

# EMPOWERED FILMMAKER

future indigenous filmmakers

In Partnership with



VoVo Productions

# BACKGROUND

---

The Empowered Filmmaker program, launched in partnership with TELUS STORYHIVE in 2017, continues to transform lives and communities through the art of filmmaking. In our inaugural year, we trained 25 aspiring Indigenous filmmakers, equipping them with the technical skills needed to create professional productions. Since then, the program has expanded significantly, empowering hundreds of storytellers and amplifying voices that deserve to be heard.

## **The Journey So Far**

Over the years, the Empowered Filmmaker program has evolved to meet the needs of Indigenous communities. By 2024, we trained an additional 100 Indigenous filmmakers across Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and Cranbrook, producing 35 films and generating a wealth of supplementary content. This brought our cumulative total to 545 Indigenous filmmakers trained and 180 films produced, many of which highlight social issues, conservation efforts, and cultural restoration.



Our workshops have become more than just technical training sessions—they are spaces for community building, healing, and cultural revitalization. Participants leave with a renewed sense of purpose, equipped to tell their stories and inspire change in their communities and beyond.

## Moving Into 2025

In 2025, we aim to build on this momentum by delivering the Empowered Filmmaker program in Williams Lake, Prince George, Fort McMurray, and Lethbridge. Each program will be tailored to the unique needs of these communities, ensuring local engagement and long-term impact. By partnering with band councils, Friendship Centres, and community organizations, we will continue to create opportunities for participants to develop their skills and share their stories globally.

## Why Our Program Works

**Professional-Grade Tools:** Participants will shoot their films using 4K-gimbal cameras and edit them on MacBook Pro laptops with Adobe Premiere, ensuring their productions meet professional standards.

**Comprehensive Support:** Each participant receives hands-on training, certification, and mentorship, with standout participants awarded 4K cameras to continue their filmmaking journey.

**Distribution Opportunities:** Through partnerships with TELUS Optik TV and Community Showcase Television, participant films gain exposure, along with access to additional funding opportunities through STORYHIVE Editions.

**Content That Matters:** The films produced are not just stories—they are tools for advocacy, awareness, and cultural preservation.

## 2025 Goals

Train 100 new Indigenous filmmakers, increasing our total to 645 filmmakers trained.

Deepen community partnerships in each location to ensure sustainable local engagement.

Expand the program's reach, creating supplementary content and offering advanced training for returning participants.

## Building the Future of Storytelling

The Empowered Filmmaker program is more than a training initiative—it's a movement to amplify Indigenous voices and foster positive change through the power of storytelling. Together, we can continue to empower communities, build capacity, and ensure that these vital stories reach audiences around the world. We look forward to working with TELUS STORYHIVE to bring the Empowered Filmmaker program to life in 2025 and beyond.





Hands-on training with state-of-the-art 4K 3-axis camera gimbals



Some of our participant film awards



Thank you so much!  
It was so great having you  
both come out with Saegre Clan  
and you are both very  
inspiring people! Thank you  
for letting us learn from  
you! -Zoe Kanashiro

Thank you, thank you  
thank you! It was  
so cool working with  
you both & your  
patience with us all  
was greatly appreciated!  
Thanks for coming out on  
a patrol and getting a  
taste of our silly little city  
love!! Mike.

This week has been a very  
insightful, stressful, but  
a very good one and  
I genuinely appreciate  
all that you two have  
done! I hope you enjoyed  
your time out on patrol  
and the time in Lethbridge.  
Good luck on the rest  
of your courses in  
the future and I  
hope you, Dalia and  
Farhan have safe  
travels back home!  
Thanks, Skylar!!

Thank you for all  
you have taught us.  
It was great to  
have you come out  
with us to serve, assist,  
Guard, & Engage.  
All the best,  
TAYLOR COUNCIL, SAGECLAN

Thank you for supporting and  
investing in indigenous people  
you've given us so many gems,  
in a small amount of time.  
We are extremely honoured  
you to have met you. Mikaela  
Scout

Thank you for your time & expertise, I learned  
so much and excited to continue on.  
Dante, Broderick

This was about  
giving the people  
"Nitsitipi" a voice  
who would've  
thought that I would  
find my own voice  
during this process  
thank you with love  
Josh S.A.G.E

Thank you so  
much for this  
Program love you  
guys long time  
squirrel!

Thank you Farhan & Dalia  
for sharing your knowledge  
and expertise with us.  
You have ~~taught~~ taught  
us how to express ourselves  
through film.

\* Hand to Q\*  
Don't forget us &  
Please come back.

