Creating space for authentic voice in Canada’s screen industry: A case study of “Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC)”

by

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Faculty of Education

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Abstract

Using an appreciative inquiry approach and sharing a reflexive 4-D (i.e., discovery, dreams, design, delivery / destiny) narrative that explores societal, organizational and personal perspectives, this action research study describes a specially designed, internationally respected Canadian national professional development initiative for women screen directors, entitled ‘Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC)’. The narrative traces how this initiative came to be, and within the context of North America’s ‘waves’ of feminism, where it is placed on the landscape of Canada’s screen industry. While foregrounding a well-documented socio-cultural ‘lack of confidence’ in women leaders and in particular in women screen directors in Canada, the study contextualizes the personal ‘leadership experience’ narratives of WIDC director participants while the author makes meaning of her own leadership journey as a co-creator of the WIDC initiative. The author further explores the twenty-one-year evolution of WIDC’s transformation-oriented pedagogical design as she reflects on the positive core of WIDC and asks, ‘What has made the difference for WIDC alumnae?’ Sharing leadership metaphors that offer guidance for navigating a ‘continuum of confidence’ and offering a theoretical map towards transformation for individual women as well as feminist or like-minded organizations, the study concludes with a call to action to adopt an appreciative growth-minded stance in order to create space for authentic voices to thrive in Canada’s screen industry, in particular the voices of female leaders.

Keywords: Authentic voice; confidence; leadership; women screen directors; appreciative inquiry; transformation
For my mother and father who gave me my first opportunities to be a leader, and who gave me space to grow my authentic voice.
Acknowledgements

Reflecting on my path towards this place of understanding, I am grateful for the space to live, learn, and create on the traditional and unceded lands that we share with First Peoples and the ancestors who guide us all on this journey. It is no surprise that the metaphor of a journey is reflected throughout this work. Especially during the final push, when I was literally writing in a vehicle driving from coast to coast, I was inspired again and again by the diversity of the land we know as Canada; such a gift.

Somehow seeing gifts in my own differences, my dear parents, Nancy and Clayton Whiteman instilled in me a belief that I could be whatever I wanted to be. It is not insignificant that my father died a few weeks after WIDC was first piloted in 1997, and my mother died during WIDC’s 20th anniversary year, in 2017. My dad modeled a tireless work ethic and commitment to integrity and fairness: what he simply called good ‘sportsmanship’, and my mom shared with me the value of life-long learning, and service to others. I drew added courage from my grandparents: Leila and James (Jim) Griffin who quietly and consistently supported us all, Lucy Whiteman who always cheered for the underdog, and Clarence Whiteman whose legendary inventiveness inspired in me a belief that mastery is attainable.

My late husband Michael Cutler’s faith in me, even in the face of his early onset of Alzheimer’s disease, inspired me with courage that helped accelerate me along the path of leadership. Our son Dodd Cutler, a steadfast realist, has been a guiding light towards authenticity. Dodd’s long-time partner Andrea Millard commiserated through her own studies to be a teacher, and my step-daughter Taliesin Sanford has taught me more about female relationships than I could imagine; I’m still learning. My in-law parents, and siblings by blood, marriage, and choice have each played a role, listening, challenging and cheering me on. And I could not have completed this endeavour were it not for my dear, sweet husband and newest collaborator Garwin Sanford, who lovingly supported and held a space for me while I laboured through the curve of emotions that came with authoring this work.

To those women who have gone before, to those I consider my colleagues, and to those who will come after: suffragettes, scholars, artists, filmmakers, advocates for gender
parity, inclusion, and social justice; feminists, I am humbled by your courage to share your voices in unwelcoming and often hostile terrains. I am honoured to tread the path with you. I am immensely grateful for the collegiality, support and guidance of WIDC co-founding organizations’ personnel past and present, including the Creative Women Workshops Association (CWWA) Board of Directors, with thanks to E. Jane Thompson during the early editing process, the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (the Banff Centre), and the Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television Radio Artists (ACTRA). The Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) initiative would not have been dreamed of without the ACTRA Women’s Committees (British Columbia and National), especially Daphne Goldrick, Amanda O’Leary, Christina Jastrzemska, Doris Blomgren, and staffers Deborah Strulow, Arden Ryshpan, Louise Chwin; Women In Film and Television Vancouver, Peg Campbell, Gabrielle Rose, Michelle Bjornson, Mary Ungerleider; The Banff Centre, Sara Diamond, Kerry Stauffer, and the first WIDC Mentor Director, Anne Wheeler. The generosity of spirit and allied engagement of esteemed male colleagues also cannot be overstated, including long-time ACTRA councillor and CWWA co-founder Brian Gromoff; cinematographer, WIDC collaborator, (and chosen big brother) Roger Vernon CSC; The Banff Centre’s Luke Van Dyk, Aubrey Fernandez, Tom Montvila; National Film Board of Canada’s (NFB) Selwyn Jacob; and Telefilm Canada’s John Dippong. I also thank Telefilm Canada, the NFB, CBC, and the many valued WIDC sponsors over the last twenty-two years, and especially the more than one thousand WIDC participants (directors, mentors, industry guests, actors, crew, volunteers and Banff Centre staff) whose voices, too many to name here, have all been imprinted on me and have inspired me in writing the following pages.

To my EdD cohort and instructors, it was an intense journey, which I would not change for all that I learned from each of you. I offer many, many thanks to my doctoral committee members Dr. David Kaufman whose expertise with data analysis, and Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell whose first-hand experiences of WIDC as a director participant alumna and past Board member along with her insights into diversity and the screen industry landscape have been invaluable gifts. And I’ve saved to last, my mentor, friend, colleague and senior supervisor, Dr. Carolyn Mamchur, and her daughter Michelle (Mickey) Mamchur. Without their confidence in me, I would not have dared to begin this scholarly journey, and I would not have been able to so confidently share this story in my own authentic voice.
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List of Acronyms

ACCT   Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television
ACPM   Aspects of Camera and Post production Module
ACTRA  Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists
BNMI   Banff New Media Institute
CAM    Career Advancement Module
CMPA   Canadian Media Production Association
CWWA   Creative Women Workshops Association
CSA    Canadian Screen Award
DGC    Directors Guild of Canada
FeFF   Female Eye Film Festival
IATSE  International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, or full name, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada
MBTI   Myers Briggs Type Indicator
PPPM   Prep Production and Post Production Module
SFU    Simon Fraser University
SIM    Story Incubation Module
S&L    Story & Leadership program
SJIWFF St John’s International Women’s Film Festival
VIWIFF Vancouver International Women In Film Festival
WIDC   Women In the Director’s Chair program
WIFT   Women In Film and Television (Alberta, Atlantic, International, Toronto, Vancouver)
WIV    Women In View
# Glossary

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<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Above the line</td>
<td>“Production costs that involve the principle creative elements, such as the writer, director, producer and lead performers” (Moshansky, 2007, p.5).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>“Authenticity (A) involves (i) creation and construction as well as discovery, (ii) originality and frequently (iii) opposition to the rules of society and even potentially to what we recognize as morality….it, (B) requires (i) openness to horizons of significance and (ii) a self-definition in dialogue. That these demands may be in tension has to be allowed.” (Taylor, 1991, p. 66).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below the line</td>
<td>“Production costs that are not included in the above the line costs, including crew, equipment, transportation, catering, and so forth.” (Moshansky, 2007, p.13).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminism</td>
<td>Although many definitions of feminism exist, Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary proposes perhaps the most straightforward definition of feminism as the, “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes” (<a href="https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism">https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism</a>). Some use the term ‘gender balance’, I prefer the term parity to equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filmmaker</td>
<td>“One who directs or produces movies.” (The Free Dictionary by Farlex).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screen Director (film or motion picture)</td>
<td>“The head honcho. The big cheese. The auteur. The director …is the person ultimately responsible for the look, sound, emotional impact of a film. He or she is the person who assembles the cast and crew often totalling over a hundred people to assist them in creating their vision of the film. A director directs the action of the actors, consults with the wardrobe, effects, lighting, grip, art, sound and locations department heads, …the camera(s) in various positions to shoot scenes that will eventually be edited into a complete motion pictures” (Moshansky, 2007, p.32).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Director (television series)</td>
<td>“The Director’s professional function is unique and calls for consultation in all creative phases of the filmmaking process” (Director’s Guild of Canada, 2013. Article DR1.01, Directors Schedule, Independent Production Agreement).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>“Person who oversees all aspects of the production at every stage along the way. The producer locks in the financing for each project, as well as being involved in creative decisions such as script rewrites, who will be cast in the movie, and how the film will be distributed” (Moshansky, 2007, p.90).</td>
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Preface

Within the span of its hundred-year history, storytelling in motion pictures has become an extremely lucrative global industry. In Canada, according to Profile 2017, a study commissioned by the Canadian Media Producers Association (CMPA) in collaboration with the Association québécoise de la production médiatique (AQPM), the Department of Canadian Heritage and Telefilm Canada with production facts and figures prepared by Nordicity Group Ltd, the screen industry as it is more popularly now known, employs some 171,700 full-time equivalent workers annually and represents a multi-billion-dollar economic driver, contributing twelve billion dollars to Canada’s gross domestic product in 2016-17 (Nordicity Group Ltd., 2017, p. 4). Big money is at stake here. In Canada today, even what are considered low budget feature films run in the range of a million dollars.

A creative industry that has a massive global cultural impact, in addition to traditional media like television and movies screened in cinemas, motion pictures can now be beamed anywhere with an Internet connection reaching millions of audiences worldwide. Creative content can be shared virtually instantly on a myriad of electronic platforms, from the largest multiplex exhibition screens to the personal pocket-sized device. According to Profile 2017, “Adults in Canada now watch an average of 28.2 hours of traditional television per week, along with another 3.1 hours per week of television programming online. And we are not just watching video content – we are engaging with it.” (Nordicity Group Ltd., 2017, p. 7). Telefilm Canada’s 2017 Canadian Audience Report indicates that “The two market segments that show the most interest in Canadian content, and the most potential for the industry, The Curious and The Belonging, grew year-over-year” (p.9). Key indicators of The Curious and The Belonging audience sectors include an expectation and or drive towards diversity and cultural affinity (p.12). In other words, Canadians want to see themselves reflected in the media they consume.

If Canadian audiences want content tailored to them, we still have an especially long way to go. According to Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015) the population of Canada is made up of just over fifty percent female citizens, with nineteen percent of the population being visible minorities. Statistics Canada further predicts a thirty percent
diverse citizenry by 2031. Studies commissioned, supported, and or conducted during the last decade by Canadian screen industry organizations such as Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA); CMPA; Canadian Unions of Equity on Screen (CUES); Creative BC; Directors Guild of Canada (DGC), Réalisatrices Équitables (RE), Women In Film and Television Toronto (WIFT-T) Women In Film and Television Vancouver (WIFTV) and Women In View (WIV), to name a few, reveal that nothing near equality, parity or balance of the sexes, nor otherwise diverse representation, have been achieved in Canada’s screen industry on screen or behind it (Coles, 2013, 2016; Duopoly, 2017; Fraticelli 2012, 2014, 2015; Fraticelli, McMillan & Armatage, 2013; Réalisatrices Équitables, 2008; WIFT-T, 2011). These studies expose the facts that comparatively few stories have been told on screen from authentic women’s own perspectives. Women writers and directors have far less often led motion picture productions especially at the highest budget levels, and women are still not yet receiving comparable funding or being hired in equivalent numbers and thus not reaping financial benefits to the same degree as men do. Indigenous women and women of colour are in these key leadership roles in numbers too small to measure.

Dissatisfied with the well-documented slow progress towards greater participation for women directors and my own desires to make meaning of personal experiences as a female leader with three decades of professional experience in the screen industry, I have come to this study as a researcher-practitioner with a feminist agenda for change. Twenty-two years of my career have been spent leading a specially designed national professional development and mentoring program offered to Canadian women screen directors (aka filmmakers), entitled Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC). Between 1997 and 2019, WIDC has carried out a mission to help advance the skills, careers and narrative fiction screen projects of women screen directors across Canada. The story of WIDC, its place in history, and what has been learned from WIDC has never been officially told.

Although it took a long time to develop the central questions of this study, they focus on: What is WIDC? What has been learned from WIDC about leadership and authentic voice? What are possible next steps towards the action agenda of gender parity in Canada’s screen industry, at the personal, organizational and societal levels?
As we begin this narrative journey, I am mindful of the power of ‘naming’ (Bohm, 1970; Friere 1993). While a detailed examination of gender is beyond the scope of this study, I acknowledge the limitations and the often-oppressive nature of binary terminology. Terminology can lead to negative stereotyping (Carli & Eagly, 2016; Valian, 1999). Therefore, I invite the use of traditionally male-identified terms like hero or actor, as if they were referring to ‘any gender identity’, unless specifically stipulated otherwise. I also wish to acknowledge that I was born and identify as a Canadian female. Further, while I have personally experienced the oppressive effects of sexism, I also write from a white privileged perspective. I am mindful that at times I contextualize my authorial voice in the personal singular, as in ‘I’ or ‘me’. Inasmuch as I acknowledge the work I have personally done to lead and sustain WIDC and I aim to be respectful of my leadership role in the telling of the story of WIDC, I have also acted on behalf of a governing board of directors and worked with a plethora of collaborators, and for this reason at other times I use the personal plural ‘we’ or ‘our’ or ‘us’.

Finally, in keeping with the intention of my doctoral program designers I have structured this dissertation in a way that shares three perspectives on the transformational process of creating space for authentic voice in Canada’s screen industry. The study explores the societal perspective, i.e., the larger landscape of the Canadian film and television (also known as “motion picture”, ‘screen-based media’, ‘screen entertainment’ or simply ‘screen’) industry; the organizational perspective i.e., the context of the WIDC program, a national professional development initiative which I have co-created; and the personal perspective, i.e., my own, and my colleagues’ experiences as female leaders working in the screen industry, primarily within the context of the WIDC narrative. Structurally this dissertation also takes the form of a re-storied narrative using an appreciative inquiry ‘4-D’ framework (Bushe, 2013) that describes the discovery, dreams, design, and delivery/destiny of the transformational space of WIDC.

Discovery

Chapter one opens with an exploration of the transformational process (Boyd, 1990; Dirkx, 2009; Friere, 1993; Mezirow, 1990, 1991) and how story helps to express and make meaning of that human experience. I reflect on the ‘hero’s journey’, from the initial call to
action (Campbell, 1989, 1993; Pearson 2001) that was sparked by a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991), through the origin story of the WIDC program as told from the perspective of my co-creating colleagues and me. Foregrounding Virginia Woolf’s (1929) often used metaphor from A Room of One’s Own, that is that, women need ‘some money and a room of one’s own’ in order to create fiction stories, and introducing poetry to the re-storied accounts of homing in on the call to action, I define the early steps of the transformative meaning-making process (Mezirow, 1991) involved in the collaborative ‘co-creation’ (Scharmer, 2009) of WIDC.

I reflect on how WIDC was discovered through an organic “women’s way of working” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberg, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 2003; hooks, 2000, Valian, 1999; Woolf, 1929) process of appreciative inquiry (Bushe, 1998, 1998a, 2009, 2009a, 2009b, 2013; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). I offer an overview of achievements and feedback from WIDC alumnae; evidence that WIDC holds a key a place in Canada’s media arts history and is a valuable, long-standing national initiative dedicated to providing opportunities for mid-career women screen directors to develop their authentic artistic and creative voices and their narrative screen fiction projects. These achievements are juxtaposed with data collected from industry studies and recent developments around gender parity in the industry.

Chapter one concludes with a brief overview discussion about how confidence (Covey, 2008; Kanter, 2006), the silencing of authentic voice (Belenky et. al, 1986; Gilligan, 2003; hooks, 2000; Taylor, 1991; Zerubavval, 2006), and feelings of imposterism (Young, 2011) factor into the socio-cultural landscape of women in leadership. These questions lead us to chapter two, a discussion of the relevant literature.

 Dreams

In chapter two, in order to ‘dream up’ or imagine a generative image of an emerging future for women screen directors and women leaders in general, and to assess what is missing in the current popular narratives about women leaders and in particular, women screen directors in Canada’s cinema landscape, I review the historical and socio-cultural context for this story.
First of all, I temporally link the metaphorical three waves of feminism in North America to accounts of the evolution of Canada’s screen industry. Sifting through literature on female leadership I unpack common threads that link leadership to feminist theorists’ writing about the different ways that women work, communicate and lead (Belenky et. al., 1986; Carli & Eagly, 2007, 2011 2015; Chesler, 2009; Gilligan, 1993; hooks, 2000; Schapiro Barash, 2006; Valian, 1999). Then, I compare theories on feminine forms and styles of leadership with Jungian theory (Mamchur, 1984, 2011; Myers, 1980) and with thought leaders on transformational process (Bushe, 2007, 2013; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Cranton & Dirkx, 2013; Kubler Ross, 1969; Marks, 2007; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009; Pearson, 1991; Scharmer, 2009).

By foregrounding the larger concept of creating transformational space, I explore how silencing of authentic voice (Belenky et. al, 1986; Gilligan, 1993; Greenspan, 2001; hooks, 2015; Taylor, 1991; Zerubaval, 2006), the concept of confidence (Covey, 2008; Kanter, 2006; Kay & Shipman, 2014), imposter syndrome (Young, 2011), gender schema, and fixed mindsets versus growth mindsets (Dwek, 2006; Valian, 1999) factor into the broader landscape of women in leadership.

Sustaining opinions by Bushe (2013), Cooperrider & Whitney (2005), Dirkx (2013) and Mezirow (1991), I suggest that the very nature of transformational change begs more study into its own emerging theories. I argue that what is missing in the literature is how such theories as growth versus fixed mindsets (Dwek, 2006), internal and external confidence (Kanter, 2006) and transformational process models (Bushe, 2007, 2013; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Mezirow, 1991) have influenced the field of the screen-based media industry, and in particular the advancement of leadership of women screen directors. In particular what is missing is the story of WIDC and the women screen directors and leaders who are part of that story.
Design

In chapter three, I describe the mixed methods approach I used to capture and share this story. Coming from a storytelling profession, I describe how I came to settle on a narrative inquiry approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and how, plagued by imposter syndrome (Young, 2011), I questioned the possible over-simplicity of my methodology until I discovered the 4-D appreciative inquiry (AI) framework as described by Bushe (2007) and Cooperrider & Whitney (2005). I explain how the AI approach aptly reflects and replicates the methodology that was innately followed by the co-creators of the WIDC initiative and how AI has been used for organizing the narrative that describes the discovery, dreams, design and delivery/destiny of the WIDC, which is at the core of this study.

I explain that since AI is "a method for studying and changing social systems" (Bushe, 2013), this study does not seek to examine specific technical skill sets, as in the functionality of a screen director. Rather, it looks at the lot of women screen directors as leaders in Canada's screen industry. In particular, it shines a light on one initiative, a transformational process designed to improve that lot, describing its genesis, how it works at its best, what has gone into growing and sustaining it and finally asking the question, 'what's next?'

Aiming towards an emerging future and drilling further down into the question of how we delivered the WIDC program and what meaning it has had for its participants, I describe how I reviewed samplings of data collected from WIDC: director participants' self-reflective observations upon entering and exiting the program (2007 to 2013), along with data from an appreciative inquiry summit and roundtables of women directors, and an online survey of WIDC director alumnae conducted in 2014. To understand the significance of the data, I describe the criteria I used for looking at director alumnae’s subsequent achievements and how they have fared on the industry landscape.

I describe how using my personal experiences as a metaphorical microcosm, I have explored female-centric paths to leadership. I link my own path to those of my co-creating colleagues, the director participant alumnae and generations from the past. I then explain how the 4-D appreciative inquiry cycle is concluded or rather, how it carries on beyond the end of the study.
Delivery

In chapter four, I stretch AI into a ‘5-D’ framework to include a fifth dimension, delivery. I share more re-storied narratives about the evolving design of WIDC. “Every organization was created as a solution designed in its own time to meet a challenge or satisfy a need of society,” say Cooperrider & Whitney (2005, p.1). Initially WIDC was designed with the purpose of developing the skills of mid-career Canadian women screen directors to bring their authentic voices to audiences through storytelling on screen. I describe how WIDC has evolved over its twenty-two-year history while our key emphasis has remained on levelling the leadership playing field in Canada’s screen industry.

I reflect on how introducing Dr. Carolyn Mamchur’s Jungian psychological approach and social learning model into the WIDC curriculum and pedagogy has shaped the direction and accelerated the evolution of WIDC, as well as significantly empowering its participants. The story then traces WIDC’s organic AI evolutionary process as it moved steadily from skills development in the areas of production and post production towards developing story, launching women directors’ screen projects, and advancing their careers. As I describe new initiatives like the Career Advancement Module, the Story Incubation Module, Story & Leadership program, and actually producing feature films through the WIDC Feature Film Award, I postulate the meaning of the space we created at WIDC by analysing the short narratives from co-creators and participants and comparing these with my own narratives. I extrapolate that what have been the best parts of the WIDC program, and what has gone into creating the galvanizing space for women directors that WIDC has become, where it might improve and where our next steps seem to be leading us. These are all woven parts of the appreciative inquiry framework that WIDC organically created.

Drilling further into the question of what has made a difference for WIDC alumnae directors, I offer analysis of survey results from a sampling of fifty-six directors’ learning goals surveys collected between 2007 and 2013. I reveal their aggregated top goals for attending WIDC and explore reasons why they appear to have centred on three key areas: 1) developing their skills working with collaborators (actors and technical crew), 2) exploring their creativity and vision, and 3) generally bolstering confidence.
Moving between the personal, organizational and societal perspectives, I describe how industry recognition of the subsequent work of WIDC alumnae directors, has led to recognition for my own work as the leader of the WIDC program, which in turn has positively impacted the significant and ongoing funding for WIDC from government and industry. I then describe how a growth-minded approach has kept WIDC evolving and improving year after year.

I conclude this chapter by reflecting on the results of the WIDC appreciative inquiry summit and alumnae survey conducted in 2014 by CWWA. Within these narratives alumnae director participants reveal their ongoing challenges to find space and resources to ply their craft as storytellers for screen. Just as ninety years ago, Virginia Woolf (1929) described the need for money and a room of one’s own if women are to write fiction, so too are twenty-first century female story-tellers for screen still in need of the space and those funds. Introducing a metaphor of a continuum of confidence, my analysis suggests that while the concept of self-confidence has been addressed fairly thoroughly by the WIDC program curriculum, more emphasis on building the external elements of confidence, where resources and societal acceptance come from, still need to be addressed.

**Destiny**

In my final chapter, I summarize my findings and return to a stance of discovery. By pursuing a deeper meaning to the story of twenty-two years of single-minded ‘tunnelling’ (Brafman, 2013) towards the empowerment of women leaders, creating space through WIDC for our authentic voices in the Canadian screen entertainment industry, I offer final reflections on the societal, organizational and personal perspectives that have been explored in the foregoing.

In terms of the larger landscape of society’s perspective, I contend that the space created by WIDC was unconventional in its time, making it a challenge for society and the screen Industry to measure its value. I return to view our current vertically integrated 1000-channel, all-access universe, confirming that technology may have equalized the power to share on-screen stories through YouTube and other social media, but it is clear that there is still a selected elite who control the multi-billion-dollar Canadian entertainment
industry – the professional industry. Given the effectiveness of recent consciousness raising and data sharing that has sparked gender parity initiatives and policies amongst public funding and other agencies, I suggest that there is great hope for more steady change. Careful study of participation and funding rates, and how diversely dispersed opportunities for women directors will be over time, will be required to assess the effectiveness of these new measures.

From the organizational perspective, having re-told the story of how WIDC came to be, sharing discoveries in the storied and re-storied narratives of my co-creating collaborators and the program’s past participants, I reiterate the value of women’s ways of working and acknowledge the power of our care-based AI pedagogy; a pedagogy marked by social learning and inspired by a Jungian approach and a 5-D AI framework.

Tying together my own narrative with the multiple narratives of my colleagues and the women screen directors in the study within the terms of the broader landscape of leadership, I summarize how knowledge of the ‘confidence continuum’ and the ‘leadership journey map’ that have become central leadership tools for WIDC are part of a growth mindset tool kit. The growth mindset has been a vital element in advancing an agenda for change and achieving transformative results through the dedicated space that WIDC provides.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that the narrative inquirer is as much part of the story as her participants and study subject (pp. 105-106). Sometimes we are on the outside recording. Sometimes we are in the thick of it participating. From a personal perspective, I acknowledge that I have been part of the discovery, dreams, design, and delivery of what is WIDC, what made it what it is. I have been interwoven into its fabric and it into mine. I admit that, I continue to hear that call that sparked my colleagues and me to action more than twenty years ago. I continue to ask myself ‘will Women In the Director’s Chair die when I finally must ‘walk away’, however now having shared this story I feel more confident that the path ahead is a little more illuminated.

This chapter ultimately reveals that growth-minded confidence, both internal and external, is needed in order to successfully navigate through the barriers to leadership that society has set before the female leader. I confirm that a key source of confidence for
women is derived from a sense of authenticity otherwise known as authentic voice. However, to be valued and have meaning in the external world, that authenticity must be connected to and compared with other voices on a larger landscape or horizon of significance (Taylor, 1991). I summate this theory by defining four cornerstones for creating space for authentic voices, in particular for female voices to be heard in Canada’s screen industry: 1) Space to discover, 2) Space for voice, 3) Space to grow, and 4) Space for meaning. Even if these spaces have been provided for in the early development of the potential woman leader or women screen director (i.e. in family and in school) we still require space for ongoing fortification and confidence growing / building. Therefore, maintaining such spaces consistently over time is also an important consideration. In other words, the temporal gravity that the last twenty-two years of WIDC has exerted on the internal and external confidence of women leaders in Canada’s screen industry is also a key discovery of this study.

Finally, I conclude that the story of WIDC reflects an ongoing leadership journey. Referring back to the grounding of the AI framework, rather than offering a definitive ending to this story, I remind us that it is possible to transform our perspectives of what was, what is, and what may be with each re-telling of a story. I therefore issue a call to action such that the narrative may continue to emerge. I thus conclude with a hope that my sharing of this story may be useful not only in guiding potential paths forward for WIDC, but also for those interested in creating transformational processes for adult learners, for those who have personally experienced being marginalized or silenced, for those who are seeking space to grow and express your authentic voice, and finally for those interested in societal change.

With much appreciation,

Carol Whiteman.
Chapter 1.

Discovery: a call to story

I invite you to accompany me on a journey through an appreciative inquiry (AI) about transformation. The transformation story I’d like to share in this dissertation is aimed at creating more opportunities for women as leaders, particularly women screen directors in Canada. I am a researcher-practitioner and, though I am not a screen director, I am a participant in this story. I have been a professional working in the screen industry for over thirty years. I started out as an actor. For twenty-two years now, I have been a mentor for women screen directors in my role as co-creator and leader of an internationally respected, specially designed initiative to empower women screen directors entitled, Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC). Now I am called to make meaning of lived experiences around this initiative, for the purposes of personal mastery, organizational development, and the hope to inspire further societal change by the sharing of this story.

Transformation: Personal, organizational, societal

While transformative learning theorists vary in their approaches and pedagogic frameworks; some focusing on the societal imports of transformation (Friere, 1993); others focusing on the organizational (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider & Associates, 2012; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005); and others on the individual elements and impacts (Boyd, 2003; Dirkx 1998, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, Dirkx & Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009); they all agree that transformation involves a shifting of perspective. In terms of affecting social change, Friere’s concept of praxis tells us that, “It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection” (Friere Institute, 2018). Taking a more personal approach, Dirkx (1998) argues, “To be meaningful, what is
learned has to be viewed as personally significant in some way; it must feel purposive and illuminate qualities and values of importance to the person or group” (p. 9).

Mezirow (1991) in *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, studying the experiences of women re-entering academia after a long absence, argues that there are ten steps within the transformative journey. He refers to the first phase of the transformative journey as an encounter with 1) a disorienting dilemma. The subsequent phases include: 2) self-examination; 3) critical assessment of assumptions; 4) recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are linked; 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; 6) planning a course of action; 7) acquisition of knowledge and skills; 8) provisionally trying on new roles; 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships and; 10) reintegration into one’s life within the paradigm of a changed perspective (p. 18). I will make further reference to these steps later in this chapter as I share the origin narratives of WIDC. However, as I explore the personal, the organizational, and the societal approaches to transformation I will use a narrative inquiry methodology. More specifically, through story-telling I will use an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) format.

Why have I chosen to share this story using an AI format? Thought leaders in the growing field of positive change, Cooperrider & Whitney (2005) define AI as “a methodology that takes the idea of the social construction of reality to its positive extreme, especially with emphasis on metaphor and narrative, relational ways of knowing, on language, and on its potential as a source of generative theory” (pp. 7-8). AI not only offers a structure that allows this particular story to unfold naturally, AI is also an embedded experience woven into the very fabric of this story. Further, with its emphasis on discovering and effecting action through attending to the positive core rather than the problem-based approach, and even as it continues to evolve as a methodology, we will see that AI is a pedagogical underpinning of the WIDC initiative itself.

What is the positive core and does AI overlook possible negative elements of study? In his article on generativity and positivity, Bushe (2013) explains that AI has been mistakenly associated with a stance of only looking at the positive “feel good” emotions while ignoring problems. He states that “AI is interested in changing the deficit discourse
to a more affirmative one, but again that does not preclude being concerned with problems. It just requires that we deal with them differently” (p.8). He argues that a “review of different studies suggest generativity is required for transformational change while positivity is not in itself sufficient” (p.2.). Therefore, this story is primarily about looking appreciatively at female leadership and dealing differently with the problem of gender imbalance in the screen industry. While it does not turn away from the challenges faced, it is about sharing generative images, metaphors and discoveries that inspire change through the lens of story-telling.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) say that, “life – as we come to it and as it comes to others – is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities” (p. 17). I see storytelling as a relational, rational and even spiritual form of conveying, sharing, and shifting perspective, as well as illuminating meaning. The narrative form offers a space to explore, understand, feel every emotion, to be uplifted, free, connected and at home, all at the same time; whether we are consuming the story or whether we are the ones telling it. Even and sometimes especially, within the tense dramatic, even disturbing and disorienting moments of a story, narrative form offers space to explore meaning and learning opportunities. Clandinin & Connelly go on to say that, “As we engage with research participants and live and tell stories with them, the plotlines under composition are restoried, that is, they are relived and retold. All of these retellings and livings prefigure the narrative forms of our research texts” (p.165). So too, the narrative of WIDC is relived and restoried through this study. As study texts describe the past, they anticipate a changed future.

**Power of metaphor: Story-teller as leader**

Carli & Eagly (2016) writing about metaphors for women leaders in “Gender and Management: An International Journal” affirm that, “Metaphors play an important role in facilitating understanding of social phenomena, organizing cognition and producing change in attitudes…or to elucidate concepts that might be vague or complex” (p.2). Further, they say that by reflecting on the meaning of the metaphors our stories evoke, we move towards clearer definitions of our own identities. In the case of this dissertation, I am
exploring for resonating metaphors and generative images for women as leaders on the landscapes of our personal lives and our chosen career fields, within the organization of WIDC and within the larger landscape of society.

Story-telling has been a foundational element of my personal existence. Narrative storytelling was a fond and stirring part of my childhood. My parents, grandparents and their friends would regularly gather around our kitchen table and share stories over fresh brewed coffee. I was keenly reminded of the impact of this storytelling practice when I was back home caring for my mom before she died. A dear friend of the family dropped by for a coffee a few days after celebrating his ninety-second birthday. The visit unfolded in a cascade of storytelling. The stories were vivid and real. Some of our friend’s stories I’d heard before, had longed to hear again, and others were only now being shared because, “You’re old enough now,” was the sentiment.

Some months later, in stark contrast to our friend’s jovial visit, my mother privately shared some very personal stories with me. Stories from her youth that she’d never shared with me before. While I listened and participated in these re-storytelling exchanges, I felt a profound sense of belonging, like I was being invited to be part of something larger than myself, something meaningful. I was no longer seen as a child. I was being confided in as an adult. I felt a transformational shift both within me and around me, a change in perspective. I now saw these two story-tellers differently. Sharing these new past stories with me, they obviously saw me differently, too. Our relational paradigms had shifted.

Sometime later when I was sharing a dissertation progress update with my sister, I conveyed to her the shift in my perspective incited by my recent story-telling experiences. As we talked further about the power of story-telling, a galvanizing metaphor began to take shape. Just as a storyteller’s voice could guide an audience through a narrative journey, so too could a leader’s voice guide followers, and even collaborators, through a storied experience towards action. I began to see more distinctly how leadership presence is metaphorically linked to story-telling voice.

Early in my research I had begun to explore the nature and sources of voice. Writing in *Women’s Ways of Knowing, The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, one of the most significant works on North American women’s voice and transformation, Belenky,
Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986), report that they “found that women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development and that their development of a sense of voice, mind and self were intricately intertwined” (p. 18). Further, Gilligan (1982) identified the difference in the sources of the female voice as being primarily relational in nature and greatly concerned with valuing the needs of others, at times to the detriment of self. Covey (2004) argues that voice is a combination of the intelligences of talent, passion, need and conscience. He says that,

…voice lies at the nexus of talent (your mental gifts and strengths), passion (those things that naturally energize, motivate and inspire you), need (including what the world needs enough to pay you for), and conscience (that still small voice within that assures you of what is right and that prompts you to actually do it). When you engage in work (professional, community, family) that taps into your talent and fuels your passion – that rises out of a great need in the world that you feel drawn by conscience to meet – therein lies your voice. (pp. 86-87)

Covey also suggests that, “As we respect, develop, integrate and balance these intelligences and their highest manifestations, the synergy between them lights the fire within us and we find our voice” (p.86).

These are powerful extensions of the metaphor, but what if we encounter barriers to discovering our talent? What if our life circumstances have not allowed for the pursuit of our passions? What if the world is not willing to pay us for our work, regardless if we believe we are doing the ‘right thing’? What if we are expected to and do place the needs of others’ voices ahead of our own? What happens to our voice then? What happens when there is no space for our voices, and our stories remain unsupported and are even suppressed? What if it is not just ‘we’ as individuals but rather, an entire gender, race or culture that have been absented from the picture? What happens to our leader identities then?

With so many questions, I had to stop, catch my breath and ask, where was this story leading? Where do I go from here?

advocate a 4-D appreciative inquiry framework (discovery, dreams, design, delivery/destiny), starting with discovery and articulating what they define as “the best of what has been and what is” (p.16). Throughout my life whenever something was troubling me, using what seemed like an innate ethic of care (Noddings, 2012, p. 772), along with an instinct to re-story towards understanding (Clandinin & Conolly, 2000), my mother would simply say something like, “Start at the beginning and tell me what happened, then we’ll see what we can do.” I will now describe what sparked my co-creating colleagues and me to ‘discover’ a transformational process for advancing women screen directors in Canada. What led to the creation of WIDC and what is it today?

An inciting incident: a call to purpose

It is often challenging to pinpoint where a story truly begins. It depends on one’s prevailing perspective and where one situates oneself physically, temporally and relationally (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). In The Power of Myth, Campbell (Campbell & Moyers, 1988) refers to ‘the call’ as the beginning of the hero’s journey,

The usual hero adventure begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there’s something lacking in the normal experience available or permitted to the members of his society. This person then takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary, either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life-giving elixir. It’s usually a cycle, a going and a returning. (p.123)

In the end, the hero is changed or somehow transformed by the journey. Something is either gained or learned, often at a price to the hero (Pearson, 1991). In The Hero with a Thousand Faces, Campbell (1993) also says, “The call to adventure signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of this society to a zone of unknown” (p. 58).

Writing from the feminine perspective, Hudson (2010) in The Virgin’s Promise: Writing Stories of Feminine Creative, Spiritual and Sexual Awakening, agrees that a heroine’s journey is towards the yet unknown, however she sees the path as an inward one towards self-knowing and being one’s true self. Scharmer (2009), and Covey (2008) call this zone of the unknown the ‘blind spot’, although each defines it slightly differently.
Covey considers the blind spot as something that can lead to gullibility in decision-making, and ought to be consciously avoided. Scharmer sees the blind spot more in Jungian terms as that unknown territory of the potential future not yet seen or available to our conscious self.

In 1990, the British Columbia-based performer members of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) had split away from the national body, the ACTRA Performers Guild (APG), which had represented professional actors and other electronic media performers across Canada since 1943. An autonomous trade union entitled, the Union of BC Performers (UBCP) was formed as a result of the split (ACTRA, 2003, pp. 18-19). To some, the split was a final act of independence after years of not being heard. To others, splitting away from the national body of ACTRA was tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bath water, basically throwing away collective strength and security hard earned by actors banding together across Canada over decades (ACTRA, 2003, p.20; ACTRA performer members, personal communications, 1990-1996).

During this time, ACTRA was also transforming from an alliance of three guilds (performers; writers; broadcast journalists and researchers), into three separate entities. Each guild had its own governance structure and presidency, but they were tied to the over-arching governance structure that was known as the ACTRA Alliance. Once the guilds completed their respective separations from the Alliance, the APG became recognized as ACTRA National or simply ACTRA (ACTRA, 2003, pp.18-19). Nonetheless, rather than see ties with ACTRA’s national body completely severed in 1990, one remaining elected British Columbia (BC) councillor, Bruce MacLeod, seeing a constitutional obligation, had held the course and with the support of then ACTRA Alliance President Sandy Crawley, the ACTRA branch in BC had emerged from the ashes and continued on with the business of representing its members (B. McLeod, S. Crawley, personal communications, 1991). With that act, in addition to the quarrel with national, a local rift occurred.

A fierce clash among peers mainly over local autonomy and having a voice at the national table, raged for five years both in the province and at the national level until a
mediated rapprochement was brokered (ACTRA, 2003 p. 20; Kelleher, 1996). The story of the actors’ dispute in BC is a dissertation in itself and is beyond the scope of this study. What is important to note here however, is that the union split, and its subsequent acrimony had created a world that was indeed a disorienting place for many performer members in BC, especially women members who were feeling silenced. Looking back, it could be argued that the whole performer community was in the throes of grieving (Kubler-Ross, 1967). Some were in denial that there was a problem. Others were outraged at being silenced, and still others were feeling powerless. Some members of the community, perhaps most, did not want to take sides. They wanted to maintain a career, so they bargained with both sides just to make a living. Few of us appeared to be in a state of graceful acceptance, and some of us had hope. It was a complicated time, and anyone who stepped forward as a leader was potentially taking a risk with their career (ACTRA members, personal communications, during my tenure as an elected councillor for ACTRA BC, 1991-1995).

