



## 2021 FESTIVAL ARTISTIC POLICY Effective as of March 2021

The imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival is our annual primary event hosted by imagineNATIVE in Toronto, Ontario, Canada every October. We present Artistic and Industry programming over the six-day Festival showcasing Film + Video, Digital + Interactive, and Audio media work created by Indigenous Artists (Directors, Producers, Writers, Designers) at all levels of experience. Artistic programming consists of works selected through the general Call for Submissions, guest-curated programs, partnership exhibitions, mediatheque, and special initiatives curated by the Artistic Director. The **2021 FESTIVAL ARTISTIC POLICY** comprises the guiding principles that ground the eligibility and process of selecting the works for the Festival. The policy is a living document, and continually evolves to reflect the community of Indigenous artists we serve. The policy is reviewed annually by the Artistic Director and approved by the Executive Director and Board of Directors of the Organization.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

imagineNATIVE presents new and innovative film, video, audio, and digital media works. This mandate guides our programming and initiatives towards reaffirming concepts of Indigenous narrative sovereignty.

As an Indigenous-led and Indigenous artist-centred organization, we support the artistic visions and perspectives of Indigenous Artists working in film and media arts in an inclusive and professional manner. As identified in our mission statement, we are committed to a greater understanding by audiences of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and artistic expressions. Therefore, works do not need to have overt Indigenous content or themes and can be productions made at all budget levels. We strive to represent a variety of ideas, themes, and genres, in addition to a diversity of Indigenous languages, nations, and cultures.

### Equity

imagineNATIVE acknowledges that barriers to services exist within Indigenous communities, particularly for equity-seeking members. We are committed to acting as a positive force in reducing/eliminating these barriers. To achieve this, and as stated in our Equity Policy, imagineNATIVE will:

- Ensure that diverse members of the Indigenous community it serves have equitable access to its services, resources, and decision-making;
- Be non-discriminatory and promote the goals of anti-racism, access, and equity;





- Take reasonable steps to ensure its services, programs, and decision-making reflect the community it serves.

### Care

imagineNATIVE adheres to a [Code of Conduct](#) and strongly encourages all programmed artists, staff, contract employees, volunteers, and guests of the Festival to read and respect it.

imagineNATIVE supports the uncensored artistic visions of Indigenous Artists while acknowledging that some of the work we present can be triggering. As part of our commitment to audience care, imagineNATIVE offers on-site Indigenous health support workers available for any individual who requests to meet with them throughout the Festival.

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

#### PROCESS

imagineNATIVE is committed to a fair and democratic selection process.

The public Call for Submissions opens on March 1, 2021 and closes on May 31, 2021. The fields of practice we accept for the Call for Submissions are Film + Video, Digital + Interactive, and Audio created by Indigenous artists. All submissions that meet eligibility requirements outlined below are presented to and considered by the Programming Committee associated with that field of practice. Programming Committees are invited Indigenous members of the film and media arts milieu who are recognized as experts, as well as reflective and knowledgeable of our Indigenous communities. Programming Committees are supported by imagineNATIVE staff, either as Committee members or administrators respectively. The Programming Committees provide additional perspectives on individual titles, overarching themes, and programming structure that push the boundaries of innovating programming. imagineNATIVE will announce the Programming Committee shortly after the Call for Submissions close.

#### ELIGIBILITY

##### Film + Video, including Web Series + Episodic Television

- The Director must be Indigenous;
- The Writer or key Producer must also be Indigenous or both;
- Joint creative positions (co-Director, co-Writer, co-Producer) may be considered by the imagineNATIVE Artistic Director with additional requirements clarifying the creative and decision-making processes.



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## Digital + Interactive

(e.g. Video Games, VR, 360, AR, web-based experiences, etc.)

- The lead Creative (Director/Writer/Lead Programmer/Lead Designer, etc.) must be Indigenous;
- Joint creative positions (co-lead Designer, co-narrative Designer, co-lead Programmer) may be considered by the iN Artistic Director with additional requirements clarifying the creative and decision-making processes.

## Audio

### Sound Art + Fiction Category

(e.g. Soundscapes, Audio Art, Radio Plays, Narrative Podcasts, etc.)

- The lead Creative must be Indigenous;
- For Radio Plays and Narrative (fiction) Podcasts, the Producer and Writer must be Indigenous.
- Joint creative positions (co-collaborator, co-designer) may be considered by the iN Artistic Director with additional requirements clarifying the creative and decision-making processes.

### Audio Non-Fiction Category

(e.g. Non-Fiction Podcasts, Documentary Podcasts)

- The lead Creative (Producer/Host) must be Indigenous;
- Joint creative positions (co-Producer, co-Host) may be considered by the imagineNATIVE Artistic Director with additional requirements clarifying the creative and decision-making processes.

