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HOST Aimée Lindorff (AL)  
GUEST Douglas Watkin Content Director - Aboriginal and Torres  
(DW) Strait Islander Program

### **“The Black Voice Must Always Come First”: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander filmmaking**

#### BLURB

This episode celebrates the rich history and diverse cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander filmmakers. We interview director and storyteller Douglas Watkin about his work at Screen Queensland as Content director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program. We discuss decolonising filmmaking, reflect on what makes an authentic Australian story and explore the challenges of filmmaking for First Nations peoples.

We acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first storytellers of this land - Always Was, Always Will Be. You can find out more about the SQMOB initiative on the [Screen Queensland](https://screenqueensland.com.au) website.

#### References:

- SQMob: <https://screenqueensland.com.au/about-sq/sq-mob/>
- Authentic: <https://screenqueensland.com.au/sq-news/apply-now/authentic-real-stories-from-the-people-of-fnq/>
- Make It In FNQ: <https://screenqueensland.com.au/sq-news/make-it-in-fnq-online-content/>
- First Peoples; First Draft: <https://screenqueensland.com.au/sq-news/latest-news/recipients-first-peoples-first-draft/>

AL	<p>Welcome to SQ On Air, presented by Screen Queensland - exploring the issues and news affecting the Queensland screen Sector</p> <p>I'm Aimee Lindorff and in this episode, I talk with director and storyteller Douglas Watkin about his work at Screen Queensland as Content director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program. We discuss decolonising filmmaking, reflect on what makes an authentic Australian story and celebrate the rich history and diverse cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</p>
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	filmmakers as the oldest storytelling tradition in the world - that Always was, and Always will be.
AL	Douglas, thank you so much for joining us on SQ on air.
DW	Thank you
AL	you're the content director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program. What does that mean? What does that encompass?
DW	I assist, I nurture talent, I identify talent and also produce and assist with the art of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling in our film industry.
AL	When you talk about supporting indigenous storytelling and advocating for indigenous storytellers, what are the nuts and bolts of that? What does that actually look like?
DW	What I try to encourage is that the authentic black voice is being heard and it comes out through film. After working in the black space for several years now, for me, it's important that the voice does come from, centrally, from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or the storyteller because we have been storytellers... Well, it's funny because we've been storytellers for the last, over 60,000 years, but we've only been telling our stories in film for the last maybe 20 or 30 years, because before that we had non-indigenous people or mainly white people filming what blackfellas are. How would you say their white lens, their white gaze on how we work, perform, even talk even down to the dialogue.
AL	So tell us a little bit about the Screen Queensland's specific interest in advocacy of black storytellers and really would love to hear more about SQ Mob, what is that about? Tell us a bit about that.
DW	SQ Mob, It's something for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to identify because a lot of Mobs out there, they look at the framework and it's very mainstream or how would you say a white framework and what we do with SQ Mob, that particular branding, Mobs out there can actually identify, like this is an Aboriginal Torres Islander thing or it's an Aboriginal Torres Islander program, because mostly, and sadly, unfortunately most of our Mob maybe don't identify with certain programs or the way things are being worded or whatever. And I feel that how we identify or how the branding of SQ Mob, it's more like a collective Mob. It has mentoring, nurturing, just a collection of storytellers and it's good to be a part of that.

