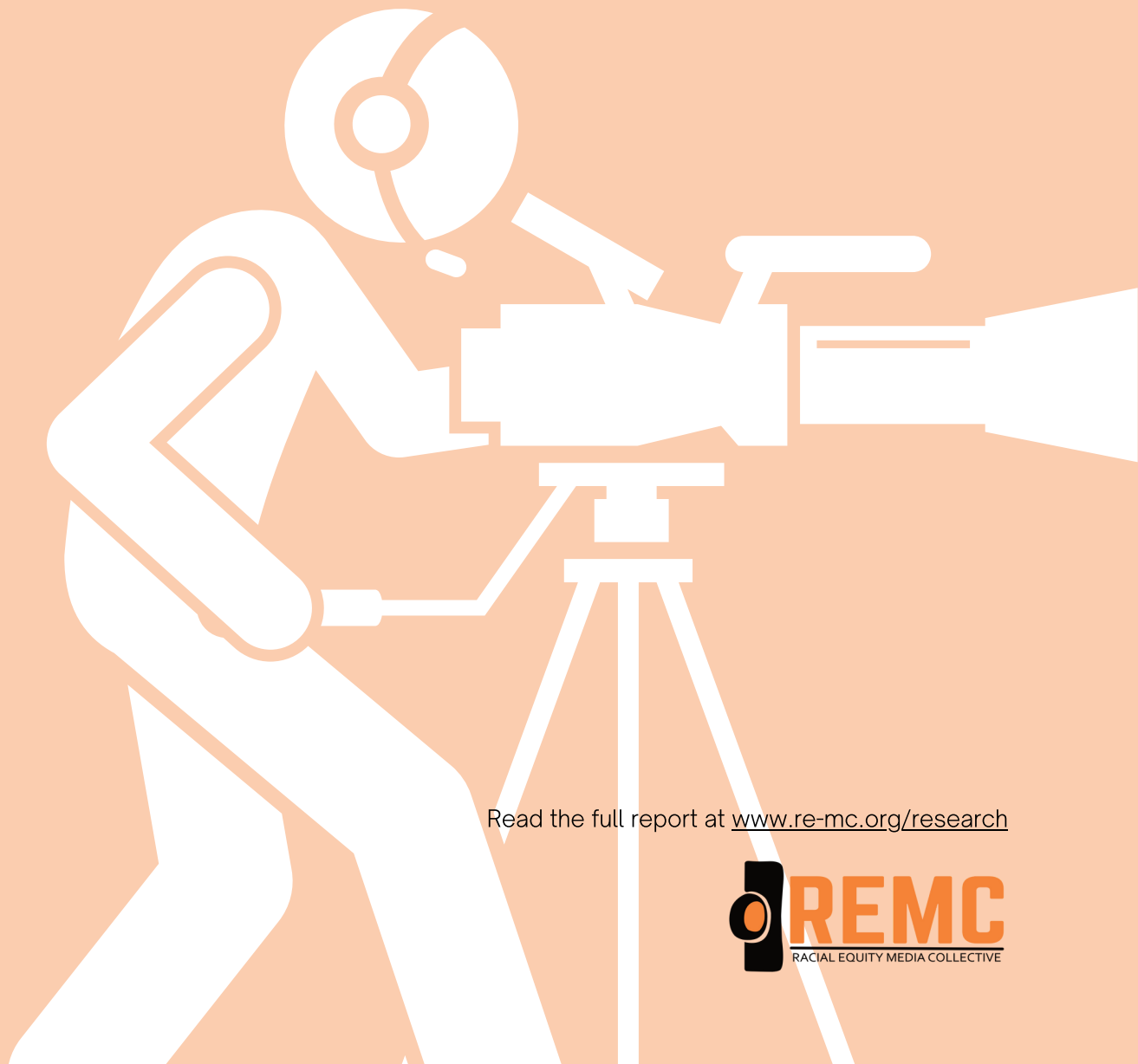


Evaluating Racial Equity in Canada's Screen Sector

November 2021 | Summary Report



Read the full report at www.re-mc.org/research



Why were we compelled to do this research

It's been said many times over that 2020 was the year of "racial reckoning". However, from the perspective of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour, racial reckoning has been the reality of our entire existence.