In 1991, a fellow ACTRA member, Amanda (Jill) Gamley who had been hosting weekly social gatherings of actors was readying to run for president of a resurrected ACTRA BC Council. She suggested that my experiences as a new mom whose child had been cast in commercials would provide important insight for the council. I felt honoured that I was being called upon to help heal our community, so I agreed to stand for election too. Once elected, Gamley also encouraged me to join the women’s committee she was forming. I’d never really thought about what a women’s committee might be. Except for watching the occasional episode of the television series, “Maude”, I had been untouched by the consciousness raising activism of the second wave feminist movement in the 1960’s and 70’s. However, I was aware that some voices in our local performer community were not being heard, including mine. It didn’t occur to me that those voices could be predominantly women’s voices.

Membership meetings were fraught with outbursts of anger and bitterness during those years. Voicing political opinions publicly, on set, or even socially was too often met with unbridled derision, to the point that one did not feel entirely safe to speak out. Other women actors had also expressed that they were feeling disheartened, disregarded and intimidated (ACTRA members, personal communications, during my tenure as an elected
councillor for ACTRA BC, 1991-1995). Since performers had little choice but to belong to both ACTRA and UBCP in order to maximize work opportunities, the memberships of both locals (ACTRA and UBCP) largely overlapped. The ACTRA BC women’s committee actively sought out ways to bridge the palpable political divide. Inviting all female members to attend the committee’s meetings, the goal was to build community and empower women members to feel safe and heard. With the support of then National ACTRA Women’s Committee vice-chair Anna Migliarisi, ACTRA’s then Eastern Regional Executive Director, Arden Ryshpan, and local BC staff members Louise Chwin and Deborah Strulow, a small group of women members began to meet regularly. We began to gather around us mentors, allies, and sponsors. We began to invite and encourage a community of supportive peers to participate in our activities (C. Whiteman, personal field notes, 1991-1995).

Gamely seemed to recognize and encouraged in me qualities and skills that I had allowed to languish since my high school days when I’d been something of a prodigious student leader. After Gamley’s departure, I took up the reins of the committee. A determined core group of members met regularly. A core group included Amanda O’Leary, Christina Jastrzembska, Doris Blumgren, Colleen Gem, Winnie Hung, Lisa St Don, Glynis Davis, Lois Dellar, and the late Daphne Goldrick, along with our union staff liaison Deborah Strulow. The Women in ACTRA BC (WABC) committee as we named ourselves, made it a priority to encourage each member of the committee to develop and practice leadership skills. We rotated the chairing duties at most meetings, learning and practicing Roberts Rules of Order, which were used to govern our membership meetings. While there was occasional miscommunication and friction, we aimed to hear the concerns of each member of the committee. With a commitment to respectful dialogue and painstaking efforts at consensus building we worked to discover what the committee as a whole was interested in most (C. Whiteman personal field notes, November 3, 1994 - April 5, 1995).

Mainly fed up with the negativity of the ongoing union dispute, the group was looking for ways to transform the situation, to make a positive and practical difference to women members’ lives. In hindsight, having heard a call to purpose, we had instinctively enacted Mezirow’s (1991) transformational process: “self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions and recognition of a connection between one’s discontent
and the process of transformation” (p.18). Working collegially, we explored and planned around options for new roles, relationships and action.

We organically enacted the AI 4-D approach as we collectively discovered and explored the committee’s self-expressed empowerment mandate. Dreaming about what we were being called upon to do eventually led us to design and deliver a series of public panel discussions to showcase women who had ‘made it’ as leaders in the screen industry (ACTRA British Columbia, media release, November 14, 1994). We wanted to get to know women who had become experts in their chosen career areas. We were looking for ways to inspire women to take control of their own destinies. We thought it would be helpful to hear women share their stories of finding their own pathways to success. It simply made sense to us that offering up exposure to role models might provide tangible examples of what was working for these high achieving women. We expected their personal stories of success would inspire, instruct and give our members hope that they could replicate these paths to achievement and success in their own ways (C. Whiteman, personal field notes, November 3, 1994-April 5, 1995). We seemed to instinctively sense, as Kubler-Ross (1967) describes in *On Death and Dying*, that the feeling of hope is an over-arching element in successfully navigating through the grieving process.

Acknowledging and acquiring skills and knowledge to implement our plan (Mezirow, 1991, p. 18), we created a list of job categories and a corresponding list of women working in the screen industry who had achieved notable levels of success in their fields. We reached out to these women and invited them to share their career journeys with eager audiences of local female ACTRA members. It was not so challenging to find a successful female actor. We also thought about who was doing innovative work in our community. Lesley Ewen was invited to share her story of being a woman of colour navigating a successful acting career. Writer, Nancy Isaak; casting director, the late Trish Robinson; Pamela Hawthorne, Telefilm Canada; union advocate Jan O'Brien chair Women's Right's Committee, BC Federation of Labour; and human rights advocate Susan O'Donnell also shared their career path insights, and their scans of the industry landscape for women. O'Donnell spoke about finding empowerment by knowing our human rights, and National ACTRA Women's Committee chair Diana Platts spoke about a Professional Women Performers survey being conducted by ACTRA on women
members’ experiences in the industry, highlighting issues around harassment and lack of work opportunities, as well as issues around pay equity (ACTRA, 1994). BC’s Film Commissioner at the time, Diane Neufeld readily accepted the invitation to speak to our assembled group. We didn't know why at the time, but it was most challenging to locate a successful working female screen director and even more challenging to find even one local female cinematographer. We invited filmmaker Sandi Wilson (*My American Cousin*) to speak about directing. We finally located a female underwater director of photography, Pauline Heaton who spoke about the lack of women in the camera department in the industry and how finding a niche that made her uniquely qualified helped her move forward in her career (C. Whiteman, personal field notes, November 3, 1994 - April 15, 1995).

Over the course of three separate evenings, scheduled a few months apart, these women told their inspiring stories to packed audiences in increasingly larger convention rooms at the Hotel Vancouver. Seeing the interest and enthusiasm after the first session, the committee decided to open the discussions to the public. Over one hundred participants attended the final session in a small ballroom at the Hotel Vancouver. What happened at the end of those panel discussions started our ACTRA BC women’s committee on a path that led to the discovery of a series of generative images that ultimately inspired the creation of the Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) initiative (C. Whiteman, personal field notes, November 3, 1994 - April 15, 1995).

AI theorists Cooperrider & Whitney (2005), say that discovery is about “Mobilizing the whole system by engaging all stakeholders in the articulation of strengths and best practices. Identifying: The best of what has been and what is” (p.16). Bushe (2013) argues that generativity, or the discovery of a new way of seeing or operating in the world, comes about within a context of meaning-making metaphors, images, or storytelling. In her lecture to our doctoral program cohort, Carolyn Mamchur referred to this beginning stage of the creative process as, ‘discovering the subject’ (C. Mamchur, lecture, September 2011). These were all steps that the WABC committee took as part of our committee’s organically generative process.
Discovering a first generative image

At the final panel discussion session, the WABC committee asked our audience what they would like us to do next. A simple reductive sorting exercise was undertaken. Key topics were identified. The audience were given three stickers each and asked to place a sticker beside the topics they felt were most important. We then distilled all the votes into super headings that included: more roles for women, leadership training, develop more scripts with better roles for women, reach out globally – make noise (C. Whiteman, personal field notes, March 13, 1995).

After performing a simple open coding process, it was clear to us, as we had suspected, that our audience, primarily made up of female performers, wanted more opportunities to be full participants in the screen industry community. They wanted more work opportunities. They wanted to develop professionally. They wanted whatever we offered next to be high profile and practical. They wanted it to be about ‘levelling the playing field’ and they didn’t want it to be negative, not about bashing men (C. Whiteman personal field notes, March 13, 1995).

When the reporting out was completed, and the meeting was wrapping up, then president of Vancouver Women In Film and Video (later renamed Women In Film and Television Vancouver (WIFTV)), Michelle Bjornson came up to me and introduced herself. She suggested that WIFTV would be very interested in collaborating with our WABC committee. Bjornson’s outreach presented a welcomed opportunity, and we kept the lines of communications open, however at that time our committee was focused on the lot of our members: women performers (M. Bjornson, personal communication, March 13, 1995).

Inspired by the feedback and our encouraging experiences with the panel discussions, our committee decided to do another brainstorm around the idea of creating more and better roles for women. “Let’s go straight to the source,” someone suggested. By going to the source of the power behind movie making we deduced that we would be more apt to influence actual change. Who would be on the top of the food chain of power in the screen industry, we asked ourselves? We reasoned that the voice that generates the story certainly held power. From the actor’s perspective we naively thought that the
most powerful voice in movie making was that of the screenwriter – the storyteller who creates the characters in the stories told on screen (C. Whiteman, personal field notes April 1995).

“What if we brought in a cracker-jack woman screenwriter to do a master class for women?” The idea of mentorship came from Daphne Goldrick who had become our group’s elder after Gamley’s departure. Goldrick had been at the vanguard of the women’s movement in Canadian theatre representing Canada and women performers at international conferences through the 1980’s. She proposed the idea in her usual infectiously enthusiastic way. It seemed brilliant! We could workshop scripts with ACTRA actors. To attract the most attention, we would need to aim big. We needed a platform on a world stage. “It could be held at Banff Television Festival!” suggested Goldrick (D. Goldrick, personal communication, April 1995).

Having begun as an intimate gathering of screen industry professionals meeting in the Rocky Mountain retreat town of Banff, Alberta in 1979, by the 1990’s the Banff Television Festival (now known as the Banff World Media Festival (BANFF)) had become a focal point attracting screen industry decision-makers from around the globe (Banff World Media Festival, 2018).

In June 1995, I was sent to attend BANFF as our women’s committee envoy and representing the ACTRA BC council. I was to test the waters and the feasibility of our scheme. I was to poll content creators and decision-makers, in particular women: Is there a problem for women participating in the industry? If so, what is it? What do you think would help? Shortly thereafter, Daphne Goldrick and I drafted a proposal to create a female storyteller master class to be delivered at BANFF. The proposal was circulated to potential collaborators and sponsors, including Bjornson at WIFTV (C. Whiteman, personal field notes, 1995).

**Sharing the call: gaining allies**

In 1995, the WIFTV board of directors changed and Mary Ungerleider succeeded Michele Bjornson as WIFTV president. In her new role, Ungerleider attended a Women In
Film-related symposium in Regina, Saskatchewan where she met Sara Diamond, then Executive Artistic Director of Media and Visual Arts at the Banff Centre for the Arts (Banff Centre). According to Ungerleider and Diamond, during a dynamic encounter at the symposium, that apocryphally included martinis or some form of cocktails, they and several other women were discussing the lack of opportunities for mid-career women directors to advance their skills, their stories and their careers, particularly amid rumblings about the closure of Studio D, the highly successful first of its kind women’s unit at the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). At that gathering, according to her report to me at the time which Diamond later confirmed, Ungerleider spoke about the WABC and our desire to gather together collaborators to support our proposal to mentor women storytellers (M. Ungerleider, personal communication, 1995; S. Diamond, personal communication, 1995).

Seizing the moment at the symposium, Diamond pitched an idea to a representative from a federal governmental funding body, the Human Resources Skills Development Council (HRSDC) who was also present at the symposium. The idea was to provide funding for an initiative that would target master-level training for mid-career women directors while working with professional ACTRA actors (S. Diamond, personal communication, 1995). The HRSDC granted the Banff Centre a few thousand dollars towards delivering such a workshop at the Banff Centre. The collaboration among the Banff Centre, ACTRA and WIFTV was soon hatched. In order to align our separate concepts and approaches, we instinctively doubled back multiple times on Mezirow’s (1991) transformational process steps one to seven, as we discovered, dreamed and designed a mutually agreeable vessel (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), which turned out to be the first edition of ‘The Women In the Director’s Chair Workshop’.

“It was a fantastic moment of convergence. There are times when there’s a convergence of vision, and when you get that feeling in your gut, you’ve just got to act!” recalled Diamond in an interview in preparation for WIDC’s 20th Anniversary. She went on to explain that in 1992 when she arrived on the scene at the Banff Centre their film and television program had just become a unified department of Media and Visual Arts. “It was fairly early into my career at Banff, and one of my focuses was getting creative work and
artists on to [television] programs,” stated Diamond (S. Diamond, interview, November 19, 2015).

Being world renowned for its long-standing dance programs, the Banff Centre through Diamond’s Media and Visual Arts department, had recently delivered a successful workshop for women dancers entitled, ‘Dance and the Camera.’ Diamond was also about to launch the Banff New Media institute (BNMI), “a uniquely Canadian response to digital media as a cultural force…a convergent space for art, design, science and technology” (Grand-NCE, n.d.). Further reflecting on the genesis of WIDC, Diamond recalls that,

We were very conscious of the small number of women actually making their way into directing feature films and television. Looking at what was happening in some other countries like Australia & UK there was a concerted effort on the part of women to create specific training programs, learning opportunities, boot camps outside of college or university programs with funding from the governments of those countries. To be successful in those commercial/competitive worlds of feature films and television (or just broadcast) we wanted to offer these kinds of opportunities to Canadian women. (S. Diamond, interview, November 19, 2015)

It was evident that there was a gap for mid-career women to access training to advance their careers and skills in the screen industry. The NFB’s Studio D, that had created a space in 1974 for women filmmakers to make documentaries and short films, was just about to close its doors after twenty-two years.

Speaking about our organizations’ coming together as collaborators, Diamond described the zeitgeist of the moment as a decidedly feminist way of working, which led to the discovery and creation of WIDC.

The Canadian Film Centre wasn’t doing this. Women In Film and Television had just recently emerged. You were in Vancouver with the actors’ guild [ACTRA], and there was a resonance of interest from Federal government. It was a feminist way of discovering each other and discovering alignments. You and I had a relationship with Peg [Campbell]. You and I were introduced, and we put our simultaneous thinking together. We said, “Okay, we’re going to do this. And we’ll do it at The Banff Centre.” (S. Diamond, interview, November 19, 2015)
In the meantime, as Diamond recounts, the WABC committee had been introduced to then WIFTV Board members, Genie Award-winning filmmaker, Peg Campbell who was also a media arts instructor at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (ECIAD), and award-winning actress and actors’ union member, Gabrielle Rose. Having recently co-founded WIFTV with a handful of other local women in the industry, Campbell was active in the community creating opportunities for women filmmakers. Sharing about her role and the role of WIFTV in the WIDC origin story at the 2014 WIDC Summit, Campbell recalled,

There were a lot of parallels going on at the time that ACTRA was going through all these issues. I had also been quite involved in starting the Cineworks filmmakers co-op earlier than that, and also... the national organization of film co-ops across the country, so a lot of work was being done ... starting in the late in the late 70’s into the mid-80’s... that would shift the way filmmaking was happening... There was a desire to tell the stories that weren’t being told on the screen. (P. Campbell, WIDC International Directors Summit speech, March 11, 2014)

Campbell and Rose had been delivering popular weekend workshops for directors working with actors. Campbell had recently earned a Genie Award for her short film, The Last Best Man, and Rose was an award-winning theatre and film actor who was soon to be cast in Atom Egoyan’s Oscar™ nominated The Sweet Hereafter. Their aim with their respective workshops was to facilitate directors’ understanding of the actor’s vocabulary in order to help them communicate more effectively and to inspire more authentic and dynamic performances. They also wanted the actor to understand the director’s vocabulary, so they could more readily help her tell the story in a cohesive way that reflected her voice and vision (P. Campbell, WIDC International Directors Summit speech, March 11, 2014).

While there were many people involved in the steps leading up to the actual delivery of the pilot session of WIDC, and many, many committee meetings among our respective organizations, in the end, four of us formed a core group that led the process of discovery, dreaming and early design of WIDC: Peg Campbell and Gabrielle Rose representing WIFTV; Sara Diamond representing the Banff Centre; and me, representing ACTRA. Once we were all in Banff, Anne Wheeler, our inaugural mentor director, grounded the workshop in practical terms. She led classroom sessions and infused WIDC with many signature pedagogical elements which I will describe further in chapter four.
In terms of leadership in our group, while I held impressive titles as an elected member of the Board of ACTRA BC and ACTRA National, chair of the BC Women’s Committee and Vice-chair of the National Women’s Committee at ACTRA, I was relatively junior in my career. I felt the least qualified amongst formidable collaborators. However, I was committed to the cause, had a mind for organization, and the determination to stick with it. Ironically, after doggedly spearheading the project, facilitating the collaboration among the three co-founding institutions, I nearly didn’t make it to ‘the ball’. The then chair of the National ACTRA women’s committee (NAWC), argued that having the more senior title, and with results from ACTRA’s Professional Women Performers 1995 Survey to present, that she should be the one representing ACTRA at the launch of WIDC at the Banff Television Festival in June 1996. It was dubious whether there would be funding to send anyone representing ACTRA to attend the workshop planned for January 1997. While I respected her title, I keenly felt the injustice of being displaced from an initiative that I had led till this point. After reaching out for advice from allies, I eventually made it to the Banff Television Festival, as did my colleague. Space was made for both of us, and in the end, I was the one who represented ACTRA at the workshop. My collegial relationship with the ACTRA National Women’s Committee chair however, became strained as a result of this competitive exchange.

On more than one occasion, that sense of being in competition for limited resources located me in direct conflict with my female colleagues. Whenever I was torn between my preferred and gender-expected relational way of being and my ambition to get things done (Chesler, 2009; Gilligan, 2003; Shapiro Barah, 2006), I suffered. Those experiences above all were the most deeply disorienting and distressing. They often prompted me to doubt if I really deserved to be part of something so important, let alone lead it, even though I was part of creating it. My fears that others were worthier of the role of leader; that I might offend, that there was room for only one rather than room for more, often paralysed me, especially during the early years of WIDC. Mezirow would suggest that I was continually provisionally “trying on new roles” and trying “to build competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships” (Mezirow, 1991, p.18). Dr. Valerie Young (2011) would suggest that I simply felt like an imposter.
Young (2011) tells us that a struggle with self-confidence is not uncommon in people who have ambition and drive to achieve results. In fact, this struggle with confidence is a key characteristic of imposter syndrome, which Young says doesn’t mean one is a loser. Quite the opposite, she says imposter syndrome hits most often when one is about to achieve something beyond current experience or boundaries. According to Young, imposter syndrome impacts approximately seventy percent of the population and while both men and women are impacted by the experience of imposterism, women seem to be more intent on addressing or at least acknowledging it (p. 8). These concepts of confidence vs. imposterism will be discussed in later chapters as it will be shown how they influence our appreciation of the positive core of women’s leadership journeys.

Nonetheless, two years after those early fateful convergences among our organizations, Sara Diamond, Peg Campbell, Gabrielle Rose and I were looking down over a balcony in the Jeanne and Peter Lougheed Building at the Banff Centre as crew members were packing away and loading out the last vestiges of the props and set pieces from the studios. We had just completed delivering the first Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC) production workshop. We were debating about next steps.

"Should we do it again?" Sara asked (P. Campbell, S. Diamond, G. Rose, personal communication, January 29, 1997). There was a pause. Just as we had been called before by the recognition of something missing (Campbell, 1993; Mezirow, 1991), we also recognized the tremendous work and sacrifice it had taken (Hudson, 2010; Pearson, 1991) to get us to that balcony. An opportunity was standing before us, yet there was a lot to consider.

On the plus side, in ten days, led by mentor director, Anne Wheeler, twelve mid-career Canadian women screen directors had written, workshopped, directed and edited twenty-four short films with professional ACTRA actors starring in them. We had received instant positive feedback from the director participants and acting ensemble. From the participants' perspectives, from the outside, the workshop appeared to have been a grand success (WIDC 1997 directors and actors, personal communication, January 18-29, 1997).
Internally however, our team had been tested. There had been long days and late nights spent facilitating and managing the artist process. I had personally put in several nineteen-hour days working with then Banff Centre Media and Visual Arts Department Coordinator, Kerry Stauffer, till three in the morning scheduling each subsequent day of the workshop as it evolved. While we had set up a general workshop plan in advance, the daily activities had been shifted day to day in order to respond to the interests and learning needs of the director participants as guided by Wheeler. This involved juggling schedules for two studios running simultaneously and assigning casts of two to three characters in each for the twelve directors’ films without overlapping personnel or equipment or other resources. Rose and Campbell had assisted Wheeler with delivery of the workshop sessions and filled any gaps on set. In addition, Campbell had also operated sound recording while Rose stepped in to support as an assistant director, including travelling cast back and forth to set. We stretched ourselves and the directors stretched their leader identities (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013).

Further, while living together on campus had been a distinct advantage for convenience and community building, the close proximity also bred some natural clashes among personalities that required added energy and diplomacy to resolve. Not that we regretted our contributions, however, while the staff at the Banff Centre were receiving salaries, and the actors and Wheeler received honoraria for their time at the workshop, Campbell, Rose and I had not been paid for the nearly two years of work planning, and then delivering the workshop. It was a lot to ask that much commitment for another year and possibly longer (P. Campbell, S. Diamond, G. Rose, personal communication, January 29, 1997).

Seeing its overall benefits, we all agreed it was worth going for a second workshop. Campbell and Rose, both of whose careers were on the upwards swing, were coming to the end of their terms of office on the Board of WFTV. While supportive of the proposal to offer the workshop again, they were conscious of setting personal boundaries on their time (P. Campbell, S. Diamond & G. Rose, personal communication, January 29, 1997).

I, on the other hand, was all in. The call for me had been born out of a personal as well as a collective loss of voice and agency for women at ACTRA. The WABC group had
initially come together for a sense of support in the face of the grief and powerlessness we felt at the fracturing of our acting community in British Columbia. My own acting career was suffering the negative consequences of taking a political stand during the long dispute. While I did not regret standing by my principles, I had been basically black-listed for being a whistle-blower on set. My agent had dropped me. I had also lost friends and colleagues who’d told me they didn’t want to be caught up in the politics of the day, and my official terms of office at ACTRA had come to an end. WIDC thus represented a positive outcome born out of significant personal sacrifice (Pearson, 1991). It was a new place to belong, and to feel useful.

In the end, with the approval of WIFTV who held the original WIDC bank account, a small surplus allowed for Campbell, Rose and I to be offered an honorarium of a thousand dollars each. Rose generously chose to donate half of her honorarium back, for the next edition of WIDC (WIDC 1997 Project Report).

**Continuing to create space**

At the time, WIFTV was focused on activities geared towards Vancouver-based women. With Campbell and Rose also stepping back, WIFTV opted to step back from the organization of WIDC and instead offer scholarships to their members to attend the program. Then WIFTV treasurer, Mary-Anne Waterhouse taught me some basics of book-keeping and checked my work for the first while. For the second iteration of WIDC, Diamond, ACTRA National Treasurer, Brian Gromoff and I created a non-registered non-profit organization that would oversee WIDC in the day to day. We also enacted a WIDC partnership agreement among the Banff Centre, ACTRA and this new entity that we called Creative Women Workshops. I was named president and CEO, Diamond was named vice-president, and Gromoff was named as the non-profit’s secretary treasurer. While she was not interested in taking on governance, Campbell remained as a lead faculty member for WIDC.

After each annual session of WIDC in Banff, Campbell, Diamond and I would meet to assess what worked and what didn’t. Then Campbell and I would depart back to Vancouver. Once we left the Banff Centre, I would continue to work on WIDC, reporting
to sponsors, recruiting, implementing plans for the following year. It took meticulous effort to align the WIDC budget with the Banff Centre budget.

In June each year Campbell and I would return to Banff to host an official launch event cocktail reception at the Banff Television Festival. Aside from a one-page flyer issued in hard copy through ACTRA branches and unions and other related screen industry organizations’ offices across the country, and a paragraph in the Banff Centre program brochure, these launch events were a key promotional tool; where we announced the coming year’s mentor director and called for applications from directors and actors. Then in January we would return to deliver the workshop again at the Banff Centre.

In preparation for WIDC 1998, we decided to begin adding more external professionals to the program. One significant addition to the team was cinematographer Roger Vernon CSC, whose contribution to WIDC over the years helped to guide and significantly elevate the professional delivery of the production module. Vernon not only brought his own technical curriculum to WIDC, he introduced us to sponsors for additional professional camera, grip and lighting equipment as well as union crew and other mentors to support the production module. In a volunteer advisor role his impeccable integrity and industry insights were a guiding force for WIDC, and for me. A popular lead mentor director of photography, in the last four years we delivered WIDC at the Banff Centre, Vernon eventually became a co-producer of the production module in Banff. His role had not changed significantly, it just meant that, with his consent, his honorarium could be cut the same as mine had been.

By 1999, I had become somewhat enmeshed with WIDC. I was a volunteer, free to work outside of WIDC though I did not have much free time left. Though I had the title of President & CEO and was functioning as a coordinator and eventually the WIDC producer, there was still no salary with benefits like my Banff Centre colleagues had. CWWA Board members were sensitive to this situation and agreed fair compensation was in order but usually funds raised were sponsor-designated strictly for programming, not to be allocated towards ongoing administrative costs. At one point it was suggested that I might become an employee of the Banff Centre (S. Diamond, personal communications, 2000), but it did not seem prudent to give up the autonomy and expectation of respect that
came with equal partner status. If it had not been for my husband Michael’s support both as the main income earner for our family, and as a co-parent to our son, I could not have remained as devoted to WIDC, and advocated so ardently for the cause of women directors.

Working at a distance, I sometimes felt isolated from my collaborators, marginalized. Our expectations of each other’s roles occasionally felt out of step. It took diligence to keep communication and transparency flowing. WIDC was a major focus for me but it was only a small part of the Banff Centre’s programming agenda.

We primarily used email as teleconference was expensive, as was video conferencing which was only in its infancy. Campbell and I, both in Vancouver, were able to meet in person throughout the year. We rarely spoke with Sara Diamond directly. In the silence, Diamond’s sustained commitment to our collaboration wasn’t always clear to me. Once our direction was decided for the year, I primarily worked with the department coordinator to execute the plan. It required a great deal of faith and trust in the good will among us to serve the cause.

When WIDC was formed, there were four designated national film training institutions, each receiving significant funding administered by Telefilm Canada (Telefilm Canada, the Canadian Film Centre (CFC), the National Screen Institute of Canada (NSI), the National Institute of Image and Sound (L’INIS) and the Canadian Screen Training Centre (CSTC). Although designated as a national arts institute and treated slightly differently, the Banff Centre also received financial support from federal pools of funds. While separate from the Banff Centre and national in scope, WIDC was itself not recognized as a national film training institution. I was told WIDC lacked the capacity, the infrastructure and that WIDC benefited through the Banff Centre’s infrastructure (Telefilm Canada, personal communication, 1998).

Perhaps WIDC’s attachment to the Banff Centre kept it from fully growing its own infrastructure, nonetheless establishing and keeping the non-profit organization CWWA as a separate entity allowed us to fundraise directly from other sources. With the success of these combined funding-raising efforts, the Banff Centre’s substantial in-kind support of equipment, facilities, staff time and subsidized lodging, along with year-round
administrative overhead in Vancouver subsidized by my late husband Michael, we were able to grow WIDC, and keep it in the black, just barely, each year. Even if the Banff Centre had to write off occasional unpaid tuition fees and I had to forgo the small honorarium allocated to my program producer role, the WIDC ship was kept afloat.

In order to create more certainty for all parties, and to access funding independently from the Banff Centre, in 2000 we decided to incorporate our informal collective into an official non-profit society to oversee the work of WIDC. Given my commitment to the initiative thus far, I was again made president & CEO. Diamond was again named vice-president and Gromoff was named treasurer. Along with Campbell, Cinematographer, Roger Vernon, and actor Veena Sood, we all became co-founding members of the BC-based non-profit society, Creative Women Workshops Association (CWWA).

From that time until 2012, Gromoff was the official link to ACTRA. For all the years that Gromoff served on ACTRA National council he was a steadfast and vocal advocate for WIDC. He ensured that ACTRA maintained its funding support for WIDC and also advocated for funding support in his home province in Alberta as well as ACTRA Toronto, ACTRA Montreal, UBCP, the BC Branch of ACTRA, and Actra Fraternal Benefit Society (AFBS). While Toronto-based actor Heather Allin replaced Gromoff as ACTRA’s representative to the CWWA Board in 2012, Gromoff remained an emeritus member of WIDC’s leadership team (CWWA annual activity reports).

Known as a gifted improv performer in Vancouver, 1997 acting ensemble member Veena Sood had been invited to return to WIDC as an actors’ liaison for the subsequent three years. After the 2000 session of WIDC, Sood who was not an instructor herself at the time, recommended that we step up our instructional offering and add a formal ‘mentor actor’ to the program. In 2001, we invited respected actor, acting instructor and WIDC director alumna Rosemary Dunsmore to take on the role of mentor actor at WIDC. Each year after that a female mentor actor was invited to lead instructional sessions with the directors to help them build their vocabulary for working with actors. Other popular mentor actors included Christanne Hirt (also a director alumna), Janet Laine Green, and Lori Triolo (WIDC newsletters and annual activity reports, 1997-2018). Each mentor brought
her own specialized curriculum to the program, enriching what is now one of the key features of WIDC: developing the director-actor relationship by exposing women directors to working with professional ACTRA actors.

**A story incubation milestone**

In 2002, I attended the Alliance Atlantis Banff Executive Leadership Program (AABELP) for television executives led by Doug McNamara and then Banff Television Festival CEO, F. Patterson Ferns. It had been years since I had participated in a formal professional learning environment for my own growth. In addition to boosting my leadership confidence, this experience inspired new insights into what was occurring in the space we had created at WIDC. It also introduced me to a number of new high-level colleagues, and facilitated future sponsorship relationships for WIDC with CBC, Lions Gate Films, Astral Media, and Tattersall Sound. In particular, the following year CBC came on board as a major sponsor of the new Story Incubation Module (SIM). (CWWA annual activity report, 2004).

The AABELP also fuelled in me greater empathy for the learning journeys of the women directors we were serving at WIDC. I was especially inspired by a change management metaphor McNamara presented, inspired by Kubler-Ross’ (1967) five stages of grief (denial, anger, self-doubt / bargaining, hope, and acceptance). McNamara presented a curve metaphor that resembled a rollercoaster. The metaphor of change being like a rollercoaster ride resonated greatly with me, and I had a feeling it would reach WIDC participants as well.

The next year, to help them navigate the fast pace and intensity of the workshop experience I shared with WIDC participants what I’d learned from McNamara’s change metaphor. There was a standing ovation. Further inspired by the metaphor of a journey, I’ve since adapted McNamara’s change curve into what I call a leadership journey map which I will share in chapter four.

Also, in 2002, WIDC earned a Canada Council grant to pilot a ‘Story Incubation Module’ (SIM) to develop the directors’ scripts in advance of the production workshop.
Primarily through Campbell’s design, the SIM introduced to WIDC Dr. Carolyn Mamchur and her psychological approach to creating authentic characters in story, as well as leadership development. Mamchur’s instructional units on Jungian type theory, archetype and creative process became infused into a signature underpinning of the WIDC pedagogy. Understanding self and others through the use of Jungian type theory, temperament and archetype offered a system that was deeply empowering and galvanizing for WIDC participants, and for me personally. (CWWA annual activity report, 2003).

Up until 2005, Campbell had been leading instructional sessions on story structure and mentoring as a story editor at the SIM. At the production module she served as a lead mentor assisting the directors with story-editing, and as a senior supervisor for her Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (ECIAD) Media Arts third and fourth-year students who she brought in for practicum experience and as a support for production. In order to ensure that her students did not miss out on her instructional time, Campbell had devised a credited practicum. The ECIAD students were placed as trainee assistants in various departments (assistant direction, art, camera, lighting). They received mentorship from the union crewmembers who headed those departments. This practicum model was later extended to other film schools in Alberta and Saskatchewan (SAIT, NAIT, University of Calgary, University of Regina) whose senior media studies students applied through their respective schools to join us at WIDC in Banff.

With growing industry funding from the unions and guilds, (Director’s Guild of Canada BC and Alberta Districts, IATSE locals in BC and Alberta (210, 212, 669, 891)), and from broadcaster social and other benefits (WIC, CTV-Netstar, CTVglobemedia-CHUM, NBCUniversal), even though WIDC maintained a devotion to supporting the artistic authorial voice of women screen directors, we could not deny that if women directors wanted to successfully compete in the screen industry, i.e. earn funding from industry sources to make their fiction feature films, and be hired to direct fiction television series, they needed more exposure to the industry and high-level personnel within it.

Around this time, for differing reasons, both Campbell and Diamond departed from WIDC. In 2005, Diamond was head-hunted and moved on to assume the presidency of
the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD). Campbell’s departure on the other hand, while graciously executed on Campbell’s part, was a painful experience of a divergence in direction. The pressure to up the industry cache, compounded by the lack of funding to engage two mentor story editors lead to Campbell stepping away from the story editor role in favour of engaging more industry-known personnel. While it turned out that her career at ECIAD was on the rise and Campbell herself admitted she was more interested in art-based and experimental filmmaking than commercial forms of story-telling (P. Campbell, personal communication, 2006), not fighting harder to find funding to keep Peg Campbell fully engaged in WIDC is a regret that I have yet to personally fully come to grips with. Her contribution to the discovery, dreams, design and first seven years of the delivery of WIDC set a tone and was fundamental to WIDC’s early success. Diamond’s contributions were no less significant. In fact, the legacy of Diamond’s efforts to keep WIDC at the forefront at the Banff Centre, characterizing it as a flagship program, fitting WIDC within the Banff New Media Institute, ensured WIDC a home for nineteen years.

A turning point: the call re-beckons

At a certain point midway through dramatic narratives, as in the transformation process, the ‘hero’ usually feels she is thrown right back where she started. She experiences a ‘major set-back’ (Campbell, 1980; Marks, 2011; Pearson, 1991; Seger, 1997). If I am one of the heroes in this story, then after Campbell and Diamond’s departures I was certainly feeling that set-back which signalled the onset of another disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1991). I was facing a turning point where a number of decisions, personal and organizational, had to be made. In 2010, having managed to juggle leading WIDC for fifteen years, with raising a son, while also caring for an ailing husband, I was exhausted, reaching burn-out. My late husband Michael had lost his decade-long battle with Alzheimer’s disease. All those years, working on WIDC, seeing how it transformed peoples’ careers as well as their personal lives, had felt like a positive upward spiral when at home we were facing the inevitable downward spiral of Michael’s decline. Michael had been such a keen supporter of my work at WIDC that when he died it actually felt like a part of WIDC had died as well.
On the societal level, Canada was experiencing Federal conservative austerity. The screen industry’s funding landscape had shifted as a result. While WIDC alumnae seemed to be faring better than most women directors (as indicated by their updates for annual WIDC newsletters), the industry collected data indicated that women directors were still not earning their share of the funding nor were they being hired to direct fiction television series in any significant numbers, certainly not at the high budget levels (Green, 2006; WIFT-T, 2011). The organizational world of WIDC was faltering under the loss of several sources of funding. WIDC had grown exponentially from its pilot budget of $101,000 to $1.1 million at its peak in 2010, so this loss meant facing the consequences of a major downshift in WIDC’s program offerings, and / or sacrificing the only other financial asset, my project producer honorarium that had slowly grown with each new program WIDC had offered.

I should explain that WIDC was run on a volunteer basis with mentors, actors, crew and me, designated as workshop participants, offering our time and talents in exchange for travel, meals, accommodations, and a modest honorarium. In order to maximize financial contributions from potential sponsors that were restrained by percentage-of-budget thresholds, it was suggested that we show in our budget in kind as well as the hard dollars and cents amounts. We undertook to reasonably estimate the in kind contributions of the Banff Centre’s involvement; the industry value of the professional ACTRA actors and DGC and IATSE crew who volunteered their time and talents to workshop scripts with the directors; the mentors, as well as my time and personal contributions of office overhead, which usually nullified any honorarium I received; and later the WIDC Feature Film Award in kind sponsorships, which includes a bundle of services and rentals accessed directly by the award recipient. This exercise revealed that more than three quarters of the WIDC value was in kind, none of which directly flowed through CWWA. The in-kind portion of the WIDC budget did however demonstrate sponsor and community buy in. With limited funds for promotion, WIDC seemed to have earned a highly regarded reputation in the industry through alumnae word of mouth (C. Whiteman, personal communications with sponsors, 1998-2018).

Nearing the second decade of the 2000’s, data reporting women screen directors’ participation rates (Lauzon, 2009; McGowan, 2009; Smith, 2008; WIFT-T, 2011) was in
fact getting worse. Major governmental funding sources like Telefilm Canada, the NFB and CBC were cutting back. Further, the Banff Centre’s support was shifting as it was in the process of reviewing its own identity. More hard cash costs were being off-loaded onto WIDC, which was now seen as an external client. Our CWWA Board, which in addition to a representative each from the Banff Centre and ACTRA, had grown to include alumnae (a link to a list of past and present CWWA Board of Directors is available at Appendix B.), was searching for answers, engaging in problem-based strategic planning exercises. WIDC needed to change or it was indeed going to die. (CWWA annual activity report, 2006). It was important to our Board of Directors, to maintain WIDC’s hard earned level of excellence, no matter what.

A grant from Actra Fraternal Benefits Society supported the process of hiring consultant, Ron Robinson who met with us in Vancouver. Robinson met with individual CWWA Board members to assess the landscape of WIDC. The Board was guided to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It was determined that WIDC’s two greatest strengths were its track record of successful alumnae, and the dedication, continuity and corporate knowledge of its key leader who had successfully fundraised and overseen the delivery of WIDC programs since the beginning. It became clear that WIDC’s greatest weakness was that its core leadership was embodied in that same one person. The biggest threat was the possibility that the ‘bus could hit the wall’ if we kept going without addressing the organization’s key vulnerability, which ironically, despite my dedication to WIDC, successful fundraising, and valued corporate knowledge, was me. Having devoted so much of myself to the cause, it was difficult for me to hear that I was now a threat to the health of the organization.

