Review of the Arctic Indigenous Audiovisual Sector in Canada

Executive Summary of Final Report to the Arctic Indigenous Film Fund by Olsberg•SPI



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Study Overview

International screen sector consultancy Olsberg • SPI ("SPI") was commissioned by the International Arctic Indigenous Film Fund ("AIFF") to provide an in-depth and comprehensive review of the Arctic audiovisual sector in Canada and across Arctic borders (the "Study").

The Study was commissioned primarily to gather data and insight on the challenges that Arctic Indigenous creators are facing in the audiovisual sector, as well as the opportunities. The mandate included making recommendations for improvements in response to a review of challenges facing the sector. Limited research has been conducted in this area to date, so this Study presents as a relatively new area of enquiry.

In conducting this review, the Study explores the following key focus areas:

- Current pattern and spread of audiovisual activity across the region
- Existing support infrastructure for Arctic Indigenous audiovisual creators, including key gaps
- Key limiting factors hindering Arctic Indigenous audiovisual creators from developing creatively and commercially
- Opportunities (regional, national, and international) available to the Arctic Indigenous audiovisual sector
- Interventions needed to overcome challenges and connect the sector to current and future opportunities.

The Study outlines strategic recommendations to the AIFF and other stakeholders in relation to future opportunities and approaches that might be employed to support sector growth. This primarily relates to the Indigenous audiovisual sector in the Canadian Arctic region, but also extends to the wider Arctic region where relevant.

The Arctic Indigenous homeland is large, covering the whole of the circumpolar Arctic from Alaska, Greenland, Sweden, Finland, and Norway to Russia. There are many Indigenous groups within the Arctic homeland which have their own languages, traditions, and livelihoods. Indigenous people in the Arctic have a very strong connection to the land, and their traditions and way of living are strongly present in their storytelling.

Nunavut is the production hub for the Canadian Arctic region. This is the main focus of this Study, along with some analysis of Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The Study focuses primarily on the Canadian Arctic region and the Indigenous audiovisual sector within this region.

This is the Study's executive summary report, providing an overview of the key research findings and recommendations to the AIFF. The full report provides additional context and research.

1.2. Our Approach

The Study was conducted over a five-month period, from May to September 2023, and utilized a combination of primary and secondary research methods. These included:

- A review of 34 reports, studies, articles, and other documents
- 16 one-to-one confidential consultations
- A survey of 13¹ active Indigenous filmmakers
- Ongoing discussions with AIFF executives.

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¹ The survey reached 13 active filmmakers in the region. This sample size should be seen as illustrative rather than fully representative of the wider Indigenous creators from the Canadian Arctic region.

Key Findings of Study 1.3.

1.3.1. Key Opportunities

Through extensive desk research and consultations, the following key opportunities were identified.

- The Arctic Indigenous audiovisual sector has significant potential and opportunity for growth, and the AIFF is ideally placed to drive this opportunity because of its unique place within the sector landscape
- There is an increasing appetite across the world for Indigenous content and unheard stories. This provides a major opportunity for the Arctic Indigenous sector in Canada, and the AIFF
- Audiovisual production is starting to create valuable commercial and cultural value for Indigenous filmmakers involved in production and distribution
- Audiovisual content is a powerful medium for communicating challenges related to the effects of climate change in the Arctic region
- Progress with wider Truth and Reconciliation work² is directly linked to progress in the Arctic audiovisual sector in Canada concerning policy and recognizing Arctic Indigenous rights
- There is an opportunity for greater capacity through improved partnerships, by joining up previously isolated Arctic Indigenous filmmakers to audiovisual activity in the region. The AIFF's partnership with other Indigenous institutes across the Arctic region is connecting largely remote and isolated communities of filmmakers, as well as allowing filmmakers to accelerate content creation by leveraging broadcaster and government-led programs. Similarly, the AIFF's programming is providing training and growing the local crew base.

1.3.2. Key Challenges

A number of challenges were highlighted in the course of the research, many of which are already being addressed by the AIFF and other relevant agencies such as the International Sámi Film Institute ("ISFI") and the Indigenous Screen Office ("ISO"). The key challenges are listed below.

