AT THE CROSSROADS

REPORT BY JEFF BEAR

Prepared for Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Television Fund, the National Film Board, the Department of Canadian Heritage
and the CBC

September 20, 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very proud to present the attached report that we hope will create a new dialogue that will be on-going. The dialogue must happen with all agencies involved with this study and report as well as independent aboriginal producers and aboriginal broadcasters, storytellers, writers, educators and linguistic experts and oral historians.

Our report is dedicated to the students of yesterday, today and tomorrow who have chosen a path to become storytellers in the moving image industry.

This report was written collectively by members of the research team, although it is important to express gratitude to: Loretta Sarah Todd for her contribution in capacity building issues; George Mitchell Henry and his handling of interviews with commissioning editors; to Gregory Coyes for his deft handling of aboriginal production companies; to Barbara Hager for her interview and organizational skills and knowledge of training facilities; to Peter Crass and Cease Wyse for organizing our telephone conferences and to the indefatigable Tracey Jack who organized our Roundtables from her headquarters in Penticton, B.C. We could not have had a research workflow without the producing skills of Marianne Jones. Marianne was also my first, and perhaps most critical, reader of the report. I express gratitude for her editorial skills.

Our research was conducted by each team member from each of our own independent producer enclaves: primarily in our home offices. In this capacity many of us relied upon the generosity of more formal and established institutions such as: the Telefilm offices in Vancouver and Montreal where we held 2 Roundtables; APTN in Winnipeg where we held one Roundtable and the IMAGINATIVE festival office in Toronto where our Fourth Roundtables was conducted. To the owners of these facilities I express further gratitude.

Finally, I was assisted throughout this report by Maria De Rosa of Telefilm Canada. I am indebted to her for her unflinching support and would like to express my appreciation for her critical and perceptive eye. She assisted me in the organization of this report. The report, *At The Crossroads*, could not have been finished without the confidence and trust she invested in my efforts to find expression in the concerns and perceptions of the aboriginal film and television workforce. It is this kind of partnership that we seek to build a strategic direction for our future.

Jeff Bear
September 20, 2004

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report was commissioned by Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Television Fund, the National Film Board, the Department of Canadian Heritage and the CBC. (the Agencies) At a meeting with Aboriginal producers at the Banff Television Festival in June of 2003, these agencies committed to evaluate the capacity of existing and new initiatives to support the development of the Aboriginal voice within the television industry. In April 2004, a request for proposals (RFP) was issued by Telefilm Canada requesting proposals to examine the training opportunities and the barriers facing Aboriginal producers in accessing mainstream television with a view to the Agencies developing a strategy. The contract was awarded to Jeff Bear representing a team of aboriginal film and television professionals. We provided a preliminary report to a meeting of the Agencies organized by Telefilm Canada at the Banff Television Festival in June of 2004.

1.1 . The Project Team

The research team was comprised of some of the most experienced aboriginal producers in Canada. They included Cease Wyse, George M. Henry, Loretta Todd, Peter Crass, Barbara Hager, Greg Coyes, Tracey Jack and Marianne Jones. Each of us has worked with at least one conventional television network and some of us were founding members of Canada's only aboriginal television network, Television Northern Canada and the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) (see Annex 6 for biographies of research team). In this study, we brought together our collective expertise as consultants, journalists, educators and independent producers of documentary, drama and animation productions. Our report, *At The Crossroads*, is a snapshot of the aboriginal producer's world and maps out the further development of aboriginal broadcasting and film policies.

1.2. Approach and Methodology

Drawing from the collective expertise of the research team, we approached our mandate by employing various methodologies: literature review, case studies, focus groups, and telephone interviews. The results of these short studies are contained in the Annexes of this report.

Annex 1 contains a selected bibliography on the subject of Aboriginal training and access to mainstream media; Annex 2 (A and B) is a summary of our roundtable discussions held with Aboriginal content creators and trainers in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. Annex 3 summarizes our case study examination of 7 Aboriginal television productions; and Annex 4 contains the case study examination of four training facilities. Annex 5 describes the results of telephone interviews held with four commissioning editors, one regional CBC television executive and two NFB Executive Producers.

The participants in our consultations (roundtables, telephone interviews) were selected primarily from the independent production community and based primarily in southern Canada. We selected individuals who work on the frontline of aboriginal production, education and training to be participants in our survey. We contacted CBC and NFB filmmakers and producers who are on the frontline of decision-making. We also invited the participation of producers contributing to the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network; including those who helped to shape the network. We invited journalists and actors to be interviewed, who have first -hand experience with mainstream television broadcasters and film making agencies. Finally, we consulted aboriginal and non-aboriginal educators and trainers and former students working in Canada. The participants shared their views with us openly and constructively.

This report begins with a brief overview of the milestones that have helped shape Aboriginal media in Canada, providing the larger context in which to situate the recommendations made in this Report. We then examine the issues, challenges and experiences of Aboriginal producers in accessing mainstream media. We describe the ways in which aboriginal producers attempt to access mainstream audiences; the general difficulties and the successes. A critical aspect of this study was to define ways and means to mitigate any qualified barriers to access.

The report then examines capacity building of Aboriginal production and all that this implies in terms of adequacy of financial resources; need for strategic partnerships; effective training models, and industrial development initiatives. This is followed by the report's recommendations which reflect not only the views of various stakeholders who participated in this study but our own assessment (as members of the aboriginal workforce in film and television) of the next steps to be taken by the Agencies that support Aboriginal television production.

II. THE CONTEXT

2.1. Milestones in Aboriginal Media

This study comes at an opportune time in the evolution of aboriginal broadcasting and filmmaking. One of the priorities of the federal government is to ensure that federal cultural agencies reflect diversity in their workplaces. As demonstrated in Canadian policy and legislative history, federal authorities have historically responded to the cycles of change that demand social and political reform. And nowhere has there been more change than in the world of aboriginal film and television. In the last forty years, there have been a number of key milestones in aboriginal media that help us understand how this reform has taken place. These include the following:

1958 CBC establishes a northern service.

1967 CBC TV comes north.

1975 Ottawa promises satellite TV for every Inuit community over 500.

1979 The Anik Satellite Experiments began. Inuit organizations in the Eastern Arctic and Northern Quebec participated in pilot projects to test communications satellites in applications such as TV broadcasting, community communications, tele-education and tele-health. (Inuit Broadcasting Corporation is born in 1981).

1980 CRTC establishes the Committee on Extension of Service to Northern and Remote Communities (the *Therrien Committee*). The subsequent report stressed the urgent need for special measures to allow aboriginal people to preserve their languages and foster their culture through various broadcasting initiatives.

1981 Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, IBC is born.

1981 CRTC licenses CANCOM to deliver a range of southern programming into northern and remote communities. As a quid pro quo, CANCOM is required to provide assistance to northern aboriginal broadcasters. CBC transponders in the north shared with IBC and other northern aboriginal broadcasters in groundbreaking agreement on access to mainstream technology.

1983 Government of Canada announces the *Northern Broadcasting Policy* and the *Northern Native Broadcast Access Program*. Public funds are allocated for the production of radio and television programs by thirteen native communications societies across the north.

1985 The CRTC releases its Northern Native Broadcasting policy statement (Public Notice CRTC 1985-274). This policy establishes certain short term measures to ensure native broadcasters have access to existing northern distribution systems, but it also emphasized that a dedicated northern transponder would be required to handle the volume of programming and to ensure that programs were scheduled at appropriate times.

1985 Gerald L. Caplan/Florian Sauvageau Report , "The Task Force on Broadcast Policy holds public hearings across Canada. Aboriginal producers show up in record numbers.

1986 Gerald L. Caplan/Florian Sauvageau Report, "The Task Force on Broadcasting Policy" recommends far reaching changes to aboriginal policy. Among the changes recommended is a dedicated satellite transponder for northern services.

1988 Minister of Communications announces support for a northern aboriginal television service to be known as **Television Northern Canada** (TVNC).

1991 *Broadcasting Act* of 1991 recognizes, for the first time, that aboriginal broadcasting is an intrinsic part of the Canadian broadcasting system. Section 3(d)(iii) states that the system should "through its programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations of Canadian men, women and children, including equal rights, ... and the special place of aboriginal peoples within [Canadian] society."

1991 CRTC licences TVNC. The service would provide discreet television services to northern audiences. The Department of Canadian Heritage would create a northern carriage system.

1992 Inaugural launch of TVNC.

1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Final Report

3.6.11
The government of Canada recognize the special status of Aboriginal language broadcasting explicitly in federal legislation.