Just as many of us avoid making a final will in preparation for end of life, and having devoted my life’s work to it, I found it unfathomable to think about succession, to face the blind spot of WIDC without me, or me without WIDC. Further, formed primarily as a decision-making body, WIDC’s non-profit organizational structure had not been set up on a business model with a vision for its own functioning staff and infrastructure. Given how it had grown, we also recognized how remote it would be to find anyone else to take on the leadership of WIDC under the same circumstance.
The facilitated strategic planning process led by Robinson had largely followed a traditional agenda of focusing on the problems in order to find solutions. While opportunities to collaborate with like-minded organizations were explored, as well as the possibilities of attaining charitable status and engaging in major fundraising efforts to hire a support staff, we fell somewhat short of the generativity of the AI process (Bushe, 2013). Rather than divining a new generative image to help guide us, we were advised to simply come to grips with the issues. No one on the CWWA Board was keen to compromise the quality of the WIDC program by cutting back, and it was acknowledged that WIDC would be in even worse shape if I were to be suddenly removed from the picture entirely. With the active support of Board members steps were taken to research charitable status while I focused on maintaining WIDC’s core activities. Given the complexity and the limitations of administrative resources to execute additional activities, the pursuit of charitable status was temporarily set aside.

During this time, I remember feeling fatigued and not sure of my own next steps. I was grieving both the loss of my husband and the potential demise of WIDC. My caregiver-leader identity was in tatters. My confidence was waning. Was my work meaningful to others anymore? Did I have it in me to continue onward? Then I received an important phone call from an alumna. That was a catalyst for a turning point. A director alumna called to share some exciting career news. She had received funding for one of her film projects and she particularly wanted to share that she had held onto something she learned from WIDC, something I’d said to her, “Don’t be afraid to take your space” (WIDC alumna, personal communication, 2010).

I reflected on the profundity of this statement and the providential timing of both the literal telephone call and the metaphorical call. The alumna’s voice kept ringing in my ears, “Your words gave me courage, Carol” (WIDC alumna, personal communication, 2010). Then another voice seemed to ‘call’ out to me. Was it my own positive core (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2009)? It echoed and reaffirmed that sense of purpose, duty, belonging, and loyalty towards the women directors whose voices I had been serving for fifteen years. An appreciative call from this single individual encouraged me to face that blind spot without fear. Inspired, this poem came pouring out of me.
The Call

“Take up your space in this world,” my words of advice recounted back to me; stayed; penetrated deep; heard.

I am proud and humbled.

Where does this come from, this call so loudly ringing?

“You are made for this now. Now, you are being called to move onward with the next wave,” it calls me,

But I can't quite make out the message, so I try to move closer. I turn my head up, ear to the sky, straining to hear the whisper, the cry, the call. Anything to help guide me, speed me.

Why do I anticipate so?

Fantasies grow, so exciting, new, unbound; the potential lives again.

The spiral wells upward. I am reborn; pure yet galvanized to the core (Whiteman, December 24, 2017, SFU Educational Review).

The poem helped me to articulate for myself a generative image of hope that helped me bridge the painful losses (personal, organizational and societal) that I/we had been experiencing, and link that hope to possible next steps. Expressing this sense of discovery through poetry also helped me hear my internal creative, intuitive voice, my positive core, that was reminding me that I was not alone, that I was making a difference, and that though it would take some time to heal, WIDC would not die, must not die. There was still more work to do, and I was capable of going the distance for at least another round.

Scharmer (2009), writing in Theory U, Leading from the Future as it Emerges, refers to the call as the “co-initiating” phase of transformational processes. He asserts that you must “listen to what life calls you to do, connect with people and contexts related to that call, and convene constellations of core players that co-inspire common intention.” (p. 18). I had been called to listen before. The listening, connecting and co-inspiring are exactly what happened with the original discovery and co-creation of WIDC. I knew I needed to replicate these steps again and I felt called to do so.
A push from external forces

Following Diamond’s departure, the Banff Centre’s internal department structures had shifted. “The reality is that we want to be positive, but I had to fight for it [WIDC] at the Banff Centre. It was resource intensive. Philosophically it was not always aligned with other goals at Banff” (S. Diamond, interview, November 19, 2015). Executive Producer, Susan Kennard had taken over as Director of the Banff New Media Institute (BNMI) and while the Banff Centre, and ACTRA, were still represented on the CWWA Board of Directors, WIDC was now being treated more as a client at The Banff Centre than a co-created initiative. Service fees that had once been absorbed by the BNMI were shifted over to CWWA to pay. The increasing service fees became more and more of a financial barrier for CWWA. Funding from Creative BC, the Director’s Guild of Canada, BC District and the Independent Production Fund had evaporated. Though done incrementally year to year, Telefilm Canada’s funding to WIDC had also decreased significantly. After two years of cutting my entire honorarium along with Vernon’s Mentor DOP honorarium, and cutting where ever else we could without compromising the quality of the program, by the end of the 2013 WIDC modules in Banff, the CWWA Board determined that we could no longer financially sustain the production and post production modules of the WIDC program.

Then another significant event occurred, an unexpected sponsorship for new programming, this time from NBCUniversal, provided a reprieve; a window to restart the AI process (WIDC, June 23, 2013). As I was about to receive a WIFT-T Crystal Award for mentorship Wanda Bradley introduced herself and suggested that WIDC submit a proposal. With the support of two rounds of financial support from NBCUniversal, in 2014, WIDC hosted an AI summit in Vancouver, entitled the WIDC International Directors Summit. We called on WIDC alumnae, our Board of Directors, and our closest sponsors for input to help path-find. The feedback from the summit led us to reach out to new industry collaborators like the Whistler Film Festival, the First Weekend Club’s Canada Screens, Winnipeg Film Group; to rethink what WIDC could offer and parlay into new opportunities for women screen directors in Canada. In 2014 and 2015 we reduced the production and post production modules to a one-week Aspects of Camera and Light
masterclass in collaboration with the Banff Centre. Though we continued to work with actors and crew there was no more production of short films.

CWWA Board member and Banff Centre representative Kerry Stauffer had prepared us for changes in focus coming from the Banff Centre’s own identity exercises. After launching an enhanced WIDC story module in Vancouver (SIM 2.0) and offering a separate mini version of the production module for two years, in 2015, the last WIDC Banff module was delivered (CWWA annual activity reports, 2014, 2015).

Prompted by advocacy and consciousness-raising by Women In View’s Rina Fraticelli, WIFTV advocacy committee chair Sharon McGowan and others, by 2014, the topic of women’s participation in Canada’s screen industry was receiving more airtime (R. Fraticelli, St John’s International Women’s Film Festival, Women In View presentation, October 2014). A global call seemed to be reverberating on social media, at screen industry forums, international film festivals and markets. Women screen directors and projects where they were attached to direct, were still not being equally valued monetarily when compared to their male counterparts. No longer able to turn a blind eye to the dismal data, industry and government bodies began to respond.

In 2016, the National Film Board announced their aim to fund women at a rate of fifty percent on all their future projects. CBC followed suit announcing they would seek to hire fifty percent women directors on all their television series, in addition to creating a new Breaking Barriers Feature Film Fund for second-time feature film directors from diverse backgrounds, including women. TELUS also ran its first STORYHIVE women directors’ edition and Bell Media announced that fifty percent (50%) of their BravoFACT projects would be female-led. In fall 2016, Telefilm Canada announced a goal of 50-50 by 2020, a commitment to diversify their feature film portfolio to more closely reflect Canadian society. With more opportunities in the offing, I began to hear the question, where are the women directors? (C. Whiteman, personal communications with WIDC sponsors, producers, broadcasters, 2015, 2016, 2017).
Fast forward into the present

As of 2018, over two hundred and fifty Canadian women screen directors have participated in WIDC program offerings. Eighty-four percent of those director alumnae are still working in the screen industry as indicated by their active profiles in the WIDC Alumnae Directory (WIDC, 2018). Since attending WIDC, alumnae directors have directed thousands of hours of screen entertainment, including more than sixty feature films. A manual count of women-directed feature films funded by Telefilm Canada located in Telefilm archives, also reveals that WIDC alumnae directors were at the helm of sixty percent of the women-directed films funded by Telefilm Canada between 2010 and 2016 (Telefilm Canada, 2018). They have created six successful network television drama series including Little Mosque on the Prairie (CBC, 2007-2012); Flashpoint (CTV/CBS, 2008-2012), and Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock (APTN, ongoing since 2007). They have created, show run, and or directed popular and award-winning web series including Dangers of Online Dating (2017-18); NarcoLeap (2018), Space Riders, Division Earth; and are show runners and working directors for hire on television series (WIDC Alumnae Directory, 2018). Alumnae have won scores of awards and nominations for their work since their time attending WIDC, including an Academy Award Oscar™ nomination an International Emmy Award, Canada Screen Awards (formerly Genie and Gemini Awards), provincial screen industry awards and recognition at film festivals around the world. They earned over one hundred awards and nominations in 2017-18 alone including twenty-eight Canadian Screen Award nominations for themselves and their projects (CWWA Annual Report, 2018). I have been personally recognized with six industry awards and two Governor General of Canada award nominations for my work on WIDC and gender equality in Canada’s screen industry. (WIDC annual activity report, 2018).

So, what was / is it about the WIDC space that has made a difference in women directors’ lives and careers? Despite the new opportunities for women screen directors cited above, there are still gaps in perceptions about women’s leadership particularly at the high budget levels. Speaking with emerging and mid-career women directors at festivals across Canada, especially women who have not attended WIDC, I am still hearing self-doubts about their readiness to direct in the ‘big leagues’ (C. Whiteman, personal communications). Why is this seeming lack of confidence still happening? Why
are some women leaders still seen, and seeing themselves as somehow lacking? What are we being called to do next?

Now that we have discovered the core of the story, where do we go from here? Since this story is informed by a confluence of temporal historic, socio-cultural, personal and collective milestones at a specific intersection in the arenas of feminism and the screen industry in Canada, let’s now pull back and reflect on a larger landscape surrounding leadership voice, women’s ways of working, and Canada’s screen industry, through a review of the literature. Applying an appreciative inquiry constructivist approach, this next part of the story also invites us to dream about a changed future.
Chapter 2.

Dreaming: reviewing the past to imagine a future

“There are two sources of learning: the past and the emerging future” (Scharmer, 2009, p. 56).

In this chapter, phase two of the 4-D appreciative inquiry framework; I adapt the traditional review of the literature to springboard a discussion about dreams for the future. Cooperrider & Whitney (2005) suggest that the ‘dreaming’ phase of transformation is about defining purpose, about asking the question “What is the world calling us to become?” (p. 16). They advocate that, “appreciation draws our eye toward life, stirs our feelings, sets in motion our curiosity and inspires the envisioning mind” (p. 27). Having described the discovery phase or immediate call to action driving this study, I endeavour here to delve more deeply into the temporal, socio-cultural landscape surrounding the call to empower women screen directors. Cooperrider adds that, “images of the future emerge out of grounded examples from its positive past” (Cooperrider, 2018). By reviewing narratives that have come before, we will see patterns and gaps in the research influencing the action agenda of this study.

Intersections of feminism, leadership and story-telling: Underlying themes

A meta-analysis of screen industry studies, news and journal articles about women’s historical participation as leaders, story-tellers, and specifically as screen directors in Canada’s screen industry revealed a significant imbalance in participation rates by gender and by race. Unveiling western society’s systemic oppression of women through the lens of feminism led me to Canadian scholars’ writings about gender and cinema (Anderson, 1999; Armatage, 1999, 2003; Armatage, Banning, Longfellow, & Marchessault, (Eds.), 1999; Austin-Smith & Melnyk, 2000; Deverell 2009, 2011; Sherbarth, 1987; Vanstone, 2007). One of the most powerfully generative images reverberating through this literature was Virginia Woolf’s (1929) iconic A Room of One’s
Own. Woolf led me to circle back to the last century of feminist movements and milestones (Ridley, n.d.; Sangster, 2018; Woolf, 1929).

Reviewing the literature in the context of the wave metaphor I observed themes emerging in what some called temporal waves that span approximately two decades each. The feminist wave metaphor itself has exerted a profound and sometimes mixed influence on western society’s historical socio-cultural attitudes towards the feminine gender. Some scholars refute the validity of the wave metaphor (Laughlin, Gallagher, Cobble, Boris, Nadasen, Gilmore & Zarnow, 2010). Their view is that the wave implies that there were only three, now four monumental events in the history of feminism. They claim that the waves over simplify feminism into monolithic terms when it has been anything but singular. However, when we examine the wave metaphor more closely, it has many parts. It not only represents a crescendo, it ebbs and flows, is always there in the form of an under-current. Waves also effect a vessel on its journey.

**Wave one: identity as personhood**

Focusing in on the general lot of the female story-teller, and writing in the time of suffrage, first wave feminist Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) introduces us to a crucial and fundamental metaphor signifying essential ingredients for women to succeed as fiction story-tellers: a separate and made-safe space to hear and cultivate ones’ own authentic voice. She openly declares that sufficient resources are needed to sustain oneself in that space, to literally nurture the body and figuratively to nurture the creation of works of excellence. Memorably quoted, “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (p.2), Woolf’s metaphor echoes through the literature on women in cinema. She is widely cited by generations of feminist scholars and practitioners some of whose works I will reflect upon later.

Drawing our attention to the lack of women’s voices in literature, Woolf describes seeing only one female-authored book on a shelf filled with male authors’ works. She laments, “to write a work of genius is almost always a feat of prodigious difficulty…But for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable” (pp. 60-61). Pointing to the power of gender bias, Woolf complains that with
so few choices in her own search for female fiction writers, at times she felt more at ease in the company of the male authors’ more practiced and assured voices (p. 115). While she acknowledges the challenges of being an author, she postulates that the male writers’ self-assuredness on the page had come from shear practice, a greater accessibility to resources, and a more accepting, if familiar audience. Furthermore, she questions, how one can imagine assessing quality or measuring excellence in storytelling, if nearly half of the entire canon is missing. Woolf postulates that if Shakespeare had a sister that her poetic voice might too have been prodigious had she been given the same space to practice (pp. 131-132). With a sense of foreboding, Woolf cautions the reader not to underestimate the power of male domination to suppress feminine voice as she pointedly remarks that, “The history of men's opposition to women's emancipation is more interesting perhaps than the story of that emancipation itself” (p. 64), inasmuch as the day’s male-dominant leaders’ feared and actively worked to suppress it.

**Emancipating Canadian female voices**

The Library and Archives of Canada web page, *Canada and the First World War: Voice through voting: The franchise for women* (2008) focuses on women’s emancipation. It reports that in 1900 some Canadian women were granted the right to own, buy and sell property. By 1916 women in Western provinces, starting in Manitoba, then Alberta, Saskatchewan and later British Columbia then Ontario, women were granted the right to vote in provincial elections. Quebec was the last province to grant the vote, holding out until 1940. Canadian Indigenous women however, were not granted to the same rights until 1960. In terms of voice and leadership in governance, the Government of Canada web page, *Rights for Women* (2017) describes the incremental emancipatory acts by simply stating that,

Another important milestone for women’s rights was defining “persons” under the British North America Act, 1867. The Famous Five, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy and Irene Parlby, petitioned the government in 1928 to ask the Supreme Court of Canada to decide whether “persons” in the Act included women. The Supreme Court decided that it did not, for the following reasons:

- The British North America Act in 1928 had to maintain the meaning “persons” would have been given by the courts when it was passed in 1867.
According to common law, women could not hold political office.

If the British Parliament had intended for women to be included as “qualified persons” under section 24 of the Act, it would have said so.

However, an appeal to the Privy Council was launched. In 1929, the Council decided the word “person” in itself was not clear and would be better understood if the British North America Act was given a wider interpretation. Therefore, if the law was to exclude women specifically, it should have been clearly stated in the Act. (Government of Canada, 2017.)

While it highlights the names of the ‘Famous Five’ women who are now known for championing the Person’s Case in Canada, the site makes little mention that these were hard fought for victories, not easily enacted, or that there were other women working and pioneering in other parts of Canada (Sangster, 2018). Furthermore, though it states that “In 1960 First Nations were allowed to vote without giving up treaty rights,” the Government of Canada Rights for Women web page (2017) makes no mention of the lot of visible minority women and their emancipatory rights. In their chapter on women, diversity and the media in the Women In Film and Television Toronto’s (WIFT-T, 1991) study Changing Focus: The Future of Women in the Independent Canadian Film and Television Industry, according to Deverell, Airst & Lee (as cited in WIFT-T, 1991) this omission is a form of silencing that has created an even greater divide in terms of the participation from women visible minority backgrounds in roles of authority, particularly in Canada’s television and cinema industry. Not having been afforded the same opportunities as their Caucasian counterparts in suffrage, Indigenous women and women of colour are still running behind. American author, activist, feminist, creator bell hooks (2000) agrees, and adds that inequity of rights within the gender created a schism within the feminist movement. I will discuss this feminist divide further later in this chapter.

One voice silenced is equal to all

In the same timeframe as suffrage, in terms of female leadership presence and story-teller voices in Canada’s early cinema landscape, Nell Shipman shines as the most identifiable woman story-teller for screen. While Shipman migrated to the United States where resources to create and financially gain from her screen products were more plentiful, Canadian cinema scholars still claim her as Canada’s foremost pioneer woman screen director (Armatage, 2003, 1999; as cited in WIFT-T, 1991). Little is known about
other Canadian women filmmakers in this era. It’s as though they didn’t exist. Except for Mohawk writer and performer, E. Pauline Johnson (1861-1913) who was criticized at the time for romanticizing her experiences of her mixed-race childhood, and who only reached critical notoriety posthumously (Shrive, 1962), there are only fragments in the literature about Canadian Indigenous women story-tellers in this era.

In *The Girl from God's Country: Nell Shipman and the Silent Cinema*, University of Toronto gender and cinema studies scholar, Kay Armatage (2003) describes Shipman’s approach to life and her work. “Certainly for Shipman, in her films as well as in her own life, creative achievement, economic independence, social mobility, and sexual equality were central to the vision of contemporary womanhood that underlies all her narratives and portrayals of women and male-female relationships” (p. 231). According to Armatage, Shipman was a powerhouse of creativity, resourcefulness and fortitude. Her portrayals of heroines in her films demonstrated both compassion and courage. These screen narratives made Shipman a financial living until the tide changed in the way films were made and consumed in the mid-1920’s.

Foretelling the fate of many other women seeking to make their mark as creative leaders in the screen industry, in her chapter entitled “Nell Shipman: A Case of Heroic Femininity”, in *Gendering the Nation*, Armatage (1999) squarely places Shipman as an iconic symbol of the silencing of women directors on the temporal continuum of feminism and cinema history, ”Nell Shipman is an exemplary figure, for her story parallels the entry, participation, and finally exclusion from cinema that was experienced by women filmmakers as a group in the first stage of film history” (p. 19-20).

American author and script consultant to Academy Award™ winning screenwriters, Linda Seger (2003) in her book *When Women Called the Shots, The developing power and influence of women in television and film*, likewise situates Shipman, along with other women directors, as their numbers declined in the early years of the film industry. According to Seger, this silencing of authentic feminine voice coincides with the rise of the powerful Hollywood studio system. Seger adeptly identifies the problem,
By the mid-1920’s, Shipman’s career was over, as were the careers of almost every women director and producer, and many women writers. After pioneering some of the best work in cinema, women sadly disappeared – from film work and from film history. How could this happen? Women had proven themselves as skilful, as talented, as capable as men. Once glorified by the industry, why are women suddenly unable to continue their creative work, to be hired, to compete? (p.11)

Armatage (1999, 2003) and Seger (2003) both point to a pattern on the temporal and social-cultural landscapes of the early days of cinema in North America. Despite the wave of suffragist hard won advancements for women’s rights, and North American women’s once successful pioneering entrepreneurialism exemplified in Shipman’s career along with scores of other female filmmakers referenced by Seger (2003), when filmmaking became established as a ‘money-making business’, a twenty-year participation gap erupted where women screen directors only marginally made their way inside the film industry. They worked as motion picture editors, script supervisors and only occasionally made a film here or there (pp. 16-17). Much of the actual film footage of women-made films of that era was lost or destroyed. Just as Woolf (1929) observed on the shelves empty of female voices in libraries, likewise half the cinema canon went missing. Further, Seger recounts, women were not given leave to take on leadership roles except behind the scenes, standing behind the men; that is, until the Second World War when women were called upon to help fill the gap left by the men who had gone off to serve.

According to Seger (2003), after the war and through the 1950’s the screen industry went through another significant transformation. The introduction and proliferation of television in North American homes changed the landscape, changed the business model, changed technology, changed the way audience consumed their screen entertainment. An opening began to present itself: women again began to move into the new frontier, of television. It wasn’t feature filmmaking, but it was storytelling and it reached more and more audiences at a rapid rate. Offering an anecdotal explanation for why this wave didn’t net a sea change towards parity for women, Seger quotes one of the first women writers to be on contract at Warner Bros. Studios, Catherine Turney, “Each time something new happened in the business, things started out so promisingly for women. The only thing I can think of is that the men, when they began to see where things were going, would behave more aggressively” (p.30). Women remained invisible, observes Seger, except for a few cases of celebrity where actresses turned producers called the
shots on their own shows, women leaders (writers, directors) fell or were left behind, their talents and contributions not recognized (p. 87).

**Wave two: Claiming agency**

By the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, according to Seger (2003) women in North America were still not making much headway into the director’s chair. After the Second World War women were primed to assert their own voices, which spawned a new surge of feminist energy in the screen industry. In Canada, women working within publicly funded media agencies, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), were making moves to own and tell their own stories (Vanstone, 2007; WIFT-T, 1991).

**Studio D creates ‘a room’**

In her book *D is for Daring, The Women Behind the Films of Studio D*, Gail Vanstone (2007) presents us with a comprehensive look at the National Film Board of Canada’s landmark women’s film production unit. Recognized as the world’s first film studio run for and by women, the second wave of feminism in Canadian cinema is punctuated in 1974 by the genesis of Studio D. Mandated in part by the Canadian federal government’s response to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women that was tabled in 1970 along with 167 recommendations for change (p. 45), Studio D was focused into action by the lobbying efforts of a handful of women filmmakers that had been working at the NFB, including the Studio’s founding executive director, Kathleen Shannon. Over the course of its twenty-two-year history, Studio D earned accolades the world over, producing over one hundred and fifty films, ten series, and earning multiple international awards including three Academy Awards™.

Studio D created a space, which co-founder Kathleen Shannon was commonly reported to have described as ‘a room of one’s own’ for women filmmakers in Canada (Anderson, 1999; Sherbarth, 1987; Vanstone, 2007). In 1978, four years after it began operation, Shannon describes the purpose of Studio D and the National Film Board’s Women’s Program:
Studio D’s purpose [is] to provide an opportunity for women to develop and express their creativity in film...to bring the perspectives of women to bear on all social issues...to provide an environment where women can work together in an atmosphere of female support and collectively...to develop in women confidence in themselves and other women and a sense of their own value and importance as human beings. (Shannon, as cited in Vanstone, 2007, p.145)

Vanstone observes that, using an activist feminist approach Shannon wanted to give voice to the voiceless. Vanstone further comments that, “The sociological approach, now considered naïve, still subscribed to the notion that the personal was political and that the filmic representation of women’s lives could be organized to transact consciousness raising with its spectators – that “positive images” of women, for example were intrinsically linked to change” (p. 129). Vanstone adds, “The filmmakers in Studio D were committed to recording "Women’s different experiences" by reclaiming women’s stories and, thus, allowing these women to “speak in their own voices” (p. 151).

Quoted in Herizons, (vol. 9, no. 2, Summer 1995), a year before the final closure of Studio D, Shannon wistfully reflects on being the beleaguered leader of a space designed to empower the voices of women,

In the 12 years I was Executive Producer of the National Film Board's Studio D, we survived, grew, changed and endured. We outlived an amazing variety of threats and internal problems that sometimes seemed about to blow us apart. Had I known when I was appointed to the job in 1974, that Studio D would still be thriving in 1995, and its existence secure within the institution of the Film Board, how different those years would have felt! I wish I'd had a better knowledge of what to expect when I landed the task of starting a feminist unit within a patriarchal bureaucracy. My reason for telling this story is to attempt to identify some of the lessons I wish I hadn't had to discover for myself. I think it's important for women to share their experiences about what happens when we work for change within organizations. (Shannon, as cited in Herizons, 1995)

Sounding battle-weary, Shannon expresses precisely the struggle to maintain the Studio in the unwelcoming patriarchal environment of the day. Moreover, as Crean (as cited in WIFT-T, 1991) points out, “This history suggests the solution to the problem is not so simple and easy as to setting up an OEO [a short-lived office for equal opportunities at CBC] or Studio D. Because the activism which produced these two projects were never formalized, both programs were endangered when commitment evaporated from senior
management” (p.53). Studio D’s closure signalled the industry and government’s loss of external confidence in women’s cinema in Canada (Vanstone, 2007, pp. 94-95).

Leading up to the final years of Studio D, WIFT-T’s, 1991 Changing Focus study shines a light on the experiences of women in the early years of the screen industry in Canada and establishes a foundation for measuring women’s participation in the screen industry. The study shares essays by a variety of women scholars and women working in the industry in various capacities. In chapter one, sociologist Pat Armstrong, quoting a producer / production manager of a private company spells out the mindset towards women working in the screen industry, “I think you will find that there is little time or respect for frailty and traditionally females have been more frail than males in society and frankly there’s not time for that in the film industry” (p.4). Armstrong explains that the film industry is a business like any other business. The men she quotes claim not to have any particular bias against women as long as they pull their weight, or rather, as long as they pull a man’s weight or stick to what they are good at, traditionally good at – as deemed by society.

Armstrong further argues that women are culturally programmed to step back from power and leadership. However, she notes that as of 1991, there was at least one woman in most every leadership position. “But”, she says, “the visibility of these high-profile women camouflages the fact that women are scarce at the top and plentiful at the bottom of the film and television industry” (p. 5). Armstrong goes on to comment on how affirmative action type initiatives changed the gender landscape at the CBC and NFB.

These routes through traditional female jobs, combined with formalized hiring practice, affirmative action programs, and methods for monitoring progress, all help explain why women do better at the CBC and NFB than they do elsewhere. They demonstrate that concrete effort can lead to real gains for women. But the continuing segregation in terms of content areas and in terms of jobs points to the problem with these old routes and the need for progress not only at getting women in but at making sure that all aspects of the industry are open to this. And opening areas to them requires changing cultures as well as policies. (p. 14)

Armstrong also points out that women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment and the career-damaging fall-out that can occur as a result (p.31). The barrage of harassing behaviours can be demoralizing. As Armstrong states, “while most
women say they simply try to ignore that atmosphere, it can have an important effect on
the confidence that is so critical to success in this industry (p.32). She adds that when
women are in charge on set, there are decidedly fewer incidents of sexual harassment.

Chapter two by Margaret Visser discusses the origins of sexism dating back to 5th
Century BC, how women have been relegated to menial care-giver type roles and
excluded from traditionally male roles that require strength and leadership. Visser cites
gendered data from 1990 about Telefilm Canada funded English language feature films
(77% directed by males and 23% directed by female directors). Describing the challenges
of leading crews, Visser says that,

In an already constituted group of males, a female can be an intruder and
a potential disrupter of the group’s complex and delicate structure. For a
woman to become part of such a working group, to be allowed to work
“hands-on” with the group’s members on their precious machinery, requires
courage on her part and extraordinary openness and civilized generosity
on theirs. (pp. 43-44)

While the study devotes a chapter to diversity, most of the narratives are from a
predominantly white female perspective. In her article in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation
Research Series, speaking to the insidious power of racism in the cultural industries in
Canada, author, performer, filmmaker, former broadcaster, and member of the Order of
Canada, Rita Shelton Deverell (2011) recounts, her personal experience in 1970’s
Saskatchewan while working as an actor in the theatre,

Quickly I discover that these same not racist people believe that Indians
are all on welfare, are lazy and shiftless, are not proactive about their
children’s education, have messy family lives, and are drunks. I tell at least
three individuals per day that these attitudes directed at an identifiable
group constitute racism. They have become convinced that only if their
negative feelings are directed at black people, of whom there are almost
none in Regina, are they being racist. “Racism” and “Aboriginal people” are
not yet terms that can be logically linked together for most folk (Deverell,
2011, pp. 385-386).

Deverell reveals first-hand experience of the existence of and the pervasive influence of
unconscious racism in seemingly well-intentioned, often well-educated individuals. Such
commentary, uncomfortable at best to white readers, is not spoken of in other historical
volumes written by Deverell’s contemporaries. It would be like asking a colour-blind
individual to see that colour that their vision is just not tuned to see, but it doesn’t mean that colour doesn’t exist.

**Wave three: Authenticity through a diversity of voices**

In *The Gendered Screen* (2010), editors Austin-Smith and Melnyk’s aim is to “broaden the definition of film author to include a wide range of films by women working in Canada who have made documentaries, experimental films, and videos…” The authors add that,

Currently in its third wave, and possessing its own conflicted history, feminism – and feminist criticism – has continually valued the significance of female subjectivity, agency, and authorship. Given that the notion of authorship has been historically male dominated, the significance of female authorship and the interpretation of women’s cinema function, in part, is a strategic intervention and recuperative practice of denied and unrealized agency. (p.8)

Armatage, Banning, Longfellow & Marchessault (1999) also observe the emerging pattern of systemic silencing of female voices at the hands of funding institutions that did not value feminine authorship.

Canadian women’s cinema is not necessarily an equitably shared tradition. Its tremendous range and diversity owe much to circumstance, birth, economics, geography, language, funding institutions and, most importantly, the prevailing attitude toward women in each particular decade inform what films get made and cinematic conventions will shape them. At the same time, the production of films by women has been affected by the same formative influences experienced by their Canadian male counterparts. Yet the gaps in women’s production over the decades repeat a familiar pattern. (p. 4)

This is to say, women filmmakers were being held to the same standards as their male counterparts, however those standards, having been assessed through a male-oriented lens valued male stories, male leadership approaches, and male potential all as higher quality and ultimately more bankable. Female filmmakers, female oriented stories, female leadership (what’s that?) simply did not measure up. The authors go on to say that, “The ongoing negotiation with institutional sites, an inevitable part of women’s filmmaking practice, is further complicated at the feature film level, where the demands for high capital
investment and market considerations subtly shape possibility” (p. 9). In other words, women filmmakers have had a more difficult time gaining the financial backing required to make motion pictures within the industry arena. Without naming it precisely, they insinuate that gender bias existed within all institutions and prejudiced the ability for women filmmakers’ voices to be heard and seen on screen. They also acknowledge that the political landscape of the day and the prevailing social commentary or advocacy narrative determine who receives supported to accelerate, and whose voices are ignored at best, coerced or even beaten into silence.

The sporadic nature of women’s filmmaking owes much to the underlying political, economic, and institutional factors that have historically influenced Canadian film production. At the same time, the larger cultural constraints and social movements that have shaped this century have additionally determined who was afforded the opportunity to produce films, and when. (p. 11)

Deverell (2009) adds a usually omitted layer to the dialogue. Stemming from the lag in granting emancipatory rights, the representation of women, Indigenous people and visible minorities was also systemically out of balance in broadcast television,

During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, I used to think that just having places to work for people who looked like me was the challenge. And so, a number of us got very busy building places where people who looked like us could be employed in television.

I thought, we thought, that the problem was who was on the screen, questions of portrayal, and of representation. We knew that in order to change that we had to own some of the tools of production, we had to run things. We needed to build our own institutions. (Deverell, 2009)

Deverell then offers a chronology of hopeful milestones in the late 1980’s and 1990’s including the launch of Vision TV; the pseudo disability network “Movin’ On” on CBC; the Women’s Television Network (WTN); and the Aboriginal Peoples Network (APTN), that herald at least the promise of a wave of change.

In that rush to change who was “on” the air, in front of the cameras, behind the microphones, I honestly didn’t notice much that the more fundamental change we were making was in who “owned” media, who was in executive management positions, and the composition of boards of directors. (Deverell, 2009)
Moving women, Indigenous peoples and visible minorities and other abled people into top positions of leadership, ownership and decision-making is a key point in Deverell’s article. She argues that it matters who is on top, and that without solidarity among stakeholders there will always be others who would be happy to take the space. Observes Deverell, “I now think that I didn’t know then how important the top was, and how easily the top for the four designated groups [women, Indigenous peoples and visible minorities and other abled people] can get toppled” (Deverell, 2009).

**Not all the same: feminist divides**

hooks (2000) plainly addresses what she sees as serious flaws in the feminist movement. She adeptly describes the divide, not just that the first two waves of feminism did not benefit all women, but that it assumed a unity that impeded the progress of the movement. She says, “The wrong-minded notion of feminist movement which implied it was anti-male carried with it the wrong-minded assumption that all female space would necessarily be an environment where patriarchy and sexist thinking would be absent” (p.2). She also describes how white women of privilege began to fall back onto their sexist socialization – it was too hard – if you can’t beat’ ‘em join ‘em – which widened the gulf between women by race and class. “As a consequence, we are as in need of a renewed commitment to political solidarity between women as we were when contemporary feminist movement first began,” determines hooks (p.17).

“Simply put,” says hooks (2000) “feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. .... Practically, it is a definition which implies that all sexist thinking and action is the problem, whether those who perpetuate it are female or male, child or adult” (p. xx). Offering an even broader view of feminism, hooks declares that “A fundamental goal of visionary feminism was to create strategies to change the lot of all women and enhance their personal power” (p.111). As she goes on to say that, “Feminist politics aims to end dominance to free us to be who we are” (p.118), hooks strikes a resonant chord for the power of and need for authentic voice.

Just as Shannon (1995) had hinted, Vanstone (2007) also uncovered dissonance in what was meant to be a unified space at Studio D. Despite Shannon’s idealist view of unity within the Studio D unit, there was often discord among the women working within
the unit (p 37). This discord was most finely pointed where academic feminism collided with practical practice, which hooks also criticizes as adding elitism to the pitfalls of the feminist divide.

hooks comments more deeply on the racial implications of the feminist divide, “Recent critical reflections on static notions of black identity urge transformation of our sense of who we can be and still be black. Assimilation, imitation, or assuming the role of rebellious exotic other are not the only available options and never have been” (p. 20). Deverell, Airst & Lee (as cited in WITF-T, 1991) echo hooks’ statement taking the argument one step further, “It is generally assumed that we are not able to understand the sum total of human experience, but only our minority part of it. This means that the total subject matter of the film and television industry is not open to us on the basis of the assumptions made about us by others in the business” (p.144). Deverell et. al. argues that women of colour and women with disabilities deserve a place at the industry table but are treated as white women were twenty years earlier. While the subject of diversity has been touched upon in other volumes about women's participation in the industry, they are not integrated into the body of the literature as part of the whole, but rather as an awkward appendage, homogenized into a category of ‘other’.

hooks (2000) suggests seeing males as the enemy to feminism is perhaps the most critical divide. Ultimately, hooks offers us a “liberatory vision of feminist transformation”, which was often not accepted in the mainstream feminism of the time. She firmly argues that, “Without males as allies in struggle feminist movement will not progress.” She predicts that “As long as females take up the banner of feminist politics without addressing and transforming their own sexism [and racism] ultimately the movement will be undermined” (p.12). Valian (1999) refers to this form of sexism as unconscious bias, the result of gender schema. Seeing males as preferred leaders is a dominating narrative of unconscious gender bias.

Intersections of leadership and gender

Research on the concept of leadership offers a broad variety of definitions, types of leadership, and situations that call for leadership qualities. Northhouse (2012)
acknowledges that the study of gender and leadership has been limited primarily to the boardroom and academic realms. In their chapter on leadership and gender in *The Nature of Leadership* (Day & Antonakis (eds.), 2003), feminist researchers, Linda Carli and Alice Eagly, known for describing the barrier to women’s leadership ascent as a labyrinth (Carli & Eagly, 2007, 2016) rather than a glass ceiling, discuss the representation of women and men in leadership roles, as well as gender differences in leadership styles in human capital investments and family responsibilities. They compare styles of leadership and identify how men tend to be naturally dominant as leaders, particularly utilizing the more traditional transactional style of leadership that relies heavily on assuming and wielding power. They observe that,

> A profound divide in power and authority separates women from men. Although women have made progress as leaders, men remain in charge of the most consequential activities of most organizations and governments. In the hierarchical structures of contemporary nations, the proportion of women decreases at higher levels, until at the highest level, women are unusual. (p. 437)

Juxtaposing evolutionary psychology and gender differences in leadership traits, Carli & Eagly (2003) examine perceptions and experiences of prejudice and discrimination against female leaders. Their discussion of stereotypes about women, men, and leaders reveals the double bind women find themselves in when assuming leadership roles. Women are penalized for exhibiting what are considered male traits of leadership, as much as they are penalized for being too feminine in the leadership role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The literature provides examples of this phenomenon of women taking on the traditionally male aspects of leadership and being criticized for no longer being feminine; for then becoming oppressive to other women (Brown, 2003; Carli & Eagly, 2007, 2012, 2016; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Fiske, 2012; Fuller, 2013). Paulo Frere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993) explains why voices that have been long suppressed can then take on the personae of the oppressor. “If they are drawn into the process of ambiguous beings, partly themselves and partly the oppressors housed within them – and if they come to power still embodying that ambiguity imposed on them by the situation – it is my contention that they will merely imagine they have reached power.” (p.127). Instead, they are merely repeating the oppressor’s patterns.
hooks (2000) in *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate politics*, Shapiro (2006) in *Tripping the Prom Queen* and Chesler (2009) in *Women’s Inhumanity to Woman* also tackle the all-but-taboo subject of women’s disharmony with each other. Chesler points out that where boys are socialized to compete for the three S’s: status, salary and sex (i.e. perpetuating their genetic line), girls are socialized to compete with each other for a different set of three S’s: security, social standing, and support for children. “Clearly,” says Chesler, “part of the problem of female rivalry would be solved if women felt free to compete against men; But if we believe the movies, women who compete with men on the job are almost always punished when it comes to romance” (p.164). Unlike their male counterparts, women can’t have it all. Shapiro (2006) agrees and concludes that,

As with other aspects of female competition, the solution lies in working together for “more pie.” When we join forces to improve conditions for all women, we will all benefit. If we continue to get side-tracked by female rivalry, all of us will eventually pay the price either by achieving less than we might have by becoming the target of envy, rivalry, and rage. (p. 185)

Why can’t we all seek fame, fortune and family? The authors cited above argue that stereotypically focused expectations of relational attitudes towards women prejudice us against women who display ambition. Ambitious women are seen as not truly feminine. Feminine women are not seen as leadership material. They suggest, as do Carli & Eagly (2006, 2012), Moore, (1986), and Rezvani (2010), we are socialized not to accept women competing in the male-oriented arenas. Women are also expected to be benevolent towards other women and when that benevolence is not displayed, particularly in business settings women are left feeling stymied on their path to leadership, unappreciated and often undermined.

