

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Women in Film & Television Vancouver celebrates a year of growth for women in film and honours those who have helped make this happen at the 2017 Spotlight Awards Gala.

Award winners include Valerie Creighton (Canada Media Fund), Heather Conway (CBC), Carolle Brabant (Telefilm) & Liz Shorten (CMPA Producer's Branch)

June 20th at Performance Works Granville Island

Red Carpet at 7 pm, Awards and Gala Party at 8 pm

Vancouver, BC (June 6, 2017) – On June 20th, 2017, Women in Film & Television Vancouver (WIFTV) celebrates leaders for their outstanding work and contribution to advancing opportunities for women with their annual Spotlight Awards™. Presented since 1999, the Spotlight Awards™ have brought together the BC Film community to celebrate the outstanding achievements of women in screen-based media.

This year's award recipients are **Liz Shorten, Tara Armstrong, Maja Aro, Karin Lee, Meg Thornton, Mark Leiren-Young, Paul Armstrong, Shauna Johannesen, Brianne Nord-Stewart, Lucia Cheung, Valerie Creighton, Heather Conway, & Carolle Brabant**. Our award recipients have shown outstanding dedication, effort and ability behind the scenes, or behind the camera, and have made a significant impact on the screen-based media industry as leaders in their field and as advocates for women in the industry. WIFTV is proud to celebrate their contributions.

This year's jury, who had the demanding task of selecting the recipients from a wealth of strong nominations, included Shauna Hardy Mishaw (Executive Director, Whistler Film Festival), Cindy Leaney (Producer and Director at Voyage Media Productions), and Doreen Manuel (Filmmaker and Coordinator of the Independent Indigenous Filmmaking Program at Capilano University).

Denise Jones from the internationally renowned comedy improv group, Vancouver TheatreSports League will emcee the 2017 Spotlight Awards™ Gala. Known for their innovative and highly theatrical improv stylings, the evening is sure to be full of laughter and celebration.

WIFTV is grateful for the support we receive from the community who make this awards gala possible: Capilano University, Deluxe's Encore Vancouver, DGC BC, Finalé Post Production, Lark Productions, Matrix Production Services, On Set Head Sets, Please Adjust Your Set, Teamsters Union Local 155, Thunderbird Entertainment, Troika Productions, Wendy D Photography

Tickets are on sale now at womeninfilm.ca!

Spotlight Award Winners 2017

Thunderbird Entertainment/ Lark Productions Woman of the Year - Liz Shorten (CMPA)

This award is presented to an industry leader who has achieved significant success and who has created opportunities for other women in the industry.

Liz Shorten, Senior Vice President, Operations and Member Services CMPA BC Producers Branch, has worked in a wide range of leadership roles over the past twenty years, building the film, television and digital media sectors in BC. In all of her work, she has been a constant champion and advocate for gender equity in our industry. In her current role at the CMPA-BC, Liz advocates for BC companies, creates policies and strategies to assist in industry growth and organizes industry and export development initiatives. Liz also serves on the board of the national research organization, Women in View, and is a past recipient of a Women in Film & Television Vancouver Award in honour of her work supporting women in the film and television industry in BC and was recently named an Industry Champion by the Whistler Film Festival.

DGC BC Artistic Achievement Award - Tara Armstrong (*Mary Kills People*)

This award honours a screen-based media artist (i.e. writer, director, producer, editor, director of photography or performer) who has created an outstanding recent work or a significant body of work.

Tara Armstrong attended UBC's Creative Writing Program where she created and wrote *Mary Kills People*, her original pilot/series about a doctor running an illegal assisted suicide business. It was produced as a six-part event series by Corus/Global, with Lifetime Television coming on board in the US. The series was critically acclaimed and has been renewed for a second season. *Mary Kills People* has also become known for providing an outstanding number of opportunities for women directors, writers and producers. Tara has also written for the series and was featured as one of *The Hollywood Reporter's* 2016 "Canada's Rising Stars: 15 Newcomers Grabbing Hollywood's Attention" and *Variety's* 2017 "Top Ten Canadians to Watch."

Please Adjust Your Set - Valerie Creighton (Canada Media Fund), Heather Conway (CBC), & Carolle Brabant (Telefilm)

This award honours a person or organization that has made a major contribution to promoting gender equality in film, television or screen-based media.

Heather Conway (Executive Vice-President of English Services - CBC)

Heather Conway is responsible for all of CBC/Radio-Canada's English-language services, including CBC Television, CBC Radio One, CBC Radio 2, CBC News Network, CBC.ca, documentary and digital operations.