I love you!  
-Kenny Fox  
-Zacharias

Thank you  
for this golden  
opportunity!  
Alex's  
Mc  
Nugie  
JOB

Thank for  
everything  
Cassandra

Nikki Jean

Thank you so  
much! I learned  
so much new  
things!  
Tania

Thank you,  
Lori Brave Rock

I will NEVER forget  
either of you, this  
experience or MICH  
MISS SKINA!  
Thank you for  
the special gift!  
-Koton



Prisilla Kellita Jane Day Chief  
(KS) Blake Marinda  
Thank you  
Treena Tallor

The ultimate goal of the program is for each group to establish filmmaking teams within their respective communities, fostering a sustainable foundation for continued creativity and collaboration. Our relationship with participants will extend beyond the program itself, as we remain committed to providing ongoing mentorship and support.

We aim to inspire aspiring filmmakers to take their first steps by removing barriers to entry, building their confidence, and equipping them with essential technical skills. This training will serve as the foundation for their lifelong growth and development in filmmaking.

Our role is not to direct the messaging but to empower participants with the tools and knowledge to tell their own stories authentically and share them with the world.



**EMPOWERED FILMMAKER 2017**  
**25 PARTICIPANTS: 5 FILMS PRODUCED**

**EMPOWERED FILMMAKER 2018**  
**75 PARTICIPANTS: 15 FILMS PRODUCED**

**EMPOWERED FILMMAKER 2019**  
**100 PARTICIPANTS: 22 FILMS PRODUCED**

**EMPOWERED FILMMAKER ONLINE 2020-2021**  
**25 PARTICIPANTS: 15 FILMS PRODUCED**

**EMPOWERED FILMMAKER 2022**  
**100 PARTICIPANTS: 32 FILMS PRODUCED**

**EMPOWERED FILMMAKER 2023**  
**100 PARTICIPANTS: 42 FILMS PRODUCED**

**EMPOWERED FILMMAKER 2024**  
**100 PARTICIPANTS: 35 FILMS PRODUCED**

### **PARTICIPANT PRODUCTIONS:**

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3HALDkdH14fe2thXYerwiw/videos>







*The Empowered Filmmaker program with Farhan Umedaly was absolutely necessary and valuable, not only to me as an Indigenous woman and mother but also to all those who attended—and even more importantly, to our peoples collectively. I say this because using film as a vehicle for education and raising awareness for social change, both within the general public and communities around the world, is essential in the technological world we live in today.*

*Film enables those of us living in smaller communities facing significant struggles and needing support to have a voice in the global*

*community. It provides viewers with a direct insight into the critical issues and stories we wish to share—stories told by us, making them authentic and filled with raw, real emotions. Additionally, film is accessible to almost anyone through the web. Even if viewers cannot hear these stories face-to-face from the storytellers, they can still experience them on screen.*

*Farhan taught our class many valuable skills, including how to shoot compelling angles, use movement and framing to evoke emotion in viewers, connect audiences with characters in the film, operate OSMO Gimbal cameras, and navigate Adobe Premiere to edit footage into a polished final production. I would recommend this program to anyone interested in filmmaking or inspiring viewers to connect with social change efforts.*

*Using film to inspire people and draw attention to social justice issues is a powerful way to help change the world. Farhan is an excellent teacher—approachable, helpful, and inspiring. His passion for filmmaking is evident in everything he does, and he enthusiastically shares this passion with everyone in his classroom.*



**Michelle Jones**

Secwepemc & Syilx Nation



*The sordid legacy of colonization, the atrocities of residential schools and the systematic, deliberate attempt to delete indigenous culture, history and storytelling still rest on Canada's shoulders. The scars of this are multigenerational and more present than ever outside of our major population centres, we all know the signs. The tide is changing however, with indigenous youth rising up, now more than ever to learn and restore their ancient ways. Storytelling rather than written documentation has largely been how history and culture was recorded and passed down since time immemorial within indigenous culture. Filmmaking is the ultimate storytelling tool that can harness the age of social media to create positive waves of change throughout society and tell the stories that need to be told. This is an opportunity often ill-afforded to indigenous youth and adults alike. That is exactly why I've created an intensive*

*filmmaking masterclass that will take place within a week - a program designed to take an individual with no prior experience and give them hands on technical training from storyboarding/script writing to on location filming, audio production and delivery of a final complete production. The purpose of this course is to create self-sufficient, self-driven filmmakers that can go on to achieve great things.*

**Farhan Umedaly, Lead Instructor**

*Empowered Filmmaker*

Grande Prairie, Alberta was one of our favourite programs for 2022



# THE CORE PROGRAM

---

## DAY 1: Orientation and Introduction to Filmmaking

- **Morning Session:**
  - Welcome and program overview in the classroom.
  - Introduction to Filmmaking 101:
    - Types of productions and filmmaking styles.
    - The structure of a production: stages, elements, assembly, and delivery.
  - Screening of a grassroots Indigenous documentary to analyze the production process.
- **Afternoon Session:**
  - Viewing and discussion of two award-winning films, A Last Stand for Lelu and HA NII TOKXW, both centred on Indigenous communities.
  - Breakdown of how these productions were created, highlighting challenges, techniques, and the impact of storytelling.



