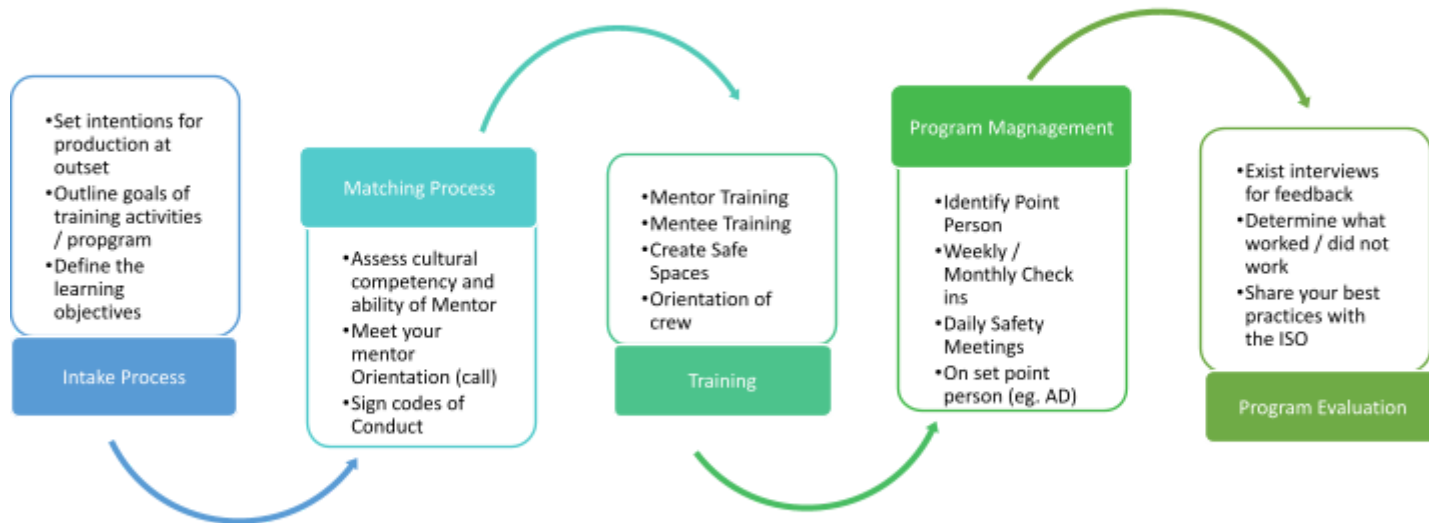
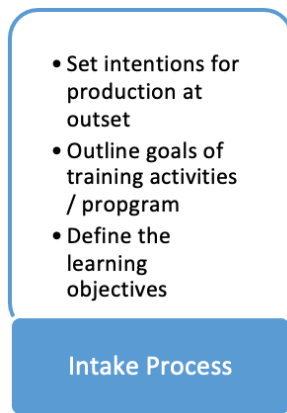




WORKING WITH
INDIGENOUS CAST &
CREW

Indigenous Training / Mentoring Initiatives: Lessons learned

Many Indigenous and non-Indigenous productions are looking to establish training, mentoring or shadowing initiatives in efforts to build Indigenous capacity in the screen sector. Indigenous creators have highlighted a number of best practices to ensure the success of these initiatives. Paid internships or mentorships, preferably that include credits, are a priority for mid- and senior-career filmmakers. The process of mentoring Indigenous directors, producers, and crew requires some thought and structure to ensure that you are transferring your experience in a way that enables learning. Recent productions with experience in larger scale training initiatives noted the need to bring in a protocols approach as early as possible in order to fully integrate training and protocols within the production, and to ensure interface between mentors / mentees and cast and crew in advance of the shoot. Preparing for and planning mentor / mentee relationships is a full-time job, therefore, the more time spent in prep the better.



Intake Process: Define goals & Training Goals

For Indigenous producers and directors, setting and expressing intentions for the creation of training and mentorship opportunities was something to be done early on, so that it remains on the radar of those involved throughout the production. Ensure that it is clear to producers and funders that capacity building and mentorship are a part of the overall production plan. Regardless of whether or not Indigenous crew members belong to a union, it is critical that they are paid equal to that of their non-Indigenous co-workers - even if they are employed through a mentorships program.