In November 2016, Heather announced the CBC's Breaking Barriers Film Fund to support historically underrepresented filmmakers to access financing and have their voices heard. The Breaking Barriers Film Fund helps finance English language feature films that are written or directed by Canadian Women, Indigenous persons, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. "We are striving to make a meaningful difference by supporting underrepresented creators directly and investing in their films," Heather explained, "It's a really difficult area for people to get financing, and it's an especially difficult area for the groups we are talking about: women, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities and visible minorities." (Link: [CBC Breaking Barriers](#))

Prior to joining CBC/Radio Canada, Heather was Chief Business Offices at the Art Gallery of Ontario, overseeing an attendance increase of 20%. Previously, she spent six years as Executive Vice President of

Alliance Atlantis Communications where she transformed the business model for distribution and increased subscription revenue.

Valerie Creighton (President and CEO of the Canada Media Fund)

Valerie is responsible for the Canada Media Fund's funding programs and 51 partnerships across Canada and in key international markets. The CMF contributes over 371 million dollars to Canadian television and digital media projects in 2105-16.

On International Women's Day, Valerie announced that the Canadian Media Fund would implement a series of new measures aimed at increasing the representation of women working in Canada's screen-based industries. These measures include changes to CMF policies and guidelines, a promise of gender parity in all juries in charge of evaluating projects, and participation in third-party initiatives, among other measures. In the official statement from the CMF Creighton explained, "we hold the view that female-led stories and ideas are available to our content makers. We believe that the talent and skill are out there. We only need to level the playing field, so new opportunities for women can be triggered. I'm confident the measures we are announcing today will trigger those opportunities." (Link: [Canada Media Fund Initiatives](#))

and

Carolle Brabant (Executive Director - Telefilm)

Carolle is responsible for administering Telefilm's annual budget supporting feature film development and production. Since 1967, Telefilm has funded close to 6200 feature film productions and invested 3.3 billion dollars.

In November last year, Telefilm announced a five-point gender equity plan developed through consultations with the industry and creative talent. Telefilm aims by 2020 to achieve a balanced production portfolio (at all budget levels) that reflects gender parity in each of the key roles of director, writer and producer. In Telefilm's official statement, Carolle stated, "our goal is to level the playing field for Canadian female talent, and we encourage creators to submit projects directed and/or written by women. This can only benefit the industry as whole; increased competition can lead to better quality projects that connect with audiences whose tastes and interests are changing along with the cultural landscape." (Link: [Telefilm Initiatives](#))

Teamsters Innovation Award - Maja Aro

The Artistic Innovation Award honours a key creator of a recent production or body of work that exemplifies vision, experimentation, and innovation.

Stunt harnesses are generic, which means they're designed to fit men. No one has ever questioned that until necessity became the mother of invention. Maja designed the first ever women's bra harness for stunt flying scenes, which has been used on a major American network production, *Once Upon a Time*.

Maja is a stuntwoman and filmmaker from Vancouver, BC. Her more than a decade long career as a stuntwoman has taken her around the world working on well-known Hollywood blockbusters including *Red*, *The Twilight Saga*, *The Cabin in The Woods*, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* and hit TV

shows *Once Upon A Time*, *Supernatural*, and *Smallville*. Maja recently made the jump behind the camera and just completed her first solo film *Hoods* the 2015 MPPIA Short film funding award winner, which she wrote and directed. As a part of being the winning film, *Hoods* premiered at the 2016 Whistler Film Festival, and is currently on its festival run. Maja was awarded “best director” for *Hoods* at the 2017 Artemis Film Festival.

Capilano University Film Centre Leadership in Education Award - Karin Lee

The Leadership in Education Award is presented to a screen industry teacher who has demonstrated a commitment to creating opportunities for and sharing expertise with female students within an academic or professional development context.

Karin Lee is a Canadian Screen Award-winning, trailblazing filmmaker who has focused on telling stories about women and Chinese Canadians for more than three decades. Karin has also been a leader in educating, training and mentoring women, youth, people of colour and indigenous communities in film production, video art, new media, and multimedia. Her vision as an educator is to democratize media production by giving media training to women, seniors, youth and marginalized community members. Karin is currently an official nominee for the YWCA Leadership in Education Award, to be determined in May 2017.

The Sachtler Ace Wayne Black Service Award - Meg Thornton

The Wayne Black Service Award honours a major contributor to the screen-based media community while working ‘behind the scenes’. This award is named in memory of Wayne Black of Alpha Cine who gave tirelessly of his time and talent to help filmmakers.

