

News Release

Inaugural Television Directing Program Recipients Selected

*Filmmaker Amar Wala creates shadowing program for BIPOC directors on CBC's documentary series **In the Making***

April 9, 2019 /Toronto, ON – **Isa Benn** and **Sherien Barsoum** have been selected as the inaugural filmmakers to partake in the Scarborough Pictures Episodic Directing Program.

Created to increase the opportunities available for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) filmmakers to direct episodic television, the program gives two filmmakers the chance to shadow directors Amar Wala and Chelsea McMullan on the acclaimed CBC documentary series *In the Making*, from White Pine Pictures.

“Episodic TV is a vital and necessary part of building a sustainable career as a filmmaker in Canada. However, Canadian TV can be insular and hard to break into,” said Wala. “Many talented filmmakers who have found success on the festival circuit find it difficult to land work in TV, despite their accolades and talent. This issue is amplified for BIPOC artists. In my experience, the industry still does not reflect the diversity of this country, especially in directing roles. Our goal with this program is to help change that.”

A recent On-Screen Report by the organization Women in View, found a massive under representation of women of colour and Indigenous Women in Canadian TV between 2012-2017. In 2017, less than two per cent of TV contracts went to BIPOC artists, underscoring the need for programs like these.

The chosen filmmakers will be provided the opportunity to get paid, on-the-job experience with accomplished Canadian directors. Each filmmaker will follow either McMullan or Wala for four weeks, from pre- to post-production, gaining valuable experience in episodic doc-television. Benn and Barsoum were selected by a jury panel that included executives from the CBC and show-runner of *In the Making*, Michelle Mama.

“As Canada’s national public broadcaster, we are actively committed to reflecting our country’s rich diversity in all aspects of our programming, both in front of and behind the camera,” said Jennifer Dettman, Executive Director, Unscripted Content, CBC. “Part of CBC’s commitment to increasing representation is ensuring that members of underrepresented groups are offered more production learning opportunities, and we are happy to support Amar, Scarborough Pictures and White Pine with this initiative.”

The program will launch in April and run through the Spring. Wala is working with the Documentary Organization of Canada to build this into a recurring program.

Of the program Barsoum said, “The creators of this program understand well the challenges that exist for independent filmmakers, and the barriers that make it doubly difficult for BIPOC directors, in creating a sustainable arts practice. This program will significantly impact my ability to cross some of those barriers, as I will be exposed to episodic documentary production, and introduced to the often inaccessible gatekeepers who make them, all within a nurturing and supportive environment.”

Along with CBC and Scarborough Pictures, other support for the program comes from White Pine Pictures, Finch Media, and CBM Lawyers. White Pine Pictures is an independent film and television production company based in Toronto and the producer of *In the Making*. Finch Media is a Canadian communications and marketing agency. Finch Media is supporting the program through their “Finch Media Creates” grant program. CBM Lawyers is a community law firm based in the Fraser Valley.

Scarborough Pictures

Scarborough Pictures Inc. is a Toronto based film production company dedicated to using storytelling to explore complex social themes and creating stories by and about diverse communities. They have produced numerous award-winning films including the acclaimed documentary *The Secret Trial 5*.

White Pine Pictures

White Pine Pictures is an independent film and television production company based in Toronto, Canada. For 40 years, its productions have engaged audiences worldwide with compelling stories in documentary and dramatic form. The company’s work has been honoured with dozens of international awards, including an Emmy, two Oscar shortlists, the Sundance Audience Award, Genies, Geminis, several Gold and Silver Hugos, and the Sesterce d’Argent. The company has become trusted suppliers to all Canadian broadcasters and the BBC, Channel 4, PBS, Smithsonian, France 2, ZDF-ARTE, SVT, ABC and SBS.

Finch Media

Based in Vancouver, Finch Media is a full-service marketing and communications agency that helps its clients develop and share their most compelling stories in order to make real connections and drive results. Finch Media established its “Finch Media Creates” grant to support emerging artists in 2018.

CBM Lawyers

CBM Lawyers, one of the largest law firms in Langley, is a community law firm providing legal services in business law, corporate/commercial and estate litigation, family law, personal injury

law, ICBC and wrongful death, real estate law, wills, estates and trusts. The team at CBM Lawyers has been serving the community for more than 40 years.