**Bridging divides: Understanding gender schema and mindset**

In *Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women*, professor of psychology and linguistics Virginia Valian’s (1999) overall hypothesis is that persisting and prevailing ‘gender schemas’ (p.2) prevent women from being assessed and treated as equals to their male colleagues in work professions, academia, and the schoolyard. Though she draws on a vast and diverse array of studies on gender, Valian admits that her study is limited to a white privileged perspective. Relatively little had been published at the time of her study.
on the “interaction of sex, ethnicity, and culture” (p. xv). Nonetheless, Valian argues that there are invisible barriers that keep women from rising to the top, and that, “they will not go away on their own” (p.1).

According to Valian, gender schemas are the shapers of expectations about women. She states that, “[t]heir most important consequences for professional life is that men are consistently overrated, while women are underrated. Whatever emphasizes a man’s gender gives him a small advantage, a plus mark. Whatever emphasizes a woman’s gender results in a small loss for her, a minus mark” (p. 2). She goes on to say that even with the best of intentions, peoples’ opinions of other people are swayed by their perceptions of the group to which the ‘other’ belongs. She argues that, “We all want to believe we are unbiased and unaffected by stereotypes we have consciously rejected. We are convinced that we know quality when we see it” (p.6).

Valian’s findings confirm that females are socialized to wait for approval whereas males are socialized to assume it. Staying silent and taking fewer risks, women are seen as indecisive and less serious professionals than men. Valian suggests that women see themselves as simply being realistic, when in fact they are being perceived as lacking confidence, and self-doubting, leaving room for others to doubt in their abilities to lead and trouble-shoot problems as they arise.

According to Stanford University psychologist, Carol Dwek (2008), our ability to solve problems and navigate unknown territory is directly related to how growth-minded we allow ourselves to be. Dwek conducted decades of research on success and achievement and discovered two kinds of mindsets.

In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort. They’re wrong. In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Virtually all great people have had these qualities. (p. 6)
Dwek argues that girls are socialized towards fixed mindsets based on immovable attributes like talent, looks, being perfect. They tend to feel an urgency to prove themselves over and over, while boys are socialized towards growth mindsets based on challenge, competition, making mistakes and taking risks. “The passion for stretching and sticking to it is the hallmark of the growth mindset. This is the mindset that allows people to thrive at the most challenging times in their lives” (2008, p.7). Dwek found wide agreement that the one ingredient that accelerates creative achievement is the resilience and perseverance associated with the growth mindset, arguing that, “Mindset changes the meaning of effort” (p.38). However, she also recognized that growth mindset is not always actionable. “Who can afford the luxury to grow when everything is on the line now” (p, 29).

In study after study on gender and confidence, Kay & Shipman (2014, 2014a) found evidence that corroborates Dwek (2008), Valian (1999) and Young’s (2011) assertions about women’s confidence predicament. “Do men doubt themselves sometimes, of course,” they say. “But they don’t let their doubt stop them as much as women do” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 12). What is confidence then?

**Aspects of confidence**

Homing in further on the concept of confidence, journalists Katty Kay and Claire Shipman (2014; 2014a) argue that confidence is part science and part art. After interviewing high achieving women in business, sports and government, as well as researchers around the world, they define confidence as “a belief in one’s ability to succeed, a belief that stimulates action.” They extrapolate that, “taking action bolsters one’s ability to succeed. So, confidence accumulates – through hard work, through success, and even through failure” (p. 26). They confirm that, “Compared with men, we don’t consider ourselves ready for promotions, we predict we’ll do worse on tests, we flat out tell researchers in big numbers that we just don’t feel confident at our jobs,” (p. xviii). They cite studies (Babcock & Laschevere, 2007; Dunning & Erhlinger, 2003, as cited in Kay & Shipman, 2014) that indicate that on average women rate their abilities, skills and performance at twenty percent (20%) less than their male counterparts.
Kay & Shipman further argue that women don’t tend to get how men can project such confidence when they are clearly no more capable than their female counterparts. It seemed absurd to Kay & Shipman to hear male interviewees say, “Your team just needs to know you can make a call and stick to it” (p. xixx). They also cite that perfectionism is a major reason why women tend to exhibit hesitation in accelerating their careers. After conducting a comprehensive review of neuroscience studies and comprehensive interviews with highly successful women and men, Kay & Shipman conclude that while it impacts success, confidence can be altered and learned – but it cannot be faked. “Part of the problem is that we (women) can’t make sense of the rules” (p. xviii).

In her book, *Confidence; how winning streaks and losing streaks begin and end* (2006), Harvard Business School’s, Rosabeth Moss Kanter offers an in-depth and case by case study of winning and losing streaks in sports teams like the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox, and corporations as diverse as the BBC, Continental Airlines and Gillette. She examines the stories of their leaders as they rise to great success or dive into a tailspin of failures and losses; how they maintain winning streaks and how they turn around from disastrous missteps. She explains that confidence in one’s self is not only important, one must somehow earn external confidence if one is to be a successful leader. She argues that there are three cornerstones to confidence: accountability, collaboration and initiative/innovation that each leader must exude if she is to be successful. Kanter describes confidence in terms of four levels,

- Self-confidence: an emotional climate of high expectation…
- Confidence in one another: positive, supportive, team-oriented behavior…
- Confidence in the system: organizational structures and routines reinforcing accountability, collaboration, and innovation…
- External confidence: a network of possible resources. (p.29)

At the personal level, Brafman (2013) in *Succeeding When You’re Supposed to Fail, The 6 Enduring Principles of High Achievement*, adds that resilience, determination and an ability to ‘tunnel’ through barriers is another marker of confidence in people who have a high expectancy of achieving their goals. According to Nell Noddings, a sense of caring (Noddings, 2012) or as Richo (2002) suggests, endowing one’s self and others with the attributes of acceptance, appreciation, affection and allowing, builds relational confidence and trust. Kanter concludes that confidence runs in streaks that either spiral upwards or
downwards. Each level of confidence impacts every other level, particularly when building and maintaining relationships with others, where the concept of confidence translates into ‘trust’.

Writing In The Speed of Trust: the one thing that changes everything, Covey’s (2008) waves of trust’ (pp. 32-36), closely mirror Kanter’s (2006) descriptions of the levels of confidence. Covey argues that there are five waves of trust that include ‘self, relationship, organizational, market and societal trust,’ Trust he says is also motivated by thirteen behaviours that are either character and competence-based or both. He says that, “trust directly impacts speed and cost”. When trust is high, productivity often moves faster. As a result, costs are lowered, and investments go farther. As trust increases the process of collaboration becomes smoother and communication becomes a kind of shorthand. Seasoned collaborators often finish each other’s sentences. Sometimes whole action plans are conveyed with only a look. There is also a personal level of enjoyment and comfort when working with people we know and trust. The relative stress-free environment that comes with working with people we trust cannot be underestimated.

Covey also suggests that each wave of trust directly and indirectly impacts the other. Each wave has an internal and external component to it. However, he adds a fifth consideration to Kanter’s levels of confidence: the ‘societal’, which is about contribution and legacy leaving.

Covey argues that waves of trust are associated with conceptual components that distinguish each wave. The waves flow into each other in a complimentary way and are linked to the endowments of character and competence; character being relational in nature, while competence is about delivering tangible results. On the self-level, one’s personal ability or level of competence, one’s passion which is related to character, and one’s vision which is a combination of both, appear to be completely within one’s sphere of control. How credible one is, is the key. Relationship trust is about how consistent you are, how accountable. Organizational trust comes from alignment and creating systems and structures that compliment common purpose. Market trust hinges on reputation - what you see is what you get. Societal trust is about contribution.
Whether we call it confidence or trust, internal or external, it doesn’t occur in a vacuum (Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb, 2013). Taylor (1991) and Bohm (1970) agree that a comparison, as Taylor describes it within a ‘horizon of significance’, is required in order to convey value, extrapolate meaning, or to determine quality or excellence for example. According to Kanter (2006) the meaning of any event or experience is shaped by what has come before. History and context play a major part in our interpretations of success or failure and a streak of successes or failures over time tends to create a culture or belief system (p.9). She says, “The momentum of the systems people are in shapes a culture that shapes perceptions that shapes the confidence to invest or not” (p.24).

If confidence and trust can be learned and earned, if the momentum generated from a winning streak can tip the scales to future investment and predictions of future potential, where does leadership presence come from?

Developing leader identity, agency and authentic voice

Researchers and leadership experts agree that a key part of leadership presence is insight about and access to one’s authentic voice. In particular, one’s ability to communicate effectively is another key leadership skill (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013; Carli & Eagly, 2014, Gilligan, 1980, Mamchur, 1984).

Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013) suggest that recognizing and or developing one’s “leader identity” is a key first step in gaining leadership confidence both internal and external. They caution that there is a danger when a woman finally does get promoted or hired to a new leader position without preparing for new leader roles. They claim that, “Organizations inadvertently undermine this process when they advise women to proactively seek leadership roles without also addressing policies and practices that communicate a mismatch between how women are seen and the qualities and experiences people tend to associate with leaders” (p.1). They suggest three actions to support women’s access to leadership positions, “(1) educate women and men about second-generation gender bias, (2) create safe “identity workspaces” to support transitions to bigger roles, and (3) anchor women’s development efforts in a sense of leadership purpose rather than how they are perceived. These actions will give women insight into themselves and their organizations,
enabling them to more effectively chart a course to leadership” (p.3-4). They encourage women to develop their own leader identity such that their purposeful action aligns with their personal values and the collective good. They argue that barriers such as second-generation bias send messages that “tell women who have managed to succeed that they are exceptions and women who have experienced setbacks that it is their own fault for failing to be sufficiently aggressive or committed to the job” (p.7).

Noting that risk aversion occurs when people feel threatened, they recommend “a safe space for learning, experimentation, and community is critical in leadership development programs for women” (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013, p.8). In terms of catering to others’ perceptions, cultivating presence learning ‘leader lingo’, they caution, “People who focus on how others perceive them are less clear about their goals, less open to learning from failure, and less capable of self-regulation” (p.10). The over-arching message is that when a sense of purpose and meaning, in other words authentic voice shines through in what a leader says and does, and that aligns with their collaborators, the organization, the market or societal structures, confidence and trust are inspired.

**Women’s ways of working: voice vs. vision**

Belenky, McVicker, Clinchy, Goldberger & Taube (Eds.) 1986 in *Women’s Ways of Knowing, The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*, describe five different perspectives from which women view reality (p. 3). They argue that, women’s self-concepts and ways of knowing are intertwined. While the book was published thirty years ago, it shares compelling case studies of how women struggle to claim personal identity, and empowerment. They explain this struggle from a socio-cultural stance, pointing out that, “All women grow up having to deal with historically and culturally engrained definitions of femininity and womanhood – one common theme being that women like children should be seen and not heard” (p. 5).

Belenky et. al. (1986) conclude that there are four forms of knowledge as they are experienced by the women in their studies: *received knowledge* – believing and assimilating from an external source only what is tangible; *subjective knowledge* – valuing experiences based on personal well-being; *procedural knowledge* – tacit capabilities
acquired from learning skills and facts; *constructed knowledge* – assessing the landscape based on a variety of sources and filtered into a personal meaning-making paradigm. Each form of knowledge implies a growing sense of agency and autonomy of voice.

As noted in chapter one, Belenky et. al. (1986) cite the importance of metaphors in the expression of agency. The authors’ assert that women in their studies tended to gravitate towards metaphors of speaking and listening, rather than visual metaphors that suggest illumination and knowledge. They add, that

Physicist Evelyn Fox Keller (Keller & Gromkowski, 1983 as cited by Belenky et. al., 1986), tracing the metaphorical uses of vision in the history of Western intellectual thought, argues that such analogies lead to a favoured model for the truth and the quest for mind. Visual metaphors, such as “the mind’s eye”, suggest a camera passively recording a static reality and promote(s) the illusion that disengagement and objectification are central to the construction of knowledge. Visual metaphors encourage standing at a distance to get a proper view, removing – it is believed – subject and object from the sphere of possible intercourse. Unlike the eye, the ear requires closeness between subject and object. Unlike seeing, speaking and listening suggest dialogue and interaction. (p. 18)

Belenky et. al (1986) further suggest that the concept of voice is a stronger metaphor for women’s agency than vision. The metaphor of ‘vision’, as in ‘director’s vision’ is typically associated as one of a screen directors’ required assets. Is it simply a matter of learning or becoming more conversant in the visual language of screen images, and using visual metaphors to communicate intent and meaning? Is it as Woolf (1929) hinted, that familiarity breeds comfort, i.e. trust?

In their study of women’s only leadership development programs, Brue & Brue (2018) focused on the process and elements used to create new leader identities. They contend that “emerging women leaders believe that leadership was less of a position to occupy and more of a mindset” (p.9). Examining interactionist theory, they argue that, an individual’s relative involvement in a role will influence the level of identity gained in or from that role. The deeper an individual is involved in a role, the more that individual gains identity from that role (p.10). Without opportunities to practice and form understanding of and experience with the leader roles and the rules of engagement in professional settings, (such as on an accredited screen industry set as a director), women are at a disadvantage.
“Thus, a challenge for women is to construct leader identities in spite of the subtle barriers organizations erect to women’s leadership advancement” (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011, p.12).

**Challenging voice: Silencing, imposter syndrome**

Belenky, et. al (1986) describe their women participants’ feelings of disconnection, of feeling dumb, voiceless, and unable to even hear, because the language spoken around them was unfamiliar, foreign. The authors observed that without language and in silence, the women participants developed either total reliance on or mistrust of authority figures that used language as oppressive tools. Language was seen as a means of keeping women “in their place”. (p. 29). The authors also argue that the experience of isolation is a means of silencing. They go on to quote Gloria Steinem saying, “When women deviate from the standard of absolute silence, they are considered loquacious and out of line.” (Steinem, 1981 as cited in Belenky et. al., 1986, p.45). This is a standard stereotype that they acknowledge is attributed to women leaders. Stay silent and you are seen as weak. Speak up and you are out of line.

Clance & Imes (1978), Schade (2011), and Young (2011) identify imposter syndrome as a powerful ‘self’ silencing phenomenon and a barrier to women’s leadership voice, particularly in the face of their achievements.

In 1978, psychotherapists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes found that many women with significant achievements also had high levels of self-doubt. Their lack of confidence was associated with feeling inauthentic and not being able to internalize their successes. Subsequent researchers have reported such fears in adults of all ages and both genders. (Schade, 2011)

According to Dr. Valerie Young (2011), there are five personalities that are hallmarks of the imposter syndrome. Young describes these personalities as 1) the perfectionist who expects everything should be done the right way, all the time. She / he wants to do everything right. It’s about being right; 2) the expert who expects she / he should know everything. She /he wants to know everything. It’s about knowing it all; 3) the soloist who expects she / he should / must be able to do everything her / himself. She/ he wants to do everything her / himself. It’s about owning it all; 4) the natural who expects everything should be easy the first time, and every time. She / he wants everything to be easy,
especially on the first try. It’s about mastering it all; and 5) the superhuman who expects she / he should be all things to all people. She / he suffers from all of the above. It’s about being the best at it all.

According to Young’s research, seventy percent (70%) of the North American population suffer symptoms of imposterism. If you are a woman, you are among the eighty percent (80%) of those people who deal with issues of imposterism. If these descriptions have never been part of your experience, Young says, lucky you! Young maintains that imposter syndrome sufferers are not fakes. They are not losers or underachievers. In fact, it is more the opposite, argues Young. They simply hold themselves to an impossibly high standard of achievement. Their expectations of themselves and their subsequent behaviour often come at a very high cost to themselves and those around them.

Through her research, Young has also identified seven behaviours or quick fixes that imposterism sufferers tend to gravitate towards. None of them really work, yet we (yes, Young admits, she is an imposter syndrome sufferer too) continually turn to them for relief. These behaviours often accompany the pangs of doubt that accompany imposter syndrome: procrastination, never starting, never finishing, self-sabotage, denying personal achievement, hiding, and denying voice. To combat the impact of imposter syndrome, Young recommends that sufferers come out of isolation, talk about our imposter feelings, and repeat as necessary. In other words, seek social interaction where your voice is valued, where you feel seen and heard; and practice sharing your voice in order to build the confidence to overcome self-judging imposterism.

Understanding leadership styles through Jungian type theory

According to Isabel Myers (1980) in her emblematical work on Jungian type theory, *Gifts Differing*, “The type concepts shed light on the way individuals perceive and judge and on the things that they value most; the type concepts are thus useful whenever one person must communicate with another or live with another or make decisions that affect another’s life” (p. 24). That would be just about all the time!

In the book’s preface Myers’ son explains that, “A common problem that has often led to stress for many of us is our apparent inability at times, to communicate about
something that is very clear and personally very important to us to someone we care about in a way that that person agrees or at least understands its importance to us” (p.xii). He goes on to share that one of Myers’ “greatest pleasures in giving feedback after scoring a person’s Indicator was the occasional astonished response: What a relief to find out this it is all right to be me!” (p. xiv). Being unable to follow our own natural preferences for, or ways of being in the world can prevent us from reaching our potential (Mamchur,1984; Myers, 1980).

As Myers (1980) explains the four archetypal functions, she cautions that “sensing, intuition, thinking, or feeling – [one function] must have clear sovereignty, with opportunity to reach its full development if a person is to be really effective” (p.11). She explains the cost of operating in one’s least favourite mode/function, something that many women leaders have been forced to do by often force-fitting themselves into male-dominated environments of academe, the corporate boardroom, and certainly in the screen industry. Operating in one’s least favorite function for too long or under extreme circumstances can also cause paralyzing stress (Quenk, 1993). Mamchur (1984) advises that calling on one’s dominant or favorite function, in other words being authentic to one’s self can help to reduce that stress.

Kroeger & Thusen (1989) agree that differing Types can encounter conflict at work. For example, Myers (1984) explains that for introverts, too much extroversion costs them privacy and peace. For extroverts, too much introversion causes them isolation and depression (p.12). Differentiating that the extrovert is a ‘what you see is what you get’ type that is highly valued in the professional world, while the introvert can be underestimated as a leader. using the metaphor of a “General” who is working on strategies inside the tent while the “Aide” is out in the battle field interacting with the troops, Myers explains that while the Aide must go inside the tent and consult with the General (introvert) before making big decisions there is no question that there is a thoughtful leader in charge at all times. She advises that, “Whenever there is a decision to be made that involves introverts, they should be told about it as fully as possible. If the matter is important to them, the General will come out of the tent and reveal a number of new things, and the ultimate decision will have a better chance of being right” (p.13-14).
Myers suggests that people have a choice of focusing attention on two worlds – the inner world where things are perceived and always connected to the individual, and the outer world where things happen with or without the individual. Myers criticizes Jung for only seeing his theory as “an aid to self-understanding.” According to both Myers (1980) and Mamchur (1984) the theory extends beyond the self into practical applications in school, organizations and in the understanding of leadership styles. Both Myers and Mamchur also advocate the value of perfecting one’s dominant or preferred function in order to experience deep satisfaction. Aligning with Dwek (2008) and her observations on mindset, Myers says that, “if children consistently fail (or feel they are failing), the resulting discouragement may inhibit future effort and block not only the required learning but even more important, the development of the perception and judgment” (p. 140).

In terms of how leaders take in information or use their perceiving functions, Myers says that, “Intuitives and sensing types differ greatly in what they find interesting in any subject even if they like, that is, are interested in the same subjects” (p. 145). For instance, individuals with a dominant sensing function tend to be bored by too much theory. Intuitive types tend to be bored by the solely practical. Myers goes on to say that, “By definition, people with adequate perception see the relevant aspects of any situation; if they also have adequate judgment, they make good decisions and carry them out.” Further, that, “Type research has shown that the types differ in their interests, values, and needs. They learn in different ways, cherish different ambitions, and respond to different rewards…The hypothesis is that type is inborn, an innate predisposition like right – or left-handedness, but the successful development (original emphasis) of type can be greatly helped or hindered by environment from the beginning” (p. 167-168). Myers further cautions that obstacles to type development such as pressures of environment, lack of faith in one’s own type, lack of acceptance at home, lack of opportunities, lack of incentive can impede us from achieving our full potential.

Addressing motivation and purpose, Myers says that good judgment depends on what we do about problems and dissatisfactions. Do we heed the call? Speaking primarily about childhood development, Myers theorizes that satisfaction can and must be earned. This is in alignment with Mezirow’s theories of transformative learning for adults (Mezirow, 1991) and Dwek’s (2008) theory of growth mindset. Adult learners need the faith, belief,
and trust, that satisfaction can be achieved. They then need the courage and
determinations to take action towards their dreams – to go for it! “Succeeding at anything
takes both perception and judgment, and in that order” says Myers (1980). “Finding out is
an exercise of perception and deciding is an exercise of judgment” (p.191).

The Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT) has collected data from
thousands of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) surveys over the last four decades.
(Center for Applications of Psychological Type, 2018.). Surveys indicate that while there
are trends indicating that males tend to skew as extrovert sensing thinking judging types,
and females tend to skew as extrovert sensing feeling perceiving types, males and
females can be any type and indeed leaders can be any types (Hammer & Mitchell, 1996).
Has there been societal pressure at play all these years? Has gender-bias caused females
to have most often expressed preferences in how they function in the world? Only recently
has the preference for introversion begun to be listed in medical journals not as a malady
to be treated as a symptom of depression, but as a natural state of being (Dossey, 2016).

Irrespective of gender, Myers’ overall hypothesis is that “When people realize that
sensing works better than intuition for gathering facts, but intuition is better for seeing
possibilities, or that thinking is better suited to organizing work, but feeling is better in
human relations, they have the key to more effective use of all their gifts, each in its own
field” (Myers, 1980, p. 193). Offering a pictorial representation of the theory, Mamchur
(1984) presents a ‘Z-Pattern of decision-making’. The image of the letter Z demonstrates
the flow of using the four functions in one’s decision-making process: from sensing the
facts to intuiting the possibilities, to thinking about logical solutions and acknowledging the
relational ramifications of the decision. Says Myers, “The final decision will have sounder
basis than usual, because of your consideration of facts, possibilities, consequences, and
human values” (p. 197). Both Mamchur and Myers acknowledge that it is best to develop
one’s best gifts first, but an awareness and appreciation for the gifts of other types also
helps us to work and communicate more effectively as leaders.
Industry-collected data

Following studies conducted by the British Columbia Institute of Film Professionals (Ference Wieker, 2005; Green, 2006; Fraticelli, 2007), and the formation of advocacy initiatives like Please Adjust Your Set, and Women In View, a Canadian non-profit research and advocacy group was co-founded by former NFB executive producer, Rina Fraticelli and CMPA Managing Vice-President, Operations & Member Service, Liz Shorten (Women In View, 2018). In a 2009 speech at the opening of WIFTV’s women's film festival, filmmaker Sharon McGowan gave a blistering account of the continuing paucity of women-directed films at Canada’s major film festivals. McGowan expressed how fed up she was with the situation, and the speech was a clear rallying cry (S. McGowan, Vancouver Women In Film Festival speech, March 2009). In fall 2010, Fraticelli spearheaded Sex, Money Media, a think-tank conference of academics, industry and filmmakers held at Simon Fraser University. The conference, which was no small feat in itself, was celebrated in the Canadian Journal of Communications (Murray & Beale, 2010) as a renewed call to action to move beyond the training wheel approach and demand women’s fair share of public funding.

Following a 2014 summit of twelve women-focused organizations in St John’s that publicly called upon government and industry to address systemic gender imbalance in the screen industry (St John’s Summit on Women in Media, 2014), by the fall of 2015, Women In View’s Fraticelli along with fellow researcher Kay Armatage, released a study at the St John’s International Women’s Film Festival that signaled a truly galvanizing moment in Canada’s feminist cinema history (Fraticelli, 2015). It reported about the current rates of women directors’ participation in feature films and fiction television series, but the difference was that Telefilm Canada, Ontario Media Development Corporation, the Canada Media Fund and ACTRA had financially supported the study as well as providing access to data. Notably, for the first time, the study also included data on women directing web series.

At the conference presentation Fraticelli introduced the study by sharing its inciting question, “Thirty years after International Women’s Year, why aren’t things better?” She reflected on past reluctance to delve too deeply into the problem in the past. “We’re coming
to an age of where we’re not afraid of being unpopular,” stated Fraticelli (R. Fraticelli, St John’s International Women’s Film Festival speech, October 21, 2015). In that single statement, Fraticelli nailed a major factor in the silencing of the feminine voice: fear that ‘rocking the boat’ might lead to one being kicked off the boat entirely. Fraticelli had been on the front lines of the second wave of feminism when women speaking out about “something lacking in the normal experience available or permitted to the members of society” (Campbell, 1988, p. 123), had been perceived, not as answering a call to a hero’s journey, but rather as raving, fanatical, angry feminists. “There has been a real sea change in the comfort with the conversation,” continued Fraticelli (R. Fraticelli, St John’s International Women’s Film Festival speech, October 21, 2015). Looking at the same issue from another perspective, Deverell in her feedback notes to a September 2018 draft of this dissertation observed, “For women of colour who are not on the boat at all, this is not a problem. When I filed a discrimination grievance against CBC, white people asked, “aren’t you afraid of not working?” I said that’s the problem you see, I’m not working, [it] can’t get worse” (R. Deverell, personal communication, September 2018).

Fraticelli’s 2015 study reported that of the one hundred and three (103) feature films produced with public funds in 2013-14, men directed eighty-three percent (83%), and women directed seventeen percent (17%) of the total feature film projects funded. The ratio was slightly better for female directors (21%) on films with budgets under one million dollars, and decidedly worse for women directors (4%) on films with budgets over a million dollars. In other words, of the twenty-six feature films produced in Canada in 2013-14 with budgets over a million dollars a woman directed only one (Fraticelli, 2015).

The study reported that the data for female television series directors was also not on par, but worse than the feature film statistics. Women were hired to direct only eleven percent (11%) out of a total two hundred and ninety-three episodes of publicly funded fiction television produced in Canada in 2013-14 (Fraticelli, 2015). A similar study (Coles, 2016) looking more qualitatively at publicly funded feature films and television series in Canada through the lens of participation of women in key creative leadership positions, writer, director, producer and cinematographer revealed that participation rates were no better.
A newly formed collective of screen Industry organizations, Canadian Unions for Equity on Screen (CUES), spear-headed by ACTRA, the Directors Guild of Canada (DGC), International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees (IATSE) and Women In View, NABET 700-M Unifor, union des artistes (UDA), Writers Guild of Canada (WGC), each representing workers in Canada’s screen industry, along with Women In View (WIV) generated reports on the participation rates of women directors in 2013 and 2016 and also found that the rates had declined even further (Coles, 2013, 2016). There are limitations to industry studies due to issues around access to comprehensive, consistently collected and reported data. They have been criticized that they are not telling the whole story of women’s participation in the Industry, particularly in terms of women’s participation in other leadership areas such as executives working in broadcast companies and funding agencies. There have been limitations to access of full data due to Canadian privacy legislation (Government of Canada, 2018).

Nonetheless, data around the globe have reported similar figures. American studies (Lauzon, 2009, 2009a, 2009b, 2014, 2014a, 2014b, 2016; Smith, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015; Smith et. al. 2018) mirror Canada’s screen industry data cited above. Studies in Sweden also showed participation rates under 20%. In response to 2013 data, in Sweden, in addition to ongoing schemes to develop women leaders, the Swedish Film Institute mandated a target of 50% women-directed films to be funded by 2016 (Swedish Film Institute, 2013a, 2013b). Those targets have since been met, and in fact are producing international award-winning films that are also winning at the box office according to Anna Serner, head of the Swedish Film Institute.

Speaking at the TIFF Industry conference in 2016, Serner also admitted that it took personal determination to make the initial change, and then to sustain the momentum towards the goals of gender parity, but that she was prepared to see it through. The Swedish Film Institute’s resolve under Serner’s clear and determined leadership is beacon to all feminists. At that same TIFF Industry conference panel, then CEO of Telefilm Canada, Carole Brabant did not fare as well. Brabant had not yet fully heard the call to action. However, by 2017 she along with Valerie Creighton, president & CEO of the Canada Media Fund made a public pledge at the Vancouver International Women In Film Festival to diversify their respective agency’s funding portfolios with an aim of 50-50 by
2020. In 2018, following the lead of the Cannes and Venice international film festivals, the Toronto International Film Festival will sign a gender parity and inclusion charter, pledging to regularly report data on gender. In other words, the overall aim, the rallying cry across the globe is to achieve gender parity in the screen Industry by 2020 (Viessing, 2018).

Minding gaps in the literature

Woolf’s (1929) observation in A Room of One’s Own when searching for women authored works to support her research on women and fiction, remains true today: library shelves are still only scantily clad by female voices. In terms of the temporal, physical and relational underpinnings of the issues of gender and leadership in Canada’s screen industry, Susan Crean writing in Women In Film and Television Toronto’s landmark study entitled Changing Focus, still holds. “The history of women in broadcasting and filmmaking is not new or even relatively recent...It is however, an uncertain history. Being largely unwritten, it is largely unknown, being herstory, it is typically left out of the official accounts” (Crean, as cited in WIFT-T, 1991, p.47). As such, there are still gaps in the literature around women filmmakers in Canada.

Historic waves of feminist praxis from suffrage through second and third wave highs and lows of exclusivity, have postulated that sustainable change hinges on the will of those with decision-making power. Ely & Myerson (2000) submit that traditional avenues towards gender equity, (1) fix the woman, 2) value the feminine, 3) create policy) are inadequate strategies to effecting sustained organizational and societal change.

In particular, the interventions derived from liberal feminist theories, though responsible for important changes in organizations, are not sufficient to disrupt the pervasive and deeply entrenched imbalance of power in the social relations between men and women. (p.9)

Studies by CUES (Coles, 2016), and Women In View (Fraticelli, 2015) suggest that professional development and training are not the answer to increasing hiring or career success. “There is little evidence that diversifying the training pool will substantially improve labour market outcomes” (Coles, 2016, p.19). However, the 2017 CMPA-led study on gender and leadership (Duopoly, 2017), advocates a multi-pronged approach to
address the lack of participation of women as leaders in Canada’s screen industry, including training. Ely & Myerson (2000) suggest a non-traditional approach to gender. They offer a four-pronged theoretical frame: “The four categories include: 1) formal policies and procedures; 2) informal work practices, norms, and patterns of work; 3) narratives, rhetoric, language, and other symbolic expressions; and 4) informal patterns of everyday social interaction” (p.10).

Brue & Brue (2018) further argue that women only leader development programs offer the needed space for women to galvanize the leader identities outside of the societal pressures applied by secondary gender bias (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). Mamchur (1984) and Myers (1980) argue that particularly through psychological type, knowing self and understanding the differences in others aids in authentic leader identity development.

Despite the scholarly works documenting the story of Studio D, the narrative is limited by the socio-cultural landscape within which it was operating. There is a temporal gap in the repository of insights and guidance for contemporary and future generations of girls and women in the screen industry sector to create space for the pursuit of creative authority. There is yet no complete and authoritative guide to creating spaces that helps authentic voices to thrive in Canada’s screen industry.

While there have been numerous quantitative studies on women’s participation in the screen-based media industry in Canada and abroad, along with anthologies of profiles of some of the most successful women directors, no works have focused primarily on the generative aspects of empowering the voices of women screen-directors through appreciative inquiry. Aside from my brief chapter in About Directing (Whiteman, as cited in Migliarisi (ed.), 2014) offering a small window into a part of WIDC’s pedagogy, and an industry news article (Robinson, 2006) to mark its tenth anniversary, no in-depth study has been conducted specifically about WIDC.

While their arguments are deductively transferable, current literature on leadership, confidence and gender is very much limited to academic, corporate and sports settings. Current screen industry studies are primarily quantitative in nature and scope, and while CMPA’s 2017 study on leadership and gender (Duopoly, 2017) touches on the impacts of unconscious gender bias, what is missing is an exploration of the socio-cultural
impacts of confidence in women as leaders in the screen industry in Canada. More specifically, the trends and phenomena that I have been observing surrounding women screen directors within my practice of leading Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) have not yet been documented. Also, no other work has been done to apply the AI approach or the appreciative 4-D framework to the study of gender in the screen industry.

Seeming or actual, these contradictory viewpoints infer that there are missing narratives about gender and leadership. This study proposes to uncover a new part of the narrative by exploring feminine forms of authentic leader identity in terms of confidence, authentic voice, and how gender schema and mindset have influenced women screen directors’ narratives about their own leadership journeys. The study shares the story of WIDC which is also missing from the canon.
Chapter 3.

Designing: Study methodology

In this chapter, I will describe how my research methodology unfolded. Circling back on the AI 4-D process, I began by listening for a call to discover the story that wanted to be told. “Narrative inquiry became the most appropriate methodological approach, because I was investigating meanings of experiences but, at the same time, the research process itself was a series of experiences, a journey” (Trahar, 2009).

I had spent fifteen years dedicated to WIDC; fifteen years living with a consuming action narrative – the story of WIDC. In 2011, when the doctoral program on transformational change presented itself, I heard another call to action. I was confident in what I knew about my practice, however, it had been some time since I had functioned in an academic setting. I was encouraged to apply to this doctoral program, but without a Masters degree, the stretch to find my scholarly voice was profound. As I searched to find a methodology that fit not only my study topic, but also fit with my own sensibility as a researcher-practitioner, I felt like an imposter (Young, 2011) of the grandest variety. Guided by an action research agenda, the methodology emerged organically, at times painfully slowly. “As the writing of texts progresses, form changes and grows. There is an organic notion at work, a kind of development genetics of form” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.153).

To zero in on two or three central questions to help me focus the scope of the study, I tried to articulate what key curiosities were keeping me up at night, or as one of our doctoral instructors, Dr. Milt McLaren phrased it, “What are the real head-scratchers?” A lot keeps me up at night, so as another of our instructors, Dr. Kathryn Ricketts suggested, I created a mind map. I gathered words and images that reflected big ideas related to my field of study. My initial mind map word cluster included: transformation, authentic voice, mentorship, leadership, advancement, galvanize, catalyst, inspire, inspiration, growth, empowerment, nurture, foster, expand, leaders, confidence, excellence, story-telling, enhance, reach, value, women filmmakers, screen-based media,
At first, the exercise of drafting a purpose statement seemed much like drafting a logline for a film project. To help inspire WIDC director participants to discover or refine the logline for their screenplays we ask, who is this story about? What are they seeking? What do they learn instead? WIDC mentor story editor Linda Coffey uses the metaphor of going on a trip to inspire logline writing. However, the challenge with applying these questions and metaphors to a thesis purpose statement was that while we expect story-tellers to know the story they want to tell, especially when it is a recounting of an event that has already occurred, and much of WIDC had already occurred, knowing where I was going and what I was going to learn in this study were the real questions. I didn’t have those answers. That part of the story was not yet known. That feeling of unknowing made me deeply uncomfortable. I became stalled.

It became clear to me that after working so long in my own area of expertise, I had become fixed-minded (Dwek, 2008). I thought I knew the answers. I was no longer comfortable with the stance of open-minded curiosity that is required of the researcher. I struggled to keep my biases in check. I began to doubt if I had anything new or authentic to say. Even though I had been mentoring and working with screen directors across Canada and internationally for nearly twenty years, I do not identify myself as a screen director, so I questioned what I had to add to the conversation about women screen directors in the film and television industry. A sense of imposterism again reared its head. Since Young (2011) recommends naming and talking about our imposterist issues as a way to combat its debilitating effects, I began searching for a way to name my approach to the study. If I didn’t know where I was going, at least I would know how I was going to get to my destination.

**Discovering Appreciative Inquiry (AI): methodology & pedagogy**

I knew I wanted to tell the story of WIDC and that that story needed to include perspectives from the personal, the organizational, and the societal. In May 2013,
following our comprehensive exams our EdD cohort was treated to a two-day symposium on theories of transformational change. Dr. Gervase Bushe gave a presentation on appreciative inquiry and dialogic organizational development. He suggested that, “We don't need to find out what’s going on, we need to find out what peoples’ aspirations are.” He went on to cite three change levers: 1) a change in narrative or discussion patterns; 2) a new generative image, and 3) a disturbance of patterns managed so as to sustain an emergence of new, more complex patterns of interaction. Bushe encouraged the cohort to consider writing about how to create a ‘Container’ for dialogic organizational development (OD). There isn't much written on it yet, he told us (G. Bushe, personal communication, SFU lecture, May 2013).

Bushe was speaking my language. A positive, appreciative approach that looked for direction rather than focusing on what was wrong. This was my story. If I didn’t know the outcome yet, I had at least found a container, an approach to help me shape the journey. And help me path-find to towards outcomes. Using the model of appreciative inquiry – ‘we create what we focus on most’ (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) I aimed to release the authentic positive core of the narratives that inspired and impelled us as women leaders to undertake the WIDC journey. In addition to finding out what had been going on (the past), I wanted to find out what women screen directors in Canada wanted next (the future).