- The Arctic audiovisual sector is a relatively small sector, which currently lacks the capacity to host (and draw value) from large-scale, multiple productions
- Filming in the Arctic region incurs relatively high costs, linked to the current need to bring resources into the region, as well as the rural nature of locations incurring additional transport and overnight costs
- Environmental deterioration and change in the Arctic are posing a challenge for Arctic Indigenous filmmakers, and for incoming productions using the Canadian Arctic as a production location
- Communities and audiovisual hubs are spread apart, leading to additional costs, networking challenges, and largely invisible production activity which takes place in isolation without a connection to an audiovisual hub
- There is a lack of suitable and adequate financing for all areas of the sector including production, training and capacity building

² Truth and Reconciliation work is being carried out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which sits within the Canadian Government. It provides those directly or indirectly affected by the legacy of the Indian residential school system with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences. A report was released in 2015 which included 94 recommendations. Accessible here: https://www.rcaanccirnac.qc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525

- There is a lack of Arctic Indigenous-centred audiovisual policies, particularly crossborder policies
- There is a lack of networking opportunities to build capacity and infrastructure for the Arctic Indigenous sector. This is further compounded by a lack of internet connectivity in some regions
- Training is often unaffordable and difficult to access
- There are skill gaps in key roles, contributing to general crew capacity issues. This means that filmmakers are not always readily suitable for new projects, and experienced / skilled filmmakers often not available
- There is a lack of a cross-agency joined-up approach regarding intellectual property (IP) policy. This can make it difficult for Indigenous audiovisual creators to own and/or control the exploitation of rights in their work. Further, Indigenous creators may find it difficult to navigate transactions in the content market where multiple, non-Indigenous stakeholders often dictate terms of trade
- There is a lack of Indigenous-centered strategies for eco-sustainability in the Arctic audiovisual sector.

1.3.3. Lessons from Other Screen Institutes, Funds and Initiatives

As part of this Study, SPI undertook desk research and consultations with a range of leading organizations working with Indigenous and underrepresented communities in audiovisual production globally. These included screen institutes, such as Canada's ISO; educators and exhibitors, such as the Sundance Institute Indigenous Program and the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival; high-profile film commissions such as Screen Australia with a notable Indigenous focus; and other industry stakeholders, comprising filmmakers, production companies, broadcasters and global streamers.

The following five key lessons examine the work of other institutes and initiatives.

- 1. Need for strong, comprehensive organizational strategies and policies the programs that work best are grounded in inclusive, clear, measured and strong organizational strategies and policies for Indigenous work and filmmakers, both on and off-screen. Examples included the New Zealand Film Commission's ("NZFC") Te Rautaki Māori strategy and its Diversity and Inclusion strategy launched in 2022
- 2. **Need to have an Indigenous-led sector** examples from the Cherokee Film Commission ("CFC") in Oklahoma demonstrate the importance and benefits of building an Indigenous-led and owned sector which is embedded in Indigenous communities. This is a valuable example of an Indigenous-led model with a comprehensive approach which includes a new studio, a production incentive, and a training initiative
- 3. Need for successful partnerships with broadcasters and streamers developing successful partnerships with broadcasters and streamers is key to the development of the Indigenous sector. Through collaboration, Indigenous filmmakers can develop their work and reach new (global) audiences. A notable example of this is the collaboration between the ISFI and NRK Drama in Norway³ where a commitment was made to create a Sámi drama production and a television series for children
- 4. **Need to focus on international distribution opportunities** wider international distribution of Arctic Indigenous work increases export revenues. A notable example of this is seen in the case of Screen Australia's commitment to supporting distribution and Indigenous work at international events and markets

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³ Arctic Indigenous Films in the Spotlight. UArctic, 2019. Accessible at: https://old.uarctic.org/shared-voices/shared-v

5. Need to embrace new technology and formats to develop content and people — working with formats such as virtual reality ("VR"), and mixed reality ("MR"), and in sectors such as animation and video games will broaden the range of commercial opportunities for the sector, by bringing Indigenous people and work to the marketplace. A valuable example of this from other regions is the ISFI's ÁRAN 360° program⁴ which promotes Indigenous digital storytelling with a particular focus on extended reality ("XR") technologies, and often includes virtual production ("VP") techniques including artificial intelligence ("AI") technologies.

