

# Festivals team up in Regina on short film



*HEATHER POLISCHUK, REGINA LEADER-POST*

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Janine Windolph, president of mispon, poses with a film prop being used in the day's film workshop at Saskatchewan Film Pool in Regina, Sask. on Sunday Dec. 11, 2016. The 2016 film festival celebrates ten years of Indigenous storytelling in Saskatchewan with various films screening in November and December. *MICHAEL BELL / REGINA LEADER-POST*

Drawing on themes from each, people involved with two local festivals teamed up this weekend to shoot a short film.

The Caligari Project — which examines German Expressionism and draws its name from 1920 horror film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* — and *mison: A Celebration of Indigenous Filmmaking* are both set to wrap up this month.

On Sunday, *mison* invited Berny Hi, one of The Caligari Project's artistic directors, to run a workshop that was to result in a short film in the German Expressionism style.

Hi described the style as being born of the unrest and angst that seized Germany between the two World Wars, compelling artists to externalize emotions into the often-dark and abstract imagery associated with the genre.

"It wasn't such an aspect of looking to create a beautiful world or replicate the world in the way it looks naturally, realistically," Hi said. "It was a way of taking what they were feeling inside and expressing that onto all the different canvasses of art."

Hi said The Caligari Project started approaching different organizations in the spring and discovered people were quickly "jumping on board." One of the interested organizations was *mison*.

While it might seem an unusual match at first, Hi noted German Expressionism at its height drew on interest in other cultures, meaning cultural imagery, iconography and mythology found a place within the genre — making this weekend's connection a more natural fit than it might otherwise seem.

"We're looking at here kind of playing with that and using some of the German aspects of Expressionism and the techniques that they were using and bringing it into this First Nations 21st century context," Hi said. "And at the same time, there are a lot of parallels between the unrest and disapproval of the status quo that was happening back then and what's happening now."

Janine Windolph, president of mispon, is part German and studied The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari in university — two reasons she was interested in having Hi show her and others the nuances of German Expressionism filmmaking.

“What we wanted to do was to create an opportunity to have that type of style, but with an Indigenous story in it and with our organization,” she said.

The short film that resulted draws on themes of horror and angst, focusing on the cannibalistic spirit from First Nations lore, the witiko (also known as the wendigo or windigo).

“The story that we created is fictional, but it’s inspired by traditional stories that I was taught growing up,” Windolph said. “We were told the stories about the witiko to keep kids from wandering off and straying too far from the family. But traditionally, we had those stories to keep people in the community and reinforce the benefits of being part of a community.”

She added the witiko is not simply a creature of lore, but is also a name used by a clan of real people (also known as the Backwards People) who hold an important place in society through the lessons they teach.

“(The film is intended) to welcome and help bring our Backwards People back into the circle, so that they’re part of the group,” Windolph said. “The whole festival is about bringing people back in and bringing all cultures in, so that’s why we have different types of backgrounds working on this. And that collaboration is reconciliation to me.”

In true 1920s style, the film was to be silent, relying on set, movement and facial expression to convey meaning. For Hi, the product was expected to be universal, allowing viewers to draw their own meaning.

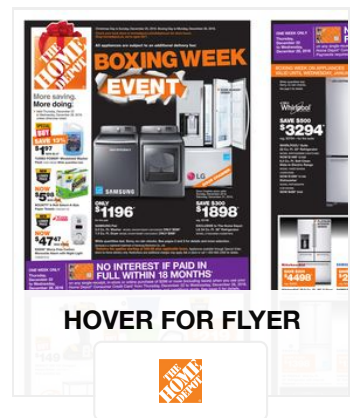
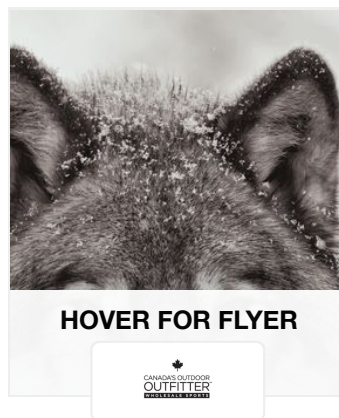
But Hi added he hopes those who come to watch the film — it will be shown at 7 p.m. on Tuesday at the Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative on Scarth Street — come away with a message about the importance of community.

"I'm hoping that people see the message that we're trying to put out there, which is that (of) believing in oneself and also staying within the community and strengthening that community — whether that's the Regina community, whether that's your friend network, or your work network where, if you be nice to one another and help each other, it helps everyone," he said.

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