3.6.12
The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission include in license conditions for public and commercial broadcasters, in regions with significant Aboriginal population concentrations, requirements for fair representation and distribution of Aboriginal programming, including Aboriginal language requirements.

3.6.13
Public and private media outlets, in particular the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, provide access to Aboriginal media products for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians by (a) purchasing and broadcasting Aboriginal programming from independent Aboriginal producers; and (b) producing English and French versions of original Aboriginal programs for regional and national redistribution.

3.6.14
Public and private media outlets address the need for training and better representation of Aboriginal people in public communications by developing and implementing employment equity plans.

3.6.15
Governments, including Aboriginal governments, recognize the critical role that independent Aboriginal print and broadcast media have in the pursuit of Aboriginal self-determination and self-government, and that they support freedom of expression through (a) policies on open access to information; and (b) dedicated funding at arm's length from political bodies.

3.6.16
Colleges and universities with programs in communications, journalism and film co-operate to support access for Aboriginal students by providing transition courses, scholarships and counseling services.

3.6.17
The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission be mandated to establish fee structures and provisions for joint ventures as part of licensing conditions to ensure a stable financial base for the production and distribution of Aboriginal broadcast media products, particularly in southern Canada.

1996 National Film Board of Canada creates annual Aboriginal Filmmaking program with $1 million annual commitment.

1997-98 The Canadian Television Fund (the EIP through Telefilm Canada and the LFP) begins financing aboriginal language productions annually for approximately $1 million.

1998 In Public Notice CRTC 1998-8, the CRTC recognizes TVNC as *"a unique and significant undertaking serving the public interest and the objectives of the Broadcasting Act"* and that a national aboriginal channel should be *"widely available throughout Canada in order to serve the diverse needs of the various Aboriginal communities, as well as other Canadian."* The Commission also stated that it would consider any application by TVNC designed to achieve these objectives.

1999 The CRTC approves the application (Decision CRTC 99-42) by TVNC to operate a national Aboriginal programming network, to be known as the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN). The Commission will issue a single license for a satellite-to-cable programming undertaking, including existing transmitters in Northern Canada, expiring August 31, 2005. APTN begins airing nationally on September 1, 1999. Under the terms of its broadcast undertaking, APTN will broadcast 120 hours of programming each week in English, French and up to 15 different Aboriginal languages. It will include children's and educational programming, cultural and current affairs, drama, music, comedy, documentary features, discussion programs, political coverage, and special events, as well as programming about indigenous people around the world. APTN will devote 90% or more of both the broadcast week and the evening broadcast period to Canadian programs. Moreover, the CRTC expected the APTN to broaden its scope from northern native to national aboriginal. The network was expected to expand its use of aboriginal producers.

2000 The Canadian Television Fund reports spending 2.5 million in aboriginal language programming.

2.2. Aboriginal Screen Culture: At a Crossroads

These milestones (as described above) provide a context in which to frame the evolution of aboriginal screen media and help set the context for what the stakeholders of this study believe should be the next steps. The stakeholders of this study believe that aboriginal screen culture is at a crossroads. The recommendations that are made in this report must be seen within the optic that the changes to be made to further aboriginal self-expression in television must be founded on the concepts originally outlined by George Erasmus and Rene Dussault, Co-chairs, in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) Report. These concepts were described as follows:

> "It is important to understand the concepts on which this strategy rests. There are four: the reality of societal and cultural difference; the right to self-government; the nature of Aboriginal nationhood; and the requirement for adequate land, resources and self-reliant Aboriginal economies. Each is linked to the others and all are critical for success." (Announcement of the RCAP 1997)

Twelve years ago, cultural icon, broadcaster and human rights critic, Fil Fraser wrote: "In the face of the foregoing, Canada is currently having a challenging time determining if, in fact, a truly 'Canadian' culture exists, and if it does, what it is…defining Canadian culture becomes increasingly difficult as the evolving mainstream of real life shifts from a primarily British and northern European given, to a new reality which now includes Aboriginals as de facto, if not constitutionally recognized…"Fraser made this observation partly influenced by incredible changes reached in Canadian society.

In their presentation to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage examining the future of Canadian broadcasting (*Our Cultural Sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting*), independent producers had this to say. "Section 35 of the *Constitution Act of Canada, 1982,* recognizes and protects existing aboriginal and treaty rights, including the inherent right to self government and rights that exist by way of land claim agreements or *may be so acquired*." This is important to note because defining aboriginal rights and titles through the land claims processes is an on going issue in aboriginal self- expression.

These Constitutional changes have transformed federal legislation particularly when the *Broadcasting Act* was amended in 1991. The new legislation recognized the unique thread woven by aboriginal cultures into the Canadian mosaic:

> Section 3.(1)(d)(iii) of the *Broadcast Act* recognizes the "special place of Aboriginal peoples within [Canadian] society," as a fundamental cornerstone of the Canadian

> broadcasting system. Of particular importance is the role of First Nations peoples in the provision of programming and employment opportunities arising out of the operations of the broadcast systems, and reflecting and serving the needs and interests of a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic society. (Quoting from brief submitted by independent producers. See bibliography)

This is a role of great importance to independent aboriginal film and broadcast producers. The lobby of independent aboriginal producers in southern Canada had begun in earnest during the late 1980's when the demographic face of Canada began to change radically.

During the consultations by the Caplan Sauvageau Task Force on public broadcasting, a high number of submissions were received that proposed changes to improve upon access by aboriginal producers to mainstream audiences. The Caplan Sauvageau recommendations influenced changes to national policies—but as with other radical reform-- change was slow to come.

Again in 1996 when the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) reported its findings, there were significant recommendations to improve the communications and broadcasting systems for aboriginal people. Unfortunately, Canadian public opinion inhibited the full acceptance of the RCAP's groundbreaking and far- reaching recommendations.

Over recent years, the Canadian government, at varying levels, has been quietly implementing various components of the 1996 report. For example, the RCAP recommended the establishment of a creative fee structure for support and development of the aboriginal broadcasting and this lead to the licensing of the APTN, in 1999. There were six other recommendations in the RCAP dealing with aboriginal people in film and television. Those RCAP recommendations, (RCAP Recommendations 3.6.11 to 3.6.17) deal with the same issues we are dealing with today.

Federal agencies need to continue to nurture the growth of the aboriginal workforce in film and television. In our view, with an aboriginal network, federal support initiatives, regulatory support and private investment--- the aboriginal film and television industry is poised to become a player in the Canadian economy. Currently, program support for aboriginal film and television is spread across various government agencies and crown corporations and as this study will indicate—programs are inadequately funded.

This study is called *At the Crossroads* for two reasons. First, as aboriginal producers there is a collective sense that our growth period is at a standstill due to various economic and political factors: we do not have a fair share of the national cultural resources; and secondly because there is no national strategy, blueprint or map of how to build capacity for aboriginal film and television. We have shown that Canadian law and policy has created the

beginning point for aboriginal self -expression while Canadian broadcasters and filmmaking agencies are paving the road to a more inclusive Canadian screen culture. It will take courage and commitment from all agencies supporting this study to take the next steps, to go beyond the crossroads.

We propose that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Recommendations 3.6.11 to 3.6.17 be adopted as the beginning point for building the capacity of an aboriginal workforce in film and television.

III. ACCESS TO MAINSTREAM MARKETS

This section summarizes the challenges Aboriginal producers face when accessing mainstream television as reflected in the literature review, case studies, and from the experiences of participants in our roundtables. There are also some issues that were raised in our telephone interviews with commissioning editors that are addressed. There are successes by some Aboriginal producers in accessing mainstream markets as demonstrated in the case studies. Taken together, this information forms a picture of what are perceived to be the barriers for Aboriginal producers in accessing mainstream markets.

3.1. Key Challenge: The Definition of an Aboriginal Producer

Our interviews with commissioning editors, producers and executive producers and with broadcasters and the Agencies revealed that one of the key challenges for Aboriginal producers to access mainstream television is the lack of clarity in the definition of an "aboriginal producer and an "aboriginal production". Questions raised centered on how do you define "aboriginal", "First Nations" filmmakers? Is it by: language, aboriginal nationality, *Indian Act*, *Constitution Act of Canada*, or other First Nation Treaty, final or Self-Government Acts.

Secondly, how do you prove this "status" if called upon? It was pointed out that definitions become more complicated when you consider the composition of
the production crew. For example, where the producer is non-native and the director is native, and vice versa; where the producer/director is non-native but the director of photography and associate producer is First Nation; where the producer/director is native but working with a more experienced non-native producer and director in order to meet the production requirements to get the production off the ground.