AL	<p>And certainly identifies that indigenous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytellers, first nation storytellers are a priority too, for Screen Queensland by having representative within the content director team.</p>
DW	<p>Yeah. It is a bit of a challenge because I'm a bit of a one person show here, especially when you have the state on your shoulders, especially for our Mob because I feel that Queensland, we have the highest Mob, I believe anyway, as Aboriginal Torres Islander people, like the population here in Queensland. Even though we do have a lot of us here in the state, but not all of us are working in film if you know what I mean. I'd say yeah.</p>
DW	<p>And a lot of our storytellers, well there's only a selective few, they'd go away, they learn the skill and they come back and all that stuff. I was in the same boat as well. Growing up in the industry, I felt that I had to go away, do my Sydney time, work at ABC or whatever like that and then finally come back home or whatever. But I guess one of the things I like coming back to Queensland is, it is home for me. Because with most Mobs it's all about connection and finding... Yeah, you need to connect with your land, you need to connect with your Mob and all that stuff.</p>
AL	<p>That idea of going away and coming back, talking with Aaron Fazo about his experience too. How much of a deterrent that can be for first nations, Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander storytellers to leave and go somewhere like Sydney and Melbourne and to not be able to have those opportunities locally. Have you seen that change over the past 20 years that you've been working in the industry?</p>
DW	<p>Back in the day, you're getting a bunch of new indigenous filmmakers that are making stories, but not necessarily being as class as being stereotyped indigenous stories. A lot of people think that indigenous stories is like yeah, black fellas, feathers, chucking spears and leading on to that, the thing is, we're everywhere, we come in all different sorts, colors and ranges and everything, creeds, what have you. And the thing is, we're etched into this fabric into mainstream society, that there is so many pockets of... Like not all blackfellas are the same. Even though we are part of a collective Mob, most of us have different storylines, different family connections and all that kind of stuff</p>
DW	<p>I'm originally from Cairns, but I wasn't a filmmaker. I did my schooling up there and I actually became filmmaker by leaving my community, seeing, going away and how would you say, learning the tricks of the trade and the schools and the tools and the skills, the craft of filmmaking.</p> <p>And I feel that as an indigenous filmmaker, I like to give back to the community and I always told Mob out here that we support through our programs and initiatives - feel privileged that you've got this position, whether it's through a</p>

	<p>producing initiative or directing or getting a story, I encourage Mob to use other Mob to be part of your journey. Instead of us Mob missing out on opportunities or whatever, we build it, we act as support, don't compete, support each other.</p>
AL	<p>I see a lot of that built into the programs that are coming out through SQ Mob, particularly the First Peoples: First Draft, that mentorship element is embedded in the processes and in the project itself.</p>
DW	<p>Yeah. For us mentoring, blackfellas and mentoring, it comes with the territory. I don't know. It's just, we're always nurturing and training the next Mob that are coming through.</p> <p>First Peoples: First Draft, it was an opportunity to get writers to tell their unique story, to use that black lens and to work with highly skilled professionals like Bain Stewart and Leah Purcell, who will be the facilitators of that program. [phonetic 00:10:58] (Hels Mergen), she has a long, extensive... God, that's another podcast in itself. But just legendary throughout the indigenous circles, but also the mainstream, not just in front of the camera but behind the camera as well. But for her to come back to Queensland and give that knowledge over to our storytellers because that's what we want to be doing. We want to be nurturing the next generation of indigenous storytellers so we can put those stories on screen.</p>
AL	<p>I'm going to talk about COVID, it's the nasty in the room for every conversation I think moving forward. How do you see that particularly impacting the programs that you were running at the moment?</p>
DW	<p>COVID, obviously it's impacting every industry, how it impacts on the indigenous community? Indigenous people are the most high risk, especially in remote communities, especially when a virus like that gets out. And for us it has been challenging because the majority of, not all, but the majority of our filmmakers who are indigenous rely on community, going into community, being on country to tell their stories and if you can't get access into that community, then it becomes a bit of an issue for us.</p> <p>So just putting into place strategies around that. We have to test the restrictions and obviously Queensland, we're quite fortunate in Queensland that some of those restrictions are beginning to ease now. But also another thing that came with COVID, that it allowed us to see things that we didn't quite pick up before. For example, we used to have black coffee mornings. The black coffee mornings are an opportunity for indigenous filmmakers to meet and greet, but also collaborate with non-indigenous filmmakers who also work in the black space. And since we couldn't do the face to face, we were able to do a bit of a Black Zoom set up, Blcak Zooms that we were reporting every month at that time.</p>