Narrative inquiry research experts Clandinin & Connelly (2000) say that, “When we see an event, we think of it not as a thing happening at that moment but as an expression of something happening over time. Any event, or thing has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future” (p.29). Exploring participants’ narratives about their experiences at WIDC using a 4-D framework of discovering, dreaming, designing and delivering WIDC, I aimed to generate thematic images, strategies and pathways that could articulate the pedagogical elements of the Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) program, what had worked so well for us in the past while leading us to the future.

By looking back to the patterns of the past, by listening to and distilling the feedback from participants, it seemed to me that I could help frame a path forward. Rather than focusing solely on what was wrong, it was my intent to focus on what women screen
directors had been doing right, how they had navigated their experiences as leaders, and what we had been doing right through WIDC. I also hoped to follow the thread towards a better understanding of my own role in WIDC, my own leadership path forward.

As Creswell (2006) corroborates in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, it was my intent to “empower individuals (original emphasis) to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants of the study.” We also use this approach “when we want to write in a literary, flexible style that conveys stories…” (p.48). Thus, stories and story-telling form the foundation of the study.

**Central questions**

Creswell (2007) acknowledges, in qualitative research, “sometimes research questions change in the middle of the study to reflect better the types of questions needed to understand the research problem. In response the data collection strategy planned before the study needs to be modified to accompany the new questions” (p.22). This study’s questions morphed and changed many times as the review of the literature and analysis of the collected data from the workshop surveys unfolded. Indeed, so did my purpose statement. In fact, until I zeroed in on my central questions the study’s purpose eluded me.

At first, I thought I might engage in in-depth interviews with a sampling of director participants as well as WIDC co-creators, key mentors from the program as well as industry executives (funders, broadcasters, producers, distributors). However, as I began to sift through the data that had already been collected internally at WIDC (notes, reports, newsletters, surveys, archival interviews and video recordings) spanning twenty years, I realized that there was not only more than enough data for this study, the voices of WIDC participants formed the bulk of the data. In fact, there was so much data that I realized it could take me in many different directions. I had identified multiple possible areas of interest: the story of WIDC’s origin; a comparison of WIDC with other like initiatives / organizations / institutions; the impact of WIDC on the director participants, WIDC’s impact...
on the screen industry. My committee advised that I needed to narrow down the field of focus.

Then Margaret Mead’s feminist voice from *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1963) encouraged me in setting the purpose and intent for this study,

> Historically our own culture has relied for the creation of rich and contrasting values upon many artificial distinctions, the most striking of which is sex. It will not be by the mere abolition of these distinctions that society will develop patterns in which individual gifts are given place instead of being forced into an ill-fitting mould. If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place. (p.322)

How do we create a space for belonging, where our authentic voice can thrive? How did WIDC create that space, and how did we create WIDC? I finally narrowed my study focus down to three fairly open-ended questions: What is Woman In the Director’s Chair (WIDC)? What has been learned from WIDC about leadership and authentic voice? What are possible next steps towards the action agenda of gender parity in Canada’s screen industry, at the personal, organizational and societal levels?

Using the 4-D framework of AI (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), I placed WIDC on the larger canvas of Canada’s screen industry landscape through a review of the literature. I explored the narratives of the director participants who participated in WIDC, as told through their interviews and surveys at the time of workshop; and a survey completed, for some up to fifteen years after attending WIDC (WIDC Alumnae AI Survey 2014). I compared those narratives with my own leadership journey and then framed them within the contexts of women in leadership, and transformation theories.

**Significance of the study**

This study intersects with feminist theory in that WIDC is temporally located within the continuum of feminism in Canada’s screen industry. The temporal origin of WIDC relates to what some theorists call the third wave of North American feminism. In particular, WIDC began where the National Film Board of Canada’s landmark women’s film unit,
Studio D ended. Studio D’s origins flow from a gap left by first wave feminism (suffrage) and the loss of the voices of pioneer Canadian women filmmakers like Nell Shipman. These temporal events all fit within a context of historic and systemic women’s segregation, in essence women’s literal omission from the literary / cinema story-telling canon that Woolf (1929) exposes in her *A Room of One’s Own* essays. As such the story of WIDC is a noteworthy element of feminist history.

The study also intersects with the social science praxis of narrative appreciative inquiry and transformative learning theory. On the surface these modes of inquiry offer a structural foundation for the dissertation. They also concurrently form a key element of the story of creating the WIDC initiative itself. WIDC has provided a space or vessel (Bushe 2009, 2013) for new and adapted transformation theories to emerge.

These inquiry-based methodologies may have been rooted in theories of curriculum design for adult learning (Mezirow, 1991), but to me they just seemed natural ways of working, respectful and uplifting. I had no idea I was working within a social learning model steeped in theoretical rigor, nor that I would be part of developing new theory through this praxis. Undertaking the care-giver type leader role (Pearson, 1991; Noddings, 2012) that I did just made sense to me. It was congruent with who I am at my core. Finding a venue to share the foundations of that inherent way of knowing, and in turn projecting that kind of accepting space towards the women whose voice-finding narratives are shared in this study felt like and is both a personal and collective act of validation of women’s ways of knowing, being and story-telling, that is rare in the literature. This is also the kind of action-oriented cause-driven purpose found in the practice of Al (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider, 2011; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

As former United States Secretary of State Hillary R. Clinton pointed out in her keynote speech to the 2014 Massachusetts Conference for Women, “Talent is universal. Opportunity is not” (Clinton, 2014). This study represents an opportunity to shine a light on a particularly underrepresented constituency of talent in Canada’s screen industry, and an all too well-kept secret space (WIDC) that has fostered that talent for twenty-two years. I say ‘well-kept secret space’ in respect to the many years where WIDC was unknown in the larger Canadian screen industry, and to the extent that women still remain invisible as
valued leaders. Further, Canadian government commissioned Marilyn Burgess (2010) in her report to Canadian Heritage and Telefilm Canada, suggests that, “Studies that seek the perspectives of film professionals can help to better understand the environmental factors affecting the participation rates and career trajectories of men and women” (p.21).

Ultimately, given the study’s agenda for change, by reflecting on the process of building the space that the Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) has offered to its participants, and sharing the experiences of the women screen directors that have attended the WIDC program, this study provides a blueprint to help others more readily create similar spaces to help embolden authenticity of voice. Creating a clearer path to greater creative and editorial control, economic parity and general social acceptance of women as leaders in Canada’s screen industry are the key change agendas for this study.

**Participants**

The participants of this study include, the CWWA Board of Directors, key WIDC program co-creators and mentors, along with samplings of the two hundred and fifty mid-career Canadian women screen directors that have participated in the WIDC program since 1997, and me (the researcher and co-creator of WIDC).

Under the auspices of the WIDC program, annual surveys and interviews have been conducted with participant cohorts. Between 1998 and 2006, participant interviews were edited into nine individual five to ten-minute promo videos that have been shared publicly. Between 2005 and 2013, participant entrance and exit surveys were conducted with each director participant cohort. These data formed the positive core of my field texts.

In keeping with the foundational tenant of AI, of examining what we do well (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), looking at how we are when we are at our best, I examined surveys from a random anonymous sampling of fifty-seven director participants who had attended WIDC programs from 2007 to 2013 a peak period in WIDC’s history in Banff. I also reviewed the achievements of some of the most successful WIDC alumnae. In selecting this sampling of director participants, I looked for participants who had between ten and twenty years of experience working in the industry to ensure that the study
captured ‘mid-career’ points of view. I sought inclusivity of a range of cultures, ethnicities, and geographic locations to safeguard as broad a spectrum of representation in the sample as possible. A final essential criterion was a willingness to share stories about leadership / directing experiences post WIDC. I looked for external confidence, or ‘success’ recognition for the participant's creative work including for example, directing a feature film after attending WIDC; creating a television series for broadcast, winning industry recognized awards and/or multiple festival or public screenings of directors’ film(s) produced after they attended WIDC.

At the March 2014 WIDC International Women Screen Directors Summit in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, following presentations from representatives of Canada’s three international women's film festivals (St John's, Toronto, Vancouver), and New Zealand-based key note speaker, guest director, Gaylene Preston, Summit delegates were invited to participate in round table discussions. Data from those presentations and discussions form a component of the field texts analyzed. Bushe (2005) reminds us that “…what is critical to creating change is not the generation of new images/theories but the telling and retelling of stories that create new and more efficacious meanings that support … evolution.” (p. 5). Summit participants were invited to share narratives around successes, win-wins, and other leadership experiences. They were asked to dream up images and design strategies for normalizing and mainstreaming women screen directors’ participation in our screen industries. The exercise was described as creating a space for confidence in women in the director’s chair.

Undertaking this study offers a benefit to its participants who are primarily players in the Canadian screen industry. It provides illuminating and inspiring narrative data. It has also helped me to personally frame my own experiences as a leader, particularly over the last two decades that I have dedicated myself to this intensive work. The study presupposes that the experiences of women filmmakers and their interpretations of those experiences are important narratives to explore. Re-storied through this dissertation, the overall narrative shares perceptions and experiences of voices and perspectives not often heard in academia or in Canada’s screen industry.
Setting

It is important to consider the setting of this study in both physical and temporal terms. As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) point out, “When we see an event, we think of it not as a thing happening at that moment but as an expression of something happening over time. Any event, or thing has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future.” (p.29). Therefore, the study has focused on gathering data from three temporal settings: 1) the past, in the form of field texts, ‘in process’ real-time surveys and video-recorded interviews conducted in the setting of the WIDC workshop that the director participants were attending. This data was gathered from workshops taking place between from 1998 to 2013; 2) the present, from re-storied memories gathered through reflexive surveys and interviews conducted online, in person, and by teleconference, in some cases up to nineteen years after the participants’ real-time experiences of WIDC; and 3) the emerging future, (blank canvas), in the form of notes and video transcripts from the WIDC appreciative inquiry summit and online survey conducted in 2014.

WIDC co-creators were asked to focus their recollections on experiences and events immediately leading up to the creation of the WIDC program. They were also invited to share their recollections of major “take-aways” or what was learned particularly from the program’s peak delivery period between 2003 and 2013.

The study data includes the short first-person narratives of the experiences of WIDC director participants, in particular those whose primary WIDC experience took place between 1998 and 2013. In terms of the AI Survey, director participants were asked to focus the setting of their narratives on their WIDC experience and the intervening years since they attended WIDC. They were also invited to share a narrative about an experience with confidence. The settings of those experiences varied.

The specific data collected and analysed for this study is primarily from WIDC data amassed in my role as WIDC Producer. The WIDC data includes director participants’ Learning Goals Surveys and Exit/Feedback Surveys from director participants from 2007 to 2013, the 2014 WIDC Alumnae Survey and the video recordings from WIDC programs (1998 to 2006) and the WIDC appreciative inquiry summit held in March 2014. Personal reflexive field texts were collected from my own attempts to access what Scharmer (2009)
calls ‘the blind spot’; from my personal childhood memories, personal journals, personal field texts from WIDC and my own unpublished poetry.

Procedures

Once I settled on the study’s AI framework, I engaged in writing my own story of leadership and confidence-building experiences as it intersected with my work with the WIDC. A combination of personal journal excerpts, poetry, and metaphor-making stories from my personal life formed the field-texts for this part of the research. I then set about writing a description of the chronology of events that led up to the creation of WIDC. I referred to hard-copy data that is locked in storage in North Vancouver, and digital data on external hard drives held in my home office (WIDC head office). Since I have been a note-taker throughout my career, a strategy modeled for me by a former work supervisor in my early twenties, I also referred to twenty volumes of personal field notes from WIDC.

Creswell (2006) says, “Participatory action is recursive or dialectical and is focused on bringing about change in practices. Thus, in participatory research studies, inquirers advance an action agenda for change.” (p. 26). The action agenda of WIDC, the intention of creating change has always been implicit in every interaction with participants, and with the screen industry at large. Being part of the WIDC mandate, the change agenda was therefore explicitly shared with study participants at every point within the study framework.

In terms of gathering the WIDC program data, participants were engaged in sessions of open group and private one-to-one dialogue. Survey instruments administered at the time alumnae participants attended the WIDC workshop had charted their learning goals and gathered their feedback immediately post workshop. While surveys were conducted at the 1997 session, in 1998 we began documenting the workshop using video recordings where we interviewed participants about their reasons for attending WIDC and their major take-aways. Starting in 2003, as part of their preparation for attending the WIDC workshop, director participants were invited to complete a Learning Goals Survey (LGS). The format and questions posed in the survey evolved over the years until 2007 when the LGS became consistent through to 2016. In 2016 the LGS was adapted slightly
to be applicable to producer participants as well as directors. This data was used on an ‘as-collected’ basis by WIDC organizers. In other words, the data collected at one workshop influenced the design and delivery of subsequent sessions of WIDC. In the context of this study the data is now being re-purposed for analysis of trends over time. This step adds to the re-storying (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of the WIDC narrative.

I transcribed the data into an excel spreadsheet. I had worked so closely with each director participant, I was concerned about possible personal relational bias in interpreting the narratives. In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants in the collective data-set for this study, the survey data was stripped of identifying markers and scrambled to hide the identities of the respondents.

In April 2014, a brief questionnaire was issued to the then full cohort of one hundred and eight six director alumnae of the Women In the Director’s Chair program. The study demographic included WIDC alumnae directors from across Canada who had attended any session of the program since its inception in 1997. A description of the survey and its purposes was included in the introduction of the instrument that was issued using Fluid Surveys. A return deadline of May 30, 2014 was set however we kept the survey open until August 2014 in order to attract more responses.

This survey invited participants to share short narratives about peak leadership experiences, recollections and re-storied narratives about the best parts of WIDC, what they needed next to advance their careers, and recommendations for future allocations of WIDC resources, all of which were used in a social constructivist manner to influence future directions for WIDC, as well as the change agenda of this study.

This short, written narrative-based survey was issued by CWWA and the data from the instrument was anonymously collected, except in cases where participants self-identified at the end of the survey, indicating their consent to be quoted and their willingness to be engaged in an in-depth interview. No in-depth interviews were collected, although they may form part of a next phase of action research.
Discovering trends and data categories

With inter-rater corroboration by Dr. David Kaufman, I performed an open coding of the data from the Learning Goals and Exit surveys. Dr. Kaufman was not familiar with the narratives of the participants at the time of rating. We rated the same data separately. We then came together to compare our results. Where we differed in our coding we talked through our reasoning, came to a consensus of meaning, and categorized the data accordingly. The need for the consensus-building process arose only a handful of times over the course of the coding. Otherwise, our coding agreed.

In a 2009 article entitled “Beyond the Story Itself: Narrative Inquiry and Autoethnography in Intercultural Research in Higher Education”, Trahar pinpoints an essential element of my research approach, “I could not "know" the stories that would be meaningful for research participants and so rather than ask a series of questions, I invited participants to tell stories that were meaningful for them and I shared the resonances that those stories had for me.” (Trahar, 2009, p.101). Creswell (2006) supports this process by noting, “The logic that the qualitative researcher follows is inductive, from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory or from perspectives of the inquirer.” (p. 22). AI is in fact founded on the sharing of stories and the co-creating of narrative through that sharing space (Bushe, 1998a, 1998b, 2009, 2013, Cooperrider, 2011; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Therefore, in the final stages of my research process, I re-reviewed the field data, inviting more meaning making with my Board of Directors. A Board of seven at that time, these participants included three WIDC alumnae directors, a representative from the Banff Centre, two representatives from ACTRA (one active, one emeritus), and me. In addition, my committee, one of whom is a former Board member and alumna participant, reviewed the data analysis with me.

All WIDC alumnae between 1997 and 2014 were invited to attend the WIDC International Directors Summit in Vancouver in March 2014. Over the course of the two-days summit, a cumulative total of fifty Canadian women directors and screen industry executives participated in round table sessions that were video-recorded. Those recordings and field texts from the sessions were analyzed and form part of the study results.
Bushe (1998) advises in his *Five Theories of Change* article, that what is “required are richly woven short stories, written in the first person. The interviewer's job is not to simply transcribe what the interviewee said, like a journalist, but to use the craft of the literary writer to make a document full of vignettes that will invite and delight those who read them.” (p.5). In the end, I have re-storied the narratives into a more cohesive 5-D story of the discovery, dreaming, design, delivery, and destiny of the WIDC initiative.

**Ethics and Permissions**

As a matter of regular practice, WIDC includes a notice to participants that data collected from in WIDC survey instruments may be used “for research purposes”. This notice is embedded in all of WIDC’s participant waivers and survey forms. Therefore, a standard consent form for research and recording had already been issued to WIDC participants through the course of their participation at WIDC programs. As such, a requisite written permission letter from Creative Women Workshops Association, the formal custodian of the data sets, was submitted with the original research proposal to the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics. This was done in order to provide additional ethical comfort regarding the publication of any WIDC related documents or data reflected in the research findings.

I was the chair of the CWWA Board throughout the timeframe of conducting this study. As such, I was responsible for the safe-keeping of all data related to WIDC. The WIDC archives are housed in a privately rented locked storage facility in North Vancouver, British Columbia, and on my personal mobile computer, which is normally kept in my private home office. While the CWWA Board of Directors and some WIDC sponsors received aggregated results from participant surveys, no other persons were given access to the originating survey data, save our Banff Centre partners who required such data for the same purposes of analysis as WIDC’s.

At milestone intervals marked by the struggle to discover the study topic, we were being called to explore, dreaming about what could be, designing the study methodology, reflecting on and assessing the delivery and the destiny of WIDC, my committee and my fellow CWWA Board members were consulted and updated on study progress via email,
face-to-face meetings, and voice-to-voice reporting. They in turn provided feedback and approvals at each of the stages of this study.

CWWA Board members were provided a copy of the study proposal to approve. The CWWA Board and my study committee were also provided with a private link to an online folder where they could review the study’s coded materials at any time, as well as dissertation drafts, chapter by chapter, along with the ever-growing reference list. One of my doctoral committee members, Dr. Rita Shelton Deverell, is a recently retired member of the CWWA Board of Directors and was instrumental in championing this doctoral work while she was serving on the CWWA Board. Former CWWA Board member and WIDC alumna, E. Jane Thompson also provided in-depth editorial feedback on an early draft of the summary preface, chapters one, two and three.

Data Collection Methods

I collected a significant portion of my study data from my own personal field notes, and personal journal writings, which included stories, musings, poems, drawings, that dated back to 1997. Relevant data from published industry reports and coded data from relevant literature was used for comparison.

I had access to original interviews and transcriptions from written, video, audio recordings retrieved from past WIDC programs; and from results of WIDC-issued mixed methods surveys which had been examined by WIDC organizers to assess WIDC director participant learning goal themes and trends, as well as their feedback (satisfaction) survey results that gave a snapshot of WIDC participant perceptions immediately after attending the WIDC program. WIDC annual reports and published newsletters included landscape-building historical facts about WIDC and direct narrative feedback, and data on WIDC alumna achievements since attending WIDC.

While other questions were asked in the Learning Goals Survey (LGS), to get a snapshot of the why women directors wanted to attend WIDC, the one question that I wanted to focus on was, “Distill your learning goals into one sentence”.

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The WIDC exit survey included nine questions that included:

1) If you had a learning or related goal what was it?

2) Did you achieve your workshop goals?

3) How would you rate your overall experience at the workshop? (Likert scales of a) satisfaction and b) relevance)

4) Please rate the workshop on a scale of 1 to 10.

5) What did you like best about the workshop?

6) Suggestions for improvement.

7) If you could convey a message to sponsors of this program what would it be?

8) Would you recommend this program to others?

9) Would you like to receive Alumnae updates from this and other sessions of WIDC?

The 2014 AI Survey of WIDC director alumnae asked for demographic information such as where the respondent resided, how long they had been working in the screen industry and in what capacities. We then asked what they were focused on in their careers and what they felt they needed at this stage of their careers. Then the survey asked what they remembered liking best about WIDC and what they felt WIDC should be doing that it wasn’t doing. We also asked respondents to share a brief narrative about a peak experience as a leader or specifically as a director. A template of the survey questions is at Appendix A.

In terms of collecting data from WIDC co-creators, Peg Campbell shared her re-storied reflections at the 2014 WIDC AI summit in Vancouver, March 11, 2014. Sara Diamond was interviewed November 19, 2015 with a main purpose of adding her voice to the creation story of WIDC where it lives on the WIDC web site along with that of Peg Campbell’s. The general questions asked of Campbell and Diamond included,

What led up to the discovery of WIDC from your perspective? 
What brought us all together as collaborators? 
What are / were your thoughts about the development / design of WIDC?
As we went along, what was learned and how were challenges faced?
What were / are your big take-aways about WIDC?
Any additional thoughts or comments you’d like to share?

The data was collected as part of the WIDC program. Participants were advised that the data collected could be used in reporting to sponsors, for research purposes and for improving future sessions of WIDC.

As Creswell (2006) observes, planned methods may change depending on the short and intermediate outcomes of the study. (p.22). And my plans of course changed over the five years that this study has taken to complete. I had intended to conduct in depth interviews with participants, however I determined that the richness of the data collected from the WIDC archival materials which included recorded interviews of participants, provided sufficient material for analysis. Also, time and sufficient resources became a mitigating factor. Conducting additional interviews with WIDC alumnae director participants was also part of a WIDC 20th Anniversary strategic plan. Due to extenuating personal circumstances, care-giving through my mother’s year-long battle with cancer, I was unable to manage conducting interviews as planned. The new WIDC Alumnae Directory that was launched in March 2017 has however, generated renewed contact with alumnae. The next step of conducting new interviews could therefore form part of a follow up to this study.

Analysis

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) say that, “As we engage with research participants and live and tell stories with them, the plotlines under composition are re-storied, that is, they are relived and retold. All of these retellings and livings prefigure the narrative forms of our research texts” (p.165). I had anticipated that the narratives collected would be primarily coded based on Kanter’s terminology, and her theory of the cornerstones of confidence, 1) accountability, 2) collaboration, and 3) Initiative/Innovation (p.46). However, after I had removed identifying markers, when Dr. David Kaufman and I sat with the data a process of coding unfolded. Dr. Dawn Whitworth (2016), in her doctoral thesis
Brave Creatives: Research Partnerships between Universities and Companies in the Creative Sector, aptly describes the coding process undertaken in this study.

Broadly these three phases were open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The first phase of open coding was built on the identification of words and phrases that were repeated many times throughout…. The second stage of axial coding was focused on connecting these categories of words under umbrella themes. The oft-repeated words or codes were placed into thematic categories, which were placed under the larger umbrella themes, with smaller sub-themes alongside. This third phase was called selective coding and it identified the umbrella themes that were built into stories that answered the original … questions. (Whitworth, 2016, p. 56)

At first, different words, phrases and images began to emerge. Key codifiers included references to communication skills, technical skills, and overall confidence. Success modifiers related to the satisfaction levels that were measured in the WIDC Learning Goals Surveys and Exit Feedback Surveys. The themes and trends emerging from the video interviews and written surveys of WIDC alumnae directors have thus driven the direction of this study.

I looked at annual summaries of exit survey findings, annual newsletters and annual year-end reports. I began mining the data, being careful not to shy away from stories that I did not expect or that were uncomfortable or indicated conflict or discord. Rather than seeing themes as negatively fixing us into static paralysis, I worked to see the emerging positive core that could lead to action. This focus on the positive core may at times appear as a glossing over, however the work of Al aims to look at the challenges in a different way (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), to learn from and transform the negative into an asset. The discordant narratives and challenges are thus characterized as learning opportunities, particularly ones identifying gaps. The negative has therefore provided a guiding light for us to design new program offerings, and questions for future Al summits and activities. The narratives from the video interviews specifically provided direction towards WIDC’s positive core.

The only part of the demographic data that I analyzed was number of years working in the industry. I wanted to see how directors’ stated needs differed depending on where they placed themselves temporally on their personal career landscape (i.e. 5-10 years of...
experience; 10-20 years of experience; 20+ years of experience). I was especially interested to see what themes arose in their short narratives about peak leadership experiences, and what they felt they needed next. I returned to the literature to search for possible linkages, patterns, where the narratives diverged or where new insights or different voices were emerging.

Having lived through much of the journey as a participant I was aware of my own biases and the temporal fragility of memory (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000), “By using direct quotes and language that are rooted in the study participants’ own words, I have attempted to represent their opinions and in-turn reduce my interpretation of the results” (Whitworth, 2016, p.58). However, honoring the aim to derive deeper meaning through re-storying (Bushe, 2013), I have also placed participants’ quotes and narratives as markers in describing the AI journey of discovering, dreaming, designing and the delivery/destiny of WIDC.

At key milestone intervals throughout this study I circled back to confer with the CWWA Board of directors, my study advisors, as well as study participants, seeking their feedback and insights. I wrote a summary of themes and findings along with preliminary lists of recommendations emerging from the findings. My committee pointed out that there were some disconnects between the narratives that I had presented and the data in the charts. What was missing where the participants narratives to connect the two. I again reviewed the narratives to see where I might have missed cues to drawing direct connections. Another brief summary report was generated. Following this step, a discussion with individual CWWA Board of Directors was convened to engage in a brief version of the 4-D dialogue towards strategy-building recommendations. Editing of the final study recommendations was conducted in consultation with CWWA Board members, and my supervisory committee.

As I neared the home stretch of the analysis, I began to see a fifth important phase emerging in the story. I decided to separate the fourth AI phase delivery/destiny into two distinct phases. Therefore, a further analysis of director participants' narratives, their achievements and their survey results will be woven into the story of WIDC’s evolution in chapter four, delivery: WIDC emerging and evolving. Recommendations and conclusions
stemming from this analysis will be presented in chapter five, destiny: future visions of authentic voice.
Chapter 4.

Delivery: WIDC emerging and evolving

In this chapter, I stretch the AI model into a 5-D framework. Cooperrider & Whitney used to call the final phase of the 4-D process the ‘delivery’ phase. “In our early years of AI work, we called the fourth D delivery, not destiny. We emphasized action planning, developing implementation strategies, and dealing with conventional challenges of sustainability. But the word delivery simply did not go far enough” (2005, p.34). However, in this story, a fifth dimension of delivery aptly fits between design and destiny. It forms an action-based momentum-filled phase of WIDC where the cycle of AI moved rapidly and randomly among all four phases (discovery, dreams, design, destiny). Through an analysis of field notes, WIDC annual reports and newsletters, director participants’ stated learning goals before the program, and their exit surveys and interviews, I describe the evolving delivery phase of WIDC through a collective of narratives. Aiming to continue to focus on the future we wish to create, I conclude this chapter by reflecting on data collected from pathfinding exercises conducted in 2014 at the WIDC AI summit and an AI survey of WIDC alumnae directors that have guided the latest four years of WIDC’s evolution.

Creating a safe space: A pedagogic prototype is born

“A safe space for learning, experimentation, and community is critical in leadership development programs for women” (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013, p.8).

In preparation for our official first WIDC launch event at the Banff Television Festival in June 1996, mentor director Anne Wheeler had provided a promotional quote that illuminated a generative image (Bushe, 2009). “At WIDC you will take risks, make mistakes and discover talents you never knew you had” (Anne Wheeler, WIDC 1997 promotional flyer). The generative image Wheeler conjured heralded our desire to create a safe space where exploration and even mistakes could result in growth and empowerment as opposed to potentially the end of one’s career; a space that surpassed
student-teacher learning and brought forth a collegial professional development experience that was at an industry standard level.

**Calling on authentic voice**

AI theory suggests that what we are passionately curious about guides us towards transformation (Bushe 2013). For filmmakers, that passionate curiosity guides us to the stories we want to tell. Without a space to explore that curiosity, how do we learn to tell those stories? At the opening of the 10-day pilot session of WIDC in January 1997, Wheeler invited the inaugural twelve women directors to consider a turning point in their own lives and write a scene about it. Turning points are those moments in narrative screenplays when drama and tension are at a peak. According to Linda Seger, a turning-point “turns the actions around in a new direction, raises the central question problem again, and makes us wonder about the answer. It’s often a moment of decision or commitment on the part of the main character” (Seger, 2010). Encouraging the director participants to reach inward drawing from their authentic core for inspiration, Wheeler impelled another pedagogical underpinning for WIDC: developing original drama for screen told from a women’s eye view.

Inspired by Wheeler’s workshop exercise, the following year, 1997 director participant Katie Tallo further developed her WIDC scene into a short film entitled See Through, (1998) about a young girl’s embarrassing experience wearing a bathing suit that appeared see through when wet. The film toured festivals and added to Tallo’s portfolio of calling card work. She subsequently went on to write and direct two feature films Juiced (1999) and Posers (2002), became a show-runner for television series, and served for ten years on the CWWA Board of Directors. Tallo has now evolved her career into the digital space and is also writing novels. In an interview for Industry trade paper Playback on the occasion of WIDC’s 10th Anniversary, Tallo talked about the confidence building aspect of the production module, “Directing is one of the few jobs that you don’t get to do for more than a few days in your career. [WIDC] gives you a chance to run the ship like a director does. Some women need that. It gives them more confidence and more experience” (Robinson, 2006, K. Tallo interview in Playback Online, November 13, 2006). The need for confidence building opportunities for women directors still guides the WIDC pedagogy.
Evolution through consultation

During the first decade of WIDC, guided by Wheeler’s original workshop design, Campbell, Diamond and I engaged in annual post mortem discussions that led us to further evolve the curriculum design and strategic plan for WIDC. Campbell and I would synthesize the plan into deliverable schedules, and I would coordinate with the Banff Centre’s staff to ensure the plans were deliverable within the context of the Banff Centre’s resources. When more resources were needed (always), we made plans to raise them which I will discuss later in the chapter.

Our first evolutionary act was to cut the cohort size to a more manageable eight director participants. In subsequent calls for applications, director candidates were asked to submit short scripts they wanted to develop. While they were encouraged to observe their fellow participants at work, we no longer called upon director participants to volunteer as crew. We wanted them to have the experience of wearing only one hat, to focus solely on the director’s role. Aiming to expose the director participants to the value of working with the unions, professional collaborators, as well as what to look for in those essential collaborative relationships, we invited the Director’s Guild of Canada Alberta and British Columbia Districts, and the technical unions, IATSE 669 (camera) IATSE 212, IATSE 210 and IATSE 891 to sponsor the participation of their members at WIDC. ACTRA was already involved as a presenting partner, sponsoring the acting ensemble. It took ongoing effort to maintain those sponsorship relationships including annual reporting, visiting executive board meetings and promotion, even then we occasionally lost the support of unions particularly when executive boards changed.

The mentor director role evolves

Though WIDC was ever-evolving, the primary content of the Banff production workshop hinged on the lead of the mentor director who, after Wheeler included Stacey Stewart Curtis, Norma Bailey, Nancy Malone, Janet Greek, Lynn Hamrick, Nanci Rossov, Patricia Rozema, Gaylene Preston, Leah Pool, Kari Skogland, Donna Deitch, and Manon Briand. Each mentor director brought a varied set of skills and expertise, and not all had experience as teachers. To ensure a level of consistency in the program, we devised a structure that covered in-class sessions on story development, the technical, and working
with actors that were led by a core team of returning mentors and instructors and supplemented by the mentor directors.

The core mentors and instructors designed and owned their own curriculum to enhance the directors’ foundational knowledge about the key departments and areas of expertise that are germane to a screen directors skill sets (i.e. working with story and script, camera, actors, designers, editors). In addition to sharing knowledge and best practices, these mini-master classes and plenary sessions offered invaluable insights into navigating key collaborative relationships. Each year, crewmembers would also volunteer to offer overviews and mini workshops on their respective departments during evening plenaries and as part of orientation for the volunteer crew, including script supervising, production sound, dolly, grip and lighting workshops as well as make up, hair and costume design.

Sara Diamond also offered an evening plenary session filled with revolutionary insights into creating content for the digital space. “What I remember was working to integrate more of a perspective on the emerging digital world. Women in the program were offered ancillary tools about marketing, technology” (S. Diamond interview, November 19, 2015). Looking back, Diamond’s foresight about working in the digital space might appear nothing short of supernatural. However, while some director participants acknowledged the value of Diamond’s insights, others could only see value in the immediate model of media making and were aiming for directing opportunities in feature films and dramatic television series, where the big money still seems to reside.

Playing an over-arching synthesizing role, we invited the mentor director to engage with the other key mentors (cinematographer, assistant director, editor, designer, actor) demonstrating through dialogue and co-designed curriculum modules, how work flow functioned, how those collaborative relationships worked best, and what caused them to breakdown. In addition, the mentor director was called upon for one to one mentorship meetings, group debriefs and case-study deconstructions of her previous work. She also led an onset directing demonstration that served as both a blocking exercise as well as a lesson for on-set protocols. Everyone was engaged in this stop and start orientation
exercise, the other mentors, the crew, and the acting ensemble; and the director participants had front row seats.

In their exit feedback surveys director participants often reported that they would like more time with the mentors, especially the mentor director. They wanted her on their sets for consultation. They wanted more feedback. However other director participants explicitly asked for the mentor director not to attend their sets. They wanted the chance to fly on their own. It was a delicate balance for us to ensure that there was room for all types of learning styles and needs. It was also challenging for the mentors as well as the professional actors and crew to know when to step in, as they would on a professional set, and when to allow the learning to take place - allow the director to possibly fail.

Speaking to the benefits of taking risks and making mistakes at WIDC rather than in the outside industry, and the value of a space to develop before going back out into the Industry, director Sherry White (2005) observed,

It's such an important thing for women artists and filmmakers from across the country of different colors, of different, of different ages, different experiences to get together and to level the playing field. I was surrounded by professionals, yet I was allowed to take risks and develop my own style and make mistakes. You just don't get that opportunity in the real world. There's too much money; there's too much, too much riding on your reputation and so therefore people often play it too safe. And they don't necessarily develop their own style. They don't necessarily develop their own voice and I think we're at a time now where that is so important for Canadians to develop their own and our own style and our own industry. (S. White, WIDC video interview, 2005)

Achieving perhaps one of the most rapid transformations among director participants at WIDC, White emerged from WIDC owning her own style of leadership that to me appeared to be a kind of ‘feminine steel’. She immediately went on to direct two short films then tackled her feature film *Crackie* (2009) that she had workshopped at WIDC. A writer with a distinct auctorial voice, White has also since written and executive produced for fourteen television series. She also wrote feature-length dramas, *Rabbittown, Relative Happiness*, and the highly celebrated international co-production *Maudie*, about one of Canada’s endearing folk-artists from Nova Scotia. Originally from St John’s Newfoundland, White
splits her time in Los Angeles, Toronto and St John’s, and is writing, executive producing and now directing television series Little Dog for CBC.

**Practice, hands-on experience: MAIN Scene & Guerrilla Shoot Exercises**

An extension of Wheeler’s invitation to write a turning point scene, the ‘MAIN Scene’, submitted by each director participant as part of her application became the focal point of the production workshop in Banff. This original scene was meant to be a three to four-minute short excerpt from an unproduced fiction narrative script set in one location for up to 3 characters, that the director wanted to develop and explore. Most times the scripts were written by the directors, but this was not a requirement. The MAIN Scene was used as a case study that the director participant carried through every aspect of the workshop. In a 2003 interview, Peg Campbell who had been leading the script development aspect of WIDC, remarked on how the pace of the MAIN Scene exercise replicated the Industry. She summed up,

> From the first concept, to actually realizing the script fully, and then going into casting and going through all the stages of development through pre-production into production and post, and their hands are on every stage; it’s compressed. It’s fast. However, it means that they can fully see their scene developed through all those stages. (P. Campbell, WIDC video interview, 2003)

The Guerrilla Shoot exercise sprang from Wheeler’s invitation to the directors at the pilot session of WIDC to use the final few days of the workshop to continue exercising their on-set directing muscles. She had encouraged them to just practice; to go out with a small crew and shoot something ‘guerrilla style.’ At the pilot the exercise proved to be transformative for the directors who were able to immediately apply what they’d learned from their directing foray only days earlier.

Seeing its value as a warm up exercise, we adopted and adapted Wheeler’s invitation to go out and shoot guerrilla-style. Scheduled near the beginning of the workshop, the re-envisioned ‘Guerrilla Shoot’ exercise helped orient the directors, cast and crew to working together in the workshop environment. It also familiarized them with the equipment and the protocols we would be using in the workshop. Rather than working on the directors’ own original material, four previously produced scenes were selected.
Two directors were given the same one to two-page script from a television series or film. The acting ensemble was pre-cast in the roles, often gender-bending and removing the location in the screen directions. Each director was allocated a classroom location and four hours to shoot the scene with her assigned crew. They were also allocated four hours to edit the scene with their editor.

After privately screening the resulting guerrilla shorts along with the originally produced scenes with the directors, at times the net learning outcomes could be almost overwhelming. One of the most profound take-aways from this exercise was how differently the same script was treated from each story-teller to the next. When we asked the directors what they were personally going to take way to apply to their subsequent works, some directors observed how the preparation they had done in advance had been invaluable. Others spoke about making mistakes that they would know how to correct in the future. When there was no real judgement on the outcome of the film product, the learning became about refining the process of filmmaking and the filmmaker’s own preferred style of story-telling.

There was pressure to screen these warm-up scenes for the cast and crew, however, after the 1998 session we learned to save that screening for the wrap party where any mistakes could be viewed in the context of the advancements made in the MAIN scenes. ‘Look how far we’ve come!’ Since one of the director’s key roles is to ensure that the actors’ performances ring true, subjecting actors and crew to seeing performances and other on-screen work that was flawed, tended to erode the confidence that the actors and crew had in their directors. This decline in confidence tended to not only effect the individual actor’s subsequent performance, it spread to other actors and crew, essentially dooming the participant before she really got a chance to take her director reins.