What defines an aboriginal producer? An Aboriginal producer is loosely defined as a self-identifying aboriginal person who owns a majority share of a federally or provincially incorporated company, as defined by the federal *Income Tax Act*. Most aboriginal production companies produce television or film programs with predominantly aboriginal content. The CRTC defines an aboriginal program as follows:

> A program in any language directed specifically towards a distinct native audience, or a program about any aspect of the life, interests or culture of Canada's native people. "

We should note that the CRTC's definition of a "native program" is not programming exclusively made in a native language. For its part, Revenue Canada does not make distinctions with companies as being owned by an aboriginal person.

Our study found that there are approximately thirty Aboriginal-focused film, video, television and media corporations in Canada. In the last twelve years, the aboriginal production community has experienced profound growth. If we use the number of aboriginal producers who have taken advantage of funds from the Canadian Television Fund--the CTF--as a way to measure this growth, we note that in 1997-1998, there were twelve aboriginal producers compared to five years later when that number had more than doubled to 28 aboriginal producers.

In our case studies of Aboriginal production companies (Annex 3), we were able to draw on the diverse and varied experience of seven companies. We made our selections based upon the following criteria: access to the funding of Telefilm Canada and the Canadian Television Fund; production of drama, documentary series and theatrical feature films; demonstrated business innovation; and success in the mainstream. Many independent producers have pursued the establishment of small businesses and are running their own companies to produce television and film content from an Aboriginal perspective. There are several companies that have partnered with non-aboriginal professionals. In these circumstances, the companies need to be 51% owned by the aboriginal partner in order to qualify for aboriginal funds. There are also several production businesses that are 100% aboriginally-owned companies.

In northern Canada, the picture is different. There are no companies owned by broadcast undertakings in southern Canada, like APTN. However some of the earliest northern broadcasters have companies established at arms-length. The northern broadcasters also form the governance structure of the APTN and nine of the thirteen societies funded through the Northern Native Broadcast Access Program are on the board of directors for APTN. Each of the 13 societies funded through NNBAP are subsidized and qualify each year for core funding and this acts as overhead for their production affiliates. Access to training and mainstream audiences by the northern producers faces its unique set of challenges and circumstances (well documented by Television Northern Canada –TVNC--and the APTN). Indeed, the northern producers have an established association whereas the southern aboriginal independents are separated by distance and greater cultural diversity.

As the aboriginal industry grows, so does the demand for an anchor, a place to call the "commons". Participants in our roundtables believe that the time is right to establish a coordinating body that could represent aboriginal producers, nationally, and have a mandate to facilitate capacity building for the aboriginal film and television workforce. They recommended support and the identification of resources, financial or otherwise, for an industry-based association (s) that will coordinate the growth of the aboriginal film and television workforce that may lead to the establishment of standards and definitions for the aboriginal film and television industry. (Annex 2-A)

3.2. Framing the Impediments

3.2.1. Screen Diversity, Story Diversity & Systematic Racism

There was an overwhelming consensus among participants in the roundtables held (Annex 2) that there is systematic racism when Aboriginal persons access employment opportunities in mainstream television. One participant noted that "mainstream media do not keep an accurate record of an aboriginal workforce and because there is a very small database of aboriginal producers and journalists that [unless] specifically targeted, they are not the first choice. Change has to start with normal opportunities but with significant placements. It all comes down to hiring opportunities".

Many expressed the perspective that a more inclusive workforce is the answer to accessing mainstream media. The participants pointed out that without aboriginal people in senior creative and decision-making positions, access will continue to be an impediment. The participants expressed the need to have aboriginal people hired in all areas of the agencies currently undertaking this study: analysts at Telefilm Canada; policy managers at the Department of Canadian Heritage; Aboriginal programmers, producers, camera operators and editors (tape and stories) at the CBC; executive producers and producers at the NFB; analysts at the CRTC; and managers and officers at the Canada Council. This process should also take place at conventional private Canadian television networks and distribution systems.

One participant suggested that federal Agencies (for example, CBC) need to take a proactive approach to recruit from diverse communities. He went on to say "a person not being available, with the notion that they (aboriginal workforce) are not out there is more perception than reality. There seems to be a desire to overcome systemic barriers. Perhaps there has to be a shift in the way we perceive the communities in which we live".

Participants noted that while they see the advantages of having employment equity programs to reflect diversity in the workplace, change is slow to come. It was pointed out that there is only one aboriginal person who anchors a television program in Canadian conventional television. There are no aboriginal producers working at the network level in any of the conventional networks in either dramatic or documentary production. It was also noted that there are a handful of reporters and researchers who work at the local level and one journalist working at the National of the CBC. In addition, the CBC has created an aboriginal content unit located in Winnipeg. The unit has acquired an aboriginal person "seconded" to them by the APTN. A non-aboriginal CBC producer manages the unit. "

In our interviews with commissioning editors, it was pointed out that "we need to make our own workforce more diverse. We can remind ourselves of the gender balance initiatives and if you look around the country there is entirely new CBC then what was there 15 years ago. Once the club is infiltrated the process circles back to the visible aspects of the screen." (Annex 5)

One participant noted that there are few aboriginal professionals already in these institutions (Agencies) that could be utilized to train incoming aboriginals in the small groups and teams within which they excel – some mentoring exists but it needs the opportunity to expand. (Annex 2)

One solution proposed was to organize producers into an association so that an Aboriginal production workforce could be promoted. (Annex 2) A national support organization is needed that can support and represent Aboriginal media to create employment opportunities and promote and enhance Aboriginal culture and aspirations. (Annex 2)

3.2.2. Points of Access to Mainstream

Our review of current points of access for Aboriginal producers to mainstream television is detailed in Annex 5. One comment made in our interviews with commissioning editors helps to explain why there are not access points for independent Aboriginal production. It was pointed out that there is no room for niche programming (as aboriginal programming has often been defined): Since 1939, the industry has been based on a mandate to, "explain Canada to Canadians." Although times have changed, the cliché still exists. In Canada, the industry is based on the politics of division – by "language," "region," "big city," "small city," "genre," "type of genre", "demographic. This approach may have made sense at one time and in those circumstances, but today's changing views and society demands a new approach."

Our examination of the National Film Board of Canada reveals that while the NFB has played a leadership role in training, there are no "access point" initiatives for Aboriginal producers. The NFB was created in 1939 and since that time the cultural industries have been driven by various national agendas. Indeed one might argue that the NFB has paved the way for the developments in aboriginal filmmaking. They have supported the works of our existing generation of documentary storytellers and some aboriginal directors have won acclaim for their collaboration with the NFB. But if we examine the results of the Aboriginal Filmmaking Program as described in *The Gathering Place*, (an evaluation of the Program) the NFB reported that they have supported 40 filmmakers since 1996. They have spent on average $4000 thousand for smaller projects (development) and up to $600,000 thousand dollars productions with established directors. With only a handful of exceptions, these projects were produced using NFB producers. No aboriginal producers are supported by these project initiatives and the vast majority of projects that have been co-produced by NFB have been completed exclusively with non-aboriginal production companies.

The Report, *The Gathering Place* reported on two pilot training initiatives that are directed at aboriginal communities: a mobile training facility in Quebec that will travel to francophone communities and another project in British Columbia that involves first nations in the Vancouver locality. The Quebec project is not an aboriginal initiative whereas the British Columbia project has had significant participation from aboriginal professionals in concept

development to curriculum design and the delivery of the training to aboriginal students.

There are some models that could improve access. TV-Ontario's Calling Card Program which is available to Aboriginal filmmakers (sponsored by the Ontario Media Development Corporation, NFB and TVO) is targeted at students who have finished formal studies but do not have production experience. Aboriginal producers could access the CBC's Rough Cuts strand although there is no identified aboriginal program, the CTV's Cross-Cultural Fund is targeted at stories with a cross cultural element but there is no specific program for Aboriginal filmmakers. It was observed that with cross-cultural material, there is an opportunity to "kick up (the project) a notch" but not "ghettoize" the project so that they are part of the regular strands of projects for production and broadcast. More needs to be done to discuss screen cultures and cultural perceptions and the application of aboriginal stories and storytelling production. Many aboriginal producers are insulted by the characterization of the ghetto. While mainstream producers view our programming slots as a ghetto, aboriginal producers see them as an appointment.

Most participants in our roundtables (Annex 2-A) stated that they are aware of very few opportunities for them to improve their access to mainstream markets. Some cited the Trade Initiative organized by the National Screen Institute which had several financial partners including Telefilm Canada. The goal of this initiative was to encourage co-productions with Aboriginal producers in three countries. Eight Aboriginal producers traveled to Australia and New Zealand. Another initiative cited by the participants is the SPARKPLUG program which is organized by Telefilm Canada and supports four producers in their development of a pilot dramatic television series by sponsoring four producers to go to Banff Television Festival to pitch their ideas.