## DAY 2: Storyboarding and Production Planning

- **Morning Session:**
  - Introduction to **storyboarding** and production planning.
  - Formation of five groups (approximately five individuals per group) based on age categories.
  - Development of scripts, storyboards, shot lists, and production plans for group projects.
- **Afternoon Session:**
  - Group presentations of production plans to the class.
  - Collective discussion:
    - Identifying target audiences.
    - Strategies for film distribution.
    - Technical approaches to production.



### DAY 3: Camera Operations and Cinematic Techniques

- **Morning Session:**
  - Distribution of **DJI OSMO Creator Combo kits** with integrated wireless audio.
  - Hands-on training in camera operation:
    - Camera settings, media preparation, and principles of aperture, exposure, and ISO.
    - Camera movements and cinematic filming techniques.
- **Afternoon Session:**
  - Outdoor shooting: Bringing scripts and storyboards to life through group productions.
  - Review and critique of collected footage, sharing insights and lessons learned.

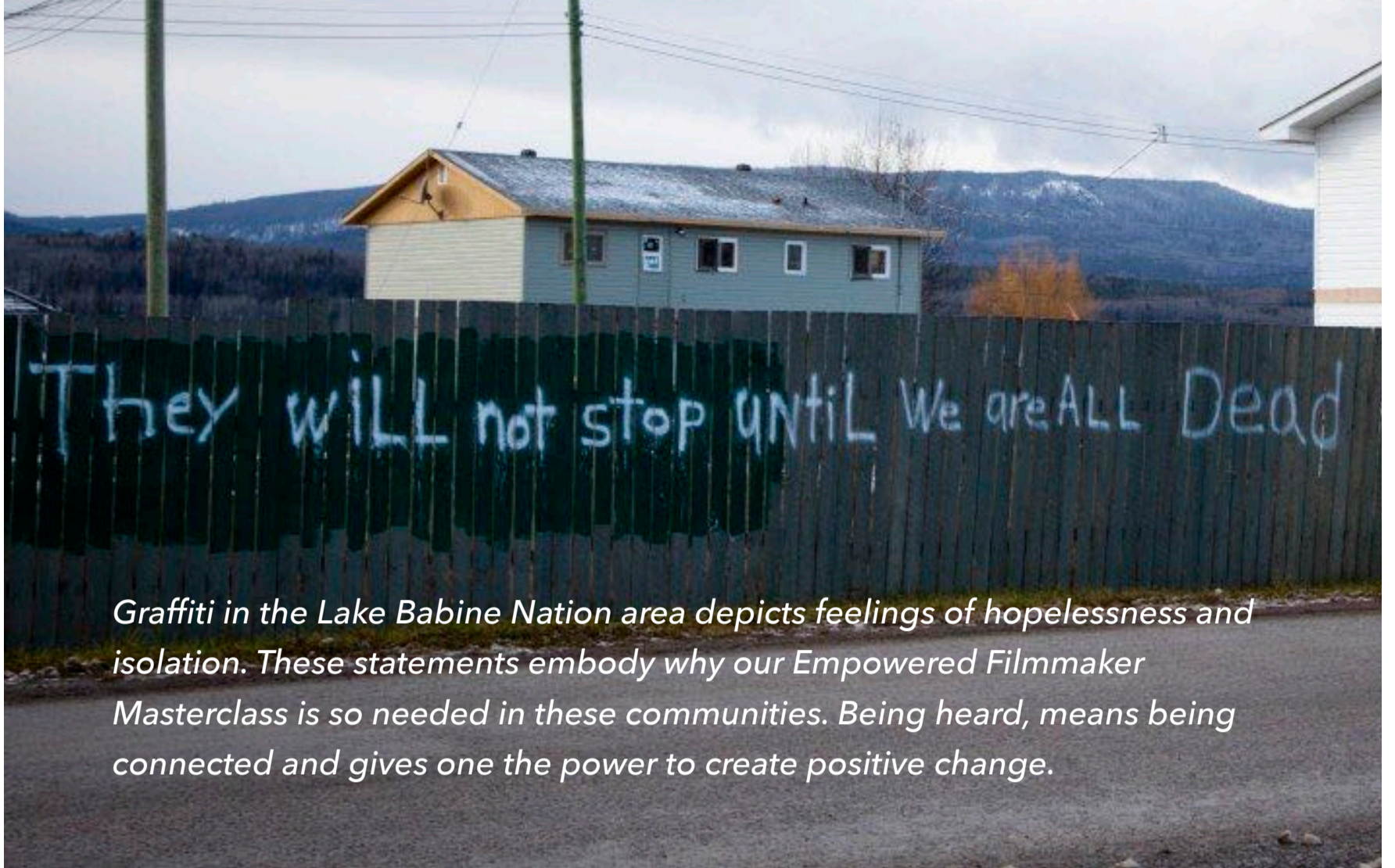
### DAY 4: Editing and Post-Production

- **Morning Session:**
  - Hands-on training in **Adobe Premiere CC** using provided high-performance MacBook Pro laptops.
  - Topics covered:
    - Importing footage, timeline editing, color grading, transitions, and exporting final assemblies.
    - Legalities of using stock music vs. creating self-made scores.
    - Exploration of online resources for music and editing tools.
- **Afternoon Session:**
  - Participants continue filming and editing their productions, preparing for final screening and presentation.

### DAY 5: Final Production, Community Screening, and Future Opportunities

- **Morning Session:**
  - Participants finalize editing and polish their projects for the grand showcase.