In Canada's screen sector, this reckoning has place in whispers on set, within exasperated conversations after pitch meetings or in complete isolation. The experience of being othered, left out, used, misrepresented and underrepresented has been growing for decades.

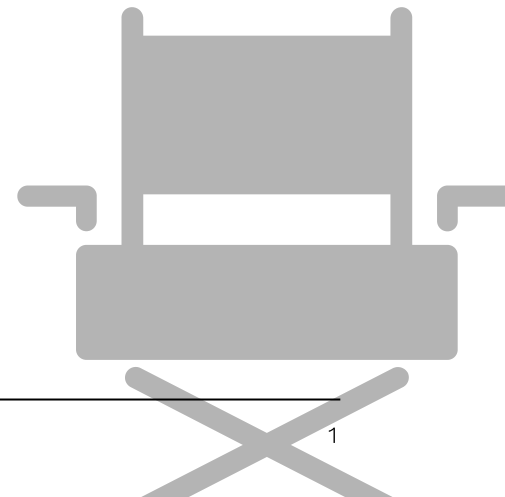
As the pandemic emerged and the cry for racial justice rang out globally, it became clear that these experiences could no longer be tolerated. The tentacles of colonialism and white supremacy were reaching every corner of Canadian society and sweeping changes had to take place. While communities called for an overhaul in the justice, healthcare and education and private sectors, we knew it was time for the screen sector to embrace radical change as well.

It was clear that BIPOC creatives were not equitably accessing funds, landing key roles, authoring content or owning intellectual property. But our lived experiences were being dismissed and our pleas met with disregard.

We needed empirical evidence to bolster our push for change.

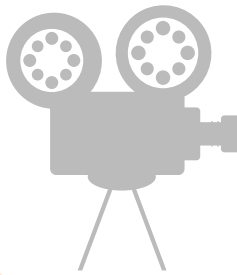
How could we tell broadcasters and funders to include more content made by our communities when we didn't know how little was currently being made? How could we evaluate our communities' participation in the industry without knowing how many of us were currently working in it? Most importantly, how could we measure future change without having a baseline?

The only way to move forward was to be clear about where we were in the present. We needed quantitative data to measure inequity in the Canadian screen sector.



What we set out to do and why we couldn't do it

We wanted to know how our communities were faring in this ocean of wealth, but the data wasn't there.



The screen sector is a behemoth - generating over \$9.3 billion in production volume, contributing close to \$12.2 billion to the GDP annually and employing close to 250K people.*

**Profile 2020*

How much were BIPOC creatives accessing from private and public funds? What was their membership in guilds and unions? How many BIPOC producers were helping independent productions? How were they profiting from the distribution or broadcast of the content they were making? Were our communities part of the decision-making process at the executive and board levels of our industry's institutions?

We tasked [Nordicity](#) to gather data from 2017-2019 from every major industry player - government, funders, unions, broadcasters - and report back.

Shortly after the phone rang to the news that our task was next to impossible. Nordicity couldn't quantify our community's participation in funds, programs, organizations or licenses because race-based data wasn't being collected. The few institutions that were collecting data did so using problematic practices and held information that was sparse, inconsistent and inaccessible.

What we found instead

While we couldn't quantify our communities' participation in the industry, what became clear were the barriers to do so.

1

Harmful data collection practices

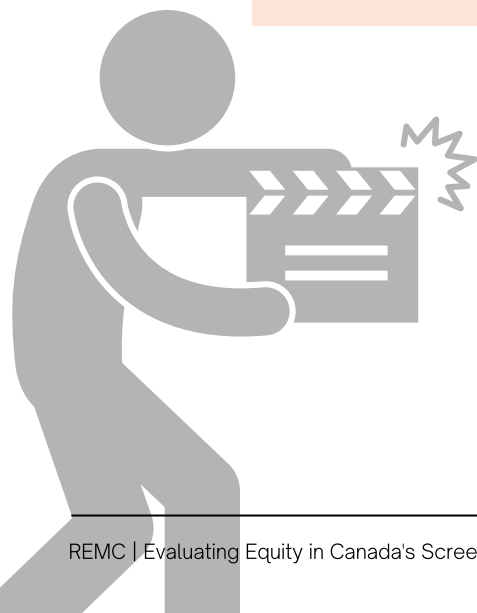
While most institutions lack race-based data entirely, some are collecting information. Unfortunately, many are using practices that cause further harm to the communities they are meant to count and help.