AL	How did they go compared to the in-person ones?
DW	Well, you see the difference is that we were able to outreach or reach out further in remote communities. Regional and remote areas that we couldn't achieve because I do believe that the black coffee mornings are good. It works if you're in the metropolitan area, or if you happen to be visiting Brisbane. But when we did the Black Zooms, we had people from the Torres Strait, we had people from Rocky, Cairns, Townsville, like that for Mobs that couldn't have the opportunity. So it was good for blackfellas to see who was in the space and there are heaps.
AL	Talking to people like Dana Curtis and even talking to Aaron Fazo, talking about how that accessibility through remote and Zoom meetings and Zoom writers' rooms has kind of opened up the space a bit more to opportunities for indigenous storytellers who may not have the opportunity to travel to Sydney or Melbourne, or even Brisbane during the year for these opportunities. Do you see that continuing beyond this time?
DW	<p>Most definitely. We're doing it for... It is a number of programs, I don't know if it's been announced yet, but I know AIDC are going virtual at the moment for next year. First Peoples: First Draft obviously is virtual as well, but also it's good because I guess it saves on budgets. I don't have to fly everyone in and all that stuff because also half of the logistics is traveling and I guess working remotely, you can reach out to the people on remote islands or remote communities that never had a chance or never had an opportunity or look in.</p> <p>There's an upside and the downside. The thing about indigenous Mob face to face is always good. We get the social cues, we understand, you know what I mean? Us Mob, when we communicate, we use our hands a lot, we communicate with the eyes, you know what I mean? So yeah, very hard to try and communicate like that over Zoom.</p> <p>tech fails and anything else that happens as well. But just the vibe and when working with blackfellas, we have a shorthand. We just know... You just pick up on each other's energy and vibe and you go, yep. And it's hard to achieve that over Zoom. So in some way, we don't have to worry about having the access, but also at the same time, you do miss that personal interaction that us Mob have.</p>

AL	When you're talking about indigenous communities rely a lot on that in-person visual aspect, film must be such an appealing medium as storytellers to be able to communicate for those communities.
DW	So blackfellas in this country, we've been telling stories for thousands of years, like handing down story after story to community, to family, from relatives. And in a filmmaking context, filmmaking is just another extension of that storytelling because we are storytellers. We are natural, we are the oldest storytellers on the planet and I guess filmmaking is just another device. And the fact that us filmmakers, well storytellers, we're very versatile, we can tell it in any medium. I've done things in animation, done things in VR and I've done things in long film, short film, it becomes second nature for us. We find filming actually, the art of storytelling, quite easy.
DW	The fact is that we only make about like two, 3% of the actual Australian population. And the fact is that, us, as indigenous filmmakers, we're punching above our belts and you think about... You name the indigenous films that are out there that are hitting those goals, you've got <i>Goldstone</i> , <i>Mystery Road</i> , <i>Total Control</i> winning awards. You've got <i>Robbie Hood</i> . It's only a small selection and we are a small population, that are making impact and inroads in filmmaking.
AL	It's such an amazing point actually, because something like <i>Total Control</i> , which just received a MIPCOM Diversity TV Excellence Award, and it's kicking goals all over the place, to not only be a Queensland story, but also to be an indigenous forward story about indigenous issues on a political level as well, is incredible, and to be on a national and international recognized level.
DW	Definitely. Now we're going to see a different... Like what people perceive as what is an indigenous film, it's going to start changing and even the way how our storytellers are now evolving or how we're developing or whatever. I know we'll have Ivan Sen, he's doing a Sci-fi film.
AL	one of the things we've been talking about is what makes an Australian story? So what makes an indigenous story, Douglas? What makes a unique indigenous voice story?
DW	I guess, for me, it's a feeling, it's a culture, it's a way of how we see the world. We don't see it like mainstream society, and that's not just through film, but everything that we do. We've been targeted, we've been hit with racism, we've