**Aspects of working with actors**

Seeing the need for some continuity to guide subsequent acting ensembles through the intensive workshop process, for the first three years, 1997 acting ensemble member Veena Sood was invited to return as a liaison and coach. She outlined the need for a common language among directors and actors.
One of the most important things that actors need from a director is the same language. So that when there is a particular result that a director wants from an actor there's a particular way to communicate that to the actors so that the actor will be able to do that. And without that common terminology and vocabulary that actor doesn't have, sort of the understanding of what it is that the director is trying to achieve... I work so much on professional sets where the director has absolutely no understanding of how to communicate with an actor and if more directors did have that understanding it would be a lot easier on the actors and I think they'd get a lot better results. (V. Sood, WIDC video interview, 1998)

Building confidence through common vocabulary and a language for generative dialogue to inspire dynamic, authentic performances was the main goal of the master classes offered to the directors by the mentor actor. Sood suggested that WIDC needed an acting instructor or mentor actor to help teach about the actor's vocabulary among other things. Each year from 2001 onward WIDC invited a female ACTRA member who had a track record as an acting instructor, to be part of the workshop as a lead mentor for the directors. These mentors included, WIDC director alumnae Rosemary Dunsmore who was not only a formidable actress and acting instructor, she was also a WIDC 1999 director alumna, and Christianne Hirt, also a WIDC director alumna (1999) who returned multiple times in the role. Other mentor actors included former WIDC Acting Ensemble members, Patti Allan, Janet Laine Green, Brenda Bazinet, Iris Quinn, and Lori Triolo. Given her focus on releasing the best, authentic self, Triolo was also invited to return multiple times as mentor actor.

From Stanislavsky, Meisner, and Chubbak to FitzMaurice and combinations thereof, the mentor actors facilitated the directors in private classroom sessions, coached as needed through the casting process and production and gave notes on performance in the editing process. By the time the acting ensemble of actors arrived a few days into the workshop, the directors were usually chomping at the bit to engage their new strategies and to begin workshopping their scripts with professional performers. A theatre-trained director, experienced with working with actors, Leah Cherniak shared a consensus view of the calibre of the professional ACTRA actors selected to attend the workshop,

When the nine actors came in and auditioned, I couldn't believe how professional they were; how potentially right they were for very many different parts that we had in our scripts. So, having professional actors
allowed me to relax in that area, the more that I could concentrate on challenges that I had to growing in the craft of filmmaking. (L. Cherniak. WIDC video interview, 2005)

Listening skills and the practice of interpreting intentions and needs of the characters as well as the needs of the actors themselves may have seemed basic to the more experienced participants, especially those crossing over from acting to directing, however, we found that clear and effective communication was precisely the area of concern that persistently required the lion’s share of our attention at WIDC. We discovered through trial and error, working with a variety of mentors, instructors and artists, that a growth-minded (Dwek, 2008) teaching-learning style best aligned with the kind of space we were attempting to create at WIDC.

The production module

Having been introduced to award-winning cinematographer Roger Vernon, CSC as an IATSE 669 panelist at WIDC 1998, we embraced Vernon’s offer of ideas for improving subsequent sessions of WIDC. To replicate a more industry standard experience for the directors, Vernon suggested we introduce additional union cinematographers, camera operators, first camera assistants (aka focus pullers) and second assistants in the camera department. He advocated engaging women in the camera department where he had noted that they were routinely absent in the industry. We gave ourselves a mandate to fill as many spots with women camera operators, first and seconding assistants as possible, as long as we didn’t compromise the learning goals of the directors, we offered the opportunity for crew to upgrade their own skills and advance into the next category in their respective departments. Vernon also began by developing curriculum materials that we formed into a module entitled ‘Aspects of Camera and Light’ which became a signature curricular element in the WIDC production workshop in Banff. Rather than delivering a prescribed curriculum, Vernon preferred to refer participants to a list of possible topics for exploration, depending on their own skills and experience levels to guide how sessions unfolded.

While the Banff Centre had its own world-class reputation in the arts, Vernon’s reputation within the screen industry opened the door to a rich pool of professional
technicians and crafts people, as well as technical resources to supplement the Banff Centre’s resources. As Vernon initiated sponsorships with William F. White International and Panavision Canada, external confidence was imbued on WIDC. To avoid perception of conflict of interest, Vernon absented himself from WIDC when he was chair of IATSE 669 executive board. However, along with board member and camera operator Christina Kasperczyk, Vernon inspired cash sponsorship from the unions, along with the confidence of local crewmembers such as Mark Woodgate, Allan Belyea, Tim Milligan (grip department); Martin Keogh, Peter Markowski, Mike Gould and David Vernerey (lighting department), Per Asplund and Geo Major (sound department), among others who often volunteered their time and use of their personal equipment to the WIDC production module (a link to lists of mentors and crew is available at Appendix B.). They also donated expendable materials, volunteered to run mini workshops in their department areas of expertise, and just generally went the extra mile to be of support.

Vernon introduced WIDC to some of Canada’s most experienced key creatives including cinematographers Dean Bennett, Harvey La Roche, Peter Wunstorf, Gregory Middleton, Richard Walden, Peter Woeste, Tony Westman, Michael Balfry, Peiter Stathis, Robert Aschmann, and the late Richard Lieterman, as well as production designer John Blackie, whose sage approach along with his sense of humour deftly fit with the WIDC pedagogy. Blackie also endowed WIDC with long-standing art department resources and contacts.

Part of the joy of being at WIDC at the Banff Centre was working with dedicated people, including technical support staffers, in particular senior engineer, Luke Van Dyk, studio technician, Aubrey Fernandez, and studio manager, Tom Montvila, among others. In the BNMI there were a series of coordinators over the years starting with Kerry Stauffer who later returned as Director of Digital Media. Other past coordinators included Colin Funk, Caroline Thebault, Debra Prince, Emily Page, Tahira Balaukey, Jean Macpherson, Karin Stubenvol, Greta Heathcote. Others staffs including, Caryl Brandt, Susan Kennard, Cindy Schatkowski, Lori Ward, Jean Macpherson, Jed DeCory, Norm Richards, Paul Lawrence, Luke Azevedo, Todd Langille, John Avery, Robert Rombough, supported at managerial, supervisory, and director levels, in addition to so many more individuals working behind the scenes. Just as Roger Vernon had asserted, in an article in the Cragg
and Canyon a Banff local newspaper, upon her retirement in 2004, long-serving office of the registrar, assistant registrar Ruth Quinn also said that it was the people that made her experience at the Banff Centre special. These dedicated individuals exuded a deep sense of caring for people and artist process. As our comradery grew over twenty years of collaboration, especially during the workshop, we made time to talk things through, and check in with each other, even after hours. It felt like the best of teams.

WIDC’s editorial personnel was primarily coordinated through the leadership of, Luke Van Dyk. The open office that housed the post production department in the JPL Building was a welcoming space of respite and a place for reflexive quietude during the hectic paced workshops. Van Dyk, like Vernon had been part of the Banff Centre in the late 1970’s when an earlier iteration of a production program was launched and ran for nearly twenty years. He’d seen a lot of artist process. Returning mentor editors included Lisa Binkley, Roger Mattuissi, and one of WIDC’s early advocates, former WIFTV president, Mary Ungerleider. Ungerleider’s video interviews corroborated the message that WIDC was money well spent,

Dollar for dollar the money that goes into this program is incredibly well spent in two ways. One is the actual production and all the components that go into that. And every year it gets bigger and better. And second is creating this wealth of talent in Canada that will go on to make amazing productions and touch the lives of many, many citizens across this country. (M. Ungerleider. WIDC video interview, 2004)

With the professional level of cast and crew, the equipment and facilities it is no wonder that director participants were asking for more elaborate art direction and design to support the visual treatment of their scripts. The Banff Centre’s theatre department was initially enlisted to support the MAIN scene exercises. Art direction was supported by the Banff Centre’s Tom Montvila, and later union art directors and production designers like John Blackie, Louise Middleton, Janet Lakeman, Cathy Cowen, Myron Hyrak, Terry Gunvodahl led the art department. Given the tight timelines of the workshop, managing expectations was one of the keys. When we decided we wanted to offer the directors a chance to learn by having a do-over day of production, Louise Middleton came up with a plan to minimize the labor in shuffling modular set pieces (aka theatre flats) by moving backwards through the shoot schedule so that the first director to shoot ended up being
the last director to edit. Advantage for the introvert who prefers to have more time to reflect,
disadvantage for the judging type who wants to complete and move on. Still, the do-over
shoot also became a hallmark of WIDC and provided perhaps one of the most profound
opportunities to learn from mistakes, by immediately addressing them.

Another gift to WIDC production module was the logistical acumen provided by
Directors Guild of Canada assistant directors (AD’s) like Karen Sowiak, Patricia Walden,
and Michelle Morris, among many others, as well as line producer Jacquie Carpenter. With
their help template schedules began to take shape, and a basic syllabus was eventually
set that formed an arc of applied learning, one thing leading to the next. Once the
workshop template was set, there was very little scheduling to do for future AD teams.
Their focus became about working directly with their assigned director participants and
facilitating production. For AD’s who were upgrading from second or third assistants to
first assistant director letting go of running the schedule was an uncomfortable stretch. It
took time with each new AD department to bring them into the paradigm of the workshop
space.

*Is it about process or product?*

Prompted by union and guild members who volunteered their time at WIDC who
expressed confusion about their roles at the workshop, I created an acronym to help
participants understand our pedagogical approach at WIDC. There was a significant
tension for union crew coming into the workshop space, particularly the assistant directors
who in the external world of the screen industry were used to running the ship. It is
normally their role to be in control of everything from budget, resources, logistics, even the
creative to some degree, in order to marshal together the means of production and keep
the machine running smoothly. In the workshop space, union members (actors and crew)
were sometimes unclear if they were supposed to behave as professionals as they would
in the outside world, or as teachers, or if they were to simply let the participants fail. Were
they supposed to take over leadership in order to ‘get their day’ (i.e. complete the
scheduled shots on time and on budget), or were they supposed to let the directors risk
not having a product in the end? Was WIDC about process or was it about product?
While returning mentors and crew ‘got it’, industry professionals coming into the WIDC space for the first time tended to feel at sea, at least for the first few days. No matter how much I explained in advance how things worked at WIDC, and even though we provided schedules and written descriptions of the objectives of exercises, there was often push back from union crew. One senior crew member who had come on board late without the usual pre-orientation interview meeting with Vernon or me, was so mystified by the workshop setting, after the first day he nearly staged a mutiny of other new crewmembers. As a senior leader, at this stage of his career, he was not interested in facing the possibility of failure, nor the humiliation caused by publicly navigating the unknown as a beginner. We sat down one to one and painstakingly went through the pedagogy. I explained how our role as leaders at WIDC created a safe space for everyone, including ourselves; how his expertise was valued and would be used slightly differently than it would be in the industry; that functioning as a teacher-practioner was indeed challenging but ultimately, it was infinitely rewarding. He came around. Also, when he learned that he would have been the first WIDC participant to ever quit the program, he decided he ought to stay and give it a try. Sharing the PROCESS paradigm with the entire workshop company the next day solidified his and the group’s collective sense of confidence in the WIDC system.

After seven years of delivering WIDC without an in-depth written syllabus, it had become clear that participants, mentors and supporting personnel really needed more concrete pedagogical anchoring especially in terms of a philosophical approach. The product orientation of the external industry was at odds with the concept of creating a safe learning environment where mistakes could be made and learned from. I began to develop a set of guiding values to describe how WIDC operated. I called it the ‘PROCESS’. The word process forms an acronym comprised of words that describe our approach. It acknowledges a belief that participants must be given leave to take the creative and skill-based risks they need to take in order to break old habits, test new ways of working, and explore new material. To do this we must create a ‘safe space’. Bushe (1998a), in his definition of AI organizational development calls this the generative image or the safe vessel. The figure below is a representation of how the theory was presented to cohorts on a white board or flip chart. Letter by letter I would spell out, in story fashion using metaphors and narratives of how we expected to work with each other during the
workshop; sharing the positive attitude or growth mind-set (Dwek, 2008) that we expected all participants to commit to practicing.

Figure 4-1: The PROCESS (Whiteman, 2013)

![PROCESS Diagram](image)

Even though we wanted to create film product, the eight directors’ short films were not the end product of the program. They were only works-in-progress, case studies to help solidify learning. The participants themselves were our intended end products; “their future successes are the products we seek to create” (Whiteman, as cited in Migliarisi (ed.), 2014). The WIDC space therefore offered a real-world hands-on opportunity to explore the process of storytelling for screen. Being respectful to everyone involved in the process of making screen products, from the newest production assistant to the seasoned executive and all in between, was the next explicit element of WIDC’s growth-minded (Dwek, 2008) epistemology.

As in life, opportunities often arise that were not planned. Since we didn’t / don’t consider mistakes to be a bad thing, we began to call them ‘learning opportunities.’ We continue to be responsive to learning opportunities as they arise. It is imperative to have a collaborative spirit and exercise our communications skills. We try to make a space for everyone to be heard. WIDC is built on the premise of creating equity for women, and during our workshops we take that concept one step further in our practice. To the best of our human abilities, every director is given access to equal resources, equal time, and as much as possible equal ‘attention, appreciation, acceptance, affection and allowing’
(Richo, 2002) for their unique voice to be heard.

The need for safety includes the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of the experience. Mamchur’s (1984), Z-pattern of decision-making allowed us to see that we acknowledged different ways of taking in and acting on information; different levels of comfort with the unknown, and that different ways of being in the world in general are valid and appreciated. Individual styles of communications were certainly accommodated to the best of our abilities. Different styles of leadership, communication, and subsequent behaviours within those styles, had the potential to create occasional conflicts (Mamchur, 1984; Myers, 1980; Quenk, 1993). Only one written incident and two verbally reported incidents occurred between 1997 and 2018, where a participant brought to our attention that the behaviour of another participant had had a negative or unwanted impact. In each case, we responded by mediating privately with the participants. I sought professional advice (e.g. Banff Centre counselling staff, human rights authorities and union). These incidents were so rare that WIDC did not have its own formal policy. We relied on the ACTRA collective agreement and the Banff Centre’s policies, however, ahead of the #MeToo movement, in 2015, the CWWA Board adopted its own anti-harassment and anti-violence policy which appears on the WIDC home-page (http://www.widc.ca).

Sometimes being responsive also pushed at the boundaries of adhering to the need for clear structure and predictability. It was sometimes a challenge for me to accommodate deviating from the schedule, at the risk of losing sight of the overall flow, but since participants also needed a sense of freedom and enough room for exploration, space was usually made. Behind the scenes, our Banff Centre colleagues, the WIDC logistical team and I would scramble to set new plans in motion, including communicating to cast, crew and other Banff Centre support staff, sudden changes to meeting locations, schedules and protocols. As far as the director participants were concerned, as its responsive structure emerged, they would remark on WIDC’s seamless design,

There are other film schools. There are other film school mandates. There are, there are training sessions you can have at different lengths and different intensities, but there is nothing like this one. The quality of the support that we’ve been offered here, the quality of the mentorship, the guest speakers that we’ve had, it’s been this
overwhelming feast of knowledge. It’s almost too intense to absorb all at once. But I’m really grateful that this program exists. It has, very honestly, it has changed me. It’s made me aware of the things that I didn’t think I knew but I do know, and vice versa, which I think is valuable. And a lot about directing is about confidence, but not just confidence but justified confidence. (S. Morgenstern, WIDC video interview, 1998)

Following her time at WIDC 1998 Morgenstern, who’d been discussing her fascination with an historical character with identic memory, directed a subsequent short film called the Remembrance (2001) which won a Canadian Screen Award nomination and toured festivals world-wide. This project led Morgenstern and her partner Mark Ellis to co-create the CBC television series X-Company (2015 to 2017) centering on a similar character along with his highly skilled secret agent colleagues, who, having trained at a secret base in Canada, risk their lives to turn the tide in Europe moments during WWII. Before X-Company however, while pitching it as a feature film to CTV years earlier, Morgenstern and Ellis landed their first drama series, Flashpoint (2008 to 2012) where they learned from the best in television series and earned their way through the leadership ranks. It wasn’t however until the last season of X-Company, the two-part series finale in fact, that Morgenstern stepped into the director’s chair. While Morgenstern and other women had leading voices in the creation of the story, only two women directed a total of seven episodes (8%) of the eighty-five episodes of the Flashpoint series. Holly Dale directed six and Helen Shaver directed one. By 2015, more vocal advocacy for gender parity was beginning to turn the tide. Of the twenty-eight episodes of X Company, six (21%) were directed by two women. Morgenstern was more than ready for the opportunity. She is now directing other episodic series.

Long-time NFB documentary filmmaker, Gerry Rogers who went on to direct her acclaimed documentary My Left Breast (2002) and subsequently became the leader of the Newfoundland and Labrador New Democratic party, described the structure of WIDC as challenging yet fulfilling,

I’ve been a documentary filmmaker for about 17 years and wanting to switch over to drama because I have a few stories that I'm just dying to tell, I'm burning to tell them. If I were to sit down and plot a workshop to cover what we have covered and to make the environment that's truly a challenging environment, truly a learning environment, but also a safe
Having had filmmaking experiences in the Industry that had tested her resolve to continue on as a filmmaker, in 2002 Cree filmmaker, Shirley Cheechoo observed that, “You have the freedom to do what you want to do, and there’s also the support that comes with it. Here you aren’t given the chance to forget what you’re learning. You’re just learning, learning everyday” (S. Cheechoo WIDC video interview, 2002). When asked how she felt about her primary learning goal, Cheechoo admitted, “Well, let’s just say I want to make more films… that was one of the real big questions I had coming here, and I want to make more films” (S. Cheechoo interview. WIDC video interview, 2002). Cheechoo went on to direct more short films, documentaries, and two feature length films, *Johnny Tootall* (2005) and *Moose River Crossing* (2013). Her films have received over 21 awards. She was conferred an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Laurentian University and founded De-ba-jeh-mu-jig Theatre Group and Weengushk Film Institute.

Finally, by ‘self-definition’, I mean that in order for the WIDC experience to be meaningful we must all bring our own purpose / goals / styles / needs to the process. We must all be invested and, as AI theory suggests, we must expect to participate in co-creating the journey. This makes every edition of WIDC unique and special and while the experience of one cohort can never be exactly replicated, the steps in the ‘PROCESS’ always reliably guide us.

**Protecting the learning space**

After the first few sessions of WIDC, we began getting pressure from public sponsors like Telefilm Canada and BC Film, now known as Creative BC, the Ontario Film Development Corporation (OFDC) now known as Ontario Media Development Corporation (OMDC), who wanted to see more concrete outcomes, more specific success measurements from their investment. Telefilm Canada had come on board as a major
sponsor. Likewise, BC Film, in addition to a corporate sponsorship, was investing thousands of dollars to support BC director participants selected to attend WIDC. We were shooting short films at the workshop after all, but those films were not going anywhere.

WIDC had been advertised as a space where one was safe to make mistakes. We could not guarantee how those films might turn out. Further, since we had made an agreement with our union sponsors that the films that we produced at WIDC would not be broadcast or sent to festivals – that meant no public (e.g. festivals) screenings, television or online broadcasts except the one celebratory screening at the end of the workshop. Only participants and invited guests would see the works in progress on the big screen. We decided to provide a copy of the MAIN Scenes to the directors, actors and crew, and our sponsors. The directors could share with potential funders and collaborators, but not submit to festivals.

Upon signing a use agreement sanctioned by ACTRA and the Banff Centre, participants were permitted to excerpt up to two consecutive minutes of the works in progress to add to their reel of demonstrated past work (demo reel). The reason we had agreed to keep the films private was to protect not only the professional standard of our union collaborators, but to protect the directors themselves. This was a workshop after all. We were encouraging people to take risks, to learn from their mistakes. Creating a safe space to explore and make mistakes meant that not every director got the kind of produced work she originally planned.

Knowing that once something was released to the public the industry’s opinions of these directors would become fixed (Dwek, 2008), I advocated to protect the works in progress from being exposed. The directors would be forever seen as ‘still learning’, in other words, not competent to be trusted with big budgets if we promoted the MAIN Scene productions as the ultimate outcome or success measurement of WIDC. We had all heard crew members at WIDC openly talk about their personal experiences with this fixed-minded phenomenon. This was a real risk.

The pervading fixed minded gender-ized rhetoric that had declaimed: She has no idea where to put the camera. She has no idea how to direct actors. She has no idea about sound, about lighting, about production design, etc., etc., leaves no room for the
possibility that one has grown and matured, nor that one has potential. Again, as Dwek points out, “Who can afford the luxury to grow when everything is on the line now” (Dwek, 2008, p, 29). It was made clear to us by the directors coming into the workshop that they wanted to be challenged and to grow and there was no other space for them to do the work without risking their careers. It was explained to the directors, and to our industry sponsors that each negative statement about an individual woman director would only add to an already scalding gender schema about women directors and women leaders in general. Some director participants understood this risk,

The scene that I chose to direct was a love scene and it was very exciting. It got very hot and steamy inside the studio here at times, but it was also thrilling to be working on something that I'd written. I want to take risks but if I take them in the business, that could be the end of my career. Taking them here means I can find out what works and what doesn't, without having my salary cut! (M. Bard interview. WIDC video interview, 1998)

A few director participants still wanted to go off and add the workshop material to their reel or take it home and re-edit. Granted they may have continued to learn from the additional tinkering, but our argument was that after the workshop was over the directors would be best served to seek funding to produce a professional version of their script; to immediately seek to implement what they learned at WIDC out in the reel world. Also, we felt that seeing the reedited work would have possibly led to an irresistible urge to exhibit the work publicly which completely contravened our agreements with our union sponsors. While a couple digital copies of the workshop works-in-progress have unfortunately slipped out, most participants have respected the need to protect the learning space.

As a compromise to accommodate the need for more tangible outcomes, we created a copyright protection agreement that limited how the works in progress could be used. While we wished to be responsive to the desires of the directors to continue to use the materials created at WIDC, identifying what it was exactly that WIDC was offering seemed to help stem the arguments for releasing that material. The real product of WIDC was / is the director participants, their future work, their potential, their later successes as leaders.
We also invited director participants to look at their own ways of working in comparison to industry expectations, to test their creative impulses with professional actors and crew. Although we gave them space to discuss constructive feedback from mentors and peers, there was always a desire to go longer, go deeper in the discussion, then step back onto the set or into the edit suite to practice and finesse what they were learning. Space was provided for this in the second “do-over” day of the MAIN Scene productions where the directors were given the same sets, cast and crew for one more shoot day to correct or complete the coverage of the scripts.

Balancing professional expectations to deliver on time and on budget with the goal of learning was a tight rope act for the professional actors and crew. On professional sets when a director shows signs of indecision or is silent in any way, the cast and crew have been trained by experience to leap in to fill the perceived gap. Everyone could lose her/his job if the show doesn’t get delivered on time and on budget. At WIDC, cast and crew were instructed to stand down from that industry edict. Crew were instructed to offer suggestions as they would in their normal course of collaboration, but rather than pushing for results as hard as they normally would, or in other words rather than running over a director who might appear weak by industry standards, they were to listen and follow, even at the risk of not getting their complete day of planned shots.

After the exercises were complete, and after the mentors had had a chance to offer feedback, cast and crew were then given formal and informal opportunities to offer their own feedback to the directors. Open casual dialogue, often in the campus pub, organically occurred after each of the shooting days was wrapped. This openness to communication and collaboration encouraged a collegial intimacy and accelerated professional relationship building.

**Contemporizing transformation theory**

Carli & Eagly (2016) say that, “[m]etaphors play an important role in facilitating understanding social phenomena, organizing cognition and producing change in attitudes…or to elucidate concepts that might be vague or complex” (p.2). Tyler (2007) adds that, “Storytelling is a symbolic interaction, one that synthesizes experience and conveys tacit knowledge, often through use of metaphor” (p. 451).
The Alliance Atlantis Banff Executive Leadership Program (AABELP) was pivotal for me as a leader. My voice was heard by people I respected. Influential people were seeing the real me for the first time and I was deeply inspired by Doug McNamara’s change metaphor based on Kubler-Ross’ stages of grief. Using brief anecdotes drawn from my own leadership journey, anonymized past experiences with past participants, and suppositional experiences that current cohorts might possibly face at WIDC, I created my own leadership journey map and continued to adapt it through my doctoral journey.

**Figure 4-2:** Leadership journey map (Whiteman, 2018)

Adding onto the bottom, more negative points on the curve, I introduced an over arcing curve or ‘up-side’ of the curve. It depicts additional stages that I believe also powerfully punctuate our personal experiences of guiding transformation as leaders, including determination, euphoria, and anticipation (however some experience this as fear) at the
point of letting go, and leaping or sailing into the flow of a new achievement or success. The two curves are bifurcated by the image of water with a ship (representing one’s own ‘leader’-ship) which we navigate from the narrowing of denial and procrastination towards a wider opening that symbolizes a state of flow.

Rather than depicting an end destination, the wide opening space represents a feeling of ever-growing confidence in one’s own ability to navigate unknown waters. The accompanying narrative that I share when presenting this theory describes leadership experiences of growing confidence in the others, as in getting to know and trust one’s ‘crew’ on our ship (or film production team); becoming aware of the landscape we are sailing or traversing; growing a sense of understanding of how we might navigate through the unknown elements we might be facing that seem beyond our control. I ask why are we on this ship in the first place? Where are we hoping, or planning to go? How will we know when we’re there? In essence, the map affirms the growth-minded (Dwek, 2008) assertion that it sometimes takes determination and courage to carry on towards our destination or our goals, especially in the face of barriers that, for women, can be externally magnified by negative gender schema (Valian, 1999); not to mention any internally embedded, self-imposed barriers resulting from feelings of impostorism (Young, 2011).

The leadership journey map metaphor advocates that regardless of the source or magnitude of barriers, without the ability to face our challenges and move through them (Brafman, 2013; Dwek, 2008), leaders can remain stuck on a cliff where our dreams are so close that we can virtually see them in front of us, but our fears literally stop us in our tracks. We can remain chained to the past. However, not being deterred by the effort it takes to achieve our goals, and rather being exhilarated by it, ‘determination in spite of roadblocks’ represents an essential proactive attitude on the confident leader’s journey, and the cliff over-looking the flow state, becomes a joyful jumping off place.

At the top of the curve, when we finally do experience a significant achievement it is important to recognize it and celebrate it. But a constant state of euphoria, while it may sound like the end game, is not a healthy or sustainable goal. Rather than an end destination of celebration, or of passive acceptance as Kubler-Ross (1967) observed in the dying and terminally ill, confident leaders need to aim for smooth sailing for themselves.
and for their teams. Confident leaders, while they aim for calm waters are not daunted when those waters inevitably become rough seas. They turn to their core skills and stretch in a way that builds them up rather than breaks them down. If we are not goal oriented, and Jungian perceiving types may resist the locked in feeling of goal-setting (Myers, 1980; Mamchur 1984), finding a sense of purpose or metaphor, a generative image (Bushe, 2012) to aim towards is enough to set one’s leader-ship assail in a meaningful direction.

Ultimately, even when we’re sailing in choppy waters, or challenged by barriers that are sometimes punctuated by intense internal and external factors, our ‘leader-ship’ provides a metaphorical generative vessel (Bushe, 2013) for us to purposefully navigate our personal and collective journeys through the unknown blind spots (Scharmer, 2000).

I usually offered this metaphorical narrative as part of the company welcome, when the directors had been at the workshop for about five days, and with the acting ensemble, they had just engaged in a day of non-stop auditions where their scripts had come to life, for some for the first time. At this welcome orientation-hour we would re-tell the creation story of WIDC, how it came together collaboratively. The directors would introduce themselves for what felt to them like the hundredth time, actors and crew would be introduced, the presenting partners and visiting sponsors would speak. And after hearing the story of using the leadership transformation map to navigate the workshop, the room would erupt into applause. This didn’t replace the need for schedules and plans, but it set a tone and a guiding purpose for why we were all there in that space at that particular time and with this particular group people. It was about the women directors.

**Ongoing co-constructing: why are we here?**

In 2005 we began conducting learning goals surveys in advance of the workshop to help us tailor the WIDC experience to the individuals in each cohort. The chart below shows the ranking of learning goals in order from most popular goals to least cited among the eighty-one goals cited by forty random director participants’ Learning Goals Surveys (LGS) sampled. These directors attended WIDC between 2007 and 2013, a peak period of the WIDC program, in particular the production program in Banff. Upon entering the production workshop, director participants primarily filtered into two categories: those who
wanted to practice working with professional actors (17%), for example documentary directors crossing over to drama; and those who wanted to work on the technical aspects of filmmaking (16%), for example actors crossing over behind the camera. Director participants (15%) also wanted the opportunity to focus on their story-telling creativity, to take risks with story and visual forms of conveying the story. Thirteen percent of directors in the sample of forty director participants wanted to build their confidence.

Since each individual director had expertise and applicable transferrable skills, there were built in times during the workshop where she would become a peer-mentor to the other women in her cohort. This purposeful mixing of skill sets and backgrounds among director participants, as well as cultural and geographic inclusion, allowed the director participant to own a sense of expertise in a given area of the workshop. In between the moments of feeling like a beginner, facing disorientation and unknowns (Mezirow, 1991; Scharmer, 2009) the director participants would still have a sense of mastery in other areas where they could each share and shine. Being raised and socialized by humans we were all subject to our own secondary unconscious biases (Ibarra, Ely, Kolb, 2013; Young 2011; Valian, 2000; Visser, 2011). It wasn’t always easy to execute but building up from the positive authentic core rather than tearing down and reconstructing in a homogenous image, was WIDC’s AI pedagogy at work.
A sampling of fifty-six respondents to WIDC’s Exit Feedback Survey (2007 to 2013) provides a snapshot of where WIDC was working well and where it needed improvement. Of the fifty-six potential respondents, forty-six directors completed and returned the exit feedback survey during this timeframe. In the responses, nineteen percent (19%) said they’d been aiming to learn more about working with actors. Sixteen percent (16%) said they had been looking to fill technical gaps. Sixteen percent (16%) cited that exploring creativity and creating the vision was their top priority to coming to WIDC. Fifteen percent (15%) of these directors also cited that they had been seeking to build their confidence at WIDC.
Throughout the workshop, directors were encouraged to think about their learning goals. They often commented that nowhere else could they find a place to practice their directing skills, hands-on with professionals without significant risks to their careers.

So usually the only time you get to be a director is when you’re on set, you know, and you’ve been raising money for months and months and months to get there and you’re on set and like that’s your only shot and you don’t want to blow it. So, to be able to come here and workshop in an environment with such a high calibre of talent and commitment it’s just unreal. And there’s an opportunity to experiment and to fail even, which for me just makes me think ok all right, I can do this. (M. Bradley. WIDC video interview, 2002)

Among the forty-six director participants who returned exit surveys in the selected sampling, of a potential fifty-six director participants, 100% of those participants responding said they would recommend the workshop to others. One hundred percent (100%) of these director participants also said they would like to receive information about other WIDC news or opportunities.

Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents stated that they exceeded their learning goals; eleven percent (11%) said that they achieved their goals; four percent (4%) said they somewhat achieved their goals; no one (0%) said that they did not achieve their
workshop goals; and twelve directors in the responding group (21%) simply left the question blank.

**Figure 4-5: WIDC Feedback Survey (director participants 2007-2013)**

Q2: Did you achieve your workshop goals?

Sixty-four-percent (64%) of respondents felt that the workshop was extremely satisfactory overall. Forty-three-percent (43%) of respondents felt that the workshop was extremely relevant overall. Eleven (11%) percent and nine percent (9%) respectively, felt the workshop achieved their expectations in terms of satisfaction and relevance. Four percent (4%) and three percent (3%) of respondents felt the experience was ‘somewhat satisfying’ and ‘somewhat relevant’, respectively. Twenty-one percent (21%) of respondents left the satisfaction question blank, and forty-five percent (45%) left the relevance question blank. Since it reads as almost the identical question, it was not surprising that the responses for question 2) ‘Did you achieve your workshop goals?’ and question 3) ‘How would you rate your overall experience at the workshop (satisfaction)?’ were identical. The blank responses could be a symptom of how the question was formatted on the page. It may have appeared to be a combined overall question about satisfaction and relevance rather than part two of the question.
When asked to rate the workshop on a scale of one to ten, ten being the highest score, 50% of director participants responding rated the workshop a ten out of ten (or higher); 30% of participants rated the workshop between nine and nine point nine out of ten; 20% ranked their experience between seven and eight out of ten, and zero participants responding ranked the workshop below seven out of ten.

When asked what they liked best about the workshop seventy-nine percent (79%) or forty-four (44) of the sample group of fifty-six director participants responded to the question. Following an open coding process, there were one hundred and thirty-eight
individual responses to the question. Of the forty-four director participants who responded to the question, 33% said that they thought that the professionalism of the mentors, their care and quality of feedback were the best parts of the workshop. Eighteen percent (18%) liked specific aspects of the workshop design, the practical hands-on nature of learning something and then applying it immediately afterwards.

Thirteen percent (13%) of respondents talked about the safe environment being one of the best features of the experience.

Being in a creative and supportive environment where I could ask questions and make mistakes at the same time as challenging myself. Direct access to the mentors - especially XXXXX (mentor director) - was invaluable. (WIDC Exit Feedback Survey 2007 to 2013, director participant 30)

Also access to a caring, collegial environment where it is safe to be one’s self allows emerging leaders licence to take risks and try on new leader identities (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb’s, 2013). In addition, eighteen percent (18%) of the directors cited the quality of the mentors, and fifty-five percent (55%) cited aspects of the program in particular the hands-on nature of the workshop, and the chance to work with professional actors and crew. They also commented on the applied learning approach to creative exploration 12% of the time. Opportunities to try on new roles is a key to transformative adult learning (Brue & Brue, 2018; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013; Mezirow, 1991).

Seventeen percent (17%) of respondents also valued the sense of community that they developed with fellow directors in the cohort. In fact, members of cohorts are still in contact with each other, calling on each other’s expertise, cheering for each other, collaborating on projects, and simply calling on each other as friends.
Figure 4-8: WIDC Exit Feedback Survey (director participants 2007-2013)
Q5: What did you like best about the workshop?

- The professionals (mentorship, care, feedback)
- A specific aspects of the program design (actors, technical, SIM)
- Community of women directors
- Supportive, safe environment to learn / create / make mistakes
- Applied learning / hands-on approach
- Other (the setting, the career impact)

When asked what they would improve about the workshop, director participants often had little to say. Thirty-one percent left the question blank or specifically said that they couldn’t think of anything. Some wished for more time, particularly time with the mentor director (10%); more time engaged in facilitated feedback (10%); more time working with actors (9%). They wanted less theory, more practical hands-on (9%) and more career planning (8%); more time to reflect (7%) and more editing time (6%). A few directors wanted more technical time, citing colour-timing and shot-listing (3%). Two percent (2%) of respondents mentioned more script analysis and perhaps, the addition of a script supervisor session, and a couple of respondents mentioned the need for more advance notice on schedule changes (2%).

These participants also commented on the need for more advance communication regarding program expectations, for example, any changes that impact what directors were expected to deliver. Recognizing that individual leadership, communication and story-telling styles can be so vastly different (Mamchur, 1984; Myers, 1980), communications was and continues to be an area that we constantly tweak. As much as we tried to explain how the program worked in advance, in recruiting conversations, in writing, in schedule form, in a brief syllabus, or day by day in a verbal Q & A manner, invariably there were some participants who commented that they would have liked more advance or better communication. Nonetheless, after the workshop was over, they often
commented that they could not have imagined such a well thought out, transformative process unfolding as impressively as it did.

**Figure 4-9: WIDC Exit Feedback Survey (director participants 2007-2013)**

Q6: Suggestions for improvement

- None or excellent program
- More mentor director
- More feedback
- More 'Aspects of Acting'
- Less theory, more practical
- More Career planning
- More WIDC, time to reflect
- More editing
- More advance communication
- More camera, technical
- More script analysis

Overall, these comments were also reflected anecdotally in group debrief sessions. Participants were asked what worked, what didn’t and what they would suggest for improvements for future sessions. It was important to me to listen and provide a space where participants felt heard and seen. In the early years, though I was thoroughly committed, I was often exhausted after three intensive weeks of artist management. After learning about Type theory, I began to listen to my own voice and pace myself, so I wouldn’t hit the bottom parts of the curve. I learned I needed to take time to retreat for some private reflection and to check in with my family.

Perhaps one of the reasons we didn’t hear more ‘negative’ feedback is that 1) after seriously road-testing the program as mentor director Gaylene Preston described (G. Preston, as cited in WIDC Newsletter, 2016), we were getting it more ‘right’ than wrong, and 2) we encouraged open communication throughout the workshop in order to responsively course correct during the workshop. When we heard a certain piece of feedback more than once, or if it seemed a simple or practical adjustment, we attempted
to accommodate or address constructive feedback. We would invite all participants to share their concerns immediately rather than hold them back until the end when nothing could be done.

It was easier to course correct on matters that didn’t require extra funding. Regardless of how enticing it was to keep improving, whenever we heard the word more attached to the feedback, it meant expanding the WIDC program which always required more funds. The demands for more time and more space to develop skills, careers, stories and voice were compelling. In anticipation of major temporal milestones, like the 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th anniversaries, we made plans to expand.

New ideas, new spaces

**Story Incubation Module (SIM)**

As I inferred in chapter one, Mamchur’s SIM lectures gave us the gift of recognizing ourselves, not as anomalies, but as fully whole individuals. I could have been the textbook case that Myers cited (Myers, 1980, p.xiv). Suddenly my personal way of being in the world, my way of making decisions, my style of interacting with others, my experience of the world made sense to me. What a boost in self-confidence. Dr. Mamchur’s lessons on “Understanding Yourself and Understanding Others” certainly developed leadership and confidence, as much as they offered a profound tool for developing authentic characters in story. Director Arlene Hazzan Green summed up her big take-away from the SIM,” If I hadn’t gone through the SIM and the whole type and temperament theory, I wouldn’t have uncovered the characters in my screenplay” (A. Hazzan Green, WIDC video interview, 2005).

It so happened that my attendance at the AABELP provided me the personal leadership space to develop self-confidence and as it happened, to develop external confidence as well. As a direct result of being in the space at AABELP, I was introduced to the CBC decision-makers, including Slawko Klymkiw then head of CBC TV and Newsworld programming. Knowing that the Canada Council funding was to be used strictly for the pilot of the SIM, with a pointed introduction from Pat Ferns and behind the scenes support from Sara Diamond, the next year CBC became a major sponsor of the
SIM and carried on through to 2011. After an enduring collegial collaboration, embattled by funding cuts precipitated by federal government austerity measures, the CBC sadly ended its nearly ten-year support of WIDC.

