

BLACKSTONE

A RENEWABLE RESOURCE

Think “resource wealth” and one thing comes to mind: oil. But then again, it depends who you ask. Ask a painter to name his greatest resource and he’ll tell you it’s his brush – a pianist, her Steinway. Ask Blackstone actors Michelle Thrush, Steven Cree Molison and Justin Rain, and they will tell you their greatest resource is their creative expression and the ability to do what aboriginals have been doing for centuries – tell stories.

“Oral tradition has always been our way of learning...and of being able to translate experiences in the lives of our ancestors. And that’s what we do as actors in today’s world,” says Michelle Thrush, one of Blackstone’s lead actresses. Thrush, who plays Gail Stoney on the show, has taken the audience through her character’s intense struggle with addiction.

While, at times it’s hard to digest, Thrush insists that these are stories that need to be told. “I think it’s where we are at right now with our evolution as aboriginal people. This is what we need to do. Even if some people aren’t willing or wanting to hear some of the stories that happen, we can’t pretend that these things don’t go on.”



Actress Michelle Thrush

Actor, Justin Rain would know. After all, the stories being told on Blackstone are his story. After struggling with drug and alcohol abuse, Rain found his outlet in acting. “I really had to step back from it all the last time I walked out of the hospital after nearly losing my life. I noticed not a single one of my ‘friends’ at the time were expressing themselves through anything creative.”

Through acting, Steven Cree Molison also hopes to demonstrate that no matter how hard things get, there are options. “Being an actor, it’s possible to create dreams and stimulate possibilities that affect the youth and inspire their path.”

“As artists, we bring stories to the people and relay them through our bodies, our emotions and our spirits,” says Michelle Thrush. “And that’s an important part of society. We need to continually fight to support the arts in this country, because it is through the arts that our society will learn and remember who they are.” So while a career in oil may have been a lucrative one, ask the actors of Blackstone to think “resource wealth”, and only one thing comes to mind: art.

Filmmaker and Videographer Trevor Mack

Trevor Mack is a Tsilhqot’in (Chilcotin) First Nations filmmaker currently living in Vancouver, British Columbia. He was raised by his mother Barbara Mack and the rest of his family in the Williams Lake and Tl’etinqox (Anaham) area for most of his life.

Although his cultural work didn’t appear until his graduation from high school, Trevor started working with media, editing, and film when he was only in elementary school. He created video game ‘montages’ and uploaded them to the internet where they would receive millions of views from around the world. He later helped form a freelance video editing, motion graphics and videography group called ‘Viral Design’ where they were flown across North America to produce product promotional videos for companies such as Red Bull, Steelseries and Gunnar Optiks.

After moving to Vancouver, BC at the age of 18 he was accepted into Capilano University’s ‘Motion Picture Arts’ program where he completed the first year and then moved into the ‘Indigenous Independent Digital Filmmaking’ program and eventually dropped out. In 2011 Trevor created a short PSA video for the First Nations Health Council ‘Active Spirit, Active History’ film contest where he won the \$5,000 grand prize.

The next year he took second place in the FHNC ‘Safer Nations’ video contest. In 2012 he wrote, directed and produced a short film called ‘The Blanketing’ which went on to be accepted into the imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, Toronto Independent Film Festival, Vancouver Indigenous Media Arts Festival, the Red Nation Film Festival, and other festivals around the world as well as being viewable on all Air Canada in-flight movie systems.

Since then he has worked as a contract videographer creating documentaries, PSA’s, and promotional spots for companies such as Provincial Health Services Authority, Interior Health, and Thompson Rivers University.



2014 Waila Festival and Circle of Art & Culture

The Non-profit Waila Festival Inc. event was formed by the members of the G la River Business Owners Association.

The bands present were Nashville, The Cruz Band, T.O. Combo and Valenzuela & Company and all from the Tohono O’odham Nation in Southern Arizona. The free event also included arts and crafts and frybread sales from various vendors present. Also present were dancers from the Hop , Salt River and Aztec dance groups.

Funds raised by The Waila Festival Inc. will be used for academic scholarships for students of the four sister tribes, Salt River and an Community, G la River Indian Community, Ak-Chin Indian Community and the Tohono O’odham Nation through the STAR (Sister Tribes Academic Scholarship) Scholarship program