	<p>experienced many, so many different emotions, you know what I mean? So yeah. And the thing about indigenous storytelling, where it comes from, it comes from our heart, it comes from our minds, it comes through years of oppression. It's a unique lens that is only recently been discovered.</p> <p>When I say recently, I don't mean yesterday, but 10, 20 years ago. You still had white actors playing black character roles that were meant for black actors. And that was only, maybe, 20 years ago. It wasn't that far, like that. The fact is, that what I do here or what I want to strive to, to make sure that that stuff doesn't happen again.</p>
AL	<p>Referring to what we were talking about before, too, that concept of telling an indigenous story that white audiences particularly expect, or being pigeonholed to look a certain way, or to behave a certain way, or to speak a certain way, moving away from that and letting indigenous storytellers tell the stories that are important to them and in, in their own voice.</p>
DW	<p>Our culture is always evolving and our storytelling will evolve with that as well, which is really exciting, because we're seeing a new generation of filmmakers that are coming out. You're getting the Chantelle Murrays, you're getting Dena Curtises, Mitch Stanleys, you know what I mean? Like that, they're giving their own unique spin that's never been seen by this country. And obviously, the evidence through, like the <i>Goldstones</i>, the <i>Total Controls</i>, the <i>Sweet Countries</i>, are winning those accolades.</p>
AL	<p>There's still that viewpoint within the industry, that indigenous stories are somehow separate to commercially viable stories. But we're seeing things like <i>Sweet Country</i>, and <i>Mystery Road</i>, and even <i>Total Control</i>, what a better example, big hitters commercially. And they're coming from that unique storytelling, an authentic voice position that is important, I think, with any community storytelling</p>
DW	<p>I think what you're seeing in this country is that society and the audiences are evolving and changing, and the audiences are, how would you say, are beginning to accept indigenous stories or aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people in genera, okay, because our voice is suddenly being heard. I would say maybe 20 years ago, when I wanted to tell, how would you say, my indigenous story, I had a producer say to me, " Look, that's not going to sell because it needs to be accepted by a universal audience, because there's too much indigenous stuff or stereotyping. Can you make it more mainstream?"</p> <p>Anyway, cut to the chase, years later, it was so funny. I did a story once, and then had the treatment and all, and then I had another producer, a different producer this time, yeah, say to me, "Oh, this is good, but we need more indigenous themes," and I just laughed. I said, "Wow, okay." So, yeah. You got to</p>

	<p>try to find why, but I think it's funny. It was amazing time for me to actually think, wow, okay, about time. Someone actually tells me that, okay, you need to put more indigenous elements into it, because the first time I did it, it had too many. And now, people are now accepting.</p> <p>Sometimes I take a leaf from Jordan Peele, when people ask him that, "Oh, most of your films, especially your recent stuff, your horror films, you have black people in your films, why do you do that?" And he goes, "Well, if I didn't, I've already seen that movie. It's been told before." So yeah, and I think it's just a unique perspective, and I think it's good showing diversity in this country. Yes, blackfellas, we go to the shops. Yeah, we buy things. We're still not seeing ourselves being represented in ads. And for me, I want to strive that when we do have functions, every functional, anything like that, we can't be the only blackfellas in the room. It's 2020, people.</p>
AL	<p>First Peoples: First Draft was a 2020 initiative?          How's that going? How did that progress?</p>
DW	<p>That's good. We actually had over 18 blackfellas apply for the initiative, which was fantastic, because majority of the times when I first started here, we had maybe about four or five. Yeah, not many. We didn't have many. And since... But let me back it up. When I do initiatives, what I'm thinking of, where's this initiative going to lead? Where's going to lead to? Who will take the next step? And that's what I look to when I make an initiative, what is connection? What is the payoff? What is the end game? End game. Been bobble nerd? No. End game, what do we want to see on the other side?</p> <p>And I remember the first initiative that I did was the Indigenous Shorts Program. Okay? So we selected a handful of filmmakers, we put them through the training workshop program. And now those filmmakers were the first filmmakers that come out of that workshop were Caden Pearson, Chantelle Murray, and Jimi Bani and Aaron Fa'aoso. So where those guys are now in their career, they have just progressed and developed. You have Caden Pearson with his documentary. [Wahru 00:32:05], he's also one of the five applicants that got into First Peoples: First Draft. Yeah, he's in Writer's Room.</p> <p>Chantelle Murray is just winning heaps of awards from her films and writing. She's getting into some really top class, top notch collaborators as well. And also Aaron, well, there you go, enough said, where he is now, where he's standing. And so there is a progression, there is a story progression, there's a career pathway. Okay? So what's happening now is those mobs are out there doing their thing, and now what we need to do is get the next generation through to tell their story.</p> <p>So with the First People: First Draft, the base of it is, it is a writing initiative, and it's looking at the organic or the essence, or, how would you say, the primary, the foundations of that story and where we want to take that story into the next level,</p>