Another participant made the comment that current Aboriginal training programs are geared towards building an Aboriginal production industry primarily to serve the Aboriginal audience. This does not preclude success for Aboriginal productions in the mainstream market, for example as demonstrated by *Attanarjuat*. One participant suggested that Aboriginal producers need to research and become more aware of the audience and the marketplace of the broadcast industry, that is, cultural indicators, television, festivals, forums, workshops and seminars. This requires market research to develop an understanding for the supply and demand of aboriginal programming in the mainstream marketplace." (Annex 5)

Another participant suggested that Aboriginal producers need to network more often and to include the Agencies in this process. (Annex 2) Others expressed the viewpoint that the Agencies need to adopt a more coordinated approach to recruitment and if necessary use Aboriginal associations to design a program for recruitment. Clearly, this is an under researched issue and many of the problems from both perspectives are subjective and require further investigation. Aboriginal producers feel that they are on the outside

pushed out by a system that does not acknowledge their unique and valid styles of storytelling. Mainstream producers and commissioning editors demonstrate inflexibility in allowing for an aboriginal narrative to emerge. Should aboriginal producers assimilate their styles in order to be accepted into the Canadian mainstream?

3.2.3. Storytelling and Approach: **Assimilate to Gain Access?**

There is a general belief that First Nations have an affinity for and unique sensitivity in telling our own stories. An aboriginal storytelling approach is sometime considered not to be up to industry standards and that the aboriginal approach to narrative structure is almost always misunderstood. Broadcasters have said that our work is emotional. Participants in our roundtables pointed out that there continues to be a cultural gap that "keeps ideas apart", that "mainstream producers do not appreciate the aboriginal point of view and therefore do not value the product or seek ways to co-produce with aboriginal producers". Participants have experienced an extremely high rejection rate of aboriginal produced material by the mainstream because of this cultural gap. (Annex 2-A)

One participant pointed out that "because the mainstream media do not understand the aboriginal point of view, they do not value the product or seek ways to promote it to the best advantage. An aboriginal storytelling approach is sometime considered to be in conflict with established western traditions. " When producers do access mainstream markets, it was observed that the timeslots may not always be good and there are no promotional and marketing advantages provided by the broadcasters. Participants expressed the view that broadcasters are only fulfilling a mandate. Several participants pointed to the arrival of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network as a serious impediment because the perception is that mainstream markets consider the APTN as a "dumping ground" for aboriginal produced and aboriginal language programs." (Annex 2)

Overall, participants expressed the view that as long as the gatekeepers including commissioning editors, program producers, executive producers and producers continue to reject submissions from Aboriginal producers, "old ways of doing things" will continue. Our interviews showed that mainstream producers and networks believe that more traditional approaches in the telling of aboriginal stories is required for these programs to be sellable to mainstream audiences. In our Case Studies of Production Companies, for example, one producer was told that the drama series being presented was "too educational" for the audience. (Annex 4)

There is also a perception that many different cultural references may have to be understood for a mainstream audience to fully appreciate the programming. There is a need to sensitize broadcasters and the funding Agencies cross cultural workshops for them to gain a better understanding of First Nations culture and heritage. But all is not lost in the vast cultural gap. There are some basics in story development that may help.

From the perspective of most commissioning editors, they are interested in unique approaches to human stories with broad-based appeal. The main hurdle for both commissioning editors and First nations storytellers is to identify local First nations issues and stories with a universal appeal and then to find ways of telling the stories by connecting on basis human level that can appeal to a mainstream audience. One editor noted that the pool of emerging projects and filmmakers needs to increase in order to increase the odds for the successful completion and distribution of a project. For example, it was observed that more stories need to be developed with humor such as Tom King's novels and stories which are told with heart and humor. He went on to explain that "it's time to let people into the tent with resonant stories and engaging characters to build exposure and reach broader audiences through more than just a one-note, super serious approach." (Annex 5)

One participant pointed out that access is easier for those with strong writing skills. For example, the participant stated that the writer is provided with an opportunity to develop writing skills and then move onto the next stage of developing and producing the project. The writer needs to write and develop projects that will fit into a MOW, a series or one off documentary with the ultimate goal to see the production broadcast across Canada. (Annex 5)

Our review of training models for the Aboriginal film and television industry shows that there are ten Aboriginal-focused film, video, television and screenwriting programs in Canada. (see Annex 4)They range from a one-week media intensive program at the Gulf Island Film and Television School (GIFTS) on Galiano Island, British Columbia to a three-year diploma program at the First Nations Technical Institute in Tyendinaga (Deseronto), Ontario. One of the unique characteristics of some of these programs is that are sensitive to the unique stories of Aboriginal people. One participant noted that it is critical that the institution providing training and professional development appreciate the need for Aboriginal-specific training programs.

Some participants stated that there is evidence that access to mainstream requires an assimilation process for aboriginal storytelling. For example, one participant noted that "In CBC news, for example, there are certain culture, fashions and values that do not always click with other cultures, particularly when one comes from a oral, or, story culture. There is resistance to tweaking and massaging a story."

It was pointed out that at the same time, veteran producers on the frontlines of the CBC see the advantages of having aboriginal people tell their own stories. It was observed that "as with any contentious issue if you look deep enough, one can find inherent contradictions in the way we see things. Different cultures have different notions of story sense and are run by contrasting structures. The style and approach determines whether the story works for us (mainstream) or not. At worst the different approach neutralizes the story, at best the style, yes, and the approach, in particular, can pose a tremendous advantage."

One participant referred to a recent documentary about aboriginal justice as an example of aboriginal involvement greatly determining access to the story. Another participant cited another example - a series produced in the 1990's by the CBC called "DRUM". In that program, "there was an aboriginal producer and writer who worked with an array of emerging aboriginal producers. Their understanding of the issues created a TV program that had pathos and depth. We could not have done the same job with non-aboriginal producers."

Another participant noted that "the CBC received a wake-up call last year when the National News conducted confidential polls and surveys about Canadian perceptions of News. The main message: there should be a conscientious effort placed upon and more interest displayed in stories about Canadian diversity on and off-screen. He went on to state that "many saw this as a chance to improve programming at all levels while others feared that the pay-off would be too slow. What to do? Take advantage of the open doors. CBC is looking for proposals that reflect the diversity of Canada right now", citing *Reel Diversity*, *Mixed Flicks* (Zed Tv), The New Aboriginal Content Unit In Manitoba and a new initiative for daytime dramas. Some of these initiatives are new and others are in their second and third rounds but in addition to what we do internally, the independent producer should look to create their own points of access with program makers and program ideas." (Annex 5)

Everyone agrees that there is not enough—almost non-existent—dialogue between aboriginal producers and mainstream producers and commissioning editors. There is an overwhelming consensus that this must change and that both formal and informal channels of communications must be either enhanced or created. Each editor and producer interviewed in this study has expressed an interest in and passions for creating a more inclusive Canadian culture. The fear is the financial stability of Canadian cultural resources and giving up and equitable share of pie. The impediments, systemic cultural barriers and monotype story structures, need to be mitigated through dialogue.

3.2.4. Aboriginal Languages

Perhaps, one of the greatest challenges facing the aboriginal producer is the question of language programming.

Shushwap chief Manny Jules made an interesting statement during the 2004 federal election. "Canada's greatest challenge in looking at diversity is to acknowledge and recognize that aboriginal peoples are as diverse as any other group." Long before the arrival of the English and French, Aboriginal nations enjoyed a land of multiple cultures and many languages, 52 recognizable and distinct dialects of the aboriginal tongue were spoken. Today, only a fraction of those languages are used as many languages hover on the brink of extinction.

Ten years ago, the Meech Lake Accord would have forever solidified the Canadian notion that this country is founded on two languages and two cultures. Many aboriginal people feared that Canada would marginalize our place in history. In a country so rich in aboriginal lore where many cities are named after ancient indigenous place names, how could the country not acknowledge our significant contribution? A country that considers itself a land of cultural country of plurality, it is not too far fetched to say that there are systemic barriers to inclusiveness in the Canadian narrative.

Our stories have always been recognized as a window on who we are, what we experience, and how we understand each other, how we express ourselves to others and to one another. But stories are more than a window on identity. We actually construct who we are in discourse through a process which involves an individual's identification with the images and cultural narratives that dominate our ways of seeing and representing the world. Language remains a fundamental character of our distinctiveness as aboriginal cultures. Producing feature length drama in an aboriginal language has proven a viable concept in the past. *Dances With Wolves* won seven Oscars from the American Academy Awards and *Atanarjuat* won the Palm D'or in Cannes, Frances.