**All other roles — including Executive Producer, Associate Producer, or any individual credited as an Advisor or Consultant — do NOT fulfill eligibility requirements for consideration for any of our submission categories.**

**In the interest of upholding our mandate's integrity to support Indigenous Artists, imagineNATIVE reserves the right to inquire further about any submission concerning eligibility.**

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*We understand that in some cases, an Indigenous person may not know their nation or community due to the impacts of colonial or assimilationist practices. With the intent of gaining a better understanding of these realities, we welcome your submission and ask that you articulate your story.*



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## CRITERIA

### Premiere Status

A premiere is the first public presentation of a film. A work will often have many premieres: a world premiere, international premiere, national premiere, continental premiere, and regional premieres.

A premiere status of any kind is not a requirement. Due to submission volumes and the limitation of screening slots, Programmers may choose to prioritize work by an Indigenous filmmaker that has not yet had the opportunity of a public presentation at another festival or via other media.

### Production Year

Due to impacts of COVID-19 on production, we will be accepting work completed on or after January 1, 2019, meaning films and videos with production years 2019, 2020, and 2021 are eligible for the 2021 imagineNATIVE Festival. Works with all other production years are not eligible for the Festival. They are still eligible for year-round initiatives or special programs such as retrospectives or guest-curated programs determined by the imagineNATIVE Artistic Director and guest curators.

### Language

The Festival presents to a primarily English-speaking audience. Non-English language works with dialogue must have English subtitles to be eligible.

*Exception:* Subtitles are not necessary if the Artist intends to present the Film or piece therein in the original language version without English subtitles for artistic or cultural reasons. If applicable, specify in the submission form. Please note that imagineNATIVE has an ongoing commitment to reducing barriers and increasing accessibility. As part of this commitment, we strive to provide closed captioning for all of our programming. Artists will be required to work with the Programming team to facilitate closed captioning.

### Film + Video

The Festival prioritizes Film + Video works not permanently and publicly accessible for viewing via the Internet or on S/VOD outlets such as iTunes or other media service providers or distribution channels.

Film + Video works screened at other festivals are eligible regardless of location. Film + Video work broadcast on television outside of Canada are accepted. Priority may be given to works that have not yet had a festival screening in Toronto or broadcast on TV nationally in Canada, provincially in Ontario, or locally in Toronto.



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### **Music Videos**

Music Videos are eligible for submission to the Festival, regardless of their Canadian broadcast status. We recognize music videos' media strategies require the release of video content publically. Music Videos are subject to the three-year production criteria.

### **Television**

Made-for-television films and documentaries of any length, as well as dramatic and documentary episodic television series are eligible. These works must be led and produced by Indigenous production companies. However, consideration will be given to the works' domestic and international broadcast status and licensing. Works that have been broadcast or have a broadcast license in Canada (which have or will have the support and opportunity to reach a public audience either locally, provincially, or nationally in advance of the Festival) are evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the imagineNATIVE Artistic Director. Television pilots that have not yet been aired before the Festival and do not have a confirmed broadcast date are eligible. Television submissions are subject to the three-year production criteria.

**Other episodic television series** such as news reports, extended reportage, television magazine formats, and information programming or segments (such as PSAs) are not eligible.

### **Web Series**

Web Series (episodic shows independent of broadcast licensing and not available online before the Festival in Canada) are eligible for Festival programming inclusion. Web Series are subject to the three-year production criteria.

### **Digital + Interactive**

Digital + Interactive media works are eligible for consideration regardless of prior exhibitions in galleries, presentations, or via the Internet. These include artistically based work on all digital platforms (online, computer, tablet/mobile/wearable devices) and do not need to be presented exclusively for cinema or monitor screens. Digital + Interactive work is subject to the three-year production criteria.

**Digital Works** are projects that have no interaction (e.g. 360 Video, static VR), or only as much interaction as a modern website.

**Interactive Works** are projects that have more interaction or player input than an average website (e.g. video game, choose-your-own-adventure experience, or VR game).



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## Audio

The Festival separates Audio works into **Audio Art + Fiction** and **Audio Non-Fiction**. We recognize that audio-based pieces are broad and multi-faceted. We support their inclusion in the Festival as audio remains a vital medium of communication, entertainment, and artistry for Indigenous people and communities.

**Audio Art + Fiction** includes, but is not limited to Soundscapes, Sound Art, Radio Plays, Narrative (fiction-based storytelling), Fiction Audiobooks, and Narrative (fiction-based) Podcasts.

**Audio Non-Fiction** encompasses works that include, but are not limited to Non-Fiction Podcasts, Documentary Podcasts, Non-Fiction Storytelling, and Non-Fiction Audiobooks. News reports, extended reportage, and information programming or segments (such as PSAs) are not eligible.

Works made for radio broadcast submitted to the Festival are eligible regardless of their broadcast status or availability. All productions in both categories are subject to the three-year production criteria.

