

INPUT to bring innovative world leaders in public television to Calgary



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From the APTN show Blackstone. Creator Ron E. Scott and actress Michelle Thrush, left, will take part in INPUT Calgary. *APTN*

There's a puppet talk show from Japan, a Danish P.O.V. documentary about a 500-pound-plus chronic overeater and an Estonian reality series about disabled youth in a metal band.

There will even be an international panel dedicated to attracting younger viewers that has been not-so-subtly named "Don't You F—ing Bore Me."

It's all part of the creative, irreverent, groundbreaking and occasionally strange world of public television from around the globe that will be on display over four days in Calgary starting Sunday at the International Public Television Conference (INPUT).

A quick glimpse of the wide-ranging content that will be on display proves that public television is not just about Downton Abbey and the Beachcombers.

"We're used to the CBC style with commercials and Hockey Night in Canada and all that," says Joe Novak, chair of the local INPUT 2016 board of directors. "Other public broadcasters are very different. They have different mandates and they approach programming very differently. That's what makes it so interesting."

More than 400 delegates from 35 countries — from Japan, to Chile, to Estonia — will be descending on Calgary's Telus Convention Centre from Sunday to Thursday to showcase their wildest, most thought-provoking public television fare. The content will be screened, discussed and debated at various panels, with headings such as Tough Topics: Would You Want Your Kids to See This? to Kill Bill: (How) We Can Adapt Entertainment Asian Style? to Ahaa! or Blaa Blaa? How To Turn New Ideas into Aha!-moments for Your Audience.

"These stories are chosen because there is something to discuss, that's the key," Novak says. "It's sort of like a film festival, but it's television with the question and answer receiving as much emphasis as the program itself. It's really about learning and having discussions."

INPUT has been held in cities throughout the world since 1977. This is the first time in 16 years a Canadian city has hosted the event.

The idea is to connect world leaders and innovators in public television with the local film industry. Alberta producers should increasingly be looking to international partners, Novak says.

Some of the panels will be designed to show international movers and shakers what the province, and country, can offer.

On Monday night, actresses Michelle Thrush and Tina Keeper will oversee a Canadian Indigenous Showcase that will feature representatives from APTN, the NFB and Blackstone creator Ron Scott, among others, to show the world how Canada, and Alberta specifically, is a leader in telling indigenous stories. On Tuesday, a session about working with Alberta producers on international co-productions will feature Calgary Film Commissioner Luke Azevedo and Alberta Film Commissioner Jeff Brinton among its panellists.

"The Internet has really opened up and made distribution so accessible," Novak says. "That's a worldwide market for made-in-Alberta screen productions. We have a very rich history compared to the rest of the world. We are seen as great storytellers, visually, in film and TV. This is a chance for our local producers, because it's open to the public and very accessible, to come and see different shows and be inspired but also to meet other public broadcasters, other like-minded producers to think about international co-productions."

The International Public Television Conference will be held Sunday to Thursday at the Calgary Telus Convention Centre. Visit inputcalgary.com