



GNWT SUPPORT TO THE NWT FILM AND MEDIA ARTS INDUSTRY

Progress Report



NOVEMBER 2012



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THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FILM AND MEDIA ARTS INDUSTRY



Film, video, and digital media are the centre of a growing and dynamic industry in the Northwest Territories (NWT). Participation from local residents is increasing, and this thriving community of aspiring and established film professionals is actively producing film projects and raising awareness of the unique benefits of filming in the NWT. The NWT film industry community is also providing support and services to visiting film productions – as cast and crew, equipment suppliers and much more.

The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) recognizes that the film and media arts industry is an important element of our cultural and financial economy.

The Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) and Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) have been working diligently and collaboratively to support the industry in complementary ways: ECE through the training, cultural and creative development side, and ITI through the business and economic side. Through consultation with the local film and media arts industry, providing increased funding for film projects, and establishing a full-time Film Commission with a new, information-rich website, solid steps have been made to establish, develop and grow this sector throughout the territory.

This report provides an overview of progress made to support the NWT film and media arts industry during the past two years and additional plans to grow the industry.



A SNAP SHOT OF HOW WE GOT HERE

MAY 2010

NWT film industry raises concerns to GNWT about need for increased support. ITI undertakes review of film industry.

MAR 2011

GNWT and NWT film and media arts industry meet to review report findings.

JUN 2011

Full time Associate Film Commissioner appointed

MAR 2012

Mandate for the NWT Film Commission developed

SEP 2012

Yellowknife International Film Festival and NWT Filmmaker and Producer Forum

FEB 2011

A Review of Film Commission Mandates Report produced

MAR 2011

Dedicated film industry contribution funding of \$100,000 announced.

NOV 2011

Formation of the NWT Professional Media Association

JUL 2012

Launch of nwtfilm.com



MAY 2010

Film and media arts industry stakeholders raise concerns to the GNWT about the need for more funding, incentives and resources targetted to the film industry. In response, ITI hires a consultant to conduct a review of the NWT Film Commission and the film and media arts industry that will include options for industry support programs and a preferred delivery model for the Film Commission.

FEBRUARY 2011

A Review of Film Commission Mandates report (the report) is developed by Outcrop Communications.

MARCH 2011

ITI and ECE co-host a meeting with NWT film and media arts industry to review the findings from the report.

MARCH 2011

ITI announces dedicated film industry funding in the amount of \$100,000 available through the Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) Policy, in addition to programs already available through other funding programs from ITI and ECE.

JUNE 2011

NWT Film Commission undergoes a staffing restructuring resulting in a dedicated full time Associate Film Commissioner to provide more capacity to support the film and media arts industry, both in the NWT and for visiting productions.



SEPTEMBER 2011

Dedicated film funding is distributed through regional ITI offices.

OCTOBER 2011

NWT Film Commission website begins development.

NOVEMBER 2011

NWT Professional Media Association (NWTPMA) announces their formation and development of its mandate: *“To enhance and promote the professional film, television and media industries in the NWT”*.

MARCH 2012

NWT Film Commission develops mandate in consultation with the NWTPMA: *“To maximize economic opportunities for NWT residents and businesses participating in the Film and Media Arts Industry, and to promote the NWT as an ultimate production location”*.

JULY 2012


New Film Commission website, **nwtfilm.com**, is launched, containing information for film industry representatives wanting to film in the NWT, including permitting and registration information, regional contacts, and a locations photo library. It also provides a catalogue of local talent and production services for producers through the NWT Film Suppliers Guide.

SEPTEMBER 2012

ITI, through the NWT Film Commission, and ECE provide support and take part in a panel at the first-ever NWT Filmmaker and Producer Forum.







REVIEW OF THE NWT FILM AND MEDIA ARTS INDUSTRY

In 2011, ITI and ECE undertook a review to assess the economic prospects of the film industry, investigate establishment of an independent film commission and explore possible programs that would support the film industry.

The review process was part of a two-step plan. The aim of the review was to explore the costs and benefits of programs to support the NWT film industry in the current fiscal environment and research options for support programs for the NWT film industry, and a delivery model for those programs. The report, “*A Review of Film Commission Mandates*”, was published in February 2011 by Outcrop Communications, an NWT-owned communications company.

The report outlined a number of options designed to promote discussion and establish a future direction for the industry. These included:

- » Develop a fully interactive and information rich website;
- » Encourage and support the development of an active industry association;
- » Institute a voluntary permitting/registration system;
- » Regularly attend industry marketing events relevant to the North;
- » Modify and/or enhance existing funding sources offered by the GNWT.