The CTF Aboriginal Language Fund

Participants agreed that breaking into the mainstream was not easy when the primary focus of the CTF's Aboriginal Language Fund requires 100% aboriginal language production. Producers disagree with this approach and suggest that there should be incentives for producing in an aboriginal language but at the same time, they felt that the language requirements of the CTF's Aboriginal Fund need to be reviewed and potentially amended to reflect the reality of the current situation – very few producers in southern Canada—most urban centers-- are still fluent in many of the aboriginal languages yet their stories deserve to be told.

The failure to let these stories be told is a loss to all Canadians. Furthermore, participants noted that when producers do access mainstream markets, the timeslots may not always be good. And almost always there are no promotional and marketing advantages provided by the broadcasters. The general viewpoint expressed by Aboriginal producers is that broadcasters are only fulfilling a mandate.

One producer reflected upon the time when aboriginal producers first gained access to the airwaves and he said it was because of "access". "If we don't have our languages then who are we? It is what makes us distinct and what brought us to the airwaves". And it was this same participant who recognized that a major shift in the aboriginal reality might require some sacrifice in terms of how Canada sees it. (Annex 2-A)

It is the responsibility of the aboriginal production community to bring these points forward in fora like license renewal hearings and to bring it to the

attention of politicians who should ensure that federal and public mandates accurately reflects the current reality.

The Role of APTN Language Programming

Several participants pointed to the arrival of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network as a serious impediment to accessing mainstream audiences. The perception is that mainstream markets see the APTN as the exclusive place for aboriginal produced content and aboriginal language programs. The APTN should be required to work with the aboriginal language institutes and other facilities who know and understand the unique cognitive needs of the aboriginal community. The issue of language is critical. Several producers, while skeptical of the government agenda, steer clear from saying that our languages are not important to our work.

Producers have also suggested that aboriginal language teachers, practitioners and aboriginal educators be involved in program development to ensure a better use of public funds that are directed at revitalizing our languages.

It was pointed out that the APTN was expected to broadcast in at least 15 aboriginal languages and that the aboriginal languages used in the schedule, however, do not follow any systematic representation of what is in greater use and what languages are in an endangered status. Language instructors have suggested the use of multiple translations of television programs already in existence and that could later be used by versioning into as many aboriginal languages as possible.

Some questioned whether this situation begs a larger question -- was the APTN licensed to broadcast only in aboriginal languages? Was this in the national interest? One thing is for certain and that is APTN should continue to play a leading role in aboriginal language programming but the network needs to work more closely with aboriginal producers and educators.

Rules regarding funding for productions in aboriginal languages do not take into consideration that in many cases few people still speak those languages. The rules do not acknowledge the importance of getting the stories told – even with subtitles - which should be the over riding concern.

It was noted that 75% of the aboriginal population does not speak an aboriginal language. Tom King, Eden Robinson, Drew Taylor, or Ian Ross while they do not speak an aboriginal language, are among the most recognized narrators of the aboriginal experience. Compare and contrast this to the filmmakers: Alanis Obamsawin, Gil Cardinal and Loretta Todd, who also do not speak an aboriginal language but then there is Zackarias Kunuk, Shirley Cheechoo, Paul Rickard, Brian Francis, Jeff Bear and Doug Cuthand all of whom are fluent in their aboriginal tongue. And along with writers Jeanette Armstrong, Patricia Ningewance and Thomson Highway also fluent and who have written in their own language---imagine the possibilities. An effective broadcaster should recognize this group as the elite storytellers in

Canada. Could these people help to articulate solutions in aboriginal language programming?

As more and more of our languages hang by the thread for survival, an industry continues to grow and to flourish. Aboriginal language programming can be and must remain an intrinsic component to our aboriginal programming mandate in this country no matter how fundamental changes must be made to accommodate the priority of building capacity in the aboriginal film and television industry. One of the suggestions made was that all agencies involved in this study be encouraged to create a national advisory council for language programming. This advisory council could dove-tail with the creation of an industry association.

3.2.5. Training and mentorship

Challenges in Training

During this time of cultural and demographic upheaval, we believe that we are witnessing the birth of a new workforce of aboriginal professionals. In our view, this is the outgrowth of a steady march toward greater aboriginal self-government, self -determination and self-expression.

There are fewer than ten Aboriginal-focused film, video, television and screenwriting programs in Canada. They range from a one-week media intensive program at the Gulf Island Film and Television School (GIFTS) on Galiano Island, BC to a three-year diploma program at the First Nations Technical Institute in Tyendinaga (Deseronto), ON.

Aboriginal individuals seeking careers in the film and television industry launched the majority of these programs in the late 1990s in response to an increased interest. Students who choose Aboriginal over mainstream training programs are looking for an educational environment that:

- Is respectful and sensitive to the unique stories of Aboriginal people;
- Accepts diverse cultures and backgrounds;
- Offers a faculty that is primarily Aboriginal.

In addition, many individuals who pursue Aboriginal-focused film and television training are interested in working exclusively on factual and dramatic productions that portrays historical and contemporary stories from an Aboriginal perspective, as opposed to mainstream television and film programming.

Our schools and training institutions, while facing many challenges have reported generating a high number of graduate—up to 90% while only 40% may find permanent or temporary employment in the industry. Seven aboriginal focused training programs report a common profile, as indicated by one participant. "Approximately 75% of instructors are Aboriginal. Students come to the program from throughout the region and the province. Half the students are from rural reserves, the rest are urban-based." (Annex 2-B and Annex 4)

When it comes to training, education and continued support for training of aboriginal people in film and television, the best results have been seen in local and regional initiatives. Vancouver filmmakers have reported success with the National Film Board, Toronto based producers have reported success with private and commercial producers while in Winnipeg producers report greater government support provincially and at the urban level.

Trainers and producers were able to narrow down the key areas for a successful training strategy.

- Consistent, on-going funding for each student's tuition and expenses;
- The continued involvement of Aboriginal writers and production staff in the training program;
- An increased emphasis on promotion of the program to ensure that the recruitment process attracts talented, motivated students.
- The development of industry training partnerships with mainstream media organizations to offer a portion of the program's curriculum, especially in the areas of broadcast journalism, camera operations, sound gathering and video editors.
- Support for accreditation for Aboriginal post-secondary institutions.
- More grant opportunities for Aboriginal journalism and film arts through Canadian agencies and broadcast undertakings.
- Corporate donations in the form of scholarships, equipment, etc.
- The need for a central organization or task force in Canada to steer Aboriginal film and television training programs and mentorship programs. (Annex 2-B, Annex 4)

Training in Aboriginal-specific program is highly successful with a low drop out rate. These programs are sought out by Aboriginal people because these are the programs that are seen as encouraging and fostering growth as Aboriginal peoples working in media. (Annex 5) Aboriginal programs currently offered tend to be broad-based and fairly basic, preparing students for entry-level positions or their first steps into independent production. (see Annex 4) And of the entry-level programs that do exist, they are for emerging directors. While a number of broadcasters, agencies and production companies offer internships, few lead to ongoing employment and many are unpaid. (Annex 2-B)

There is a need to develop more of the "crafts" skills, producers' skills and abilities, proposal writing, cinematography and editing in order to work towards an overall industry as opposed to one-off productions. (Annex 5) The AFP, for example, is skewed towards support for directors. Also, production skills need to be upgraded, more opportunities for exposure to festivals and overall more capacity building initiatives. (Annex 2-A)

It was pointed out that learning on the job as a producer is essential –"learning about raising money, promotion and scheduling, all critical aspects of a producer's role and details that aboriginal filmmakers must gain greater knowledge in order to be successful with mainstream audiences. " With the planning and production process, a story routinely gets fleshed out in development and proves its depth in a successful treatment. It is at this time that meeting production standards, financial and management capabilities must be demonstrated and the question asked "if there are enough human, financial and technical resources to pull off the job. (Annex 5)

Our case studies of production companies found that Aboriginal producers (who are producing drama series) were committed to creating positions on

their productions and suggested that more incentives are needed. For example, one producer commented that there should be longer periods for training, perhaps a six-month window as is done with mechanics and electricians. (Annex 3)

From the perspective of commissioning editors, while they recognized that their mandate is to make films for production and distribution, as public filmmakers and broadcasters, they recognized the relationship between training and success in reaching mainstream audiences in the marketplace. It was suggested that the route to pursue is institutionalized training programs and mentorships including the CFTPA, industry and agencies. (Annex 5) Others expressed the opinion that Aboriginal producers must be trained in order to create a critical mass that will ensure that aboriginal media teams can be developed. (Annex 2-B)

Overall, expansion of institutional training programs and courses, coupled with the implementation of a coordinated strategy to provide paid internships, mentoring programs and professional development opportunities at all levels is needed.

