

CBC-TV boosting female directors in gender-parity initiative

Public broadcaster joins NFB, Telefilm in boosting gender parity in film, TV industry

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Actor Yannick Bisson (as Murdoch, at left), director Leslie Hope (centre) and actress Hélène Joy discuss a scene during filming of Murdoch Mysteries. At least half of the episodes of CBC-TV's Murdoch Mysteries, Heartland and other scripted programs will be directed by women, the public broadcaster has announced. (Jan Thijs/Shaftebury)



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At least half of the episodes of CBC-TV's *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Heartland* and other scripted programs will be directed by women, the public broadcaster announced Monday.

The move echoes a wider initiative towards gender parity spreading through the film and television industry.

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"I'm proud that CBC, in partnership with our producers, is the first Canadian broadcaster to take a proactive step forward to increase the number of women directing scripted television in this country," Heather Conway, CBC's executive vice-president of English Services, said in a statement.

"The talent, ideas and experiences of female directors are essential to the creation of extraordinary content that is seen in Canada and around the world. We know that there is still much work to be done, and look forward to building on our commitment to improve gender equity and diversity in all areas."

Women in View, a Canadian non-profit group working for gender parity in media onscreen and behind-the-scenes, released a report last fall that noted women are still a minority in the industry: representing only 17 per cent of directors, 22 per cent of writers and 12 per cent of cinematographers.

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The group's 2X More initiative urges the industry to double those numbers, for instance to boost women directors from 17 per cent to 35 per cent in two years.



Eleanore Lindo directs a season 9 episode of *Heartland* in Alberta. (Andrew Bako/CBC)

Signal to the industry

CBC says women will now make up at least half of all directors on *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Heartland*, *This Life*, *Baroness Von Sketch Show* and *Workin' Moms*. Alternately, 50 per cent or more of the episodes for these series will be directed by women in upcoming seasons.

"This sends an important signal to the rest of the industry, both here at home and internationally, that Canada is once again leading the way by drawing on the full diversity of our abundant talent pool," said Rina Fraticelli, executive director, Women in View.

On International Women's Day in March, the National Film Board of Canada announced a gender-parity initiative that will see half of its productions and half of all money spent go to women directors.

Meanwhile, in April, Telefilm announced the latest batch of Canadian documentary film projects to receive production funding and noted that among the six selected, there was parity between female and male directors.

"Canadian feature-length documentaries continue to thrive, driven especially by projects from women directors, writers and producers," Telefilm executive director Carolle Brabant said at the time.

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