The second part of this project involved consultation with the NWT film and media arts industry to explore those options and develop recommendations for support to the industry. This workshop took place in March 2011 and was co-hosted by ITI and ECE. The workshop provided the GNWT and industry stakeholders with an opportunity to review the findings from the report and encourage collective discussion on ways to move forward together.

At the meeting, the GNWT committed to supporting the healthy growth of the NWT film and media arts industry by:

- » Improving collaboration between ITI and ECE;
- » Dedicating funding support for the film and media arts industry;
- » Investing in website development;
- » Investing in the formation of an industry association;
- » Establishing the NWT Film Commission's mandate and staffing configuration.

The final meeting report that included these commitments was tabled in the Legislative Assembly in May 2011.

HOW HAS THE GNWT RESPONDED TO THESE COMMITMENTS?

Both ITI and ECE have committed to work in unison with film industry stakeholders to address gaps and explore ways to best support the industry. Significant progress has been made in all five commitments made by the GNWT to support the growth of the NWT film and media arts industry, as described below:

- » In November 2011 and October 2012, the NWT Film Commission attended a Tri-level arts funders meeting hosted by ECE and the NWT Arts Council intended to foster ongoing discussion amongst other government agencies and departments who provide support to the arts.
- » Through the 2010/2011 business planning process, additional funding, in the amount of \$100,000 per year was allocated to ITI and is administered through the Support to Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) Policy, to provide additional support to the NWT film industry.
- » A website that will serve as a resource to the local film and media arts industry and companies who want to film in the NWT was developed in consultation with the NWTPMA. The website is located at **nwtfilm.com** and contains the NWT Film Suppliers guide to promote the local industry.
- » In October 2011, and with the full support of the GNWT, the NWT Professional Media Association (NWTPMA) was formed. Its mandate is to *“enhance and promote the professional film, television and media industries in the NWT”*.
- » ITI restructured the NWT Film Commission and added a full-time dedicated Associate Film Commissioner. The NWT Film Commission is now comprised of the NWT Film Commissioner and two Associate Film Commissioners.





NWT FILM COMMISSION

THE NWT FILM COMMISSION'S MANDATE IS TO:

“Maximize economic opportunities for the NWT Film and Media Arts Industry, and promote the NWT as an ultimate production location.”

THE NWT FILM COMMISSION:

- » Provides support and assistance to grow northern film and media arts productions using sound business principles in areas of funding, marketing, promotion and infrastructure development;
- » Promotes the NWT to national and international film markets as a northern production destination;
- » Serves as a liaison between industry and local government in support of the NWT Film and Media Arts Industry;
- » Provides support and advice on all levels of funding and options available to industry;
- » Assists in the development of local creative talent necessary to sustain industry growth.

A main vehicle the NWT Film Commission uses as a promotional tool is the NWT Film Commission website, nwtfilm.com. The website reaches audiences around the world by raising awareness about the NWT as a filming destination and acts as a link to provide information on the local film industry.

The NWT Film Commission also uses strategic advertising campaigns and industry partnerships to raise the profile of the Commission. The NWT was also profiled in *The Location Guide*, a comprehensive online guide containing information for production companies looking for information on filming in various international locations.

An important tool the NWT Film Commission uses to support and promote local film industry professionals is through the *NWT Film Suppliers Guide*, a guide used to promote the local film industry by including listings of businesses, organizations and individuals who can provide specific areas of expertise, products and services to assist production companies who are filming on location in the NWT.



GNWT FUNDING PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT THE FILM AND MEDIA ARTS INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT

Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development (SEED) Policy

SEED Policy programs are accessible to all industries in the NWT, including the film and media arts industry. Applicants can get funding for:

- » Purchase of tools, equipment or raw materials;
- » Filmmaking equipment or assistance with production expenses for specific film projects;
- » Travel assistance to tradeshow, festivals and events;
- » Shipping assistance to consumer shows (e.g. arts exhibits);
- » Marketing and promotion efforts.

Dedicated funding is available to the Film and Media Arts Industry, under the SEED Policy, to assist with the completion of a first film; to assist applicants to market or promote their skills, services or productions and to increase sales of new or existing NWT film and media arts products and services; and to assist qualified film and media arts businesses in supporting commercial media productions, including co-productions in the NWT.

