



WOMEN IN FILM  
AND TELEVISION  
CANADA COALITION

## News Release

# ***Deciding on Diversity***

## **New WIFT Canada Coalition study explores the impact of COVID-19 on efforts to advance equity, diversity and inclusion in the Canadian film and TV industry**

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 11 AM ET, October 27, 2021** – The Women in Film and Television Canada Coalition (WIFT-CC) has released its latest research study: ***Deciding on Diversity: COVID-19, Risk and Intersectional Inequality in the Canadian Film and Television Industry***, authored by **Dr. Amanda Coles** of Deakin University, Australia, and **Professor Deb Verhoeven**, Canada 150 Research Chair in Gender and Cultural Informatics at the University of Alberta.

***Deciding on Diversity* finds that despite the opportunities COVID-19 presents to do things differently, the Canadian film and television industry remains characterized by uneven, closed and defensive networks and relationships—to the disadvantage of equity-seeking groups.**

“The industry must come to terms with how risk management is used as a tool to normalize and justify decision-making practices that exclude dynamic stories, highly talented content creators and the global majority of audiences,” said DOD report author Dr. Amanda Coles.

“Without better data and data tools to understand both the systemic and specific ways inequality is perpetuated in the industry, we are trapped in a cycle of confounded good intentions. We can do better than this,” said DOD report author Professor Deb Verhoeven.

### **[Download the \*Deciding on Diversity\* report](#)**

The report adopted an innovative methodology to identify and interview Key Players who exercise influence within film and television industry networks, as well as industry executives and content creators.

Key findings include:

- Policy shifts have produced perceptions of reputational and political risk for executive decision-makers who do not “do diversity.”
- However, current approaches to “diversity” remain widely tokenistic. “Diversity” efforts are focused on adding a minimal number of “diverse” people (i.e., those who are not straight white men) to meet equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agendas set by policymakers.

- Better data is urgently required to challenge widely held risk perceptions that reinforce the systemic marginalization of stories by and about equity-seeking groups. In particular, the report notes a deficit in quality data about audiences.
- There are serious questions about who is invested in advancing systemic change. All the men who were identified as Key Players either declined or did not respond to requests to be interviewed for the study.
- The whiteness of the corporate leadership and executive workforce in the Canadian film and television industry poses a significant risk to advancing EDI.
- Despite their serious legal, reputational and political risks to the screen industry, toxic individuals and workplaces were not identified by interviewees as key threats to advancing EDI.
- Meaningful change strategies must account for how organizational risk management perceptions and practices perpetuate intersectional inequality.

### **Recommendations:**

The report calls for a national screen industry data taskforce to inform organizational and policy decision-making and challenge the widely held risk perceptions that act as barriers to diversity and inclusion. And it calls for a zero-tolerance approach to EDI failures, with clear consequences as a pre-requisite for government funding and support.

### **About the report**

This report was funded through the Government of Canada's Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage and Sport Organizations, distributed by the Canada Media Fund.

### **About Women in Film and Television (WIFT) Canada Coalition**

The WIFT Canada Coalition is a dynamic group of autonomous WIFT chapters across Canada. The Coalition is committed to exploring issues, to challenging the status quo and to championing initiatives that contribute to an equitable and safe environment for all women and gender diverse people in the Canadian screen industry. (<https://wiftcanadacoalition.ca/>). Contributors: WIFT Atlantic, FCTMN Quebec, WIFT Toronto, WIFT Alberta, WIFT Vancouver, Women in View.

### **About the Canada Media Fund**

The Canada Media Fund (CMF) fosters, develops, finances and promotes the production of Canadian content and applications for all audiovisual media platforms. The CMF guides Canadian content towards a competitive global environment by fostering industry innovation, rewarding success, enabling a diversity of voice and promoting access to content through public and private sector partnerships. The CMF receives financial contributions from the Government of Canada and Canada's cable, satellite and IPTV distributors. Please visit [cmf-fmc.ca](http://cmf-fmc.ca).

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Source: WIFT Coalition Canada  
<https://wiftcanadacoalition.ca/>

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