

CIF FEATURE STORY:

Digital Storytelling Project: Across Generations, Across Cultures

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Feature Story: *Digital Storytelling Project: Across Generations, Across Cultures; Saskatoon Open Door Society*

Digital Media: Across Cultures, Across Generations (www.sods.sk.ca) is a film-making project, where over the course of several sessions, newcomer and First Nation youth learn the skills necessary to create their own documentary-based stories on their own communities and experiences. In the program, they are trained on script writing, cameras, light and sound recording techniques. There is also a senior component to the program, where the seniors share their stories with the youth and some of the youth film and edit these stories to be showcased to the community.

“This program has run for the past two years in partnership with the Core Neighborhood Youth Co-op and Paved Arts and is taught by established filmmakers in Saskatoon,” shared Ian Shaw, Saskatoon Open Door Society. **“We run four sessions throughout the year with a final film screening in March at the Broadway Theater.”**

The project is designed primarily for newcomer and First Nation youth ages 14-22. The program is targeted to the communities that the youth live in, whether it is their cultural community, or the larger Saskatoon or Canadian community. The project will raise awareness and support community members across generations and within the variety of community groups in Saskatoon.

“Four of our films have been broadcast on Roger’s City Saskatchewan TV in 2017 and six more will be screened in 2018 as they had been selected at the Yorkton Film Festival,” shared Ian. **“They were selected out of many submission based on their content and quality. As well, many of our films were also selected and won awards at the Saskatoon “I Am the Bridge” film festival by Paved Arts, a community based organization that helps advance knowledge and practice of arts including digital media products.”**

The projection of the films produced by the newcomer and First Nation’s youth have impacted many viewers that attended the various screening events. Since the films portray personal stories and biopics, many viewers can relate to the content and experience which are being spoken of. The sharing of these experiences brings the people closer together and helps break stereotypes, mass media misinformation, and racism. They help bridge the community and create a positive culture.

“ The program was excellent. In the beginning I was a little worried as I did not know what to expect. I had many questions in my mind: *How will I look on camera? What story should I tell? What will people think of me?* And so on. But as the program went on and with the help of the instructor and coordinators who were interpreting for us I started to feel comfortable. It felt good to get involved and mix with everyone. The program was great in every way. ”

- 15 year old participant



Youth in the learning session at The Two Twenty building.



Abdel Hanan Khalyan behind the camera



Wilson Yao & Abdel Hanan Khalyan out filming