



being seen

Directives for creating inclusive and
authentic content

Creators & Producers Toolkit

Table of CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Questions & Answers	3
Glossary	5
Tips for Creators & Producers	6
Additional Resources/Other Suggestions	8
Appendix 'A' Authenticity Guide	9
Appendix 'B' Demographic Data	10
Appendix 'C' Infographics	11
Sponsors	12

Introduction

Creators & Producers Toolkit

This Toolkit is intended to help creators and producers looking to implement the Directives contained in the *Being Seen* suite of reports. It provides context, guidance, handy references and addresses commonly asked questions. For more information, please refer to the reports themselves.

Statement of Principles

It is important to understand where Being Seen is coming from to fully understand what it is trying to accomplish.

No right or wrong answers

Screen content is a creative medium. Authenticity is subjective. Therefore there is no right or wrong answer in the search for authenticity. Each project, each creative team, each audience will have different concerns, standards or goals. Being Seen encourages self-reflection, discussion and evolution and not a proscriptive list of do's and don't's.

Where Being Seen applies

Being Seen applies to all screen media including film, television and interactive digital media. It applies to scripted and unscripted content. The degree that the search for authenticity plays a role can vary depending on genre and story but at no time should it not be a consideration.

Identity

Identity can be evolving, and for some fluid. Aspects of identity are not always visible. Self-identification is key, provided that should there be concerns, identity can be confirmed.

Intersectionality

No one is just one identity. Intersectionality means that different aspects of a person's identity can be at play at different times or all at the same time. When one identity is addressed, other identities may still be actively oppressed. A checkbox approach to identity undermines seeing a person as their whole selves.

Systemic Barriers

Systemic barriers do not target one or two communities but multiple communities as they were created to favour straight, white, able-bodied people. There are other elements of privilege as well, not dealt with by *Being Seen* such as gender, socio-economic status, citizenship and religion. Communities need to work together to break down these systemic barriers so that Canadians have equal opportunity to fulfill their creative dreams and audiences see themselves in the screen content created in Canada.

Change

The ultimate goal of *Being Seen* is to create positive change that will result in a more diverse talent pool and better screen content.

Questions & ANSWERS

Q I'm a straight, white, able-bodied male. Does all this authenticity stuff mean that I can only tell stories about straight, white, able-bodied men?

A No. While some participants in the research felt that only members from a community could tell stories from that community, many others felt that respectful storytelling could be done by those from outside the community provided that it was for the right reasons (i.e., not just because the topic is trendy or that's where the money is) and the necessary work to ensure authenticity was done. The Directives in Being Seen outline what is meant by 'necessary work' but it will always depend on the project and the creator.

However, there are two other things to consider. Given that so many underrepresented people have been shut out of telling their own stories, consider whether you should be telling a story or stepping aside to let someone from that community tell their own story, or perhaps helping someone to tell their own story. In addition to the equity argument, consider that mentoring someone to tell their story can help bring to market new stories and new ways of telling stories that could have great appeal in the marketplace. It could be financially beneficial to support new talent.

Q I have a number of screenwriters who we have always worked with and they know the style of content that we are looking for. Can we not continue to work with them and just hire a consultant to review scripts once they are done?

A If a consultant identifies that there are problems with the characters or the plot or the structure of the script, it will be more expensive to revise finished or even later drafts of scripts. A consultant can merely provide notes, often in isolation from the creative team, and does not have the authority to require that changes are made. It can be challenging to find a consultant to work at a later stage because of the history of producers using consultants to rubber stamp approval rather than truly check for authenticity.

Q Authenticity takes time and money to engage consultants, sensitivity readers, training for interns and anti-racism training for the production team. Who is going to pay for all of that?

A All of the stakeholders are recognizing the need for budget and schedule to incorporate authenticity and inclusion in productions. These costs are likely to be considered eligible for development and production costs. However, the additional costs will still put pressure on budgets if funders and broadcasters do not have additional resources to contribute. The first step is to include it in the budget and make the ask.

Q I'm working on a documentary/unscripted production. Surely I don't have to worry about authenticity.

A Yes, you do. It isn't the same or likely as extensive as with drama or comedy but you still have to 'do the work'. For example, are the hosts or interview subjects for your science documentary representative of the demographics of the subject matter experts or did you only pick white men? Are your stories only from a Western perspective (which may be intentional but consider it). Are the subjects of your reality show stereotypes? Have the interactions been edited to support stereotypes or tropes? Have you considered the various skin tones of interview subjects in makeup, cinematography and lighting? These and other considerations are specific to documentary or unscripted production and are important authenticity considerations.