  - Preparation for the **Community Screening**, a celebratory event to share and honor the work completed during the program.
- **Afternoon Session:**
  - **Community Screening Event:**
    - The community is invited to view the films, celebrate the participants' achievements, and engage in meaningful discussions about the stories shared.
    - Presentation of **Empowered Filmmaker program awards**, official certifications, and recognition of outstanding contributions.
    - Select participants will receive **camera giveaways** to continue their filmmaking journeys.
  - **Celebrating Future Opportunities:**
    - Introduction to pathways for participants to continue their filmmaking careers, including:
      - Registration on **STORYHIVE** to access funding opportunities and grants.
      - Distribution of selected films through **TELUS Optik** and **Community Showcase Television**.
    - Ongoing mentorship opportunities to guide participants as they pursue future projects.

This special event not only highlights the technical and creative accomplishments of the participants but also strengthens community connections and builds momentum for their future in filmmaking. It serves as an inspiring conclusion to the program while opening the door to continued growth and success.



*Graffiti in the Lake Babine Nation area depicts feelings of hopelessness and isolation. These statements embody why our Empowered Filmmaker Masterclass is so needed in these communities. Being heard, means being connected and gives one the power to create positive change.*



*I found the challenge of establishing a small working group to go through the whole learning program of filmmaking so simulating. Our group went from idea concept, storyboarding, shooting, editing and post production, daunting for a newbie. However, our diverse group experienced the thrill of completing our short film.*

