

WIFTV Focused on Growth by Honouring Emerging and Accomplished Advocates at the 2017 Spotlight Awards

Vancouver, BC (June 21, 2017) – Industry leaders and advocates took to the stage Tuesday night for Women in Film & Television Vancouver’s annual Spotlight Awards Gala. Over 200 guests gathered at Performance Works to honour those who are currently shaping the screen-based media landscape. The theme of the evening was growth, and while growth for women in screen-based media has been a slow process, we saw last night that the roots dig deep.

It’s been an amazing year for women working in screen-based media all across Canada, as was evident by last night’s award recipients. Guests joined us from far and wide including, Valerie Creighton, president and CEO of the Canadian Media Fund, from Ottawa, as well as Tara Armstrong, creator of *Mary Kills People*, from Toronto.

Highlights of the evening included a standing ovation for Woman of the Year Award recipient Liz Shorten as well as, not one but three recipients, Valerie Creighton, Heather Conway, and Carolle Brabant, of the Please Adjust Your Set Award for their dedication and major contributions to promoting gender equity. Congratulations to all of the winners of the night: 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, and Carolle Brabant.

Spotlight Award Winners 2017

Thunderbird Entertainment/ Lark Productions Woman of the Year – Liz Shorten (CMPA BC Producers Branch)

This award is presented to an industry leader who has achieved significant success and who has created opportunities for other women in the industry. Over the past 20 years, Liz has been working in a variety of leadership roles to build up the film, television, and digital media sectors in British Columbia.

Please Adjust Your Set – Valerie Creighton (President and CEO of the Canada Media Fund), Heather Conway (Executive Vice-President of English Services – CBC), and Carolle Brabant (Executive Director – 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. These three women have each played an important role in all of the amazing announcements we have received that have made it such a great year for Canadian women in the industry:

- On International Women’s Day, March 8, 2017, Valerie announced that the Canada Media Fund (CMF) 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 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.
- Carolle Brabant, Executive Director of Telefilm Canada, reviewed their five-point plan announced in November 2016, after 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.

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 is committed to creating quality television about powerful women. And with *Mary Kills People* she’s created not only a world about a complex and dangerous female character, she’s created mainstream employment for women in our industry. Tara believes in telling stories about women, by women, for women.

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 and it has been used on a major American network production, *Once Upon a Time*.

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. A Canadian Screen award-winning and trailblazing filmmaker focusing on stories about women and Chinese Canadians for over 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 multi-media. Karin's vision as an educator is to democratize media production by giving media training to women, seniors, youth and marginalized community members.

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. In the Fall of 1983 she was hired by Cineworks Independent Filmmakers Society and took it from its roots as a burgeoning, grassroots film co-op on West Pender and Richards to the vibrant, multifaceted media arts organization it is today.

Bron 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.

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. As a Producer and passionate filmmaker, Paul has tirelessly supported women in film throughout his career. Paul has not only been a member of WIFTV since 2000 but his commitment to supporting women in screen-based media is evident in all of the films he's produced, promoted and supported.

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 a multitalented filmmaker who writes comedy in an original style. She tells female-centric stories and presents relationships in a fresh, bold way.

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 has established her niche in creating intelligent and awkward (for some: disturbing) comedies about sex. Brianne is a trailblazer in the scope and tone of her work and that she has a mission that she is following with gusto.

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, and a long time valued volunteer at WIFTV.

We are very grateful to Matrix Production Services, the Directors Guild of Canada BC, Capilano University Film Centre, Teamsters Union Local 155, Sachtler Ace, Vitec Videocom, Encore Vancouver, Troika Productions, Lark Productions, Thunderbird, Finalé, Bron, Please Adjust Your Set, On Set Headsets, WealthBar, Parallel 49, and Wendy D Photography.

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[Award Photo's Courtesy of Wendy D](#)

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.

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