In 2012, we were extremely grateful that Super Channel provided in kind support, covering the costs of Marguerite Pigott and Maureen Levitt to attend the SIM as industry experts and story consultants. Coincidentally that year Mamchur was suddenly struck with a terrible flu and couldn’t attend. Through the benefits of Skype technology together, she coached me through the delivery her module on Type theory, temperament and archetype that I’d witnessed her teach over the last ten years. In 2013, NCBUniversal came on board to sponsor the SIM and other outreach initiatives (WIDC annual activity reports). In 2014, the WIDC underwent another structural transformation which I’ll describe later in the chapter. Leading up to this transformation, I want to touch on WIDC’s gradual expansion beyond its Banff Centre home.

**Outreach Initiatives**

In 2008-09, CTVglobemedia’s acquisition of CHUM triggered a significant flow of tangible social benefits to the industry. WIDC actively pursued and was the recipient of a significant social benefit of three hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars over three years towards the creation and delivery of a new element of WIDC, the Career Advancement Module (CAM) to be delivered at Canada’s three international women’s film festivals (St John’s, Toronto, Vancouver), and the CTV Director Development Award. This particular benefit allowed WIDC to become a benefactor to the women’s film festivals as we made a commitment to bring value added support to the festivals in the form of guest speakers, a public panel discussion as well as three thousand dollars cash towards the festival. In exchange the festivals provided festival passes to CAM participants and guests, and often a space for the CAM workshop to take place. When the benefits ran out the CWWA Board decided to continue offering the CAM which devolved to simple coaching sessions with a couple of local filmmakers and local Telefilm representatives, to what it is currently, a full week intensive with scheduled one to one meetings, and three one-hour follow up coaching sessions for a cohort of four women directors for each of the three festivals. In addition, Telus STORYHIVE has participated in supporting the Vancouver session of the CAM for two years, 2017 and 2018.
Developed as a result of an infusion of social benefits from the sale of broadcaster CHUM to CTV Bellglobemedia the Career Advancement Module was first piloted in 2009. Feeling a loyalty to add value to the community, I reached out to Canada’s three remaining international women’s film festivals in St John’s, Toronto and Vancouver. The original benefit provided for CWWA to offer a cash contribution to each festival, plus an in-kind delivery of a two-day master-class workshop where a group of four pre-selected women directors (a different group at each festival) would meet privately with broadcasters, funders and producers to discuss their career goals. They would have a chance to present (aka pitch) their upcoming projects and receive feedback to help them articulate goals to be achieved over the course of the three months following the workshop. The CAM would also cover the cost of flying an out of town decision-maker into the festival. A ‘Meet the Funders’ panel would be held the morning of the workshop to allow the public and the CAM participants a chance to get to know how these decision-makers work and what their corporate stories were.

By the time the funding from the CTVglobemedia-CHUM benefits ran out, we had generated such a committed rapport with the women’s film festivals that we continued offering the CAM, reducing it to two participants and two days during the festival. When NBCUniversal came on board in 2013, new life was breathed into the CAM and we expanded it to a week starting with two master classes led by producer Marina Cordoni and me respectively, group meetings with Industry experts, and one-to one coaching sessions, followed by three months of intensive career coaching for each of the four director participants from each CAM session. The CAM now serves both as a refresher for alumnae to develop new projects, as a prep module for WIDC’s more advanced programs and a pipeline for WIDC’s nomination for funding from Telefilm Canada’s Talent to Watch program and the WIDC Feature Film Award.

**WIDC Awards**

Seeking to create a bridge between the learning space of WIDC and real work opportunities within the Industry, over the years, with the financial support of broadcaster social benefits, and in kind support of a variety of companies, WIDC has created development and production awards, including the @Wallace Studios Award (2003 to
2011); CTV Director Development Award (2009 to 2011); BANFF Fellowships (2003 to 2014), which had limited but effective runs.

**Feature Film Award**

On September 8, 2008, we launched the WIDC Feature Film Award (FF Award) as part of the BC Institute of Film Professionals (BCIFP) ‘Please Adjust Your Set’ campaign. The Feature Film Award has since handed out nine prizes; each valued at more than $100,000 in kind services and rentals to help a Canadian woman screen director to complete her fiction feature film project.

The award began as a conversation with Peter Leitch, president of the BC Motion Picture Production Industry Association, and CEO of North Shore Studios and Mammoth Studios. When I asked for an in-kind prize of studio time, to match the @Wallace Studios Award that was based in Toronto, Leitch encouraged me to also reach out to other local companies to support this new BC-based award. Selected by a peer jury, the recipient of the first MPPIA WIDC Feature Film Award was Jacqueline Samuda for her debut feature *Bread*. The award included services and rentals in kind from William F. White International for lighting and grip equipment, Panavision Canada for camera package, Deluxe Vancouver for picture postproduction, Sharpe Sound Studios for audio postproduction, and $15,000 from Creative BC (aka BC Film) towards completion. Samuda was unable to bring together the final financing needed to round out the budget, so the project was not made.

Subsequent winners of the FF Award, Katrin Bowen (*Amazon Falls*, 2009), Lulu Keating (*Lucille’s Ball*, 2010), and Siobhan Devine (*The Birdwatcher*, 2013) directed award-winning ultra-low budget films and self-produced the projects (i.e. were the lead producers) with budgets under five hundred thousand dollars (cash and in kind). Bowen raised private funding. Keating and Devine received Telefilm Canada funding. While Keating and Bowen wrote their scripts and produced, Devine directed and produced *The Birdwatcher*, which was written by Roslyn Muir. *The Birdwatcher* earned six awards, sixteen nominations, was theatrically released in Toronto and has gone to VOD (video on demand). In 2018, IndieCan Distribution picked up *The Birdwatcher* for world-wide distribution.
In the current industry system, funding for feature film projects is administered under the aegis of the project’s lead producer. The lead producer is responsible for arbitrating final decisions about the spending of funds, the final outputs of the film project, the final cut (or edit) of the film. That person or company is contractually bound to deliver the final film on time, on budget, and to the professional standard (i.e. creative satisfaction) of the contracted investors in project, and to the extent that those agreements require. If the film’s director is not also the lead producer, she could find herself at odds creatively with her lead producer, in which case her creative voice in telling an authentic story from her singular female eye view, could be in jeopardy. When budgets are smaller and there are fewer investors to be satisfied, the risk of silencing the director’s voice is lower. However, when the budget is higher and there is an added expectation of commercial exploitation of the film – that it will make money for its investors – the singular voice and vision of the director is at greater risk of being squashed if not silenced altogether by her being removed from a project entirely. Given the mandate for the award, if the director was to be separated (fired) from the film project, the FF Award assets would be separated as well. In other words, the award follows the director. In these ways, WIDC is protecting the authentic voice of the director winner.

The FF Award agreement currently designates a CWWA representative as an executive producer on each award–winning project. The executive producer designate is expected to mentor and provide notes and feedback in the business and creative undertakings of the project, but claims no editorial or creative control, nor any recompense from the exploitation of the film. The executive producer designate is the formal conduit between CWWA, the film project and the award sponsors and protects the integrity of the ongoing sponsor relationships for future award recipients.

Past recipients have called the award a real game changer. Each film produced through this prize has won subsequent awards. Katrin Bowen (Amazon Falls), Lulu Keating (Lucille’s Ball), Ana Valine (Sitting on the Edge of Marlene), Siobhan Devine (The Birdwatcher), Kathleen Hepburn (Never Steady, Never Still), Jordan Canning (Suck It Up) have all gone on to direct subsequent films. Devine and Canning have parlayed into directing for television series (WIDC alumnae directory, 2018). As the prize value has grown each year, it is now valued at nearly $200,000, sponsorships have now been
arranged with companies across Canada. The number of quality submissions received from across the country are impressive.

At this writing, WIDC Feature Film Award winners writer/director/producer Gloria Ui Young Kim has completed the first phase of production on her debut feature film Queen of the Morning Calm, October 2018; writer/director, Sonia Bonspille Boileau (Rustic Oracle) is in post-production on her second feature film in Oka, Quebec; writer/director/producer Marie Clements (Red Snow) has just delivered the final version of her film. The 2018 prize was presented during the Whistler Film Festival to Shelley Thompson for her debut feature drama, Dawn, Her Dad & the Tractor.

**Short Works Award**

In 2018, after two years of outreach discussion, WIDC collaboratively launched a new initiative with the Winnipeg Film Group. Delivered in May, the Short Works Award offered three local women filmmakers an intensive short film script lab, at the end of which one film was selected to go immediately into production. The award served as a prototype and as of this writing, after offering a second version supported by TELUS STORYHIVE in Kamloops, two woman-directed shorts are nearing completion (WIDC, 2018).

**Evolving the collaboration with the Banff Centre**

Concurrent with the launch of the pilot session of WIDC, Sara Diamond had created the Banff New Media Institute (BNMI) department, a creative learning environment primarily focused on the new frontiers of digital media and its convergence with science and the arts. Diamond led the BNMI until her departure in 2005. Though WIDC didn’t quite fit the mandate of the new department, Diamond believed in WIDC and championed its cause, and so WIDC stayed there. Leading up to WIDC’s twentieth anniversary, in a 2015 interview Sara Diamond acknowledged the complexity that the collaborative endeavour of WIDC presented.

Most of the challenges were in the management side. Determining who was doing what, which resources were being allocated and which were being brought in from outside. It took a lot of planning. Then there was a transition in terms of the media arts department. That added
somewhat of a layer of complexity, to know that the resources were there for you.

WIDC required an in-kind donation from Banff. We had complex budgeting systems. WIDC was a big program that drove a lot of resources. Making sure that people understood the ongoing value of it was key. Everyone wanted to make sure that the program was top quality. (S. Diamond interview, November 19, 2015)

Since it incorporated so many of the core values of the Banff Centre, (i.e. encouraging creativity, providing mentorship, developing new talent, and incorporating the Centre’s work-study internship programs into the practical aspects of WIDC), Diamond had encouraged that WIDC should be promoted as a flagship program at the Banff Centre. Closing night dinners with the director participants were hosted by the president or vice president of the Centre in those peak years. WIDC was graced with support from almost every department at Banff Centre.

Supporting WIDC’s flag ship status, in a 2010 interview, one of WIDC’s most high-profile alumnae at the time, former prima ballerina and Emmy award-winner Veronica Tennant openly spoke about her transformative experience at WIDC at the Banff Centre. Tennant had already had a stellar twenty-five-year career with the National Ballet of Canada. Upon her retirement from dance she had begun to produce for the CBC. In 1999, when she attended WIDC in Banff, Tennant aptly summed up what many mid-career women directors were experiencing. She said something like, ‘I know my ABC’s, and where I’m at in my career I’m expected to know XYZ. What I want to know now are the letters in between so I can fully communicate my voice and vision in the Industry’. In 2010 Tennant went on to praise the space we created at the Banff Centre for women directors,

By ’99 I decided I really wanted to develop as a director, and it’s the Banff Centre with the Women In the Director’s Chair that gave me that first in depth training as a director. Then I was able to come back to Banff and actually shoot two films here. One was Words Fail with Shawna Rolston and Peggy Baker and the second one was Trio which won two Gemini Awards, and was actually birthed because I was able to get a Paul Fleck Fellowship. For me to come back after, I guess it’s nine years since I was here for Women In the Director’s Chair, with two big films, the first is Shadow Pleasures made in collaboration with Michael Ondaatje, the wonderful author, and the other is called Vida y Danza a Cuba, and it was shot in Havana and Toronto. I really think of myself more as a filmmaker now and so I guess that’s the transformation for me, and so much of it was birthed here at The Banff Centre. It’s great
to be back. I’m so happy to be here. (V. Tennant, Banff Centre interview, YouTube, 2010)

After Diamond’s departure, former BNMI executive producer Susan Kennard took on the leadership of the department. Kennard had the unhappy task of bringing WIDC into financial alignment with the Banff Centre. Upon Kennard’s departure in 2012, when Kerry Stauffer took over the reins of the department, the department was steering away from delivering workshops. By this time the WIDC production module had expanded to twenty-one days however at the peak impact of the Federal government landscape’s austerity measures, with waning funding to the arts, WIDC’s position as a flag ship program was faltering. Through those years, given the expansion of our external program offerings and the greater desire for autonomy expressed by the CWWA Board, WIDC’s position at the Banff Centre became perceived more as an external client. Having started out as a part of the Banff Centre, after Diamond’s departure, WIDC began being charged an ever-increasing user fee for services.

The focus was to re-encompass and service all of digital media production at the Centre. As the Banff Centre representative to the CWWA Board, Stauffer prepared us for the next evolution. Under the leadership of then president Jeff Melanson, the Banff Centre had begun to undertake its own identity exercises. It was unclear if WIDC would still fit within that new identity. The CWWA Board began pathfinding in earnest for new options for WIDC.

Founded by an initial collaboration among like-minded organizations, the CWWA Board was open to new collaborations that aligned with WIDC’s purpose. Given a constitutional mandate to promote and advance women screen directors, WIDC was / is primarily focused on providing professional development opportunities for women screen directors and promoting alumnae achievements within the scope of CWWA’s limited resources. In her 2015 interview Sara Diamond reflected on the lack of change after nearly two decades since she was part of co-creating WIDC.

I had moved on to OCUAD when Rina Fraticelli [Women In View] showed me the data that the group in BC [BCIFP] had collected. Looking at the data, we realized we still have a really bad problem here. Two decades have gone by and the data have not gotten better, it’s getting worse. I felt it was important to get behind Rina’s ’Sex Money Media’ conference
(2010). When I helped to initiate that, I had gotten back into this issue because I was so frustrated with how it wasn’t moving forward. WIDC had raised consciousness and awareness but it wasn’t enough. (S. Diamond Interview. November 19, 2015)

In the build-up to the 2010 Women In View: Sex Money Media conference, I was beginning to hear criticism from colleagues that training for women screen directors was passé. The conference pointed out a systemic trend in that women tend to train for the job, men tend to do the job. In their Canadian Communications Journal article written following the Sex, Money, Media conference, Murray & Beale (2011) passionately corroborate Diamond’s observation. In 2010, it was clear there was still more to be done in terms of making space for women directors. Murray & Beale further observed that, “despite having an institutional home at SFU, the labour conditions of producing the conference mirrored those confronting female media producers” (para, 4). They concluded that, “in the end, it is the vision of a virtual kind of Studio D for the age that proves most compelling and must galvanize Canadian feminists yet again” (para, 14). At the time, the message I took away from this conference was that while it had given individual women director alumnæ a boost, WIDC had done nothing to change the societal landscape for women screen directors. In fact, rather than creating a generative image to expand resources available for gender parity initiatives, some women in film colleagues were referring to WIDC as a resource suck of the limited funding for gender parity initiatives, and that it was masking the systemic problem. Nice try, but move aside, seemed to me to be the bottom line message.

    Rather than providing galvanizing inspiration and support, for me the Sex Money Media conference was an exercise in humility and navigating the margins. Again, I asked what’s next and was WIDC still relevant?

**Using AI tools**

**The 2014 AI Summit**

To probe into the positive core and find direction, in March 2014, CWWA hosted an appreciative inquiry summit at the Empire Landmark Hotel in Vancouver, British
Columbia, supported by the Canada Council for the Arts. The CWWA Board of Directors learned from women director delegates about how they had been navigating their careers since WIDC. Fifty Canadian women screen directors attended the Summit over two days. Representatives from Canada’s three international women’s film festivals, union and broadcaster representatives, shared about themselves, their best practices and collectively dreamed what the world was calling us to become and do. A full analysis of the AI Summit could encompass an entire dissertation in itself so here I will offer a summary analysis as it directly stitches into WIDC’s evolutionary track.

By employing the AI 4-D process the Summit built a stronger sense of community among the delegates who in some cases had never met each other before. During the introductory ‘discovery’ sessions we identified who we were and talked about our visions for the ideal screen industry landscape. When asked to finish the sentence participants said, “I have a dream that…”,

- Women could have a safe place to fail.
- We reach girls at a much younger age to create an appreciation for film made by women.
- There was a quota for Canadian content in theatres (e.g. music industry).
- There was a quota for Canadian women-directed films in theatres.
- We could see real women that we can identify with on screen.
- There was a production fund administered through festivals for films made by women (e.g. if your film plays in the festival it triggers tax credits nationally).
- Dedicated screens across Canada have been curated by the Women’s Film Festivals (e.g. TIFF Film Circuit, and Banff Mountain Film Festival).
- To create a ‘depth of dialogue’ around women-directed films – about the stories, not just the ‘making of’ – as a place to start dialogue in the community, thereby validating the audience.
- The day would come that women’s film festivals become redundant.
- There was a way to make a living from filmmaking.
- There was a way to increase public interest in Canadian films.
- There was a way to increase public interest in women-directed films.
- A national campaign like “Wake up people, the world is round” would deluge Telefilm Canada and any other funders’ desks with
applications from women-directed films. In other words, encouraging more women to apply (e.g. a Double Dog Dare campaign).

There was support to develop a funding body to correct the gender imbalance (Israel has a series of foundations that do this; Sweden’s Film Institute is doing this – goal is 50%-50% (f/m) led films funded).

There was a way to access the power of the female corporate and business sector to seek their support (e.g. funding cash prize(s) for woman-directed films).

The three international women’s film festivals in Canada would be recognized as A-list festivals – not just niche because, films that would not otherwise be seen are screened at these festivals.

(Delegates, WIDC International Directors Summit, March 12, 2014)

These dreams sentences cover the gambit from the personal, the organizational to the societal. During facilitated and open group discussions, summit delegates also disclosed that as screen directors they often felt isolated. They recommended convening more gatherings of women directors. Delegates clearly expressed that they wanted more facilitated opportunities to connect with one another and learn from each other, not just in major cities, but also in more regional areas.

Looking deeper into the generative side of the emergent theme of isolation, it is noteworthy that for seventeen percent (17%) of our WIDC alumnae sample one of the other major benefits of the WIDC program experience was the building of a community. Therefore, as a key part of the WIDC 20th anniversary the CWWA Board decided to make plans for celebratory opportunities to promote and re-unite alumnae and their WIDC mentors for one or two-day retreat-like gatherings across Canada at Women's Film Festivals in St John's, Vancouver, Toronto, as well as at the Banff Centre and in cities where women-led organizations have invited WIDC to visit and co-host events, such as in Winnipeg (Winnipeg Film Group, Women's Network), and Halifax (WIFT-Atlantic Women Making Waves Conference). That fall at the 25th annual St John’s International Women’s Film Festival the conversation was taken up again with an eye to advocacy. Twelve women-focused groups, of which WIDC was one, gathered for a facilitated mini-summit and developed a communique of recommendations that called upon government and industry to pay attention to the gender issue, record, report and create movement towards parity in their funding and other programs (St John’s Summit on Women In Media, October 2014).
AI Survey

A copy of the 2014 WIDC director alumnae AI survey instrument is attached at appendix A. The purpose of the AI survey centered around a desire to check in with alumnae, to find out what they needed next as screen directors, what they liked best about their WIDC experience and what they thought WIDC should do more of. Given our early discovery of the theme of confidence, they were also asked to share a story about a time when they felt confident. Other demographic details to be collected in the survey included finding out about other areas where the alumnae were working within the industry, how many years they had been working as a professional, which WIDC timeframe they attended, (i.e. 1997 to 2002, 2003 to 2013 or after 2013). They were also asked to specify which WIDC programs they had attended, such as Story Incubation Module, Production Module, or Career Advancement Module.

By May 2014, twenty percent (20%), or thirty-eight (38) director alumnae out of a possible one hundred and eighty-six (186) completed the WIDC AI survey. To capture a cohort that as closely matched the voices of participants captured in this study, only responses from participants who identified as having attended WIDC between 2003 and 2013 were analyzed. This time period included the three key WIDC program offerings: the Story Incubation Module (SIM), the Prep, Production and Postproduction Module (PPPM), and the Career Advancement Module (CAM). This temporal setting offered the broadest potential range of program experiences by the participants. This is not to say that all respondents had participated in all three modules, however the programs were in existence and they were aware of them. Alumnae having participated prior to 2003 would not have had experience or knowledge of the SIM or the CAM. The responses form alumnae that attended WIDC programs between 1997 to 2002 were included in the analysis of questions about what was important to them and what they felt WIDC should be doing next.

When describing what they liked best about their WIDC experience, fifty two percent (52%) of the respondents talked about a range of program specifics. Twenty-two percent (22%) appreciated the hands-on nature of the production workshop, the insights gained about themselves and their characters, as well as the deeper understanding they gained in terms of their stories and of their screenplays at the Story Incubation Module.
They also talked about how they valued the intensive private time with industry decision-makers at the Career Advancement Module. The next best things these alumnae said that they liked best were: the supportive environment (19%), the specific mentors with whom they worked (15%), and the other women directors in their respective cohorts (15%). They also appreciated the follow up network (12%), that the WIDC experience was empowering and built their confidence (12%), and a few (5%) said they appreciated the time to focus solely on their craft.

Figure 4-10: 2014 AI Survey WIDC alumnae directors (2003-2013)
Q8: What would you say is / are the best thing(s) about the Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC) program?

- Program specifics: hands-on aspects; SiM; access to professional resources
- Supportive safe space
- Mentors (professionalism)
- Connection with other women directors
- Network, ongoing connection to CW
- Empowering, confidence building
- Dedicated time to focus

These directors’ narratives quite clearly express the sense of appreciation of the positive cores of WIDC. One director alumna simply itemized, “Learning in a safe environment. Feeling supportive and for once feeling like we, as female directors, matter. Working with professionals, motivated individuals, great mentors & guides” (Director alumna 11, 2014 AI Survey). Another said,

I attended WIDC after I had made a few short films - and so the best thing for me was even though I had a strong working knowledge of the industry and how production runs, I was able to apply MY skills and MY personal touch and navigate the waters of writing and directing, and I was able to lead a "creative ensemble" as I call it, on a vision of my own. Having worked in production and knowing how to be led, I feel I now have a great balance to proceed with on future projects. My goal
has been to make a number of small projects and then create larger and longer projects. WIDC has been integral in bridging my past work experience with carving out my new direction bearing the strength of my own voice and convictions. (Director alumna 3, AI Survey, 2014)

And a third said,

The support and encouragement of female directors is an important aspect of the program, as well as inspiring the confidence it takes to make the leap into directing. Being a director is as much about embodying the role as it is about doing it. The program allows for the shift to happen. Also, the relationships developed in the program have been integral to succeeding in the career. There needs to be an old girl's club! (Director alumna 4, AI Survey, 2014)

This director's insight about the importance of embodying the role of being a director agrees with Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013) and leader identity and corroborates that WIDC creates the space for that identity shift to happen.

Director alumna 30 said it was community and support that she liked best. “At the time there were so very few women directors. It was awesome to see the different kinds of directors and hear the different voices. Just knowing we were a community was so strengthening” (Director alumna 30, AI Survey, 2014). Another alumna shared that she valued the trust and confidence she built from the hands-on practice, corroborating Kay & Shipman (2014). She said that what she liked best was “the trust, that builds your confidence - being able to take the reins and actually direct a scene from prep to post production with professional ACTRA actors and DGC & IATSE crew....priceless!” (Director alumna 20, AI Survey, 2014).

When alumnae directors shared their peak leadership experience narratives, I began to see immediate themes drawn from a variety of scenarios. After conducting an open coding looking for the themes in these narratives, the links with Kanter (2006) and Covey’s (2008) concepts of internal and / or external confidence became clear. The bulk of the narratives (62%) were about experiences of self-confidence drawn from a sense of accomplishment, pride of voice, and from having overcome self-doubt and adversity. Some spoke about how they handled challenging situations, being innovative in a clinch, quick-thinking and determination getting them through. Twenty-four percent (24%) were
about receiving funding or resources to make their films. Interestingly about the same average ratio of women-directed feature films funded by Telefilm Canada (Fraticelli, 2015) however, the survey narratives rarely spoke about external confidence in relationships (9%) or recognition at the societal level (5%).

Table 4-1: 2014 AI Survey (WIDC 1997-2013)
Q4: Share a peak experience as a screen director / leader, and what you took away from that experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE OF PEAK EXPERIENCE</th>
<th># citings</th>
<th>% citings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External - Resources</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External - Relationships</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal - Self</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>101</td>
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One director shared that her peak experience was, “realizing I am a Director at WIDC after being riddled with insecurities that I wasn't capable of the job.” This statement profoundly confirms the depth of impostorist feelings (Clance & Imes, 1978; Young, 2011) that I’ve heard so many women directors speak. Despite being hand-picked by a nationally representative jury of industry professionals from applicants across the country, despite winning awards for their work, despite having already made a feature film, some directors still doubted they had really earned their spot at the workshop. There must have been a mistake.

“Feelings of doubt never go away,” shared director alumna, WIDC Feature Film Award winner and mentor director Siobhan Devine at the 2017 WIDC Story & Leadership program, a new iteration of WIDC that has taken the best elements of the SIM and the Banff module (without the production of short films) and combined them with an Industry Immersion at the Whistler Film Festival. “You just learn to handle them better.” Kay & Shipman’s research would agree. Men have doubts of course, but they handle them differently (Kay & Shipman, 2014).

Another director talked about how her self-doubts caused her great anxiety throughout a particular directing job. She shared,
The experience I learned the most from was when I was hired to shoot 3 TV episodes in 2 weeks. I felt sick from the moment I was offered the job until 2 months later when I called cut for the last time. I learned that to really achieve my goal of being a working director I have to be able to work through anxiety that is beyond anything I have ever experienced before. I also learned that I will shoot that show and I will survive. (Director alumna 14, AI Survey, 2014)

Demonstrating courage and determination (Brafman, 2013; Young, 2011), she worked through her self-doubts and anxiety, completed the job, and survived. Other directors talked about the galvanizing impact of asserting her authority as director and being decisive on set. One shared that a peak experience for her was, “[w]hen I realized if I asserted what I really wanted, the crew carried it out. That felt very powerful. I could then see what I caused to be up on the screen and anything that snuck in,” (Director alumna 27, AI Survey, 2014). This director realized that if she didn’t speak up, her voice and vision would not end up on screen on a film that she was causing to be created. Her confidence came in the form of a sense of pride of ownership and accountability for what appeared on screen.

As I reflected further on field notes, surveys and interviews, a third metaphor centering around the concept of confidence began to emerge for me. I was surprised to hear some directors say they didn’t need to learn anything new. They were angry that they felt they had to be at WIDC to advance their careers in the first place. Other more growth-minded (Dwek, 2008) directors talked with gratitude about seeking to fill the gaps in their skill sets. However, even the directors with an abundance of self-confidence were not receiving commensurate measures of external confidence from the marketplace. These talented and skilled women were in a double-bind (Carli & Eagly, 2007, 2012; 2016; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Fiske, 2012; Fuller, 2013; Gilligan, 2003; Valian, 1999; Visser, 2011). It seemed that there was a disconnect along the spectrum of confidence.

Rather than waves of trust (Covey, 2008) or layers of confidence (Kanter, 2006), I began to see a continuum that rippled back and forth from self to others, through the organization and the marketplace, to society and back again. Agreeing with Kay & Shipman’s (2014) argument that confidence can be learned, I began to infer that the incongruity in statements about confidence from and about women directors, cited earlier,
might be stemmed if the disconnect were understood and somehow the continuum of confidence was activated. Perhaps the confidence continuum could be learned to be played harmoniously like keys on a piano.

Figure 4-11: The Confidence Continuum (Whiteman, 2018)

Why is confidence so important to leaders? Being the social creatures that we are, it makes sense that we gravitate towards enjoyment and comfort in our working relationships. When working with people that we know and trust, communication becomes a kind of shorthand. I’ve heard seasoned collaborators say that they can often finish each other’s sentences. It seems like they are reading each other’s minds; their thoughts conveyed with only a look. The value of the reduction of stress when working with people we trust, have confidence in, cannot be underestimated. It would appear from figure 4-10 that self-confidence comes first. However, from our alumnae narratives, it is also sometimes triggered or at least it is increased when someone expresses their belief in us, our abilities to accomplish something, or our tendency to do the ‘right thing’ (Kanter, 2006). Likewise, some women directors’ self-confidence can be undermined by their assumptions about what others expect of them, or by what they expect of themselves. The bottom line the is that “it is not just having belief but that, “taking action bolsters one’s ability to
succeed. So, confidence accumulates – through hard work, through success, and even through failure” (Kay & Shipman, 2014, p. 26). The question then became, what was next?

The AI Survey invited the directors to give us three top priorities when we asked the question, “At this stage in your career what is most important to you? We also asked them “What should WIDC be doing more of?” The results closely matched what we’d learned from the AI Summit. In addition to more work opportunities, WIDC alumnae directors were calling for WIDC to provide more alumnae check-ups, refreshers, and more opportunities to build community, particularly in cities where WIDC was not already offered. They suggested that WIDC do more outreach to collaborate with like-minded organizations. They were looking for workshops (22%) in areas such as marketing and promotions, business affairs and the technical areas of production and post production. Fourteen percent (14%) were also interested in showcasing opportunities and new distribution models. WIDC was already working on developing an alumnae directory for the WIDC.ca web site, as well as a collaboration with Anita Adams, First Weekend Club and their Canada Screens video on demand service (VOD). The directory and the Canada Screens WIDC Channel were launched as part of WIDC’s 20th anniversary celebration. Seven percent were looking for workshops in other areas such as special effects (SFX), post production and television series development. Only 7% were looking for scholarships and 5% thought that WIDC should be engaging in advocacy work.

Corroborating the feedback from the Summit roundtables and open discussions, a combined nearly seventy five percent (75%) of the responses to the AI survey question about primary needs centered around work opportunities, making a living and writing and directing quality creative projects (specifically feature films). The second most notable need (11%) was for more community connections. Interestingly, only five percent (5%) mentioned they wanted to connect more with audience, and four percent (4%) said they would like more training opportunities.
The need for more work was an obvious requisite. It is why we had created WIDC in the first place. The survey results told us that we were being put on notice that there was still more work to do, and that a new approach was calling for us to discover it. The need for community, discussed at the AI Summit, was also corroborated by the survey. What was difficult to digest was that WIDC appeared to have been painted with the ‘training is passé’ brush and branded as demeaning to women, when it was actually offering a space for developing original fiction stories told by women with a pipeline for getting them made.

**Tracking evolution**

Despite the three hundred and fifty individual opportunities from workshops, fellowships, and awards that WIDC has offered to women screen directors in Canada since 1997, and the positive outcomes that WIDC alumnæ directors have subsequently generated for themselves (86% of alumnæ directors have active profiles on the WIDC.ca directory), there is still a prevailing issue with low participation rates of women in the literal director’s chair position. While individuals advanced, the societal layer of confidence in women’s leadership and women directors in particular has not been fully activated.
In other words, while eighty-six percent (86%) of WIDC alumnae went on to direct and advance their careers, an average twenty percent (20%) of feature films funded by Telefilm Canada were directed by women. Individual women directors were able to seize the momentum that attending WIDC garnered them. However, their confidence and determination to achieve did not translate to an overall shift in external confidence from the market / resources or society. The ‘confidence continuum’ has been disrupted. Furthermore, at the organizational level, we have struggled to raise sufficient resources to maintain the WIDC space.

Bushe (1987) explains, “The key data collection innovation of appreciative inquiry is the collection of people’s stories of something at its best.” He goes on to explain that; “these stories are collected to create new generative ideas and images that aid in developmental change of the collectivity discussing them.” (p.1). Following the AI work in 2014, WIDC was re-designed to align more directly with connecting women directors with industry. The production module in Banff, having been reduced to less than a week’s worth of studio time to explore the technical aspects of story-telling: camera, lighting and post production, was quietly ended. A new collaboration, an industry immersion with the Whistler Film Festival took its place and was added to an enhanced story module in Vancouver. Director participants still had the opportunity to work with Dr. Mamchur using Jungian archetypes to understand themselves and to develop characters in their scripts. Story editor Linda Coffey along with mentor actors like Christianne Hirt and Lori Triolo and a cast of union actors continued to workshop scripts. Also casting directors, a fight choreographer, and a variety of mentor directors and industry experts, including funders, broadcasters and producers were added to the array of mentors and guests to whom the directors had access.

The winner of the WIDC Feature Film Award was also awarded a tuition scholarship to attend the newly branded Story & Leadership (S&L) program and the award was presented at Whistler in the midst of the world-class industry gathering. Bell Media’s Harold Greenberg Fund came on board as a major sponsor of S&L as well as an equity investor in the Feature Film Award. Since its inception in 2015 S&L has worked with forty Canadian women directors. Being at mid-career these directors have had some success already and the WIDC program has placed them at the threshold of the industry where
they are spring-boarding themselves into more opportunities to advance their careers and their projects. In her exit feedback survey, in answer to the question ‘what would you say to sponsors of the WIDC program’, award-winning documentary director Rama Rau said,

> I was at the crossroads of 'where can I learn more?' versus 'where will my experience thus far be valued?' and it came at the right time. I had researched many other programs and decided this was the right one for me. And the program did not disappoint. It was intense, detail-oriented and absolutely nurturing, to learn directing with A-list Canadian actors, to hear from such brilliant women directors like Anne Wheeler and Rachel Talalay. We also learnt about Leadership and psychology on set, something that’s overlooked by other programs. Of course, the most wonderful thing coming out of this program was that we felt more confident, better equipped and had made so many amazing friends in our business! The WIDC is highly recommended if you're looking to add the finishing touches to your directing career, you should be so lucky! (R. Rau, WIDC Story & Leadership, 2016-17)

Rau’s debut, narrative feature film, *Honey Bee*, supported by CBC Films, Telefilm Canada, the Harold Greenberg Fund, Ontario Media Development Corporation and the Northern Ontario Fund, had its world premiere at the 2018 Whistler Film Festival and took home an EDA Award from the Alliance of Women Film Journalists for Best Direction of a Feature Film by a Woman Director.

Another one of the generative ideas growing out the AI Summit and Survey was WIDC’s 20th Anniversary Sharing Authentic Voices (SAV) project. In 2016, the SAV initiative, funded in part by the Canada Council for the Arts, was designed to provide a backdrop for creating more spaces to develop and sustain authentic voice. How do we overcome the pressures to suppress it? Where does it thrive? What is the female screen director's experience of authentic voice? Unfortunately, plans to launch the SAV initiative were temporarily put on hold while I cared for my mother before her death. In the fall of 2017, the SAV was launched in St John’s with a presentation by Marina Cordoni on effective communication. Subsequent sessions were held in Winnipeg where I presented some preliminary findings from this doctoral thesis and invited AI generative dialogue among women filmmakers in attendance, and in Vancouver in collaboration with the Whistler Film Festival where Geena Davis founder of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in the Media gave a talk on gender and the media.
The ultimate goal of SAV is to generate more new ideas and new internal and external narratives about women screen directors’ leadership, for women screen directors to see themselves, and for society to see them and hear their own voices as who they authentically are; and to help them discover ways of sharing those voices with larger audiences globally. SAV was a natural next step for WIDC and CWWA in the pursuit of its mandate. After twenty years of service, WIDC has nurtured a generation of skilled and talented women screen directors, many of who have made great strides in their careers (WIDC Alumnae Directory, 2018) including directing over sixty feature length films and creating internationally respected television series and web series. A proponent of life-long learning as a key to ongoing success, WIDC’s SAV shines a spotlight on the quality and excellence of WIDC’s director alumnae - a measure that these women screen directors have arrived and deserve more audience recognition. The next level being explored is expanding internationally to create space for women screen directors working in international co-production. It is time to see more women screen directors’ stories on screen and hear their authentic voices ringing across the land!
Chapter 5.

Destiny: down the road

I initially embarked on a journey to describe the space that has been created by WIDC, to share the story of WIDC and what has been learned; to achieve personal mastery; and to make meaning of lived experiences. I have come to realize that the source of this story is both internal and external. The WIDC story exists within a continuum that shifts based on the meaning we make of the landscape we inhabit (Dirkx, 1998; Taylor, 1991). The landscape is not only physical, it is emotional, intellectual and spiritual as well as temporal, social and political (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). In this final chapter, as I reflect back on the transformative journey of sharing this narrative, I also step back, or rather forward, to a new discovery phase to allow a future story to emerge such that “[i]n a systemic fashion, continued appreciative inquiry may result in new affirmative topic choices, continuous dialogues and continued learning” (Cooperrider, 2018).

Summary of findings

While volumes have been written on the themes of feminisms, more and more data about women’s participation in Canada’s Screen industry are being recorded and reported, and there are some narratives documenting the work of female leaders and screen directors working in Canadian cinema, particularly those working in the 1970’s and 80’s, WIDC’s story was missing from the canon. It is finally being chronicled here as this study is the first to specifically explore the space created by the WIDC program and how the people involved with it created and experienced that ‘space’.

I have been entwined with WIDC since its conception in 1995, and it has been entwined within major milestones of my life’s journey. As much as WIDC provided a space for women directors to grow, develop, achieve, it has also allowed me to grow, to feel a useful part of something positive. Particularly at times when I felt helpless to prevent the health of my loved ones from spiralling downward, there was WIDC offering a focus on an upward spiral of potential and momentum for women directors. If hard earned, there was
hope and growing confidence (internal and external) to keep the momentum going towards our purpose. With its focus on re-storying narratives, this study has created space for me to make meaning of my own part of this re-story, as both participant and researcher. It has also provided a repository for a particular ontological blueprint for creating a space for authentic voice in Canada’s screen industry.

**Society**

Historic systemic barriers to women’s leadership, particularly as screen directors in Canada’s screen industry have been widely acknowledged (Armatage et. al.). Studies of other industries confirm that if one woman leader were to make a mistake, she not only risked dooming her own career, she risked halting progress for the entire gender (Armstrong, as cited in WIFT-T, 1991; Carli & Eagly, 2007, 2012, 2016; Dwek, 2008; Valian, 1999). With such high stakes there has been little room for women leaders to stretch, explore their voice or fully assume their own authentic leadership identities (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). I have argued that with the space to exercise and stretch into new leadership identities tailor-made for them by them, women screen directors, despite having previously experienced unwelcoming industry environments, may find and confidently exercise their authentic voices in their chosen leadership roles.

