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## Blackstone nominated for 5 Canadian Screen Awards

TV show about First Nation reserve is produced by Edmonton company

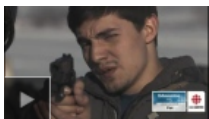
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Blackstone was nominated for five 2014 Canadian Screen Awards on Monday. (Prairie Dog Film and Television)

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Blackstone, a TV drama produced in Edmonton about life on a First Nations reserve, has been nominated for five Canadian Screen Awards.

It's the first time a local production company, in this case Prairie Dog Film & Television, has earned that many Canadian Screen Award nominations.

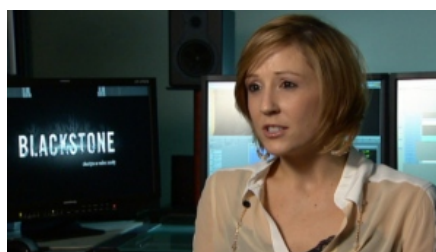
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"It's competing with the quality of these other big shows and we've finally been rewarded with the highest honour," producer Jesse Szymanski said.

Blackstone's third season received nominations for best dramatic series, best writing, best performance by an actress (Michelle Thrush) and best performance by a supporting actress (Cheri Maracle).

The series is also nominated for a 2014 Diversity Award for Excellence in Mainstream Television Programming that Reflects the Racial and Cultural Diversity of Canada.

"To have again an indigenous, aboriginally-produced, directed, acted and written television show coming out of Alberta, to have that on so many nominations is, I think, an amazing coup for indigenous filmmakers," Thrush said.



Jesse Szymanski is one of the producers of Blackstone. (CBC)

Szymanski says the series, which airs on APTN, tells stories about First Nations that have never before been seen on TV.



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Blackstone has also benefited Alberta talent – both in front of and behind the cameras.

“Over the three seasons of producing Blackstone we have seen the numbers of aboriginal youth exponentially increase as they come out for auditions,” Szymanski said.

The Canadian Screen Awards replace the Genie and Gemini Awards, which used to be handed out separately for film and television, respectively.

The televised awards show airs on March 9.

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