These harmful practices include:

1. Requiring producers to report on the racial identity of their teams versus allowing individuals to self-report confidentially
2. Allowing producers to guess the racial identity of crew/talent and reporting it as fact to meet equity or inclusion requirements
3. Hosting insecure systems to store and maintain privately-collected data
4. Only collecting race-based data from BIPOC people versus everyone, including white people
5. Developing targets without engaging in community consultation
6. Barring community organizations or researchers from reviewing and reporting on collected data
7. Using population demographics as a benchmark
8. Assigning the collection & reporting of race-based data to people with no equity or anti-racism training
9. A lack of effective policies to mitigate false or fraudulent self-reporting
10. A lack of transparency around collection practices

A note on using population demographics as a benchmark

Canada's population looks the way it does because of its history of genocide, colonialism and racist immigration policies. If the goal is to make up for historical under-representation then simply meeting current demographic percentages is not good enough. Added to this is the fact that Canada's racialized population continues to grow, with the biggest urban centre already having a population that is over 50% BIPOC.



2

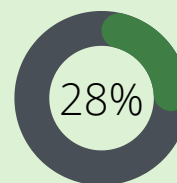
The issue of privacy

Private and public institutions maintain that Canada's Privacy Act prevents them from collecting and storing race-based data. However, while federal institutions are limited in their ability to share data unless granted permission from the Treasury Board, the obstacle is less a legal one and more an issue of administrative directives and obligations. For example, CAVCO, which administers federal tax credits, does not currently collect data on gender, race or any other dimension of diversity. It is limited by Treasury Board directives, the Privacy Act and general principles of program administration that only information to the extent that is essential for the administration of tax credit programs should be collected. Because diversity data is currently not relevant to the administration of these programs, CAVCO cannot collect it.

3

The omission of tax credits

Provincial and federal tax credits make up the largest single source of all funding going to the industry, 28% of \$3 billion (and within that amount provincial tax credits make up 38% of all public funds). However, they are not subject to any equity-related standards, incentives or eligibility, making them the biggest equity omission in the system. This ultimately means that BIPOC Canadians who pay taxes are financing their own exclusion.



4

Underrepresentation in leadership

A quick scan on the websites of most institutions paints a telling picture of the makeup of executive and board level leadership. This is not a quantitative measure and Nordicity was not given any data on employee demographics of most of Canada's screen sector institutions. In addition to information on programming and production funding, it is essential that organizations collect and report on the demographic makeup of their staff, managers, executives and boards.

A note on tax credits

Tax credits have become far removed from their original purpose. Currently, they are expected to be used as part of the financing structure for production as opposed to providing capital to producers between projects to grow their companies. When broadcasters and other entities force BIPOC producers to reinvest up to 90% of their tax credits into productions, it minimizes the growth possibilities for those producers.

An appetite for change

Over the last two years almost every institution in the screen sector has acknowledged the need for change - some turned this recognition into action.

Data collection

Despite the challenges around privacy, Telefilm and the CMF found a way to collect limited race-based data from the distribution of COVID-19 relief funds. While Telefilm shared some aggregate data (neither was able to share robust data points for review), both started to collect data on producers for development or production-funding programs targeting Black and People of Colour in 2020 and 2021. Some unions and guilds have also started to collect data on their memberships, although not all have made this data public.

Leadership

A number of institutions like the NFB, Telefilm, CBC, CMF and ACTRA have hired or are in the process of hiring staff dedicated to racial equity. Some have published equity strategies or objectives. Nearly all organizations have struck committees or working groups to provide feedback on equity issues and solutions.

Targets

Broadcasters have also started to think about targets. For example, the CBC released its initial plan to make independent production teams more diverse. While this announcement has several problematic features, including a lack of clarity around how they will track and report on these targets, it's a step in the right direction.