Mentorship

The general belief is that there is a need for experienced Aboriginal producers, directors, writers and craftspeople to mentor the less experienced so that new talent is fostered and high standards are set. It was noted that training programs will take students only so far and that on-the-job mentoring is essential to hone skills and raise standards. There is also a need to create "master mentoring for mid-career producers, directors and writers. (Annex 3)

There is a need to develop more of the "crafts" skills, producers' skills and abilities, proposal writing, cinematography and editing in order to work towards an overall industry as opposed to one-off productions. (Annex 5) The AFP, for example, is skewed towards support for directors. Also, production skills need to be upgraded, more opportunities for exposure to festivals and overall more capacity building initiatives. (Annex 2 A) Many participants believe that a specified mentorship program in these areas would be very helpful.

It was pointed out that learning on the job as a producer is essential –"learning about raising money, promotion and scheduling, all critical aspects of a producer's role and details that aboriginal filmmakers must gain greater knowledge in order to be successful with mainstream audiences. " With the planning and production process, a story routinely gets fleshed out in development and proves its depth in a successful treatment. It is at this time that meeting production standards, financial and management capabilities must be demonstrated and the question asked "if there are enough human, financial and technical resources to pull off the job. Many seasoned aboriginal producers are seeking potential mentorships in producing. But nobody likes the paperwork." (Annex 5)

Our case studies of production companies found that Aboriginal producers (who are producing drama series) were committed to creating positions on their productions and suggested that more incentives are needed. For example, one producer commented that there should be longer periods for training, perhaps a six-month window as is done with mechanics and electricians. (Annex 3)

Clearly, mentorship is an underserved area in the goal of developing an effective aboriginal film and television workforce and a national strategy is required as a vital next step.

IV . CAPACITY BUILDING: GETTING BEYOND THE CROSSROADS

In order for Aboriginal cultural expression to move beyond the crossroads, our consultations have found that the path to be taken is to build the capacity of Aboriginal media ensuring that our unique voices and stories are heard throughout the world. What has been expressed to us in the various consultations conducted for this study is that we are no different from our non-native colleagues in Canada – we want success – and we want it within the context of our diverse cultural expressions and identities. We also believe it is possible to have a sustainable media industry that fosters and enhances vibrant, innovative creative talent. A consistent message from the participants of this study has been that the Aboriginal community has to take the lead to shape this industry but in partnership with the government and the Agencies.

Imagine this headline "*Aboriginal Independent producers in Canada become global leaders in Digital Content industries by building on their existing enterprise, as well as excellence in all areas of creative content, software, multimedia and entertainment. The Aboriginal and Canadian Governments have already shown a strong commitment to the development of the industry through the creation of a Digital Media Venture Capital Fund and the establishment of the Digital Lab. The key challenge is to take significant steps to develop these opportunities for innovation, enterprise promotion and wealth creation."(adapted from the Irish Film Council site)*

You could change this headline to read "global leaders in children's programming" or "global leaders in feature film production." The point is we can become those global leaders – all we have to do is envision a future and create the environment to make the future come true. Some call this capacity building – that is, providing the resources, encouraging confidence and developing necessary infrastructure, training, mentoring and information exchange – to ensure the success of any community.

Building Capacity is, of course, the second objective in Telefilm's Corporate Plan (*Striking a Chord with Audiences)*. In order to build "Canadian audiences for Canadian cultural products, there needs to be an environment

in which sustainable companies and gifted talent can thrive." (*Striking a Chord with Audiences)* Charles Belanger, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Telefilm Canada, has said of mainstream audiovisual media, "our success in reaching audiences will also be determined by the degree to which we can equip the industries and the talented individuals that work in them with the means to succeed – this is essentially the crux of Building Capacity."

Our consultations confirm that Aboriginal media producers face challenges like all those in emerging industries: lack of funding and difficulty assembling capital; inadequate communication amongst community, financial, industry and government players; fragmentation of initiatives; inadequate infrastructure and training and difficulty reaching viable markets. We also face a number of systemic barriers against our economic and professional development and we are not starting on a level playing field with respect to the rest of the media industry in Canada. Another challenge is that the Aboriginal community has yet to articulate what it is that we are building toward.

The following maps out what is needed to build the capacity of the Aboriginal film and television industry. Whatever initiative is developed, it must be done within the context of a new strategic direction that recognizes the special status of Aboriginal peoples.

4.1. A New National Strategic Direction

One of the barriers to the sustainable growth to an Aboriginal media industry is the misunderstanding as to why we are at the table in the first place. Are we here for economic or cultural reasons? Do we want a collective industry or one based on entrepreneurs striving for success? Are we seeking integration with the mainstream or an alternative market or are we producing primarily for our own communities? Do we want to speak in our languages or in English and French? Documentary or drama? All of the above?

To quote from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, "Because Canadians do not hear Aboriginal points of view, they are often left with mistaken impressions about Aboriginal people's lives and aspirations and the reasons for their actions." This is true of our colleagues in the Canadian media industry. We don't often get to articulate our POV, our aspirations and reasons for our actions. So, in brief: It is fair to say that we want economic viability and sustainability within the context of cultural viability and sustainability. And that most, though not all, Aboriginal producers adhere to cultural values that carry with them certain responsibilities.

Thus, the structural, systemic, political, economic and cultural changes that have occurred over the last couple of decades are the result of Aboriginal peoples affirming sovereignty, expressing cultural rights and identifying the need for change and following through for that change with government departments, regulatory agencies, industrial and cultural agencies and within the industry itself, including broadcasters.

It is fair to say that in Canada, Aboriginal political and media leaders fought hard to ensure Aboriginal rights have driven the expression of our cultural rights, through the provision in Canada's *Broadcasting Act* that aboriginal broadcasting is an intrinsic part of the Canadian broadcasting system (Section 3(d)(iii)), the formation of such initiatives of Northern Native Broadcast, the Aboriginal Film Program at the NFB, the Aboriginal Language Program at Telefilm and the Aboriginal Media Arts program at the Canada Council. All these have been created in response to some form of intervention by Aboriginal peoples. Underlying this are our Aboriginal rights, as guaranteed in the Constitution Act, 1982 – Section 35.

Ultimately, there needs to be an understanding by all parties involved of the principals and history that propel these programs. This is not to discredit the enlightened reception that is sometimes the response to our interventions – but change is not simply because of the generosity of our colleagues.

*Cultural rights are an integral part of human rights, which are universal, indivisible and interdependent. The flourishing of creative diversity requires the full implementation of cultural rights as defined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Articles 13 and 15 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. All persons have therefore the right to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons are entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity; and all persons have the right to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. (*Article 5 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001)

Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs…Culture is at the heart of contemporary debates about identity, social cohesion, and the development of a knowledge-based economy. (Adapted from the preamble to the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001)

Into this discussion, is how the right of self-government applies to Aboriginal peoples and the control of our media. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples reminded us of the basis for Aboriginal self-government.

In Canadian history, the colonial powers won no 'rights of conquest', for there was no conquest. Nor was North America terra nullius, free for the taking, as was claimed later. Aboriginal peoples' right of self-government within Canada is acknowledged and protected by the constitution. It recognizes that Aboriginal rights are older than Canada itself and that their continuity was part of the bargain between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that made Canada possible. (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996)

It is often thought that self-government only applies to individual First Nations, Metis or Inuit governments as they seek to create self-governments for the day-to-day lives of their communities. But the intent and the spirit of self-government applies to all aspects of our lives. That is not to say that a producer is entitled to financing of a bad project because of self-government, but it does mean that we can enter into negotiations with all levels of government and the private sector about the management of our cultural resources and about our cultural rights as they apply to the development of knowledge-based economies.

To this end, and based on the consultations we held, the message we received is two-fold: that it is timely for a new national strategic direction to be adopted to build the capacity of the Aboriginal media industry; and that more importantly, this direction should be driven by Aboriginal peoples in recognition of their rights and the obligations of the our partners (agencies, broadcasters and others that have a role to play in the development of the media industry in Canada). This strategic direction should address the issue of financial resources; confidence building and audiences; strategic partnerships; industrial and commercial development and training.