	<p>whether it gets to a pitching doc or whether it becomes the next draft or whether it goes into production. These are the things that we want to see.</p> <p>I'm getting more blackfellas applying, and that's what I want to see. And sometimes it's sad because you want to give it to everyone. It's like, "Oh my God." But unfortunately, we have to work with a budget, we have our own parameters of working with. But also, at the same time, we had a couple of filmmakers that didn't quite make the grade, but we were able to give them positive feedback.</p> <p>And also Leah was able to give her time to those ones, that didn't quite make it through, and giving them directions on where they can head. Because for most people, they don't know how the process works in here or whatever, and they don't know how close they got. And I always tell mobs out there, "Look, you got really, really close. It's not that your idea was terrible, I see it as your idea is maybe not ready now." Okay? And also, the market, you need to find the right stream or the right market, if you know what I mean, like that. I mean, it may not be ready now, there might not be a taste or a flare for it now, but it will happen one day. It's like the trends, what do you call it, yeah, trendy. What is trendy in the market today?</p>
AL	<p>It's not always a question of the quality or the idea, but it's just the timing isn't right.</p>
DW	<p>so one of things that we do here at Screen Queensland is to, obviously, we do the initiatives, not only working in the short film initiative or the factual space, we also like to strive for workshops, in conjunction or in collaboration with, AAFTAs, blackfellas attending markets, because I feel that it's important for our mob to be, have a visual presence at some of these markets like SPA and AIDC and all that stuff. And also, with the training workshops, they're able to take those skills and able to upskill them and bring it back into the community.</p>
AL	<p>You mentioned when you first started with Screen Queensland, you only had four to five applicants to initiatives, and now we're pushing it up to 18. How do we make that more? Because, obviously, with, I guess the white community, that's not an issue, there's hundreds.</p> <p>Is it a case of people just not knowing that these programs exist or not feeling that they're at a level that they can apply? How do we change that narrative?</p>
DW	<p>A bit of both, because when you're dealing with, as I said before at the beginning, 2% of the population, okay, like these mobs, we do other things, we doing things in community.</p>

	<p>Okay. So when I first started at Screen Queensland, I noticed when I put out an initiative or even a call-out, we wouldn't get many numbers. And the fact is that we had to try and rethink our strategy, because sometimes mobs don't identify with initiatives if it doesn't sound black, if that makes sense. And I guess that's where the branding of the SQ Mob came in. Even though we encourage blackfellas to apply for our mainstream programs, for me, it was just about getting the information out there, having these black coffee mornings or Zooms. Because I think mobs out there, using Facebook, I mean, it's all about just the communication. And if you spread enough communication around that, or if you place enough cultural or wording around that, you'll get more people applying.</p> <p>you need to travel with this job. You need to go out to community. Sometimes community won't come to you, you have to go out to them. And like a lot of my practitioners, like a lot of the blackfella practitioners out there, I go out and meet them on country first or wherever where they feel comfortable, instead of coming in here. Because some mob don't come in here, because they might feel intimidated or just doesn't speak to them, because it works in a white framework or it just... And I feel for us is that, I have to encourage to go out and bring mob here, if that makes sense. Because what you want to try and set up here is a culturally safe space.</p>
AL	<p>And it's so limiting, too, with Queensland, I think, when we're so geographically dispersed, to be able to get to those places consistently and regularly. And like you said before, the financial costs. But even just the time</p>
DW	<p>But also, it does, but also, just getting out to, even up in the Torres Straight, the cost of flying up to the Torres Straight is equivalent to going overseas. Okay? Even though you're not going that far. Well, Australia wise, you are going far. But you got to catch a plane from Brisbane to Cannes, then Cannes to Horn, and catch another one to the islands, whether it's a charter plane or a boat, and all of that costs money. And it makes it hard, even for mobs out there. In fact, if you're shooting out in community, you need a lot of budget, okay, especially when you're shooting remotely, because the cost of traveling will just, it just sinks into your budget.</p> <p>And it's hard because you want to make sure that all your budget goes towards the screen, but now it's going towards other things. And that's always been a challenge for us mob to to tell our stories in rural communities, because A, it's hard to get out there or whatever. The cost of living, the lifestyle, the setups. And also, when you're shooting in remote communities, you have to understand the politics and understand the connection or the culture that's out there. Even though I'm blackfella, okay, that doesn't give me a free license just to go in and say, "Hey, look, I'm a blackfella, I have the right..." No, I have to earn their trust. I have to follow the protocols.</p>