Persona-ID

By far, the most promising development was the launch of PersonalID, a first of its kind CMF pilot of self-identification which has the potential to develop into an industry-wide system that can be used to collect, monitor and store equity-related data on both content and crews.

While it remains to be seen if the new hires, committees or strategies will be properly resourced or have agency to affect meaningful change, these steps are hopeful. The industry has just scratched the surface but these measures are an indication that change is possible.



Persona-ID
Visit <https://cmf-fmc.ca/persona-id/>
to find out more.

A way forward, starting with the federal government

The system-wide change required to get the screen sector to a place of equity will only be fully realized by specific changes in legislation and policy.

BILL C-10

A rare opportunity is before the federal government with Bill C-10, which could create a route to formalize race-based data collection, set targets, demand accountability and ensure the community is reflected in leadership and policy design.

Mandating race-based data collection

The CRTC, CAVCO, Telefilm, CMF, the CBC and all broadcasters as defined by the CRTC should be mandated to collect, track and report on equity-related demographic data (i.e. race, gender, age, language, sexuality, ability) as it relates to intellectual property ownership, below and above the line talent and on-screen talent. To achieve this, the Department of Canadian Heritage should support and participate in the creation of a national data collection system, similar to the CMF's pilot project, PersonalID. The government should include this mandate in the reform of the Privacy Act and updates to the Treasury Board.

Tying tax credits to equity standards

Federal tax credits are a significant funding source for the Canadian screen sector and should also be distributed equitably. Data collection can unlock a deeper understanding of who is accessing tax credits and can also pave the way to policy creation designed to ensure support for BIPOC companies. Community and industry consultation can recommend the best way forward to modify how tax credits are currently calculated, who receives them and what weights or incentives in tax credit eligibility should be tied to equity standards.

Creating meaningful targets

All broadcasters and federal funding agencies should be mandated through the Broadcasting Act to achieve targets or standards in relation to IP ownership and participation of BIPOC Canadians. For broadcasters the achievement of these targets or standards must be a condition of service for their licenses. Similar targets or incentives should exist for the administration of federal (and provincial) tax credits. These targets or standards should be developed in consultation with community members.

Ensuring representational leadership

Senior BIPOC employees in the public service (specifically at the Department of Canadian Heritage, the CMF, Telefilm, the National Film Board, and the CRTC) should be hired and included in senior management to oversee the implementation of data collection, equity policies and programs in support of BIPOC creators and companies. The Act should also make the hiring of staff in similar roles in all funded agencies (i.e. CBC, CMF) as a condition of their contribution agreements.

The federal government holds both the burden of responsibility and the key to support equity, not only in the screen sector, but for all facets of Canadian life. The REMC envisions that this could take form through the creation of an Equity Act and Office, tasked with bringing equity into sharp focus by mandating and tracking data collection, targets, representation in governance and community consultation. This could be led by the Minister of Housing, Diversity and Inclusion with support from the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and President of the Treasury Board. If change is to happen in a meaningful and lasting way, equity must be drafted into the framework of all government branches of education, health, immigration, justice, etc.

A note on provincial, territorial and municipal governments

Other levels of government should also ensure they have relevant equity policies to address race-based data collection, tax credit reform, targets and representational leadership. Provinces should especially take note as they contribute large sums to independent productions.



The role of funders, broadcasters and other industry players

While the slow workings of government unfold, there is pressing and immediate work to be done by all screen sector players. The REMC recommends the following:

Data collection

All industry stakeholders should immediately stop using harmful data collection practices as outlined above. Instead, they should finance and use a national data collection system to monitor and report on content funding. For broadcasters, this would include tracking and reporting on content co-produced, licensed or acquired for linear and digital platforms. Festivals should monitor and track the ownership and creators of the content they program. Unions and guilds should monitor the diversity of their members and encourage members to sign up for an ID number through the national data collection system.

Ownership of intellectual property

Organizations should start using IP ownership by BIPOC creators as a metric of success as it is directly linked to authorship, unlocks access to funding and paves the way for company growth and stabilization. Policies around ownership must go beyond mandating a set percentage of company shares to BIPOC members but must also work to place BIPOC talent in meaningful decision-making positions.