4.1.2. Financial Resources

With respect to financial resources it is safe to say that we are under-resourced in relationship to the rest of the industry and certainly with respect to any catching up we must do to reach a sustainable industry.

The total volume of media production in Canada in 2002/03 was $4.93 billion *(CTFPA Profile 2004 Report).* Without an existing tracking system, the total Aboriginal media production for 2002/03 can only be estimated. We suggest $12 million, based on Telefilm Aboriginal Language Program, NFB Aboriginal Film Program, APTN licences, CTF, CAVCO and other sources and broadcasters.

As such, our production volume represents only 2.4% of the overall media production volume in Canada for 2002/2003, and a significant percentage of that $12 million went to non-Aboriginal companies for a wide range of services such as camera rentals, post production facilities and tax credit administration. There are still instances where the majority of crews are made up of non-aboriginal people. We want to see a reverse trend where more and more aboriginal people could be filling these roles.

Aboriginal independent producers are within the first decade of the development of an Aboriginal media industry in southern Canada – which means we have a lot of catching up to do with an industry that has been around for at least the last sixty years. According to Statistic Canada, those that reported Aboriginal ancestry represented 4.4% of the 2001 population, with our population on the steady increase. This, combined with our constitutional basis for the expression of our culture, would suggest that the current level of Aboriginal media production is below capacity.

Based on simple population percentages, a quick overview of cultural agencies reveals that the current levels of designated Aboriginal funds or programs is inadequate. For instance, the NFB's AFP is one million per year, or .02% of the overall NFB production budget of 41 million (2002/03). Another example would be the Aboriginal Language Productions program, administered through the CTF and budgeted at 3 million. Compared to the CTF License Fee Program budget of 145 million, the ALP is .02% of the LFP base.

Of course, it is too simple to compare and calculate one fund against the other. After all, Aboriginal producers have, in theory, access to all levels of funding and financing in Canada. However, we must start somewhere in evaluating the discrepancies in access and programming. The funds expended on the establishment and promotion of the Canadian film and television industry is likely, on a per capita basis, considerably higher on what is being expended to establish and promote an Aboriginal film and television industry.

Another good place to start is the suggestion of a formula for designating allocations for Aboriginal programs. We are recommending a 10% direct share of existing and future film, television and new media programs for production, distribution, marketing, infrastructure and administration. If adequate resources and support were available, our production volume should grow to 10% of the overall production in Canada, or roughly 49 million – and perhaps even surpass that. The 10 % is arrived at through what is often articulated by Native leaders and native organizations as a more accurate share of our population (in fact, Statistic Canada states that census has been difficult in Aboriginal communities).

It is very likely, that a dollar figure can be arrived at that will contribute to the overall growth of Aboriginal production. This study recommends that the federal agencies enter into a process of negotiation to arrive at a more equitable share of financial resources for the Aboriginal media industry – based on population and constitutional obligations.

4.1.2. Cultural Expression, Confidence Building and Audiences:

DEFINING SCREEN CULTURE

> *Market forces alone cannot guarantee the preservation and promotion of cultural expression, which is the key to sustainable human development. Lots of money can help build an Aboriginal media industry – but if the community doesn't support its own vision and voice and if the mainstream doesn't support or believe in the viability and, in fact, the cultural necessity of our voice – no one will care nor watch.*

Two factors we must overcome are first, systemic barriers by the mainstream industry and more confidence in our own voices to create excellence. When the Canadian government, through its agencies, signals its understanding and commitment to Aboriginal rights/cultural rights for the basis for our expression then industry and public perception will move away from seeing our work as the result of hand-outs and tokenism. As well, as we exercise management of our cultural resource, we can advocate for the appropriate tools, policies and programs that will ensure the development of cultural capacity. As stated by the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD) "every community has the capacity to develop the individuals, the companies and the institutions, both public and private, that it needs to give itself voice through music, audiovisual productions, new media, publishing, stories and other forms of artistic expression."

One of the systemic barriers to the full realization of our cultural expression is what is validated as an Aboriginal story and how it is told. Restrictions - whether exercised from outside the community by broadcasters or internalized by a lack of visual vocabulary – have potentially limited the diversity of cultural expression. Just as there are numerous cultural artistic aesthetics, storytelling forms and stories, as well as experiences and points of view, so should there be diversity in the types of Aboriginal programs. Our case studies of production companies provides a small glimpse of the range, innovative and diverse content that is being made by Aboriginal companies. This content includes a documentary series on Aboriginal languages; the history and role of Aboriginal peoples in mainstream music; a drama series which reflects the reality of inner-city Aboriginal youth which is produced and written by Aboriginal people with an Aboriginal cast; and a youth drama series which also delivers a real Internet newspaper for Canadian youth.

While, chronic under-funding, underdevelopment and underemployment has affected the quality as well as the quantity of our media production – we too have a responsibility to ensure we are producing work that is of the highest standard, in both craft and content. Excellence is at the core of our cultural expression with our traditional forms of expression. We must see ourselves as more than "just making television." We must see ourselves as the inheritors of great cultural wealth – cultural wealth that must be nurtured, respected and enhanced. High standards, innovation and unique forms of expression and storytelling should inform our work and "brand" - if you like – our form of media as unique in the world.

Our case studies found that Aboriginal producers want to know what success they are having with audiences. One producer noted – "we are 2. million First Nations people in Canada and we are the fastest growing portion of the population. But we are an audience share that is not measured! How do we prove to broadcasters that we are an audience that matters? When they describe a demographic that is white, male, and 15-24 years of age, we are not found anywhere there! There has to be some kind of measurement for the Aboriginal community. Neilsen ratings cannot possibly represent our audience. Networks should do more to promote the show. The audience is out there. » (Annex 3)

4.1.3. Strategic Partnerships

Capacity Building is building strategic partnerships —within the Aboriginal community and beyond. The media industry is like all industries – it thrives on knowledge, information and relationships.

Currently, there are a number of government agencies that deliver financing and other programs to help build the Canadian media industry. Included are programs broadcasters rely on licensing independent productions to fulfill CRTC requirements, attract audiences and program their schedules. All these entities require fair exchange of information to alert the industry – from producers, directors and writers to distributors, suppliers and markets – about what is new and changing in the Canadian and international media industry.

Information sharing is therefore critical. The industry has responded by creating its own networks and systems of communications. A fair exchange of information between colleagues has enabled the Canadian media industry to strengthen and grow. The CTFPA, for instance, keeps its members informed through e-mail alerts, newsletters and their regular reports, such as their annual economic report on the Canadian film and television industry. Other organizations, such as DOCS, WIFT, DGC, NSI and the Independent Media Arts Alliance, keep their memberships up-to-date on the latest comings and goings of the rapidly changing industry. These organizations also promote the achievements of their membership and enable networking—building strategic partnerships.

While the Aboriginal community has begun in this exchange of information, it is so far limited to workshops and small festivals, as opposed to on-going exchange. We are often out-of-the-loop when it comes to changes and developments that affect the industry. Without information, our capacity to stimulate innovation and generate revenue and ultimately to create and sustain an Aboriginal media industry is limited.

Opening up the media, making it more transparent and assessable is essential for the creation of community and reinforcing participation. Strengthening cooperation between stakeholders helps to develop the community and industry and to improve service delivery. As well, it is important that we link with our colleagues in the Non- Aboriginal industry, to create balanced co-production relationships and to deliver better programming. It is also critical that we keep in regular contact with our communities, to ensure our production is meeting their needs.

It would make sense that in order to build capacity, we must create professional exchange and information networks. This study recommends the development of such systems, by enhancing Aboriginal professional associations, encouraging APTN and other broadcasters to be more forthcoming with its information, by making sure public agencies disseminate information in a timely and fair manner and by sharing information with

other professional associations. To achieve this improved level of exchange, it will be necessary to implement web-based communication systems, regular face-to-face gatherings and visible interaction at existing industry and cultural events, such as festivals and trade fairs.

4.1.4.Industrial and Commercial Development

We need everything, from studios, to post-production houses, to cameras, to costumes – everything that is needed for film or television to get made. And we need it tomorrow. And we need it accessible across the country, in the many regions where we live, urban, rural and remote.

Most Aboriginal producers and directors are only now entering the economic growth stage of their careers, which is of course driving the development of Aboriginal media industry. Licenses to produce programming for APTN began in 1999. Prior to that, most of us were working to promote cultural and artistic expression, working for Native communications societies or working within the mainstream industry. It is safe to say, that most producers today, regardless of the number of years working, are only at the very beginnings of the development of their industrial capacity. In fact, it is fair to say all Native producers are emerging producers and directors, within the context of building industrial and commercial capacity.