	<p>Half the time, I feel that we do, blackfellas do the right protocols to the note, where non-indigenous people just come in and take it and they go, they take it, they don't follow. So yeah. And the fact is even we get a no sometimes, we get knocked back. And I feel that you're trying to let the community know that you're here to tell a story, you're not here to appropriate, you're not here to... You just want to make sure that the community is on the same level, we're all on the same page.</p> <p>There's a stigma that most indigenous films, especially in the community are, I don't know, below par or low expectation, if you know what I mean? But because of the resources and all that stuff. Even hiring a camera cost money.. But flipping back on to education, I mean, sorry, flipping back onto technology now, you're getting kids these days, they're making films on iPhones, anything like that, and they're telling really good, hard-hitting stories.</p> <p>And the technology is getting on par with cameras that you can probably use today. Maybe not the same caliber, but it's the caliber of storytelling that is actually the difference. For me, if you have a good story, you can't stuff it up, no matter if you're using a \$30, 000 camera, or if you're using a \$3 camera.</p> <p>you want to give opportunities to a lot of blackfellas out there equally, but at the same time, we have to train the next, whether it's an Ivan Sen or Rachel Perkins, we don't have that yet. We need to get the... or the Warwick Thorntons. We need to keep on trying. We need to keep on training until we get to that level. It's good that we have filmmakers up there emerging, and even mid-level making these pockets, making these breaks, but we still have to support them so that they can get to that level.</p> <p>Invest in them. Exactly. That's what I mean, you need to invest because maybe in mainstream circles are a little bit different. I understand funding is a little bit different, you have to give, opportunities because I had that opportunities. But for me, The more you can hone in and really invest the time and effort into that filmmaker.</p>
AL	<p>Well, that's kind of comes back to what you were saying in terms of the way black community operates separately to mainstream, or mainstream white community, let's call it what it is white community operates is that, when you invest in one, you're actually investing in the whole community.-And it comes back to that brilliant quote that you said when we were talking earlier is you can't have separate identity from work as a Black fella. It's part of not just your work, but your life, your storytelling, and every part of it.</p>
DW	<p>The thing is when we do indigenous story, especially in community, we still have to have the relationship with that community. Most of the time, those communities, where we actually have relatives in there. And that's why I say to a lot of non-indigenous filmmakers out there who want to work in the black space or collaborate with blackfellas, that it is a way of life, whether that's the right word</p>

	<p>to use, but you just don't okay, I've done my indigenous film. I'll go off and do something else for me. I just can't do that. I won't do that. Every indigenous filmmaker will go through a stage in their life where, I don't want to be pigeonholed as an indeginous filmmaker. I just want to be a filmmaker.</p> <p>And I normally tell people, look, I just do good stories. I just happen to have black people in them. That's what I practice, because for me, it's all about the story, but every indigenous filmmaker does go through that. How would you say film identity crisis? Because they get sick of being pigeonholed. They get sick of the stereotyping and all that stuff but I normally tell people, you can go out and make whatever film you want to do. You can go out and make your sci-fi film. You can make a film with all white people. It doesn't worry me. But one day you're going to have a non-indigenous filmmaker who wants to do something on your family or walks into your house or your community, and wants to tell their side of the story. Would you allow that? Would you let somebody else tell your story, your family story? Because, that's the thing. Because I normally say that, indigenous filmmakers, we got the best of both worlds because we can do both indigenous filmmaking and mainstream filmmaking. Not the other way around. We do... We can't have that luxury if we wanted to, because the thing about filmmaking is the tools of filmmaking, the tools of storytelling. It doesn't change, there's no such thing as an indigenous camera are there. I'd say if you know what I mean, the tool is the tool, you know what I mean? It's the person behind it. It's the lens. It's the notion. It's the perspective that tells that story.</p>
AL	<p>Tell us a little bit about the initiative, Authentic, real stories from the people of Far North Queensland. Because that's open now at the moment.</p>
DW	<p>In conjunction with Screenworks and Screen Queensland, a development program for indigenous storytellers who are particularly placed in the Far North Queensland region. So we're just targeting into just filmmakers in the far North who want to do screenwriting or who wants to just get into film in general.</p> <p>We'll be working up in Far North Queensland, working with the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander mob up there. And what we're trying to do is develop the skills and the training for Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander writers up there to develop their craft and filmmaking.</p> <p>Far north Queensland is one of the most highest population for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, from Cannes, Torres Strait, Townsville, from there on up and what we try and focus on is giving the skills and the opportunities to</p>