Q Are the Directives meant only for white/straight/able-bodied people? I'm a member of an underrepresented community and I get this.

A Not at all. We all need to learn to embed authenticity practices into our creative and production work. Some people may be more attuned to the need to do the work because of their lived experience, but that experience does not mean that they do not have to do the work nor that they have more that they could learn. The Directives can act as validation, a refresher of steps to be taken or a tool to share with others.

Q I make interactive digital media (e.g., websites, video games, mobile games). I don't see a lot of references to games in the Directives. Does it not apply to my work?

A Authenticity can still apply to interactive digital media, but unlike other forms of screen content, it is possible to create content that is not story or character-based and therefore concerns of representation are limited to those who make the content. However, a game does not need to be a narrative-based game for authenticity to play a role. Consider the avatars, the design, the targets and the story world created for the game. Even a match three mobile game can promote stereotypes or be racist by using symbols with racist history. For example, the Anti-Defamation League has a [Hate Symbols Database](#). A quick check can determine if your Celtic Cross symbol represents Irish pride or is the version that is used by white supremacists. Are your soldiers all white guys who are killing Latin American drug dealers, perpetuating stereotypes in your shoot 'em up game. Are all the farmers in your resource game white? Does your fighting game perpetuate Asian stereotypes by combining different martial arts or is it respectful of the culture. These are examples of questions to ask as you review your content.

Q I make kids animated content where the characters are bubbles (or rocks or fantasy animals). If they are not real, how can authenticity apply?

A Characters are often coded to act a certain way either intentionally by the designer and/or screenwriter or unknowingly as they pattern the character after their own perspective. Even fantasy characters need to be reviewed and care taken to not communicate stereotypes. On pages 23 and 24 of the [Being Seen Children's Media Report](#), there was a discussion of attempts to use fantasy characters to avoid issues of representation, the often unwitting coding of characters with the personality and character traits of the creators or intentionally coding them with stereotypes such as dark hair for bad or evil characters, which is a problem even when the characters are ponies.

Glossary

Many people in the industry have asked for a glossary or vocabulary list that would help them understand what are the right terms to use and what each one means. This is a challenging problem because terms are evolving and at times divisive. Many organizations have definitions that they have worked hard to develop, yet as there are no industry standards they differ from the definitions that others have developed. People are also looking for advice on what is ok to say in informal situations. Our attempted solution is to present a live document that can be updated and will provide context. The [Being Seen Glossary](#) provides guidance on usage as well as in some contexts definitions of terms. Readers can provide other perspectives and suggest other terms to be included through the submission form included in the document.

Tips for **CREATORS & PRODUCERS**

The following tips for Creators and Producers were generated by focus group consultations with creators and producers.

- 1** Incorporate authenticity into your brand rather than as an add on to ensure that it is woven throughout every decision and consideration.
- 2** Share Being Seen or at least the standalone Directives and Toolkits with key creative and key crew.
- 3** Review the Being Seen Considerations for Community Engagement Plans prior to submitting Community Engagement Plans (which may also be known as Diversity Plans or Inclusion Plans) to funders and broadcasters.
- 4** Consider engaging the Being Seen team at BSO to provide a tailored workshop to key creative and/or key crew.
- 5** Emphasize authenticity research and reviews at pre-development and development stages where changes in teams and/or content can be more easily made and will have less financial impact. If engaging a consultant, do it early and not as a 'rubber stamp' of approval or to 'fix' close to final draft scripts.
- 6** Discuss the importance of authentic casting, and where necessary review of self-identification, with directors and casting directors. Despite casting notices with specific identities listed, some performers will audition for roles they do not qualify for.
- 7** Build in paid mentorship and training opportunities for underrepresented talent wherever the budget allows. These are being recognized as eligible budget costs but there will still be pressure to finance additional costs.
- 8** Advocate for underrepresented talent, particularly in job categories that need to be approved by funders, broadcasters, distributors or other stakeholders. Make the case that they are ready to take advantage of the opportunity and that there is training and support for them.

- 9** Ensure that your team knows that you intend to run a respectful and safe set and/or office. Provide training when necessary and not just when required by broadcasters. Identify who members of the cast and crew can speak to if there are concerns about behaviour of others or the authenticity of the content.
- 10** If your story is set in a specific location, review its demographics on Statistics Canada and fill out the Demographic Data form in Appendix 'B' to support the creative, inform the creative team and help pitch the project.
- 11** Often broadcasters are compressing the development phase or requiring that they are pitched fully developed projects. Therefore it is important for producers to conduct their own authenticity reviews and not wait for a broadcaster or funder to require it or provide their own comments.