**Janice Antoine**

*Lower Nicola Indian Band*



## EMPOWERED FILMMAKER

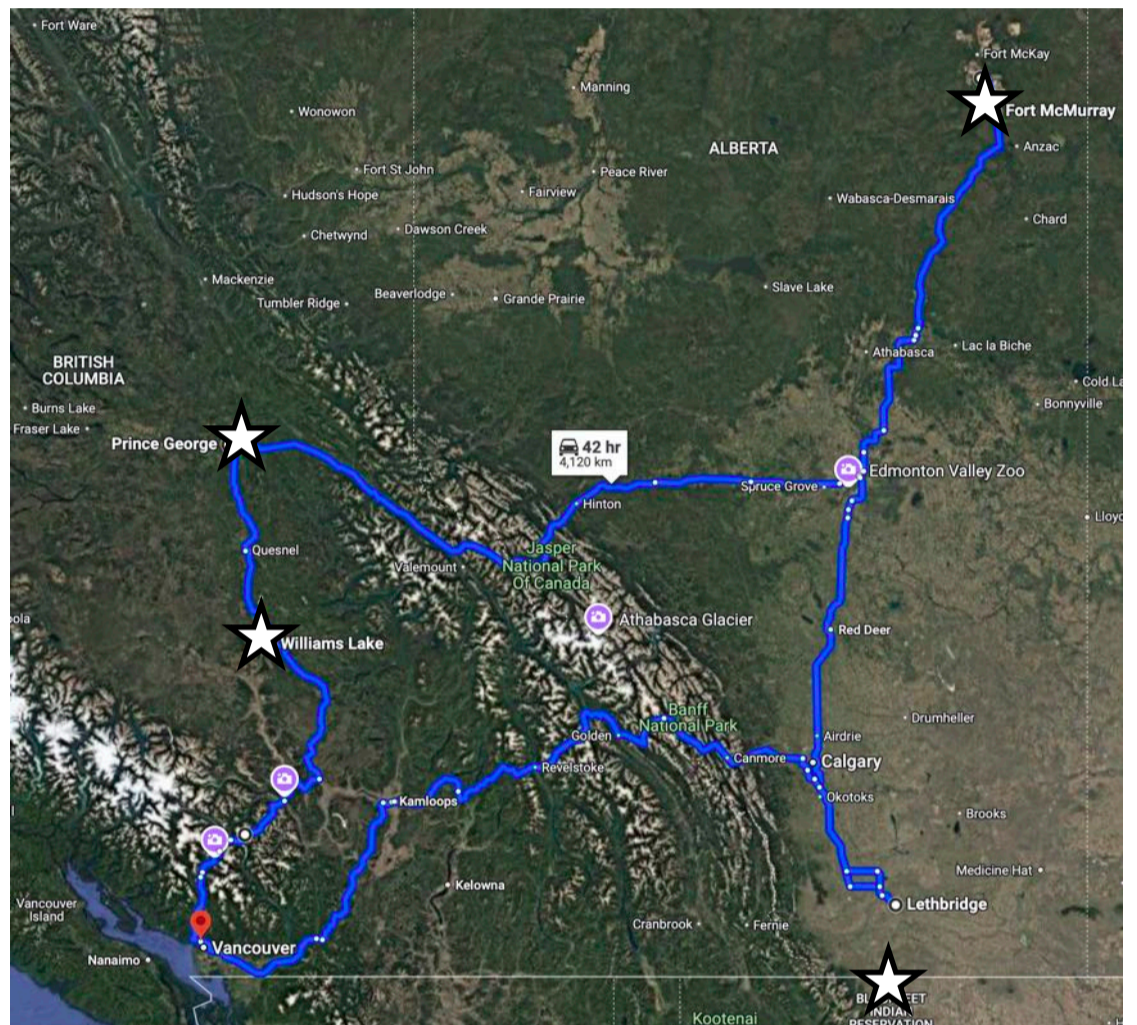
# THE PLAN

Each Empowered Filmmaker program will feature an official community liaison embedded within the respective Indigenous communities or partner organizations to ensure the program's success. These liaisons will provide critical support by enhancing visibility within the communities, guiding the recruitment and application process, and fostering meaningful engagement with participants. By collaborating with these local partners, we will also ensure the program supports local suppliers and utilizes the best possible facilities.

The 2025 Empowered Filmmaker Program will begin in Williams Lake in partnership with the Williams Lake First Nation. From there, we will head to Prince George, where we will collaborate with Carrier-Sekani Family Services. We have run one of our most successful programs in Prince

George and have had numerous requests to come back to this community. Our third stop will be Fort McMurray, where we will establish connections with the Nistawoyou Association Friendship Centre to host the program. The program will conclude in Lethbridge, in collaboration with the Lethbridge Native Friendship Centre.

Each program will accommodate up to 25 participants, with the goal of producing a minimum of five films per program, along with supplementary content. This participant-created content will align with CRTC requirements and fulfill key objectives for program funding. As in previous years, the program is designed to empower participants to tell their own stories, ensuring Indigenous voices are amplified and preserved through film.





EMPOWERED FILMMAKER

# CONTENT

---

COMMUNITY	SHORT FILM CONTENT MINIMUMS (MINUTES)	SUPPLEMENTARY CONTENT (MINUTES)	TOTAL
WILLIAMS LAKE	30	145	175
PRINCE GEORGE	30	145	175
FORT MCMURRAY	30	145	175
LETHBRIDGE	30	145	175

We will be able to produce an estimated 5 , 6 minute short films in each community, totalling 30 minutes minimum. Supplementary content will come in the form of a BTS and instructional footage or video blogs produced by participants as they move through the program. In addition to this our team will capture highlights of the program for inclusion a STORYHIVE, Empowered Filmmaker documentary in the future. In summary, a total of 700 minutes of content will be produced for our 2024 programs. These materials will be packaged and delivered to STORYHIVE as per our contract requirements.



*"We need to create a visual platform to assist youth to be more informed about choosing to live healthy, drug-free lives... We need to strengthen the youth with the power to achieve their own social awareness".*

**Trent Moreas,**  
*Skidegate Band Council*

"Farhan still continues to mentor me, help me become a better filmmaker, and be my number one filmmaking resource. I couldn't be happier to endorse his program. I hope other aspiring filmmakers can learn from him as much as I did".