	<p>mobs that maybe not exposed to. How would you say some of the opportunities to expose down here in the metropolitan areas.</p>
<p>DW</p>	<p>We're going to be going up to Far North Queensland up in Cairns and launching the program called Make it in FNQ, creating screen stories with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is going to be led by Dena Curtis and myself. It's a free program of online and indigenous screen storytelling. The program is made up of development workshops, which will be open to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from that region and will kick off in February. The participants will learn about the screen industry, develop their skills. So we'll be working with the applicants in getting their screen story idea into a high quality pitch document and maybe even launch it into a sizzle reel.</p> <p>The other avenue we have, and also the other collaborators we have on the board as well is NITV, who will be up in Cairns. And they'll be part of the program as well.</p> <p>So basically this is a call out to black fellas who are working in the screen space up in Far North Queensland to bring their ideas and their stories, but also to be part of a three-stage workshop that we'll be conducting up in Cairns.</p>
<p>AL</p>	<p>tell us a little bit about the community cultural engagement plan.</p>
<p>DW</p>	<p>the cultural community engagement plan is a document that must be supplied, especially if you're doing anything that has indigenous content, you have to supply a plan of how you're going to work with our community engagement with that community. And also, addressing the elements, the cultural elements of the story, especially if you're a non-indigenous person now for an indigenous person, they still have to do the cultural engagement plan anyway. But it should be quite easy because that's small, it's in our DNA. We know exactly what to ask. We know exactly what to do. But with other mobs out there that not maybe familiar with the space or don't have an understanding how community runs, we always want to make sure that the community comes first. Make sure they have an understanding on how they will engage with that community.</p> <p>And what we're looking for is not just a line that says, yes, we will approach the community what we want to see in there is evidence, for example, a letter of support from the community.</p>

	<p>instead of stuff that you're going to do. I mean engagement plan is not about, "Oh yeah, this is what we want to do." We want to see that there's evidence that this engagement is actually happening.</p>
AL	<p>I think that's a really important point, in that it's about, not only what you're taking away from the community, but what you're also putting in what you're taking away as well. So making sure that everyone's across it and everyone is comfortable with the level of engagement that you're committing to, but also providing opportunities for employment, for the people that you're working with as well.</p>
DW	<p>Definitely. We want to try and extend it and also, I always say, try and keep your crew as colorful as possible. You know what I mean? Like that the more diversity, because the thing is they bring an extra layer of story. The reason why we have these things in place is a lot of people in the mainstream might feel this is a deterrent or you're putting roadblocks or something. We're not putting roadblocks, we're actually adding more layers of stories, so your story has more gravitas to it, it's authentic. That's what we're trying to put in place. We're not saying, "No, you can't." We're saying, "Yes, you can," but it needs to have this or your story will become thin or stereotypical without knowing that.</p>
AL	<p>As a white practitioner, how can we be more responsible in our engagement with indigenous stories?</p>
DW	<p>Let indigenous filmmakers take the driver's seat. Don't use this as a backstage crew. Let us... Give us, the opportunity to tell that I see non-indigenous filmmakers as collaborators. There's not many indigenous filmmakers out there to fill out a whole entire crew. Let's be honest here. You're going to need everyone. We need to have that support, especially when making a feature film, regardless whether you're black, white, or whatever. But the fact of the matter is when you collaborate with indigenous people, just remember that the black voice comes first.</p>
AL	<p>Thanks for listening to SQ On Air. We acknowledge and celebrate <b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first storytellers of this land</b> - Always Was, Always Will Be. You can find out more about the SQMOB initiative on the Screen Queensland website. <a href="http://Screenqueensland.com.au">Screenqueensland.com.au</a></p>