## Installation

Installation works are not accepted as regular submissions but are selected through a project-based curatorial initiative at the Festival, instigated and solicited by the imagineNATIVE Artistic Director.

## Awards

With the exception of our Audience Choice awards - the annual imagineNATIVE Awards are adjudicated by independent Juries at arm's length from the organization and are determined by consensus. The Juries consist of industry and community peers, and the majority are Indigenous. All the works selected and programmed from the Call for Submissions are presented to the Juries to determine the recipients based on excellence and each category's respective criteria. The awards support works that are innovative in form and content – ones that are creating a new aesthetic language and that contain unique ways of telling stories, specifically from Indigenous perspectives. Awards winners (recipients) receive a gift of commemoration, as well as cash and in-kind prizes through partnerships with sponsors and stakeholders.

## ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

### Guest Curated Programs

The Artistic Director invites guest curators to program a film/video screening. They work directly with the Artistic Director to determine the overarching theme. The program may



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consist of a series of films, a panel discussion, and an essay. Curators and artists must be Indigenous and the work can be outside the Call for Submissions production dates. The imagineNATIVE strategic plan guides the priorities for artistic programming.

### **Partnership Exhibitions**

The Artistic Director collaborates with local artist-run centres in Toronto to present Indigenous exhibitions (group or solo). For the 2021 Festival, imagineNATIVE will be partnering with A Space Gallery, Trinity Square Video, and the Canadian Filmmakers Distribution Centre. The exhibition themes are led by each organization in collaboration with the Artistic Director. Curators and artists must be Indigenous and the work can be outside the Call for Submissions production dates. Exhibitions are included in the annual Art Crawl and consist of exhibitions, essays, artist talks, and screenings.

### **Mediatheque**

The Mediatheque is a print traffic catalogue of all the works that were submitted to the Festival. During the submission process, artists are invited to opt into participating in the Mediatheque regardless of if their work is programmed. Throughout the Festival, programmers, broadcasters, curators, and buyers can request access to the Mediatheque to preview work, creating opportunities for potential acquisition and presentation.

### **Special Initiatives**

Special initiatives presented during the Festival are curated by the Artistic Director. The work presented must be made by an Indigenous artist and can be outside the Call for Submissions production dates.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

imagineNATIVE supports Indigenous artists' work, including those who give their time, insight, and talent as Board members, staff, contractors, and volunteers.

The Indigenous film and media arts community is a small one. We value Indigenous artistic practices and representation within our organization. We cannot disadvantage Indigenous artists who give their time to imagineNATIVE by excluding them from Festival presentation opportunities or awards.

These Artists are eligible to submit their work to the Festival. They are not present for programming discussions and decisions about their work, nor do they have input into the scheduling. These Artists are also eligible for the annual imagineNATIVE Awards, as they are adjudicated by independent juries at arm's length from the organization and adhere to a consensus decision-making process. The juries consist of industry and community peers, and the majority are Indigenous.



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## NOTE FROM THE PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

We, the Programming Committee composed of a group of peers and the imagineNATIVE Artistic Director and imagineNATIVE Institute Manager, appreciate the dedication of all the

artists who feel that their work complements the artistic mandate, vision, and Artistic Policy of imagineNATIVE. Programming the Festival is very involved and challenging. The selection process is composed of a Programming Committee that considers and prioritizes work through a consensus decision-making process.

With considerable thought and deliberation and beyond of our eligibility terms, the programming considerations include but are not limited to:

- A balance of unique and new perspectives expressed within the content of the work;
- A cultural, artistic, and social significance to Indigenous peoples and communities. Diverse representation that reflects local, national, and international perspectives;
- A creative approach to form characterized by innovative representations, content, aesthetic form, and genre;
- The relevance of form and content, with consideration to emerging themes and issues that present themselves during the programming process, that informs the overall program's artistic framework; and
- Consideration to overall available programming slots, scheduling, and budget.

We receive hundreds of submissions. If a work is not programmed, it does not comment on individual achievements or relationships, nor does it reflect the work's artistic value. Artists can opt-in for inclusion in the Festival Mediatheque. Due to the volume of submissions we receive, we cannot provide feedback or notes on unsuccessful applicants. The process of accepting and declining works is an emotional but necessary experience for everyone involved. As artists ourselves, we understand how difficult it can be to receive such news. We appreciate feedback on our processes, and in return, are pleased to suggest [alternative exhibition strategies](#) for your work beyond the Festival. We hope to continue to receive your work and look forward to meeting you at the Festival.

Download the 2021 Festival Artistic Programming Policy [here](#).

Please contact our Program Coordinator, Kaitlynn Tomaselli, at [programming@imagineNATIVE.org](mailto:programming@imagineNATIVE.org) if you have any questions or require any clarification.



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