1.3.4. Key Recommended Priority Actions for the AIFF and the Arctic Indigenous Audiovisual Sector

This section summarises the key recommended priority actions, drawing directly from the context and the opportunity for the Canadian Arctic Indigenous audiovisual sector.

Work has already started to overcome some of the challenges outlined, as well as to build infrastructure. The AIFF and other relevant agencies, such as the ISO, are already working in various areas such as funding a planned new studio development in Iqaluit, increasing the portfolio and visibility of Arctic Indigenous work in Canada and across the globe, and adopting approaches to deploying new technology and online Indigenous-led distribution models⁵ which support a nuanced approach to the Indigenous-ownership of IP.

The recommended priority actions are broken down into the following seven objectives:

- Developing successful ways of working across national borders within the Arctic region
- Improving access to, and the nature of funds for, Arctic Indigenous filmmakers
- Increasing access and funding for training and skills development
- Creating opportunities for in-person and virtual networking for capacity building across the Indigenous Arctic region
- Understanding and helping mitigate the effects of environmental change on Arctic Indigenous filmmakers
- Developing nuanced policy relating to the Indigenous ownership of rights in audiovisual content
- Developing wider policy that supports the growth of the Arctic Indigenous audiovisual sector.

Developing successful ways of working across national borders within the Arctic region

Context: Arctic Indigenous audiovisual creators report facing barriers in working across national borders. This is mainly because of national funding policies. Nearly half (46%) of the Study's survey respondents report having limited opportunities to work across Arctic borders as either a significant or notable challenge they face in the region. For the sector to develop and thrive, Arctic practitioners need to be able to work across Arctic borders.

Opportunity: Indigenous filmmakers from the Canadian Arctic can further collaborate with their Indigenous counterparts in other jurisdictions to share knowledge, skills, resources and strategies and maximize their growth potential. They can also acquire control of their own narratives.

Recommended Priority Actions:

• AIFF to continue to strengthen existing partnerships with Arctic cross-border agencies via a Memorandum of Understanding, including a cross-border funding partnership

⁴ ÁRAN 360°, ISFI webpage. Accessible at: https://isfi.no/arran-360/

⁵ Such as ISUMA TV streaming platform in Arctic Canada, ISFI streaming platforms

with Canadian agencies Canada Media Fund ("**CMF**"), National Film Board of Canada ("**NFB**") and Telefilm Canada

- AIFF to work with Canadian audiovisual stakeholders to develop a skills exchange program across Arctic borders on large productions filming in the region
- AIFF to develop formal partnerships with international Indigenous-led audiovisual organizations, including the CFC, Screen Australia, and the NZFC to help strengthen advocacy and research work, and increase visibility, co-production and distribution opportunities
- AIFF to make recommendations for funding for cross-border working, highlighting AIFF's unique position to tackle cross-border issues akin to existing cross-border funds:
 - o Focus this funding not just on production, but on people and organizations
 - o Advocate for funding schemes operating across Arctic borders
- Communicate the importance of cross-border working for Arctic Indigenous filmmakers at national and global markets using the findings from this Study
- AIFF to continue wider Truth and Reconciliation advocacy work in Canada, with specific reference to language culture and sovereignty,⁶ and the media and reconciliation call to action.⁷

Improving access to, and the nature of, funds for Arctic Indigenous filmmakers

Context: A lack of suitable development and capital funding is a key challenge for the region, with over half (54%) of the Study's survey respondents listing this as either a significant or notable challenge. Despite recent Arctic filmmaking successes via funding from the AIFF and partners, there needs to be greater funding intervention for the sector to grow.

Opportunity: Increased funding will help filmmakers develop their projects and grow their businesses, resulting in a higher number of Indigenous films being produced in the region. This will contribute to the overall growth of the sector and should improve the distribution and sales potential of Indigenous-made films, especially when distribution models are Indigenous-led.