**Zehra Ozgun Gunduz**  
*Emerging Documentary Filmmaker (2021 Program)*



**Many of our participants are now working professionals serving their communities with their new filmmaking skills.**

## **EMPOWERED FILMMAKER**

**545+ PARTICIPANTS: 180+ FILMS PRODUCED**



The term empowerment refers to measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority.

*EMPOWERED FILMMAKER*

# TIMELINES

PHASE	DATES
COMPLETE WEBSITE AND PRELIMINARY PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL	FEB 13, 2025
COMMUNITY LIASONS APPOINTED	MAR 4, 2025
VENUES SET - PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED	MAR 6, 2025
ROUND 1: APPLICATIONS OPENED	MAR 13, 2025
STORYHIVE RECRUITMENT CHECKPOINT 1	APR 1, 2025
ROUND 1: APPLICATION ACCEPTANCES	APR 14, 2025
ROUND 2: APPLICATIONS OPENED	APR 15, 2025
STORYHIVE RECRUITMENT CHECKPOINT 2	MAY 1, 2025
ROUND 2: APPLICATIONS ACCEPTANCES	MAY 8, 2025
TROPHIES, CERTIFICATIONS, AWARDS, GIVEAWAYS READY	MAY 9, 2025
WILLIAMS LAKE PROGRAM	MAY 19-23, 2025
WILLIAMS LAKE COMMUNITY SCREENING/AWARDS	MAY 24, 2025
PRINCE GEORGE PROGRAM	MAY 26-30, 2025
FORT MCMURRAY PROGRAM	JUNE 7-12, 2025
LETHBRIDGE PROGRAM	JUNE 16-21, 2025
STORYHIVE RECAP MEETING	JUNE 30, 2025
FINAL FILMS REVISED AS NEEDED	JULY 15, 2025
FINAL FILM COMPILATIONS DELIVERED	JULY 22, 2025
SUPPLEMENTARY CONTENT DELIVERED	JULY 29, 2025
STORYHIVE REVIEW MEETING	JULY 31, 2025



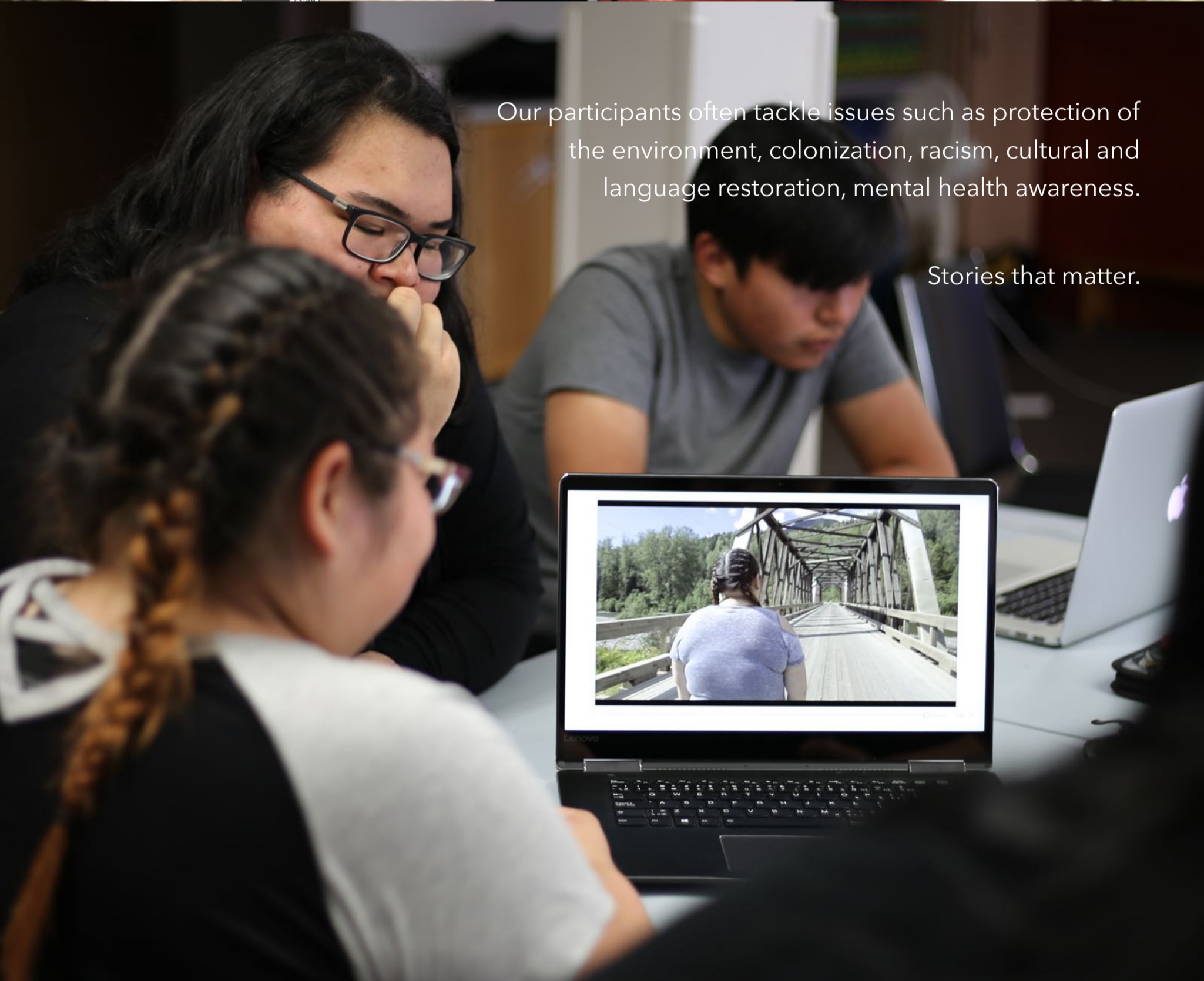
*We have a huge responsibility to preserve and engage in our culture to be passed to future generations, and by documenting our traditions we are taking a huge step towards just that. I give my full support for this project and I am eager in hopes that it can be brought to our little community and grow exponentially.*

