

## A Brief history of the DGC

### The Directors Guild of Canada A brief history

By early 1961, Canadian directors had begun to talk about, and were beginning to see, the advantages of organizing. They were spurred on by the fact that the Screen Directors International Guild (SDIG), based in New York, had focused its attention on Canada as it sought to expand its membership.

Several Canadian members of the SDIG invited an SDIG representative to Toronto to address a meeting of 18 directors in November, 1961. The agenda was to discuss and compare the advantages of forming a Canadian branch of the SDIG or a fully autonomous Canadian guild.

Those present at the meeting voted to form an association to be known as the Screen Directors Guild of Canada with the aims of elevating the art and craft of directing and securing for directors and their assistants a proper professional and economic status. The group also agreed to set up an interim executive to function until a national membership meeting was called to confirm a constitution and bylaws. Elected officers of the first DGC were: President, Sydney Banks; First vice-president, Jack Lingeman; Second vice-president, Lorne Freed; Secretary, Bob Barclay; Treasurer, Bob Rose.

On June 4, 1962 at a meeting in Toronto, the DGC's constitution was ratified and the organisation adopted the name Directors Guild of Canada (to operate fully autonomously of the DGA).

In its first year of existence the DGC's priority was to establish a schedule of rates of pay and working conditions for its members. The schedule would form the basis of an agreement the Guild was determined to sign with all producers in Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal.

The early years of the DGC were devoted to meeting decision makers in Ottawa and pressing them for the financial support necessary to expand and solidify a feature film industry in Canada. By 1967, the establishment, through legislation, of the Canadian Film and Development Corporation (CFDC) was a tangible recognition by the government of a viable Canadian feature film industry and the promise of a better future for those working in it. The Capital Cost Allowance followed, boosting feature film investment, working in tandem with the CFDC.

By 1972, the DGC's 10th anniversary, membership had grown to 280 members. Key concerns during this period were lack of control over the distribution system within Canada and the refusal of the CBC to sign a collective agreement for its freelance directors. Guild president Peter Pearson worked in Ottawa to encourage the government to set quotas and levies that would guarantee the screening and broadcast of specific numbers of Canadian films each year, creating a demand for content and guaranteeing some distribution. In 1975, the two major chains, Famous Players and Odeon, consented to a voluntary agreement to exhibit Canadian films four weeks per theatre per year.

Meanwhile, in 1974, the Capital Cost Allowance was extended to feature film, allowing Canadians the ability to deduct 100 per cent of their investments in Canadian film production and encouraging a new wave of private investment in the nation's feature film industry.

When founding member Bob Barclay became president in 1978, the DGC had 305 members, no money and one full-time employee. There were only 12 signed contracts on file for work done by Guild members. There were regional offices in Montreal and Vancouver and provisions for District Councils.

Barclay looked inward at the DGC and worked to ratify the DGC contract, putting in clauses for directors' rights and rates, which hadn't changed in a decade. He added a pension clause, instructing producers to pay out a small percentage of the budget towards the director's pension. By the end of his presidency, there were 92 signed contracts, 80 more than when Barclay took office.

As the Guild moved towards its 20th anniversary, its first president Syd Banks returned to office and a much more established organisation. The stage was set, by the visionary industry leaders who guided the DGC over the 70s, for the development of the Broadcast Fund, Telefilm and other industry support.

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By 1987, the DGC had grown to represent more than just directors and their assistants. It included production managers, production assistants, art directors and editors and their assistants across Canada except for British Columbia. District Councils across the country were established in 1991.

By 1989, the Guild had grown to 1,426 members.

From 1992 to the present, the fourth decade of the DGC was guided by the vision, stability and programme building efforts of two strong presidents: Allan King and Alan Goluboff. The 90s began with a recession that had a great impact on film production in Canada. Energy needed to be refocused on building the strength of the collective and its bargaining power.

Shifts in the economy led to a boom in service production in Canada. The DGC, refocused on its mandate to service the membership, increased staff to administer a variety of programmes such as the health plan and training initiatives. The DGC also reasserted itself as a lobbying organisation, ensuring that productions with Canadian content were a priority with the CRTC and that the hours of Canadian drama and other representative programming were increased in prime time.

In 1996 the Canadian government launched the Canada Television and Cable Production Fund, and money for the \$300 million fund was partially provided by Canadian cable operators as a licence condition.

By forging relationships with the Writers Guild of Canada, ACTRA and other unions as well as international relationships, King worked to improve the standards and policies that nurture the industry. King led the development of the International Forum of Directors Organisations (IFDO), making the DGC one of its principle founders.

The 90s wound down with two important situations that would have a lasting effect on the industry: a study/report by US interests that triggered concern over “runaway productions” and quoted that \$8.3 billion in economic losses were attributable to this – with over 81 per cent of these productions coming to Canada. Later that year, the CRTC dealt the industry another blow by altering their Canadian Content expenditure requirements.

The DGC continues to deal with the effects of these major actions on the industry. However, the recent November Declaration outlines a clear roadmap for the National DGC and the District Councils to work together to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the Guild and the best service to all members across the country. (See Fact Sheet 1 for an overview of the DGC today.)

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