Recommended Priority Actions:

- AIFF to continue to lobby and work with key national Canadian audiovisual agencies on the following:
 - Make Arctic Indigenous production funding caps higher, and in line with non-Indigenous funding caps
 - Make non-Indigenous funding streams easier to access and more flexible so they align more easily with Arctic Indigenous sector needs; build in greater flexibility for the use of production funds for community engagement, travel, translation, and extra costs of filming in the Arctic environment
 - Make Indigenous and non-Indigenous funding streams less administrative and more accessible
 - Allocate greater resources overall for Arctic Indigenous sector development, including capacity building, via Indigenous-led organizations such as the ISO and the AIFF
- Continue important working group/partnership work with the ISO, CMF, NFB, and Telefilm Canada, to help solve cross-border funding issues, particularly with Greenland, and to support emerging producers specifically

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⁶ Language and Culture: Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Government of Canada, January 2023. Accessible at: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.qc.ca/eng/1524495846286/1557513199083

⁷ Media and reconciliation. Delivering on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Government of Canada, August 2021. Accessible at: https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1524505692599/1557513408573

 Lobby the Canadian and regional Government to help make production incentive systems such as the Northwest Territories Film Rebate Program, and the Yukon Location Incentive Program, more flexible, accessible, and equitable for Arctic Indigenous producers.

Increasing access and funding for training and skills development

Context: There is a lack of suitable training for the Arctic Indigenous sector which compounds crew capacity issues. Training and skills development provision needs to be more suitably tailored to the needs of Arctic Indigenous filmmakers, and expanded to meet the needs of a growing sector. Training is currently unaffordable and difficult to access for many filmmakers.

Opportunity: Greater access to suitable funding for training and skills development will help grow and solidify the sector and build a crew base for both domestic and incoming productions within the region. It will also provide a larger pool of mentors for future talent. Further, strategic and collaborative training partnerships across borders are an opportunity to increase the depth and breadth of the workforce.

Recommended Priority Actions:

- AIFF to seek partnership and support to develop an Indigenous-centered comprehensive Skills Plan for the Arctic region. This should look at both the current and likely future skill gaps and shortages. It should also include where skill gaps and shortages could be addressed via new and traditional adjacent sectors, such as video games, immersive tech, engineering, and craft
- The AIFF to expand its current training and skills development to incorporate the following elements:
 - o Arctic Indigenous-led training, with partners in Canada such as the ISO
 - A collaboration with other cross-border Arctic Indigenous groups, including continued work with the University of the Arctic and others as outlined in an education mapping report commissioned by the ISFI
 - Focus training on identified skills and role gaps such as below-the-line ("BTL")
 crew and producer roles, as highlighted in the Skills Plan
 - Focus on non-formal, on-the-job mentorships or traineeships with partners such as ISUMA TV, Netflix, and other streamers working in the region, and Indigenous productions filming in the planned Nunavut studio
- AIFF to signpost training initiatives available through its networks to the Arctic's audiovisual practitioners, including initiatives outside the region
- AIFF to seek global Indigenous partners to deliver global Indigenous blended learning audiovisual training, including for producer roles and where skills gaps lie.

Creating opportunities for in-person and virtual networking for capacity building across the Indigenous Arctic region

Context: The existing setup of national audiovisual institutions makes networking and collaboration challenging. Process-based activity, such as networking and relationship building, which are key to sector-building, and fundamental to Truth and Reconciliation work, needs to be a strong focus in the Indigenous Arctic region.

Opportunity: Indigenous Arctic filmmakers wish to collaborate and benefit from each other's lived experiences (both shared and unique), resources, audiences, and strategies. The AIFF is uniquely placed to maximize current networking and cross-border networking opportunities. It would bring filmmakers together from different Arctic regions to share resources, audiences,

skills, training, funding, knowledge and experience; and strengthen the sector and help to fill skills and capacity gaps.

Recommended Priority Actions:

- The AIFF should:
 - Seek greater resources (including partners) to support filmmakers and businesses with networking and relationship building, by providing continuous opportunities for in-person and online networking, panels, conferences and events across Arctic borders. This includes support with increasing internet bandwidth across the region which acts as a barrier
 - Ensure that there is a continuation of funding for valuable networking and relationship building conferences such as the Indigenous Film Conference
 - Strengthen existing partnerships with broadcast sector stakeholders who work remotely and regionally to support networking and capacity building in the Arctic audiovisual sector
 - Build stronger formal strategic partnerships with Canadian Indigenous broadcast sector stakeholders to help set up networking opportunities and connect Indigenous producers and content to the broadcast sector for training, talent development and co-production
 - Continue building on and advocating for the wider Truth and Reconciliation work via organizations including the Arctic Council and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ("TRC") of Canada, helping to act as a conduit between these key organizations and Arctic Indigenous audiovisual stakeholders
 - Deepen strategic relationships with imagineNATIVE to tap into global Indigenous filmmaking networks and support them to ensure that funding is available
 - Continue to build a profile for the sector at international networking and market events, including the Berlinale, the Cannes Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival
 - Continue to build formal strategic relationships and networks with other leading global Indigenous screen organizations, such as the NZFC, the CFC and Screen Australia's First Nations department
 - o Build an active Arctic Indigenous film exchange program between Canadian and other Arctic areas.

Understanding and helping mitigate the effects of environmental change on Arctic Indigenous filmmakers

Context: The Arctic environment is becoming more unpredictable; environmental deterioration and change in the Arctic is a growing concern and challenge for Arctic Indigenous filmmakers. It is also posing new production challenges which need to be considered for incoming productions.

Opportunity: Moving image content is a powerful medium for communicating challenges related to the effects of climate change in their region; 38% of the Study's survey respondents reported that eco-activism is a key opportunity for the sector. There is also an opportunity for the wider filmmaking community in Canada and beyond, to maximize the impact of Indigenous filmmaking and storytelling focussed on the environment. Further, there is also an opportunity to address the specific funding challenges in the Arctic, and to make filming within it more sustainable, as well as increase the capacity of Indigenous filmmakers to reduce the carbon footprint of incoming productions.

Recommended Priority Actions:

- AIFF to seek partners and funding for the development of an Indigenous-centered Arctic eco-filmmaking policy document which is led by a working group and includes key national agencies including ISO, Telefilm, the CMF, and the NFB, and other key Arctic Indigenous partners such as ISFI
- AIFF to continue to support the development, production, distribution, and exhibition
 of Arctic content to a wider audience to help create awareness of environmental issues
 in the Arctic, including at the Toronto International Film Festival and the
 imagineNATIVE film festival
- AIFF to lobby funders and national agencies for increased insurance provision in the event of environmentally-caused unexpected production costs which is also a larger global production concern
- AIFF to continue advocacy work in campaigning for wider national, and global climate change objectives in the audiovisual sector with partners such as the Arctic Council.

Developing nuanced policy relating to the Indigenous ownership of rights in audiovisual content

Context: Indigenous audiovisual creators view the ownership of their rights in the content they create as being of high importance. However, rights in audiovisual works can include both Indigenous cultural or community rights, and intellectual property rights such as copyright. There is therefore a fundamental difference between these two sets of rights. Further, retention of ownership copyright is often not typical market practice in some transactions involving the production and distribution of audiovisual works. This adds complexity to the subject.⁸

Opportunity: There is an opportunity for the AIFF to develop a strategy to guide industry practice regarding usage of Indigenous community/cultural rights, and Indigenous ownership of copyright in audiovisual works.

Recommended Priority Actions:

- Strategy developed by the AIFF should take into account that Indigenous audiovisual
 content typically includes two sets of rights: community/cultural rights vesting with
 an Indigenous community based on the usage of Indigenous culture and/or stories;
 and copyright vesting in the creative content
- AIFF to create a document that outlines existing Indigenous community/cultural rights protocols for content
- For copyright, a starting point for the AIFF may be to set out a clear agreed-to set of
 guidelines on the exact rights that are to be retained by Arctic Indigenous creators in
 different types of transactions; and provide sample contracts and deal types. This
 should account for potential limitations, such as the inability of the AIFF to dictate
 terms of trade as a third-party organization; and complete retention of ownership of
 copyright by creators being atypical to market practice in some types of transactions
- AIFF to seek relevant legal and policy advisory, to guide any and all strategies developed in this regard.

⁸ Not all Indigenous content has cultural or community rights attached to it, but when it does, these types of rights can tend to be in fundamental conflict with mainstream notions of ownership as well as mainstream laws around IP, like copyright. Indigenous creators also want to own the copyright in their work, which, subject to the type of transaction, are typically owned by non-Indigenous broadcasters, distributors, studios, etc. This is often considered to be a continuation of colonization and exploitation by the Indigenous audiovisual community according to research conducted for this Study.