Additional **RESOURCES**

Through consultations the participants asked for a number of resources which would either make using the Directives easier or would make implementing authenticity protocols easier. Some of these resources were created and can be found in the Appendices. They include:

1. Glossary (see above)
2. Develop a guide of items to consider that can provide guidance on steps to take. See Appendix 'A'.
3. Demographic Data. See Appendix 'B'.
4. Infographics to communicate the messages of Being Seen briefly and visually. See Appendix 'C'.

Appendix 'A' - AUTHENTICITY GUIDE

Being Seen Authenticity Guide for Producers

The following questions are reminders of what to do and ask yourself to signify whether a project is authentic. The guide will lead to further reflection and work to ensure authenticity of the content.

- Have you read *Being Seen* and [*ImagineNative On-Screen Protocols and Pathways?*](#)
- Have you reviewed the *Being Seen Considerations for Community Engagement Plans?*
- Can you explain your connection to the community(ies) portrayed in the story or explain your plan to ensure authenticity of the story?
- Do you have a plan to ensure diversity within your creative team?
- Do you have a plan to ensure diversity within your production team?
- Have you budgeted money and scheduled time for cultural consultation or community engagement?
- Have you discussed strategies for authentic casting with your director and casting director?
- Have you budgeted for interns or job shadowing to help build the diversity of the talent pool?
- Will you be implementing anti-racism, anti-harassment, anti-oppression training for your production team? Will you be tracking who on your team has previously taken such training?
- Do you have contingency plans should any of your diversity or authenticity plans not be successful? For example, if you cannot find a screenwriter from a specific community, what is your plan to ensure authenticity?
- Have you planned for reflection and possible reporting on the success of your diversity or authenticity plans?

Appendix 'B' - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Fill out the following form as a way to inform your creative team about the specific location that is the setting for your story and as a tool to support your creative when pitching broadcasters and applying for funding.

Project Name

Location (is it a specific city or region? If it is an unnamed city or region, what location most resembles it):

Percentage of the population based on [Statistics Canada](#) using their ethnocultural categories (link is to 2021 census tables):

Indigenous: %

Latin American: %

South Asian: %

Southeast Asian: %

Chinese: %

West Asian: %

Black: %

Korean: %

Filipino: %

Japanese: %

Arab: %

Other factors related to the Project (e.g., age, income, language at home, immigration status, place of birth for recent immigrants, religion):

Note that Statistics Canada collects limited demographics on the [2SLGBTQIA+](#) communities and the [Persons with Disabilities](#) communities.

Share information on the audience behaviour of your racialized demographic based on [Being Counted: Canadian Race Based Audience Survey](#):

Appendix 'C' - INFOGRAPHICS



Accents

Not all Black and People of Colour have accents. Accents should be normalized and not used to signal character traits. If you're going to have a character with an accent, get it right.



Who Can Tell A Story?

There is no one answer to this question. Whether you are from the community or outside, make sure you have done the work to ensure authenticity.



Avoiding Black Stereotypes

Understand the complexity of the Black communities including ethnic or cultural origin, intersectional identities, socio-economic status and location within Canada.



Avoiding Asian Stereotypes

Understand the complexity of the Asian communities including ethnic or cultural origin, intersectional identities, socio-economic status and location within Canada. Be sensitive to the stereotypes that reinforce the hypersexualization of Asian women and desexualization of Asian men.



Avoiding 2SLGBTQIA+ Stereotypes

Avoid stereotypes unless you're subverting them or adding complexity to the character or story. Review content with an eye to unconsciously promoting stereotypes.



Avoiding Disabilities Stereotypes

Understand that there are visible and invisible disabilities and a wide range of experience and characteristics within each disability.



Parents of Child Performers

Being familiar with the Directives can help parents and guardians become better advocates for child performers.



Working with Consultants

In some situations authenticity can be ensured by engaging a cultural consultant. However, sometimes that is not enough.



Why Authenticity?

Authenticity isn't just a feel good thing we should do because we are good citizens who care about our communities. There is an economic imperative behind authenticity.

Thank you to the Generous **TOOLKIT SPONSOR**

TELEFILM PARTNER
C A N A D A OF ►
CHOICE

And Being Seen **REPORT SPONSORS**

TELEFILM PARTNER
C A N A D A OF ►
CHOICE

CBC  Radio-Canada

OUTtv

Bell
FUND


REEL CANADA

 ONTARIO
CREATES

creativeBC

Shaw)
Rocket
Fund
Fuelling creativity 