*Haaw'a/Thank you,  
SGaana Gaahlandaay  
Alix Goetzinger*



Our participants often tackle issues such as protection of the environment, colonization, racism, cultural and language restoration, mental health awareness.

Stories that matter.



**Through our program we honour participants who lift up others and are dedicated to positive change. We also honour the creative geniuses who often work quietly in the background but are instrumental in creating beautiful, creative films.**



# TEAM



## **Farhan Umedaly - Lead Instructor**

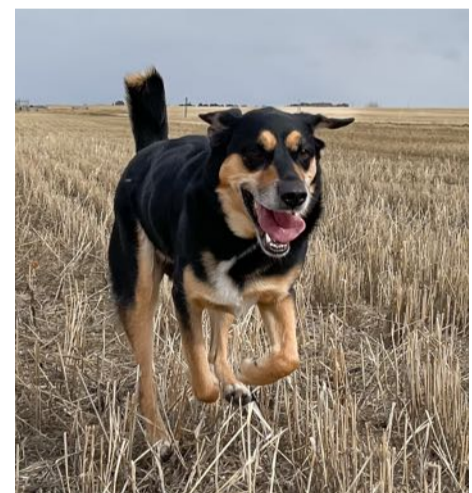
Farhan Umedaly is an award-winning filmmaker best known for his films about social causes.

Farhan has a background in neurobiology and has worked as a consultant for renewable energy developments before establishing VoVo Productions in 2009. The original focus of the company was to produce videos that enable clean-tech and renewable energy companies to realize their business objectives. Since then, VoVo Productions has diversified, having produced more than 200 promotional videos and commercials for leading companies and non-profits such as the David Suzuki Foundation to help create positive change. Farhan works alongside groups such as ISSofBC, Vancouver Foundation, and Access to Media and Education Society to provide mentorship in filmmaking to marginalized communities such as Syrian refugees and indigenous communities. He is best known for his indigenous focused documentaries - 'A Last Stand for Lelu', and more recently 'HA NII TOKXW: OUR FOOD TABLE', featuring Dr. David Suzuki. He recently was a Producer, Assistant Director and Director of Photography for the acclaimed Hollywood feature 'Best F(r)iends' which was recently purchased by Lionsgate Films. He is also a Producer of 'Brave Blue World' on Netflix starring Matt Damon and others.

The son of refugees to Canada from Uganda, Farhan is committed to building alliances with indigenous communities through providing professional training and mentorship in filmmaking - an area of great opportunity as well as a powerful tool to give voices to those who have important stories to tell.