Meg Thornton has contributed to Canada’s media arts community for more than 40 years, both as a film and video artist and as a cultural worker. A tireless advocate for the media arts and artists Meg has served on innumerable boards and advisory committees (including Women in Focus and Women in Film & Video Vancouver amongst others) as well as participating on juries for the Canada Council, the BC Arts Council, and the City of Vancouver. She has contributed to the development of Canadian cultural policy through briefs on subjects as diverse as the creation of a BC Arts Council, proposed criteria for the BC Film Fund, and the Gaming Policy Review.

Iris Award - Mark Leiren-Young

The Iris Award is given to a person who has demonstrated a commitment to the promotion of female creators and their screen-based works either through curating or programming or through print and online media sources. Named after the Greek mythological figure Iris, associated with communication, messages, and new endeavors.

As a journalist working for The Hollywood Reporter, Maclean’s, The Georgia Straight, TV Week, and dozens of other publications, Mark has profiled hundreds of BC’s best female directors, writers and performers. When he was hired as editor of Reel West, he immediately hired two female columnists - Diane Wild and Erica Hargreave—and instituted a policy of ensuring that at least 50 percent of his cover stories featured BC women in film and television. As a writer for film and TV he has created characters that helped earn Leo nomination for Ellie Harvey and Tricia Helfer (both for his episode of The Collector, The VJ) and a Leo win for Jillian Fargey (for The Green Chain). When The Green Chain, which he wrote

and directed, debuted at VIFF, Jillian Fargey received a special mention for her performance from Women in Film and Television. He recently completed his first short documentary - a tribute to one of BC's most vital matriarchs - Granny, The Hundred Year Old Whale. His cinematographer—making her debut—Rayne Benu.

Finalé Post Production Honoured Friend Award - Paul Armstrong

The Honoured Friend Award recognizes a person who has played a significant role in supporting women in the industry and promoting the goals of WIFTV.

Paul Armstrong, a member of Women in Film since 2000, is an award-winning Vancouver film, television and theatre producer with more than 45 film producing credits. Paul is the founder, programmer, and producer of The Celluloid Social Club, a monthly screening of short films, and is the Executive Director of Crazy8s, the 8-day filmmaking challenge that has been running since 1999. Paul is currently in production with the CBC Documentary Channel on the feature doc *Cool Daddy*.

Matrix Production Services Image Award - Shauna Johannesen

The Image Award is awarded to a director, writer, editor or director of photography of an outstanding short work that shows production excellence or a unique, visionary approach.

Shauna is an award-winning writer, actor, and filmmaker. Her plays have been produced across Western Canada and her short film *Bedbugs: A Musical Love Story* garnered numerous accolades on the festival circuit, including Leo Awards for Screenwriting and Best Female Actor. Shauna's newest play *Common Grace* premiered in 2016 at Pacific Theatre, and her current short film, *Trying*, is already garnering awards on the festival circuit including multiple nominations at the 2017 Leo Awards. Between writing and directing, Shauna regularly graces your living room via your TV set.

Encore Vancouver Newcomer Award - Brianne Nord-Stewart

The Newcomer Award recognizes a new artist or technician, including one who is shifting from one career to another (i.e. from an actor to a director) whose first few works have laid the foundation for an inspiring new career.

Brianne writes, directs, edits, and produces films, web-series, commercials, and music videos. Brianne has garnered numerous awards including Shaw Media's Fearless Female Director Award, The Harold Greenberg Fund's Shorts-to-Features Award, and the Telus Banff World Media Film Festival Fellowship. As a writer, director, producer, and editor, Brianne has established her niche in creating intelligent and awkward (for some: disturbing) comedies about sex. Brianne looks forward to breaking into that damn TV sphere, directing her first feature, and collaborating on more music videos in cinematic places.

Troika Sharon Gibbon Award - Lucia Cheung

The Sharon Gibbon Award honours a member in recognition of her volunteer work with WIFTV advancing the organization's goals. The award is named in memory of Sharon Gibbon, who exemplified these qualities in a career cut short too soon.

Lucia Cheung is an avid film lover. She started volunteering with WIFTV in February 2012 and still volunteers today. When she first started, Lucia manually processed memberships and sent out individualized cards and now electronically continues to prepare our member ratification tables and comparative membership reports. She has played an important role in organizing our festival ticketing and assisted in the coordination of festival submissions.

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About WIFTV

Women in Film & Television Vancouver (WIFTV) is an internationally affiliated non-profit society committed to advancing and celebrating women in screen-based media. We are the Vancouver chapter of Women in Film + Television International (WIFTI), which counts more than 10,000 members worldwide.

Visit our website: www.womeninfilm.ca

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