Matching Process

- Assess cultural competency and ability of Mentor
- Meet your mentor Orientation (call)
- Sign codes of Conduct

Indigenous creators are looking for practical, hands-on learning that enables them to understand and navigate the industry. They are seeking opportunities to collaborate with peers and Indigenous mentors (including international peers). Capitalizing on people's skills and interest is as important as allowing them to build new areas of experience and craft, with a view to building all aspects of the Indigenous industry. Another best practice is to ensure that there is more than one Indigenous person on your set / crew. Not only is this for reasons of cultural safety, individuals on set often bear the brunt of "representation".

- **Selecting a mentee**
 - What are the training needs of the mentee?
 - How well do they understand the position?
- **Partner mentee with appropriate mentor**
 - Does the mentor have soft skills?
 - Is the Mentor culturally competent?
 - Get a formal commitment from mentors
 - Encourage mentors to approach the work with cultural humility
 - Mentors have a responsibility to educate themselves
- **Define the training objectives for the individual**
 - What do they want to learn?
 - What will they learn?
 - How do they best learn?
 - agreement in place about what mentees will learn in their roles
- **Schedule & Conduct Training**
 - Establish Set Culture and set respectful intentions for the production – ensure that everyone knows what to expect
 - Have everyone participate in ceremony together at the beginning
 - Define everyone's role on set
 - Monitor frequently (eg., weekly check ins, monthly discussions, lunch and learns) for ongoing feedback
 - Ensure availability of Cultural Supports
- **Follow up / Evaluation**
 - Exist interview with the mentee (and mentor if desired)
 - Determine what worked well and what did not work
 - Share your best practices with the ISO

Matching Process

First and foremost, Indigenous creators are hoping to work with experienced and well-respected Indigenous mentors; however, where that is not possible, they are seeking the recruitment of quality, high-profile and culturally competent mainstream mentors. Building relationships (particularly developing relationships with producers) and making contacts and connections are often the most beneficial aspects of participating in training initiatives. Assessment before placement was recommended to ensure positions are suited to mentees. Producers noted that most everyone wants to participate in the creative aspects of the job, therefore, it is necessary to be super clear about what any of the available positions actually entail.

Success will be based on matching participants with experts – this should be very deliberate. On the part of productions, this may be facilitated by having in depth submission forms and clear job descriptions. On the part of mentees, Indigenous creators encourage you to write your weaknesses, describe what you are looking for, and assess where you fit in the spectrum of artists. If possible, create a brief agreement describing what mentees will learn in their roles, to be shared with both the mentor and mentee. According to Doreen Manual, Director of the Bosa Centre at Capilano University, on longer or larger scale productions, it can be useful to divide mentee experiences across departments or positions (eg., on a 60-day production you may have a 20 / 20 / 20 split). A survey of Indigenous participants in mentorship and training programs deemed that aside of culturally competent mentors, hands on approaches and collaborative experiences were the most important aspects of training programs.

The most common lessons learned are that mentorship positions require dedicated effort, and that mainstream industry mentors require a certain level of cultural humility. If the mentors aren't invested and versatile, then the experience is lacking. Bring your production team along with your vision well in advance in order to get everyone comfortable with the environment. Set out your expectations (see sample Mission statement), create a healthy learning environment (see sample Creating Safe Spaces), and ensure that trainees, mentees, or shadows are taught in a good way, with understanding and patience (which, according to most Indigenous filmmakers, is contrary to the time sensitive, often intense and aggressive, or hierarchical set culture that exists within the industry at this point in time).

Training & Training Program Management

The goal of many Indigenous creatives is to ensure that there is either an Indigenous person or mentee / mentor in every department. Training often worked best with people who had transferable skills, even if they have never worked in TV or film. By way of example, anyone who studied carpentry could easily translate those skills into set construction; or, find electricians, or draught's people who can work in the art department, wardrobe, etc. Outreach to trade or skill areas where people might be out of work and could be retrained. Creating safe spaces for Indigenous trainees / mentors includes making cultural supports available, but also requires having regularly scheduled check ins with both mentors and mentees / shadows / apprentices. Some productions suggested defining a clear process or point person for complaints or resolving issues (such as the Assistant Director). Those who participated in training programs with clear structures, deliverables and deadlines got the most out of their training experiences.

Program Management

- Identify Point Person
- Weekly / Monthly Check ins
- Daily Safety Meetings
- On set point person (eg. AD)