Program	# of Projects/ Activities	Amount
Community Economic Development	1	\$8000
Other Film Industry SEED Contributions	14	\$118,000
Total	14	\$126,000





EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

Northern Film and Media Arts Contributions

This program supports the production and distribution of film, video, audio and digital media works by NWT artists or organizations.

NWT Arts Council

The council provides contributions to NWT artists and organizations for creative artistic projects and technical workshops in film and media arts, music and performing arts, and others.

Support for Northern Performers

This program promotes and develops Northern film and media arts by funding presentations and screenings at festivals and events.

Northern Arts Mentorship Contributions

This program provides contributions to NWT film and media artists and organizations to support teaching and learning opportunities for those who desire to gain the technical skills and knowledge to find employment in their field.

Through this program funding is provided to WAMP, for a range of workshops and public presentations, including support for the Yellowknife International Film Festival.

Program	# of Projects/ Activities	Amount
Northern Film and Media Arts Contributions	1	\$50,000
NWT Arts Council	7	\$70,500
Support for Northern Performers	1	\$20,000
Northern Arts Mentorship Contributions	2	\$17,000
Total	10	\$157,500

WHAT'S NEXT

ITI and ECE are committed to supporting the healthy growth of the NWT film and media arts industry and will continue to work with industry to ensure its future development and growth.

While still continuing to work with film production companies such as Omnifilm Entertainment Ltd. (producers of *Arctic Air* and *Ice Pilots NWT*), and responding to inquiries regarding filming in the NWT, ITI and the Department of Finance are exploring possible film incentive program options for the NWT. The ITI/Finance Working Group is currently looking at three possible options:

1. Implementation of film rebates;
2. Implementation of a film tax credit system; or
3. Increased dedicated funding through the SEED Policy.

The purpose of an NWT Film Incentive Program would be to assist the film industry in lowering the cost of productions, thereby making the NWT a more attractive industry location.

Production companies have indicated that they produce in the NWT when the required content is an NWT location (for example a documentary); otherwise production costs are too high and infrastructure (for example hotel rooms, vehicle rentals) is lacking. Finding enough skilled labour to make producing in the NWT viable was also a concern.

The GNWT will continue to work with industry to identify areas of concern, explore possible filming incentives, and to identify infrastructure and labour needs and possible solutions.





NWT FILM AND MEDIA SUCCESS STORIES

- » In 2011, Yellowknife filmmaker France Benoit screened her short film, *Hand to Toe*, at North America's largest and most prestigious documentary film festival, Hot Docs, in Toronto. France was the first filmmaker from the NWT to have a film selected by Hot Docs. *France was provided travel assistance through SEED to attend the screening in Toronto.
- » The short film, *Amelia*, by Yellowknife's Andrew Silke was one of 25 shorts screened by Telefilm Canada at the Cannes Film Festival in May 2012. The entire film, including cast and crew was from the NWT. In addition to receiving funding assistance through the SEED Policy to produce this film, the SEED Policy partially funded Mr. Silke's travel costs to Cannes, France.
- » Joel Evans, Fort Smith high school student, made his acting debut by playing the lead role of Larry alongside Benjamin Bratt in the feature film, *The Lesser Blessed*, an adaptation of the novel written by Richard Van Camp, an accomplished writer who grew up in Fort Smith, NWT. The film screened at the Toronto International Film Festival, the 13th annual imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival and also in Fort Smith and Yellowknife.
- » In late November/early December 2011, three emerging NWT filmmakers, Travis Mercredi, Lesley Johnson and George Bailey, participated in an enhanced mentorship initiative hosted by *The Lesser Blessed* producer and director team. The filmmakers shadowed the production team on a professional dramatic film set that showcased northern content and culture. Their participation was coordinated by Western Arctic Moving Pictures and funded by ECE's Northern Arts Mentorship Contributions.
- » The television series *Arctic Air* drew the largest audience for the premiere of a new drama series in the last decade for CBC, with a total viewership of 1.05 million.
- » In July 2012, with assistance by the NWT Film Commission, Omnifilm Entertainment – producers of the series *Arctic Air* held a job fair in Yellowknife looking to hire local residents for cast and crew. Approximately 400 people identified themselves as interested.

- » In the summer of 2012, Fort McPherson hosted the first ever Gwich'in Youth and Elders Storytelling and New Media Engagement Project. 15 youth, 3 elders and 4 community adults participated in workshops related to film production, including acting and crew-specific roles like camera, sound recording and editing. The activities included collaborating with elders and peers to research, design, and produce digital works including music videos and stories and legends that take place on the land.