A quick review of the case studies shows that most Aboriginal production companies are going from project to project without being able to accumulate enough capital to invest in significant infrastructure. The few that have are often in a region where access to capital is greater or who have partnered with non-Native companies that bring capital and infrastructure projects.

There is inequity in the building of infrastructure – non-Aboriginal producers have been part of the industry longer and have benefited from a Canadian government industrial model that has promoted the growth of smaller companies moving up the ladder to become mid-size entities. As well, many have been able to translate long term employment and networking in the industry into capital.

As such, we are trying to compete on an uneven playing field. In order to help build our industry, it makes sense to develop capitalization and market programs. These may be one-time offerings, with emphasis on an overall regional stabilization strategy combined with projections for long-term growth. We recommend that discussions begin with the appropriate government agencies as well as potential private sector partners.

4.1.5 Training

Training has become a convenient catchall for fixing Aboriginal media. In this way of thinking, if there are enough entry-level training programs all will be right with our participation in the media industry. However, from the concept of capacity building, training is much more than that. Training is the promotion of a culture and economy based on innovation and excellence. To achieve this means developing and fostering human talent, validating societal and cultural values that are favorable to creativity and innovation, and building structures and processes that encourage and manage innovation. Training should also be seen in the context of our cultural values; that is, training is a life-long commitment. We see training as on-going professional development – and not simply a means to recruitment to increase numbers for bureaucratic accountability, nor as a way of maintaining barriers because of perceived lack of training.

In the promotion of an innovation culture and economy, training begins from childhood and continues throughout one's professional career – much as it did/does in our traditional forms of education. As well, in the promotion of an innovation culture and economy, we must educate our audience and markets to be receptive to innovation and excellence.

One of the weakest links in the growth of an Aboriginal media industry is lack of key creative technicians in the areas of cinematography, sound, lighting and editing. The number of skilled, talented personnel in these categories probably represents the greatest level of under-representation. These positions are essential for the development of a uniquely Aboriginal media and to the development of an Aboriginal workforce.

4.2. Consolidation of Programs into One Fund

Our consultations demonstrate that the further development of the Aboriginal film and television requires the implementation of a national strategic direction that respects the principle of Aboriginal self-government and that builds the capacity of the industry. The challenges being faced require a substantial increase in financial resources that can be used to build a sustainable industry. The problems in the industry cannot be addressed in a piece-meal fashion but require a long-term solution to address the challenges in development, production, marketing and training. These are inter-related and require a long-term vision and a commitment of resources.

It is therefore proposed that a permanent Aboriginal Production Endowment Fund be created. This Fund should be financed in the amount of $125 million to be spread over five years. The $25 million per year would help to support the initiatives that arise from this and other studies. This fund would support aboriginal television and film production companies and producers in production and distribution, training and educational workshops, screen culture initiatives, building capacity activities and the pursuit of strategic partnerships. It is proposed that this fund would consolidate all existing funds currently being administered by Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Television

Fund, the National Film Board, Canada Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage. In the long-term, this could mean the consolidation of all federal spending in the film and television sector directed at aboriginal people.

It is further recommended that the Agencies work together to establish the ABORIGINAL PRODUCTION ENDOWMENT FUND for aboriginal producers to undertake the following:

- Finance production, marketing and development of aboriginal productions.

- Build strategic partnership with the private industry, agencies and broadcasters to gain a better understanding of Aboriginal culture and heritage in media

- Begin a dialogue between the commissioning editors and Aboriginal independent producers to consider Aboriginal stories, including those based on traditional knowledge, legends and culture with the goal of creating access points to mainstream audiences.

- Develop market support system that could include corporate information, producer and partnerships profiles, provide data and merge resource bases or aboriginal producers and production companies utilizing new media and other distribution models.

- Create a new strategic student initiative for internships/partnerships between the private industry, agencies and broadcasters.

- Implement and support training opportunities that lead to an increase and greater visibility in Aboriginal stories, and storytelling productions being broadcast and distributed to mainstream audiences.

4.2.1. National Roundtables

As a an immediate step aimed at the implementation of this Fund, it is recommended that the Agencies undertake the following:

1. Identify the stakeholders from the aboriginal film and television and new media community and the key agencies and establish a formal working group to convene a series of national roundtables. The stakeholders can be determined by each of the following::

    i. Department of Canadian Heritage: Assistant Deputy Minister (Designates),
    ii. Telefilm Canada; Executive Director (Designates),
    iii. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; V-P English & French (Designates),
    iv. National Film Board of Canada; Director General (Designates),

v. Aboriginal Peoples Television Network; (Designates),
vi. Aboriginal Independent Producers; (Designates),
vii. Private broadcasters (Designates)
viii. Educators (Designates)

2. Convene a national roundtable of stakeholders to set out a strategic direction for aboriginal film and television production financing and development-related matters. There are three distinct roundtables that should be created to help make the Aboriginal Endowment Production Fund (APEF) a workable strategy. These roundtables can occur simultaneously on the following themes:

   - Cultural Policy and Screen Culture;
   - Financial Resources and Production;
   - Education and Training.

Roundtable One Cultural Policy and Screen Culture

Aboriginal Film and Television Policy
The task is to articulate current policy and to examine its strengths and weaknesses. The goal is to encourage policy review and to articulate the policy foundation for the APEF.

Focus Points:

To define and articulate strategic direction

a) Identify methods to enhance existing legislative framework to support current *Aboriginal Film and Television Policy*
b) Develop alliances designed to encourage provincial, national and international partners to invest in Aboriginal industry
c) Identify methods to bring an Aboriginal presence to boards of cultural agencies and public and private broadcasters

Aboriginal Screen Culture

The task is to articulate the historic and constitutional basis for Aboriginal media development through innovative, interactive methods and to encourage and support methods for on-going dialogue between parties. Our goal is to articulate and support the development of Aboriginal cultural values as central to our industrial model.

Focus Points

To articulate and acknowledge our differences

a) what does it mean to decolonize our media? Who is determining our cultural expression?
b) articulate our own standards of storytelling, develop methods to assess our work ensure mixture of diverse Aboriginal expression, IE urban, remote, traditional, contemporary
c) educate audience to unique voices through marketing

d) participate in provincial, federal and international strategies to protect and foster culture diversity
e) stress excellence as cultural value in all areas, from training to distribution
f) educate broadcasters about unique expression and importance of political POV

Roundtable Two: Financing Resources and Production

- What is the per capita spending on Aboriginal media versus non-Aboriginal media? Can we determine what the total overall spending on developing the Canadian media industry and extrapolate a relative financial amount for Aboriginal media development? What have the recent recommendations of governments studies said? What is the most feasible financial formula to increase financial growth and stability?

Analysis of eligibility
- ensure development is not restricted to urban centers
- ensure development is equitably divided amongst all levels of expertise and experience
- ensure development based on standards of excellence and merit
- non-Aboriginal producers and directors producing Aboriginal content
- how best to administer enhanced funding, and through what cultural parameters

Analysis of program categories
- what is the capacity building return on financial resources expended on programs within the cultural sector
- make use of existing mechanisms to capacity build, i.e.; ensuring Aboriginal companies are promoted Aboriginal companies to private sector
- how to create a capacity building formula

Access Issues

- create professional exchange and information networks
- enhance Aboriginal professional associations
- encourage CBC, APTN and other broadcasters to be more forthcoming and accessible
- ensure public agencies disseminate information in a timely and fair manner
- improve level of exchange, through web-based systems, regular gatherings
  and interaction at existing industry and cultural events, such as festivals and trade fairs
- promote dialogue of diverse cultural communities, finding potential co-production partners
  other than mainstream

Production and Capacity Building

- identify financial resource needed to build infrastructure
- explore various strategies used to build Canadian producers' infrastructure
- seek strategic industrial partners, IE investors, Kodak,
- identify existing broadcaster programming plans that can be targeted to Aboriginal companies, to provide sustained production and revenue,
  IE designate episodes of documentary series for Aboriginal producers,
  not necessary of Aboriginal content
- develop community-based production and post-production capacity

Roundtable Three: Education and Training

Priority Issues

- examine existing training programs for systemic barriers, IE, under-funding, lack of technology, accessibility
- examine existing training programs for key technical training capacity
- enhance existing training programs to have Aboriginal history and cultural expression part of curriculum
- develop mentoring for all levels and positions
- develop master mentoring for mid-career producers, directors and writers
- develop measurable standards of excellence to ensure advancement of highest standards
- develop incubator approach involving the formation of competent production teams be adopted for the creative development
- examine potential for APTN as window for broadcasting of training program production