

Don't sweep us under the rug

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Ron E. Scott works with an amazing cast to put together a poignant show. /image: Dean Buscher

Blackstone exhibits life on reserves

Article: Robyn Tocker - A&C Editor

Canadian television isn't often praised for various reasons, namely due to our neighbours in the south, but there is one series that is redeeming our reputation.

Blackstone is a television series set on a reserve in Canada. The story took about nine years to develop, but after the successful pilot three years ago, the show has developed quite the following.

"The show airs in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. We have a lot of fans around the world that believe in what we're

doing," says Ron E. Scott, writer, director, and producer of the series.

Blackstone has a simplistic premise. Two families, similar to the rivalry families in Romeo and Juliet, live on a reserve where their lives are constantly intertwined. Some of the main characters represent good, while others represent evil, and through this their worlds often collide. The conflicts, Scott says, take the characters out of the reserve and into the city, which is quite normal in any First Nation's community.

"Originally this started as a project that wanted to expose and start a dialogue on reserves and what was happening in them across Canada," said Scott.

After such a successful pilot aired, Scott and his partner, Gill Cardinal, developed the series into what it is today.

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In its third season, *Blackstone* tackles heavy topics, specifically domestic violence and what a modern family looks like. The show displays anything from sexual abuse to addiction to tainted water to corruption. It has also dealt with economic growth in the community and what that takes. Last year, their overarching theme was missing women, a huge issue for the First Nations community. It's not only a series that is entertaining, but it has deep social context not often found in Canadian shows.

Blackstone is embraced by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals as television that's relevant and entertaining, which is a rare combination in this day and age, says Scott. He also says this show doesn't try to create a fantasy world. *Blackstone* is all about authenticity.

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Scott says a lot of people who have given the show a chance have been surprised. It's an entertaining and relevant series. Scott has had people say to him it looks like life on their reserve.

Scott would like to see more series produced by First Nations peoples, but he is unsure if that will happen. Canada, he says, used to host a variety of shows, but that is changing. Thankfully, American television studios are always looking for something new and fresh.

There certainly is an abundance of talented Aboriginal people available to do more shows. Scott pointed out Carmen Moore, Michelle Thrush, Eric Swag, Steven Creemolsen, and Nathaniel Arcand who are a part of the *Blackstone* team.

"*Blackstone* is a very unique program that has a lot of dimension, and for anyone looking to be entertained by a one hour drama, they should watch it. It has a lot of meat, and people will find it rewarding."

Blackstone is in its third season and airs every Wednesday night on APTN.

Written by **Robyn Tocker**



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