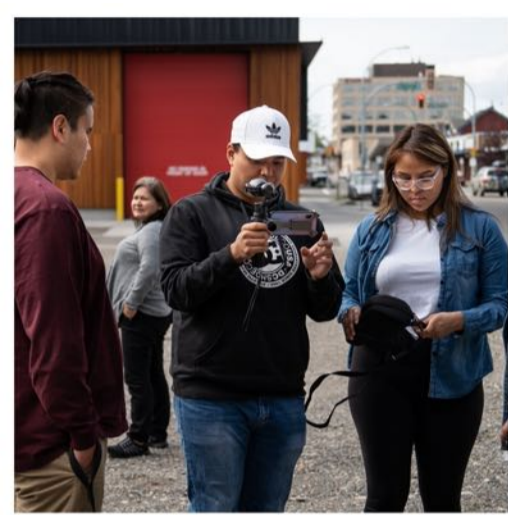
## **Skeena Bobeena - Emotional Support Dog**

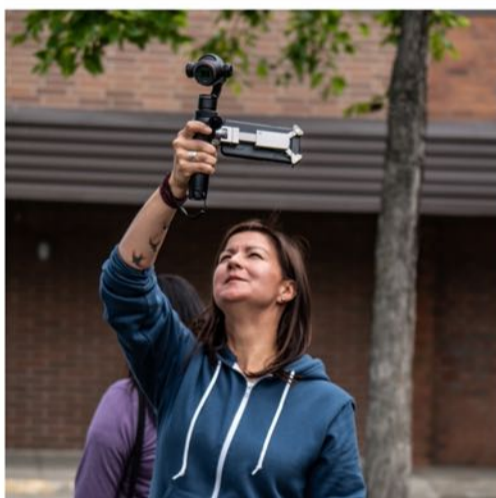
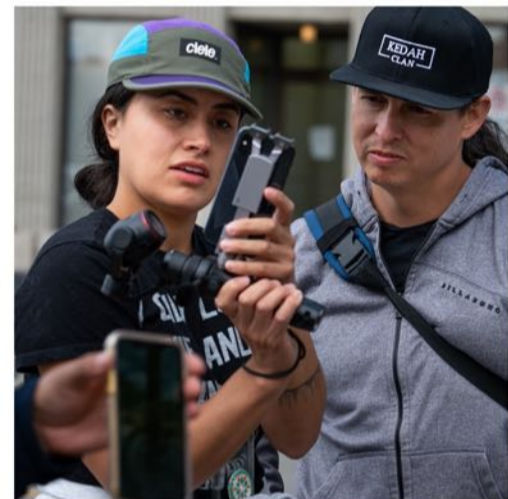
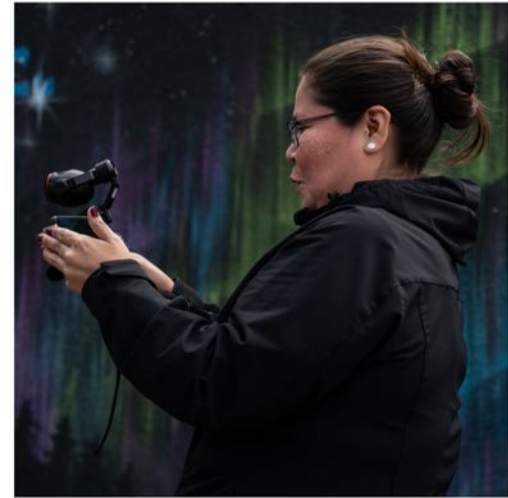
Skeena Bobeena Umedaly, has been a dedicated emotional support dog since the 2018 Empowered Filmmaker Program. When tensions rise or we confront difficult subjects in the production of our films, Skeena intuitively lends her affection and time to our participants, ensuring that nobody gets left behind. She has become an integral part of our program having worked in all 4 communities in 2022 with a total of over 4000 km travelled. She is poised to take on the challenge of Emotional Support Dog for 2023 with the goal of seeing our 100 films benchmark being reached by the second program.



Farhan Umedaly will engage a select group of experienced mentors from the Empowered Filmmaker Program to provide in-person instruction during community visits. These mentors, alumni of the program, will play a pivotal role in fostering creativity and technical skills among participants. Their duties include guiding the filmmaking process, offering hands-on training in camera operation, editing, and storytelling, and mentoring participants to become self-sufficient filmmakers. By working directly within the communities, this team will ensure a personalized and impactful learning experience.

Every single participant that completes the Empowered Filmmaker will be able to produce their own productions from beginning to end.





**MORE INFORMATION:**

**[www.empoweredfilmmaker.com](http://www.empoweredfilmmaker.com)**





## CONTACT INFORMATION

Farhan Umedaly  
[farhan@vovoproductions.com](mailto:farhan@vovoproductions.com)  
604.562.2119

Participant contact: [empoweredfilmmaker@gmail.com](mailto:empoweredfilmmaker@gmail.com)  
Find us on Facebook or Instagram @empoweredfilmmaker

Made possible with support from [www.storyhive.com](http://www.storyhive.com)

*Within the Traditional Territory of the Coast Salish Peoples*



V o V o P r o d u c t i o n s