Targets

Funders and broadcasters should set targets, incentives or standards in relation to the IP ownership and participation of BIPOC Canadians in their funded and/or broadcasted content as well as the representation of creatives and on-screen talent. Festivals should set targets for film programming as well as industry programming. Unions and guilds should create pathways and/or incentives for BIPOC members to join and participate in membership. For all stakeholders, targets and standards should always be informed by community consultation.

Staff & Leadership

Organizations should hire and retain equity and sovereignty-seeking employees in senior positions and on boards of directors to oversee the implementation of equity practices, data collection, policies and programs. Festivals, guilds and unions should ensure the hiring and retention of senior BIPOC employees to oversee the implementation of programming, membership and equity policies.

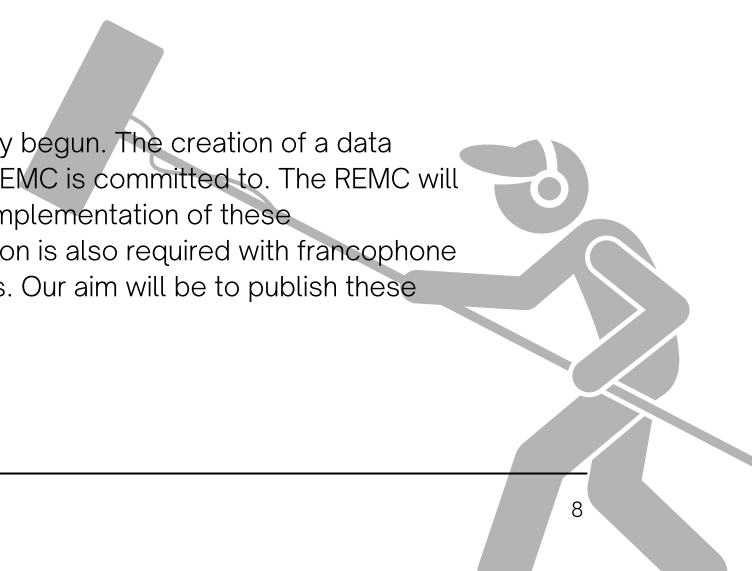
What our communities are saying

In order to further inform these recommendations, the REMC started consultations with BIPOC producers and organizational leaders around the topics related to data collection and funding disbursement to BIPOC communities. While there wasn't universal agreement on all the details, the following ideas reached broad consensus:

- 1 Race based data-collection is vital to the goal of equity
- 2 Harmful data-collection practices must cease immediately
- 3 A single data system to store and manage data is preferable, with the caveat that self-identification practices need to be further explored by community
- 4 Data needs to be readily available to, and easily accessible by, BIPOC communities
- 5 Further research and consultation with BIPOC communities around the creation of targets, quotas and standards is required

Next steps

The promise of equity in Canada's screen sector has only begun. The creation of a data collection system will be a multi-year process that the REMC is committed to. The REMC will continue to consult with BIPOC communities about the implementation of these recommendations and best practices. Further consultation is also required with francophone communities, as well as digital and interactive producers. Our aim will be to publish these findings and more at the end of 2023.



Racial Equity Media Collective

The REMC is a national not-for-profit organization committed to equity for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) creators in Canada's film, television, and digital media industries. Fueled by research and rooted in community engagement, the REMC's mission is to remove barriers to access and increase the production, export and sustainability of BIPOC content and BIPOC-led production companies.



Nordicity

Nordicity helps governments make better policy and deliver better services, companies grow and make smart investments, and all our clients make informed, evidence-based decisions. We give our clients the tools they need to adapt, evolve, and thrive in an ever-changing market. Nordicity is a group of professionals with diverse backgrounds and deep knowledge in their respective fields. In addition to our core team, we draw on our extensive network of associates and partners who add local experience and subject matter expertise.



Inspirit

Inspirit Foundation is a public foundation based in Toronto, Ontario. We promote inclusion and pluralism through media and arts, support for young content creators, and impact investing—specifically addressing discrimination based on ethnicity, race, or religion.



Read the full report at www.re-mc.org/research

E: admin@re-mc.org

