



# Impact Story: Yorkton Film Festival

by  
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Saskatchewan  
Arts Alliance

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### ***Yorkton Film Festival: Cultivating a love of film in rural Saskatchewan***



Over the past twenty-five years, it seems every medium-to-large sized city in North America has launched their own film festival, with thousands now operating across the continent. But it’s hard not to conclude that the oldest among them still provides one of the more unique film festival experiences. After 72 years of continuous operation, the Yorkton Film Festival draws

filmmakers, broadcasters, and funders to this unlikely destination on the Canadian prairies based on a reputation as much for its distinct local flavour as for the opportunities it presents to make crucial professional connections in a pleasantly laid-back atmosphere. Like most high-profile festivals, this four-day event features screenings, panel discussions, workshops, and pitch sessions with representatives from funding organizations and broadcasters like Telefilm, the Canadian Media Fund, the National Film Board, CBC, and Netflix – but visiting filmmakers to Yorkton are as likely to encounter an important television executive in a meeting as they are while waiting in line at the annual Lobsterfest dinner or to shoot skeet at local Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation club house. Executive Director Randy Goulden says “it’s always a good time; and, yes, it’s definitely a unique setting.”

While delegates at this year’s festival hobnobbed and shot clay pigeons with industry leaders, across town at Sacred Heart School, busloads of students from Langenberg and Kakisiwew arrived to take part in the Yorkton Film Festival’s Student Film Day says. “It’s the largest day-long high school film course in all of Canada.” The school has partnered with the festival to organize the course for more than 15 years, and the event provides opportunities for nascent auteurs to engage in filmmaking workshops alongside established industry professionals in town for the festival – independent producers, directors, sound recordists, cinematographers, and editors among them. “We’ve never had a problem getting 40 or 50 kids to attend,” says Michael Oleskiw, who teaches Communication and Media classes to grades 10 through 12 at Sacred Heart.

“If we had a bigger facility with more equipment, we could probably easily accommodate 75 kids or more. They love it.”

It’s an unparalleled opportunity among many offered to surrounding communities by the Yorkton Film

Festival, which also organizes regular public screenings of short films and documentaries, as well as the distribution of their Golden Sheaf Award DVD tour collections produced yearly by the festival, and delivered to schools, libraries, and seniors centres across the western

provinces. Oleskiw says it’s not a stretch to say that this collaborative programming broadens the horizons of many on the prairies looking for varying views on world events, social and environmental issues, and new perspectives on storytelling.

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Check out: <http://yorktonfilm.com/2019-festival/>



*Wanda Schmöckel is a freelance writer, communications worker, and filmmaker based in Regina. Her writing has appeared in The Walrus, Prairie Dog, Broadview, and elsewhere.*