An analysis of the literature shows that confidence is a key factor in leadership success (Kanter, 2006; Kay & Shipman 2014, 2014a), and that the power of self-confidence is fuelled by authenticity (Mamchur, 1984; Myers 1980). Cooperrider & Whitney (2005) confirm that by “modeling AI as a relational leadership practice, leaders send a clear and consistent message: positive change is the pathway to success around here” (p.46). This attitude is rare in the business or academic world, and rarer still in the screen industry where time is money and there is no allowable margin for errors; errors which if allowed space for reflection and course correction, often inspire and accelerate growth. This is not to say that women leaders or women directors are incompetent and prone to errors. On the contrary, it means that the lack of space to learn, to own one’s leader identity or authentic voice, has had a more patently negative impact on female leaders than it has on males (Carli & Eagly, 2007, 2012, 2016; Ely & Myerson, 2000; Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013; Valian, 1999; Visser, 2011). Young (2011)
also warns of the adverse effects of perfectionism, expecting to get things right the first time without practice, relegating ourselves to go it alone that are endemic to imposter syndrome sufferers facing the unknown territory of achievement stretch.

Further, as shown in the review of the literature, studies in neuroscience argue that when we ignore, de-value or refuse to see something for long enough, it can be literally deleted or silenced from our consciousness (Brafman, 2013; Kay & Shipman, 2014; 2014b; Zerubavel, 2006). The level of historic denial of the value of their capabilities faced by women leaders, in particular women screen directors, has created a silencing effect that has impacted the voices of the entire feminine gender, virtually deleting them from history.

This serious gap between perception and opportunity on one hand, and the relative value of achievement on the other has been masked for decades (in the temporal scope of the screen industry) by secondary gender bias (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013; Valian 1999). Decision-makers have been blind to their biases and have thus continued the cycle of sexism, racism (Deverell, 2009, 2011; Friere, 1993; hooks, 2000), and have wasted the potential talent and contribution of female leaders.

Women seeking more opportunities to excel in their careers as leaders, as screen directors, have been faced with few viable choices. Some have elected to assume the male attributes of leadership and have suffered criticism that they’ve abandoned their sex. They’re deemed cold and difficult, where, exhibiting the same behaviours, their male counterparts are seen as competent and discerning. Contrary to the call to sisterly solidarity, women have fought each other for the small scraps left to appease the feminist calls for a fair share (Chesler, 2009; hooks, 2000; Shapiro Barah, 2006; Valian, 1999) in the screen industry. Women who have courageously stuck to their own authentic, women’s ways of working have been likewise criticized as being incompetent or less evolved (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 2003). Others have given up, opted out and disappeared. Their voices lost. And who has time for listening, considering others’ opinions, or relational ways of being in a money driven industry, but, such character-based qualities (Covey, 2008; Dwek, 2008), when recognized and applied within the AI approach can garner transformative outcomes (Bushe, 2009, 2012; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005;
Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013) as they have at WIDC. Women leaders are empowered and emboldened to find their own way.

Further, I have suggested that both internal mindset and the mindsets of our colleagues are linked to a continuum of confidence. When it is fully functioning; when we are experiencing a high expectancy of achievement (Kanter, 2006), resulting in feelings of internal / self-confidence the continuum constantly ripples back and forth like trilling keys on a piano. If the ripple is stopped or held up at any one point, we become stuck or fixed-minded (Dwek, 2008). When all keys on the confidence continuum are in play, what music can be made! Steadfastly standing behind our right to explore, try, fail, learn and get back out there, creating a space that allows us and even encourages us to break the negative and fixed mindsets, to grow in the face of mistakes, transfers to us external confidence that has been lacking for women for centuries. I say ‘our’ now as I acknowledge that I am part of this paradigm, as mentor-leader, leader-participant and researcher-participant.

It has also been well documented by feminist thought leaders (Gilligan, 1980; hooks, 2000; Valian, 1999; Visser, 1999; Woolf, 1929), that the persistent oppression of the feminine voice has held back the advancement of women as leaders. Decades ago Canadian screen industry organisations like ACTRA (1994), Canadian Actors Equity Association (CAEA) (1986), and WIFT-T (1991) had begun documenting an ongoing systemic imbalance of women’s participation in key leadership roles particularly as directors.

In 2015, with the release of Suffragette, the motion picture featuring Meryl Streep as Mrs. Pankhurst the UK’s most infamous suffrage leader, the fervour of the gender equality conversation seemed to harken the conversation back to a crescendo of feminism at the turn of the twentieth century. It was as if the dial had been turned backwards in time. Women’s cinema and advocacy groups significantly propelled the conversation about gender and the need for authentic female voices in leadership. On January 21, 2017 a new feminist wave reached a massive crescendo with a Women’s March on Washington that was joined by over one million women around the globe marching in their locales and connected by social media; marching in solidarity to support the emphatic assertion of the
need for a more caring and empathetic stance in general, and most assuredly, for equality of voice.

The #MeToo and #TimesUp campaigns have awakened the world to the terrorizing effects of silencing in the forms of sexual harassment and power mongering. These campaigns would not have reached near the momentum without the courage of those who stepped forward into the unknown blind spot at the risk of their careers. This movement also would not have taken hold without a space being created by women working in institutions with the power and the courage to step into the transformation cycle.

Feminist author bell hooks (2000) observes that, “As is often the case, in revolutionary movements for social justice we are better at naming the problem than we are at envisioning the solution” (p.70). As AI theory suggests that what we focus our energy and attention on is what we tend to create (Bushe, 2013; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), I contend that in order to achieve the feminist intention of ‘equality of the sexes’, we must place more consistent and continuing attention on the female voice. I would further suggest that we must place more attention on the value of the authentic ‘positive core’ of the feminine leader. This story therefore answers a long-standing call to turn a sharper focus on the feminine leadership voice in Canada’s screen industry, in particular women screen directors.

A call to Canada’s screen industry

Made richer for the inclusion of women’s voices, the Canadian screen industry has finally begun to embrace change. We cannot turn away from the accumulation of authentic voices calling for more change. We must co-create a sustainable model for inclusivity and fair representation of authentic voices as leaders and screen directors in our industry. Using an AI approach that is inclusive of all stakeholders offers a means to develop responsive, effective and representative generative images that inspire and guide action. As we collectively navigate the evolving cultural and industry landscape with an aim of inclusivity, we must continue to re-story our past experiences to discover new generative images and metaphors that will help guide us towards a co-created future; just as we’ve done with the image of ‘women in the director’s chair’.
Organization

In the context of Canada’s screen industry, at the 1997 pilot session at the Banff Centre, WIDC created a space for women leaders, in particular women screen directors to explore their authentic voice. Alumnae have confirmed that their experiences at WIDC gave them added confidence, the courage to own that space as leaders. Since then, by sustaining that pedagogical space, and with every subsequent achievement earned by WIDC alumnae directors, internal and external confidence continues to grow for women screen directors and for WIDC. The confidence continuum is playing our song!

In striving to create a safe, welcoming space for mid-career women filmmakers to explore and express their own authentic creative and artistic vision and voice, our aim was to never dictate style or content as other film schools, studios and industry institutions may have done in the past. This may have led to a slowness on the part of the screen Industry in understanding just what the product of WIDC truly was / is. The WIDC logo, an empty director’s chair symbolizes that WIDC does not discriminate who may sit in the chair by cultural or ethnic background, age, physical size or ability, colour, sexual orientation, or geographic residency. As WIDC continues to live by its anti-harassment and anti-violence policies, formally adopted in 2015, we maintain our commitment to sustaining that safe space for all.

At WIDC exploration is encouraged. Mistakes are considered "learning opportunities", authenticity is valued, and competence and character in a leader are both considered important strengths. Through the WIDC initiatives, CWWA has aimed to help facilitate professionalism, using and sharing best practices as well as an ethic of care (Noddings, 2012) in the process of film making i.e. storytelling for screen. Traditional film making theories have been offered by experienced senior artists as a jumping off place so that program participants can make their creative and editorial decisions with their eyes wide open to possible pitfalls.

Members of WIDC cohorts share each other’s expertise in an appreciative social learning model. They build a community of peers who cheer for each other’s successes rather than begrudge them. We focus on creating more space rather than fighting over scraps. These practices were seen as unconventional and rare at the time. With WIDC,
we created and organically modeled an AI process and an AI space; a welcoming space that has consistently sent the message that creative risk-taking and leadership skills practicing are safe and expected (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) on the pathway to achieving our goals or aiming towards what is meaningful to us. While we purposefully set up real-world challenges within that space, we endeavoured to also include systems that supported learning through risk-taking and celebrating mistakes as learning opportunities. Within the scope of our resources much was achieved.

While each director made her own leadership decisions, the correlation between alumnae narratives about the things they liked best about WIDC, their statements claiming that WIDC was transformative for them, and the track record of alumnae successes since attending WIDC workshops are strongly linked. Furthermore, women directors have had the opportunity to develop leader identities through the transformative praxis space of WIDC. However, despite this positive outcome that WIDC has helped facilitate, there was still a prevailing societal and market place issue with low participation rates of women in the literal director’s chair position (Coles, 2016; Fraticelli 2012, 2014, 2015), particularly at the highest budget levels. A push of consciousness-raising from persistent gender parity groups and individual advocates like Rina Fraticelli, Sharon McGowan, et al. and international role models like Anna Serner and the Swedish Film Institute has awakened leaders on the path. Telefilm Canada, the CBC, NFB, CMF, the world is aimed at 50-50 gender parity by 2020. After 2020 a renewal of generative images will be required, not simply a resurrection of Studio D, (Beale & Murray, 2011), but perhaps a new more fully funded ‘room’ (Woolf, 1929; Shannon, 1985).

“Every organization was created as a solution designed in its own time to meet a challenge or satisfy a need of society” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 1). WIDC was born in response to a call to fill a gap left by the 1996 demise of Studio D, and in fact the gap that Studio D itself was unable to fill in its time. WIDC was created to generate a space for women story-tellers to grow their skills and their confidence, to hear their own voice, and to find ways to meaningfully share that voice. With its current twenty-two-year track record, it is clear that the WIDC narrative is part of the more epic story of feminisms and the history of cinema in Canada.
In the context of organizational development, Bushe (2013), says that, “generativity occurs when a group of people discover, create, and / or are presented with an image that allows them to experience their work or organization differently. It doesn’t have to be new to the world. It doesn’t even have to be an image no one in the group has had before – but it does have to be one that has not been considered widely. It has to be “new”. A generative image allows people to see the world anew, identify new options, formulate new strategies, even reform their identity” (pp.2-3). Without explicit knowledge of AI, we instinctively looked “beyond the data with the essential question being, “What would our organization [WIDC] look like if it were designed in every way possible to maximize the qualities of the positive core and enable the accelerated realization of our dreams?” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 29). Looking beyond WIDC, I suggest that we combine the best of what has been created thus far and keep building, leaving nobody behind in the process!

**Pedagogy of appreciative transformation**

From its early adoption by a collegial group of leaders, the generative image of ‘women in the director’s chair’ created a powerful call to action, both as a metaphor and a tangible goal. Was the concept of creating a safe space for women to practice their skills an entirely new idea? No, not to my co-creating colleagues, but it was to me. Had a collective of screen industry organizations ever come together to deliver something so ambitious before this? Perhaps, but not in this unique constellation: in this time, with these people, under these circumstances. I agree with Sara Diamond, that it was momentous that WIDC was piloted in 1997 by three independent or ganizations: ACTRA, WIFTV, and the Banff Centre (S. Diamond interview, November 19, 2015). Our organizations were seeking ways to empower women leaders and we created what came from the best of our collective creative minds, hearts and spirits. It took a lot of resources, a lot of not taking no for an answer, and careful navigation in terms of continually clarifying roles and expectations. Like sisters sometimes do, we occasionally disagreed, but it always came back to purpose. We were doing something meaningful, larger than us, whatever it took.

Cooperrider & Whitney (2005) confirm that, “After the positive revolution begins, what it needs most is affirmation and a clear, open pathway for experimentation” (p. 45). Together, we had created that missing space or ‘room’ (Woolf, 1929), a space where
according to Anne Wheeler, women could be safe to “make mistakes and explore talents they never knew they had,” where different voices, styles and stories could be experiments with and expressed. Providing that space for women to develop their leadership identity (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013), in the Banff production modules we gave Canadian women screen directors the opportunity to flex their creative leadership muscles in a safe collegial environment. One key way we did that was by replicating a real production experience within the means of our resources and seeking to create product - works in progress - from which the directors could learn from their creative risks what worked and what didn’t. By promising a screening of the works in progress for the cohort of fellow directors, cast, crew and mentors we allowed for a sense of completion and celebration. Keeping the screening contained to allies-only, allowed space for risk-taking, and for mistakes to be turned into learning opportunities. Ibarra, Ely & Kolb (2013) describe this as modeling stretch behaviour.

In order to sustain this space, WIDC must remain committed to a ‘PROCESS’ paradigm, balancing the practice of AI with the pursuit of delivering product; being respectful, open to opportunities, communicative and collaborative; advocating for equality; maintaining a safe space; and encouraging self-definition in leaders, in particular in women screen directors. It is also important to continue to cultivate external collaborations.

Organizations in jeopardy

The financial struggles that WIDC has faced have somewhat mirrored what Studio D faced in as many years of its operation. Even though Studio D was lauded world-wide for being one of its kind, creating space for women filmmakers to produce critically acclaimed internationally award-winning films, including earning Academy Awards™, and launching scores of women filmmakers’ careers, it was fraught with what were ultimately insurmountable financial, social and political challenges (Crean, as cited in WIFT-T, 1991; Sherbarth, 1987; Vanstone, 2007). After twenty-two years, WIDC still faces financial challenges to sustainability and charitable status is back on the table.

When, after twenty-two years, Studio D closed its doors in 1996, it became clear that Shannon’s perpetual wary state was justified (Shannon, 1995). Operating within a
patriarchal institution, Studio D was not entirely the master of its course, not entirely welcome in the space. Whereas WIDC eventually became its own entity separate from the Banff Centre, had Studio D been supported by its filmmaker members as WIDC has been by WIDC alumnae, perhaps it could have survived. Hmmm, with each draft it is less of a stretch for me to say (Young, 2011), and here goes (Dwek, 2008), without innovating and determined leaders at the helm, WIDC would have not survived more than a couple of years let alone twenty-two.

In its initial incarnation, WIDC embodied the training space but it has fallen short of creating a full-on production space. When in 2008 WIDC began actively supporting production through the Feature Film Award, it began to embody a studio production space and in 2018 when WIDC began to co-produce short film through a Short Works Award. Nonetheless, without the support of determined servant leaders dedicated to the cause, any enterprise will eventually crumble. If WIDC is to continue to serve women directors, its leaders need to continue to listen, engage, evolve and be determined in perusing WIDC’s purpose.

**A call to the organization**

Using an AI approach, and raising the profile of women leaders, in particular women screen directors, by sharing their authentic voices more widely, consistently welcoming them into the story-telling space, and ensuring they have applicable tools and resources, i.e. “some money and a room of one’s own” (Woolf, 1929), makes it more difficult for those voices to be ignored or deleted from history. Commitment is required to sustain the flow in this inclusive direction. Therefore, what we did at WIDC in Banff and indeed what we continue to do in WIDC programs delivered across Canada, and as much as possible with the WIDC Awards program, is create a space to practice creative voice and leadership identity. We leave the visioning to the directors themselves, their style, their purpose, their stories. If it is to fulfill its mandate WIDC must continue to promote, create community, and to seek ‘more money and more room’ for women to develop and share their authentic voices as leaders and story-tellers for screen!
The personal

In the context of personal narratives, WIDC alumnae attest to the momentum generated by attending the WIDC program or as I view it, by participating in re-calibrating the ‘confidence continuum’. The momentum of the continuum creates a sensation of ‘flow’. As this momentum takes hold of participants at WIDC, confidence is stirred both internally and externally. Also, significantly, alumnae directors say they value the discovery of a community of peers. They no longer feel alone on their leadership journey.

Successful collaborative process requires clear intent that is continually revisited, refined and reconfirmed. In order to tunnel through adversity, we require a growth-minded attitude bolstered by determination, courage and hope (Brafman, 2013; Dwek, 2008; Kuber-Ross, 1967). Fear, conflict, and doubt are standard ports of call on the leadership transformation map, and we all visit those ports on our personal leadership journeys. It’s our choice how long we wish to stay in each port before we check out the more appreciative landmarks like determination, euphoria and anticipation. Hope helps us float along, and a sense of purpose gives us direction.

A journey towards authenticity and confidence

After fifteen years leading WIDC, struggling through unwelcome industry terrain, and facing the grief of losing my spouse and my parents, I have hit every port of call on the leadership journey map. Without the ability to draw on a growth mindedness (Dwek, 2008), to re-imagine my purpose when the waters became murky, I might have been sunk a long time ago.

My own sense of leadership, self-mastery and self-confidence were first set in place by the encouragement I received from my early role models, particularly my Mom who always told me, “Just do your best, that’s all you can do.” Over the course of time, functioning in unwelcome spaces that were filled with gender bias and ‘otherisms’, caused an incongruence with that sense of agency. Without the gifts of attention, acceptance, appreciation, affection and allowing (Richo, 2002), that also came from my professional peers and mentors, I believe that my personal struggle with imposter syndrome (Young, 2011) could have defeated me many times throughout my own leadership journey. My
mentors and professional peers created a space for me to grow, contribute and feel valued, just as we have done for Canadian women screen directors.

A personal call

It is clear that my own relationship to confidence, authentic voice and my own practice of leadership has undergone a transformation through my association with WIDC. Certainly, a greater awareness of that transformation has come forth through the process of writing this dissertation. While I have been seen as its main guardian and ‘front-woman’, I no longer feel so alone as WIDC’s leader. The act of writing this re-storied narrative has reminded me that WIDC was/is a collective dream among many collaborators over many decades. It is itself part of a temporal feminist continuum. While my voice is the one most often heard as the voice of WIDC, and I am certainly entwined, WIDC is in fact a collective of voices. It was appreciatively ‘co-designed’ (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Scharmer, 2009), and as such the appreciative inquiry cycle has been intuitively used throughout the life of WIDC. As a leader of WIDC it is important to continue to listen to all the voices in this landscape, to continue to seek deeper understanding and to continue to practice the ‘PROCESS’. Though I am not looking to move on from WIDC just yet, I now have the tools to share what I’ve learned and to help us all as we ‘peer together’ into a future and co-create a landscape where all spaces are appreciative, where women’s voices and women’s ways of leading are valued; where our work is compensated fairly, and where our passions and insights ignite and inspire growth and learning opportunities for future generations. down the road.

Ongoing questions

More analysis

Being a first chronical, I recognize that this is only a part of the story of WIDC, my version. A review of the literature has uncovered gaps. Only a small part of the story of feminist voice in Canada’s screen-based media landscape has been tapped. More analysis by other researchers will bring new perspectives and quite possibly conflicting perspectives will arise. How exciting! Some amount of friction is expected and even
necessary in order to effect change (Bushe, 2013; Mezirow, 1991; Scharmer, 2009). Nevertheless, I hope future study remains appreciative of the positive core of the question: How do we create and sustain equitable space for women’s authentic voices as leaders, in particular for women screen fiction directors in Canada?

**More data collection**

Encouraged and educated by feminist screen industry advocates, the Canadian government and industry has begun to implement policies and programs to address the gender gap (R. Fraticelli, St John’s International Women’s Film Festival, October 21, 2015). We are now being asked, where are all the women directors? WIDC’s response is, “We know them! We know where to find them.” An infusion of support from NBCUniversal helped WIDC to re-brand and re-launch the WIDC.ca web presence and in 2017 the WIDC alumnae directory / showcase was launched as part of the WIDC’s 20th anniversary. This directory now requires second phase planning for showcasing and cross referencing for discoverability.

Women In View has been steadfastly collecting and sharing data since 2010 (Women In View, 2018). I recommend that industry find some way to support the ongoing effort to record and report data. While WIDC would be well served to continue to maintain its own database of alumnae, and archives of surveys and interviews, the organization currently does not have the mandate, nor the personnel resources to carry on a detailed annual examination of industry data that fuels the agenda for change. The dismal data does not lie – it’s what we do with it that really matters.

**Generating new opportunities**

Scharmer (2009) asks, “How can we as a group shift our attention field so that we connect with our best future potential instead of continuing to operate from the experiences of the past?” (p.49). hooks (2000) points out that feminism must keep being responsive to address the needs of the present. She states that, “We must courageously learn from the past and work for a future where feminist principles will undergird every aspect of our public and private lives. Feminist politics aims to end domination, to free us
to be who we are – to live our lives where we love justice, where we can live in peace” (pp. 117-118). As we continue to practice appreciative inquiry, WIDC must continue to reach out to women directors and seek their help in generating new generative visions and opportunities. Rather than asking what is missing, we must ask them what is needed and set about co-designing a path towards fulfilling those needs.

Following the 2014 summit, the CWWA board of directors advocated reaching out to more institutions and organizations to initiate collaborations such as the Toronto International Film Festival, the National Film Board of Canada, the First Weekend Club’s Canada Screens, and other women director focused groups like Women In Film chapters, Femmes Fatales, Black Women Film – Canada, Women and Hollywood, The Director’s List, the Alliance of Women Directors, Film Powered, Swedish Film Institute (C. Whiteman, personal communications, 2018). WIDC has continued to respond to the call to reach out to more communities, to offer more opportunities to connect with other women directors, and to keep building community by sharing best practices and engaging in open dialogue among women directors.

The WIDC 20th Anniversary SAV initiative was drawn from recommendations from the 2014 WIDC Summit: "Creating Confidence" and from the analysis of survey data collected from WIDC director alumnæ. SAV, originally sponsored by a grant from the Canada Council for the Arts, resulted in a series of WIDC events themed around authentic voice hosted in St John’s, NL, Winnipeg, MB, and Vancouver, BC. The value of the SAV initiative has not yet been fully realized.

Responding to the call for more resources to make their films, we have also reached out to more sponsors to increase the value of the WIDC Feature Film Award and make it accessible not just in British Columbia where it began, but across Canada. WIDC is on the brink of creating international opportunities for women screen directors through a new international co-production initiative.
Conclusions

This journey has been about addressing an action agenda. Initially sparked by disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991) that urged more reflection on what is missing, an appreciative call to purpose (Campbell, 1988; Covey, 2004; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013) has in fact guided this study. By focusing on the positive core in order to make meaning of our experiences, we are able to navigate towards a welcomed future. Has the ailment, the lack of gender parity in the screen industry been healed through the telling of this particular story? Can such a deeply rooted ailment ever be healed or fixed? Kubler Ross (1967) suggests that a state of acceptance is an important, often final stage of serious or terminal illness. Rather than seeing the question of gender equality as a terminal ailment I suggest we aim directly for that state of flow (Covey 2004, Scharmer 2009), that positive generative image that helps us purposefully navigate onward, like following the North Star.

In the sharing of this story, I feel a personal sense of relief and release. As Kanter (2006) describes about confidence, a sensation of flow can run in any direction as in a winning or a losing streak. If the flow state or that heightened sensation of confidence runs on a continuum, it has been historically, temporally, culturally and systemically, relationally, and all too often personally broken for women leaders. However, in Canada, public funding bodies, Telefilm Canada, Canada Media Fund, the CBC, the National Film Board, and the provincial funding agencies, seem to be listening. They’ve announced action agendas linked to gender parity policy. We are seeing evidence of incremental progress (Whistler Film Festival, Women On Top workshops, November 30, 2018).

Private member-based Canadian organizations like the DGC, CMPA, ACCT, and ACTRA are investing in gender parity initiatives which can be viewed on their web sites. It takes commitment to keep the dialogue fresh, to go back every fiscal year and make the argument again and again. Showing steady results from the progress made by WIDC alumnae certainly strengthens the argument for supporting WIDC (WIDC Alumnae Directory, 2018).

The story of WIDC and its generative appreciative approach to pedagogy needs to be told again and again. Stories of women, by women, told from those particular female eye views must be told again and again. Through the exercise of consciousness raising,
the story must be told and re-told (Bushe, 2013; Clandinin & Conolly, 2000) in order for engagement to be sustained; for the story to evolve and remain relevant.

In 2016, when there appeared to be an explosion of gender parity initiatives, WIDC alumnae were at the forefront, earning their spots in these offerings. ACTRA’s National Women’s Committee took on its own narrative inquiry approach, creating a short satirical comedy film entitled Reel Women Seen, produced by WIDC alumna and ACTRA representative to the CWWA Board, Heather Allin. The film depicts women in all the roles both in front of and behind the camera, and it cleverly satirized the dismal data. It is another appreciative tool to shine a light on the story of gender parity. Private commercial enterprises from the broadcast networks like Bell Media and communications organizations like TELUS STORYHIVE have created gender parity inspired initiatives. Bell Media’s BravoFACT declared 2015 the year of fifty percent female-led projects and had continued on with the mandate. Bell Media also collaborated with Women In Film chapters in Toronto and Halifax to present ‘pitch competitions’ designed to stimulate BravoFACT submissions from creators working in the margins. Sadly, due to a CRTC decision to reduce broadcasters’ commitment to programs of national interest, BravoFACT was cut and the Harold Greenberg Fund funding was reduced. Nonetheless, WIDC alumnae such as Reem Morsi, Jenna MacMillan, Nicole Dorsey rose to the top in these competitions.

WIDC alumnae won two major pitch competitions at the 2016 Whistler Film Festival. Ana de Lara won the MPPIA Short Film Award for Good Girls Don’t; and Sara McIntyre won the big pitch event for her feature film The Last Six. The Whistler Film Festival also hosted a first ever power breakfast of women leaders at the top of their game in the screen industry, on the top of Whistler Mountain. At this event, Rina Fraticelli announced another of Women In View’s latest offerings, ‘Five In Focus’, a scheme to shine a spotlight on five Canadian women screen directors for one year, and WIDC presented the 2016 Feature Film Award to Korean-Canadian WIDC alumna, Gloria Ui Young Kim for her debut feature film, Queen of the Morning Calm (aka Debra and Mona) (Whistler Film Festival, 2016). Kim was subsequently selected as one of the ‘Five In Focus’, which was announced at the CMPA’s Prime Time Conference in Ottawa (Women In View media release, 2017). Prime Time was also the launch point of the CMPA’s 2017 study, Women and Leadership in Canada’s Screen Industry (Duopoly, 2017).
In terms of feature film and supporting that authentic feminine auteur voice, the WIDC Feature Film Award has grown from a BC-based offering, into a national offering valued at two hundred thousand dollars in in kind services and rentals. From 2015 to 2017 the award included a commitment of development funding and cash equity investment from The Harold Greenberg Fund (HGF). The added bonus to the award is that the winning project, having gone through a development process with the WIDC Story and Leadership program, which having received funding support from HGF, was then eligible to apply to the HGF for further production funding. In 2019, WIDC and CBC will announce that CBC Films will be stepping (back) on board to support the development of second features by women directors through Story & Leadership and a new development award.

**The confidence continuum is real**

One of the systemic or external elements of confidence in Canada’s screen industry is endowing the individual, or in this case an entire gender, with that stamp of approval, that value designation of ‘quality’. If confidence is experienced on a continuum that is stimulated by currents flowing through the internal to the external and back again, whether it begins with one individual’s courage and determination to tunnel through adversity or unwelcoming terrains, to traverse a yet unknown plane or if it starts from an external source believing in an individual’s potential, it makes no difference. What matters is recognizing that the continuum exists, noticing when it is flowing and appreciating it. Noticing where it is stopped and using our positive core to determine how we respond to the keys that are stuck, and get it flowing again.

Certainly, the journey towards leadership is accelerated by external votes of confidence, but particularly in unwelcoming environments it takes an added sense of personal conviction and a sense of purpose to venture forward towards one’s leadership goals and assume the corresponding leader identity (Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). It takes a sense of purpose to navigate the journey and it takes hope and a belief that change is possible (Dwek, 2008). In that moment when we see that “attitude of high expectancy” (Kanter, 2006) of imminent success or achievement reflected back to us in the eyes of our closest collaborators, we are emboldened with confidence. When we see it positively reflected back to us in the responses of organizations who fund our work, we feel welcomed, ‘home-free’, in a state of grace, in the flow engine of the confidence continuum.
According to Woolf, “Intellectual freedom depends on material things. Poetry depends on intellectual freedom” (1929, p. 125). Since fully realized story-telling on screen requires significant amounts of 'material things' – equipment, locations, other collaborators’ time and skills, and the commodities of marketing and distribution – and women have been historically denied these materials things, it follows that on the whole, except for a very small percentage, less than 20% according to Coles (2013, 2016) and Fraticelli, (2015), women screen directors have yet to realize their full intellectual and poetic potential.

This appreciative exploration is a call to engage in the continuing quest to create room for feminine potential, a space for the authentic feminine voice to thrive. It also serves as a template for creating a generative vessel for previously silenced voices to inhabit while they incubate their authenticity. In terms of a pedagogical stance, the generative vessel of WIDC was co-created by committing to providing space for women screen directors to seek a deeper knowing of self, while being/becoming more aware of their horizons of significance (Taylor, 1991), the external landscape that they sought to work within. In creating that space, as Dirkx (1998), suggests, “It is best to view our role, as one in which we enter for a time, a journey that has and is ongoing within the individual and the collective lives of those with whom we work… it requires careful, thoughtful, constant attention to inner work…” (p.11). In alignment with Scharmer’s (2009) open mind, open heart, open will, leadership technologies (p.40), this generative space also requires us to stand in the place of unknowing, listening for the call to action. Once we can hear that call, we need the tools to discern its meaning and to form a purposeful response.

Recommendations

The journey of creating the Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) program, the lives it has touched, and the narratives it has inspired exist in a temporal historical context burdened with challenge and push back. It is my hope that this story may be useful on the personal, organizational and societal levels, particularly for those interested in creating transformational processes for adult learners, for those who have experienced being marginalized or silenced, and for those interested in societal change. To articulate
potential paths forward for the WIDC program, I offer four pedagogical cornerstones for creating space for authentic voices to be heard in Canada’s screen industry:

- **Space to discover**: to know and understand self, others and the external landscape.
- **Space for voice**: to hear one’s own voice and practice the art of storytelling in respectful dialogue.
- **Space to grow**: to inspire, imagine and explore creative generative expression with an openness to opportunity.
- **Space for meaning**: to move authentic voice into action by confidently and purposefully navigating through the unknown.

In creating these spaces, it helps to consider the metaphor of a journey. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) remind us that on this narrative journey, we are all part of the story. At times we are in the thick of it participating. At times we are on the outside observing, recording, reflecting (pp. 105-106). We are all part of the discovery, dreams, design, and delivery / destiny of what is WIDC, what made it what it is. We are all interwoven into its fabric and it into ours.

Through this meaning-making process, I have discovered that I cannot just walk away at the end of the telling of this story as I once thought I might do. WIDC has not been purged from me. While I continue to question in all hubris if WIDC might die when I finally must walk away, what is certain is that, if we remain committed to the AI approach, WIDC will evolve no matter what. Further, being about transformation, this story itself has not finished, nor will it be at the end of this dissertation. The end of this story suggests a new beginning (C. Mamchur, SFU lecture, September 2011). The future will be more navigable by the telling of what has gone before as it will with the sharing of AI tools and insights gathered along the way.

Therefore, rather than offering a definitive ending to this story, I have discovered that the study and the pedagogy of WIDC, grounded in a ‘5-D’ AI framework, is a narrative that continues to emerge. This version of the story of *Women In the Director’s Chair* (WIDC) has been transcribed from my interpretation of the data, the narratives from my WIDC co-creating colleagues and participants, from the literature, and from the experiences that I have had within the study setting. I am forever changed by the living of this narrative, as I am changed again in the re-telling of it.
Epilogue

My belief is that if we live another century or so — I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals — and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton’s bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born. As for her coming without that preparation, without that effort on our part, without that determination that when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worthwhile. (Woolf, 1929, pp. 131-132)

Ninety years ago, Virginia Woolf (1929) described the need for money and a room of one’s own if women are to write fiction. Though the medium has evolved, twenty-first century female story-tellers for screen, women directors are still seeking the space and the funds to make their fiction screen projects. While Woolf conjures the metaphoric space – the room – the preparation – to share our authentic voices here, her rallying call, “and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worthwhile”, encourages, inspires, cheers us on to soldier forth, generating wherever and whenever we can, through WIDC, and on our own steam, space for the authentic voices of other women story-tellers, a space to grow confidence, a space to thrive.

I have not worked in total obscurity. I have gratefully accepted honours bestowed on me by my colleagues for having held this space of WIDC for women screen directors – in number, a generation of Shakespeare’s sisters now – to share their authentic voices. I have been monetarily recompensed for my work, though not to the degree that a male colleague in the same position might have been. In my own way, though it has not been without many challenges along the way, I have found the means, the money to create a
room of my own. I know how to create it. I have been able to sustain it for more than two decades.

What is next? That is always the blind spot. The difference now is the tools I have in hand to face it more confidently. As I stood in that blind spot, about to hand in the final draft, another poem poured forth.

**A turn on the curve of change**

Determined to dutifully venture forth in search of a meaningful future, I waiver briefly.

“Think of a day ahead without you,” call some voices from a blind spot in the distance.

Without me? But then where will I belong?

“Remember what we’re here for,” shout a chorus of voices behind me.

I scrabble to the highest peak I can reach, and shout to the heavens till I can no longer hear my own voice. “She’s here! Hear her! See her!”

“What’s the plan now?” screech more voices from an angry place below. “When is it going to be my turn, my turn, my turn?”

I tunnel through a mountain of blame; swim through a sea of shame; race to the edge of anticipation as my leadership is about to sail through.

Ok, when it’s time to jump, will you jump with me?

Together now, 1, 2, 3, 4 as the waves lap the distant shore. Let’s jump onboard together!

It’s all our turn now.

Will the work of WIDC, and indeed this doctoral tome that is now part of the story, serve to illuminate a path for more women screen directors, or anyone else to more confidently share their authentic voices within a landscape they hold to be significant and meaningful to them? In a landscape that is not always welcoming or kind? Will others be transformed by this story? Who can say. The telling of this story has helped me to see the landscape more clearly and myself within it. Having the space to share this experience in my own way has given me confidence to tread the path ahead, and with perhaps a little
more grace. Just as WIDC alumnae have said that they have been transformed by WIDC, and WIDC alumnae are now transforming the face of Canada’s screen Industry, I too have been forever changed by this journey.

Thank you for accompanying me. Welcome to the space.
References


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Appendix A.

WIDC Survey Questions


Introduction

The Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) program will be turning 20 in a short while and as such the Board of Directors of Creative Women Workshops Association (CWWA), the non-profit organization that presents the WIDC program in partnership with The Banff Centre and ACTRA, is undertaking an appreciative inquiry among the nearly 200 women screen directors that have attended WIDC since 1997, and members of screen industry communities across Canada and internationally to help guide us forward.

An appreciative inquiry involves exploring who we are serving, what is already good about what we do, and imagining what could be done to make things better. Your responses to this survey will be compiled and aggravated to protect your anonymity. In addition to helping to form future plans for CWWA and the WIDC program, data collected in this survey may also be used in related promotional, research, and fundraising initiatives. While you will be able to come back and complete your responses, the survey will close May 31, 2014.

On behalf of the CWWA Board of Directors, thank you in advance for taking the time to participate in this important outreach initiative. It will help us to be more responsive to the needs of women screen directors, and more effective in the aim of sharing more stories told by women on screen.

So, let’s get started...

1. Check all that apply to you.

I am a...

- Director
- Producer
- Writer
- Industry Executive
- Other

2. Why do you tell stories?

3. Share a peak experience as a screen director / leader, and what you took away from that experience.
4. At this stage in your career what is most important to you? Please share your top three priorities.

1st Priority

2nd Priority

3rd Priority

5. Are you a WIDC Alumna?
   Yes  No

6. If you are a WIDC Alumna, what year did you attend?
   - [ ] Prior to 2003
   - [ ] 2003 to 2013
   - [ ] After 2013

7. What would you say is / are the best thing(s) about the Women In the Director’s Chair (WIDC) program?

8. What would you like to see the WIDC program do that it isn't doing now?

9. Are you interested in follow up?

If you would be interested in being contacted for a follow up interview, please leave your name and email address here...

10. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to share?

Please complete and return this survey by May 31, 2014.
List A2: Women In the Director's Chair: WIDC 1-page feedback survey

NAME: 

Please circle whichever is applicable: 

Director | Mentor | Guest | Actor | Other 

Sweats: 

Your feedback is important. Comments from this survey also may be used by Creative Women Workshops to provide direct feedback to our sponsors about the value of their investment in the WIDC program and for research purposes. Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions and thank you for attending this year's workshop. If you would like to elaborate on any of the questions please use the back of this page or attach your comments. 

Kind regards, 
Carol Whiteman, WIDC Producer 

1. If you had a learning or other related goal what was it? 

2. Did you achieve your workshop goals? 

  □ Exceeded expectations □ Achieved expectations □ Somewhat □ Neutral □ Not at all 

3. How would you rate your overall experience at the workshop? 

a) □ Extremely satisfying □ Very satisfying □ Somewhat satisfying □ Satisfying □ Not at all satisfying 

b) □ Extremely relevant □ Very relevant □ Somewhat relevant □ Relevant □ Not at all relevant 

4. Please rate the workshop on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the top) 

5. What did you like best about the workshop? 

6. Suggestions for improvement? 

7. If you could convey a message directly to sponsors of this program what would it be? 

8. Would you recommend this program to others? MAYBE YES NO 

9. Would you like to receive Alumnae Updates from this and other sessions of WIDC? YES NO 

Please return this survey to Carol Whiteman, Workshop Producer before you leave the workshop.
Appendix B.

Links to WIDC online archives

Table B1: Links to WIDC online archives

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## Appendix C.

### Chart of WIDC director opportunities

**Chart C1**: WIDC director opportunities (1997-2018)

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**Subtotal**: 153 Directors | 76 CAM Directors | 29 AWARDS | 258 Total Opportunities

**SIM2.0**

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**Subtotal**: 193 Directors | 111 CAM Directors | 46 AWARDS | 350 Total Opportunities