Encouraging the development of wider policies that support the growth of the Arctic Indigenous audiovisual sector

Context: The development of wider policies that support the growth of an Indigenous-led audiovisual sector in the Canadian Arctic is a key structural intervention needed for the region, as found by this Study. While policies that support the achievement of all key focus areas are important, the development of Indigenous-centered organizational policies and expansion of existing policy efforts is an important starting point for the AIFF.

Opportunity: There is an opportunity for the AIFF to lead and champion the development of policies that promote the interests of Indigenous Arctic filmmakers, increase and improve representation of Arctic Indigenous people in the audiovisual sector, and create an Indigenous-led sector.

Recommended Priority Actions:

- AIFF to work with key stakeholders in the Arctic audiovisual sector to support them with thorough and rigorous Indigenous organizational policies, and to develop leadership models and strategy
- AIFF to support and/or expand on current policy efforts underway in the sector towards the growth of an Indigenous-led and Indigenous-centered audiovisual sector.
- While developing policies, underlying principles should:
 - Be framed by the wider national Truth and Reconciliation work
 - Be aimed at enabling Indigenous narrative sovereignty for Arctic stories; and creating an Indigenous-led sector.

2. ABOUT THE ARCTIC INDIGENOUS FILM FUND

The Arctic Indigenous Film Fund is dedicated to films and filmmakers with Arctic Indigenous origins.

The AIFF's current partners are the International Sami Film Institute, the Canada Media Fund, Telefilm Canada, Film Greenland, Nunavut Film Corporation, Sakha Film, and the Sundance Institute.

The goals of the AIFF are to ensure that:

- Knowledge about Indigenous cultures, climate change, the environment, and land rights, are shared by means of art
- Building capacity for the Arctic Indigenous audiovisual sector
- Advancing filmmakers' opportunity to produce and distribute Indigenous content by offering funding and training programs
- Promote high-quality film and content projects that enhance cultures, languages and societies of Arctic Indigenous people
- Support cooperation among Indigenous filmmakers.

Further information on AIFF's work can be found at www.aiff.no.

Please **contact Liisa Holmberg** at <u>liisa@aiff.no</u> for further information about the AIFF and this study.

3. ABOUT OLSBERG•SPI

Olsberg • SPI is an international creative industries consultancy, specialising in the global screen sector.

SPI provides a range of expert consultancy and strategic advisory services to public and private sector clients in the worlds of film, television, video games and digital media. Formed in 1992, it has become one of the leading international consultancies in these dynamic creative screen industries.

The firm's expert advice, trusted vision and proven track record create high levels of new and repeat business from a diverse group of companies and organizations, including:

- National governments, including culture and economics ministries
- National film institutes and screen agencies I Regional and city development agencies and local authorities
- Multi-national cultural funds and authorities
- National and regional tourism agencies
- Established studios and streamers
- Independent companies at all points of the screen business value chain
- National and international broadcasters
- Trade associations and guilds
- Training and skills development organizations
- Publishers and conference organizers.

With expertise in all areas of the fast-moving global creative sector, SPI offers a wide range of services, including:

- Analysis and strategic advice for building healthy and sustainable national and regional industries, and recommendations for public policies to support this
- Mapping and assessment of physical infrastructure, services and workforce
- Delivering economic impact studies of whole sector activity or of incentives
- Advice on the creation of fiscal incentives for screen productions

- Helping businesses and governments interpret the strategic implications of digital media innovations
- Business development strategies for content companies
- Feasibility studies, marketing and business strategies for small and large-scale studio facilities
- Evaluations of publicly-funded investment schemes
- Acquisition and divestment advice for owners or managers of SMEs
- International cost comparisons for small and large film and television productions
- Strategic advice on inward investment and exports for national and regional public bodies
- Analysing and explaining the links between growth in tourism and a nation's film and television output
- Providing strategic advice for screen commissions, including business and marketing plans
- Keynote speakers at industry events.

Further information on SPI's work can be found at www.o-spi.com and within the SPI Company Brochure.

Please **contact Joshua Dedman** at <u>joshua@o-spi.com</u> for further information about SPI and this study.



