

# SPLICE

Winter 2018



Viewfinder: Ian Toews | Terrarium | First Person | Evidence Exposed

[filmpool.ca](http://filmpool.ca)

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Splice Magazine is a publication of The Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative. The Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative is a non-profit artist-run centre that supports, encourages, and assists independent filmmaking in Saskatchewan.

The Filmpool is committed to developing an awareness and appreciation of independent film that reflects the individual and collective cultural expression of Saskatchewan people.



#### LETTER FROM THE FILMPOOL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The language of film is an exciting language to learn how to use as a filmmaker, but also, an exciting and challenging language to analyze and to study as a viewer. Unfortunately, I believe, this aspect of our culture - to explore, talk and write about film - seems to be fading. This is why publications like *Splice Magazine* are so important. We need to give more than a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down to a work of art, or a simple "like" on Facebook. We need to articulate why these artists and why these films are important to create and to study, within our own culture. We need to remember that

humans are interesting, complex, and intriguing creatures, when given a chance to create, and when given a chance to analyze and study our creations.

Canadian communications guru Marshall McLuhan said that art is a 'distant early warning system', - in other words, art was a means to explore and expose aspects of our society that otherwise go unnoticed. Let us continue to make art, but let's not forget the important role of sustaining critical discussion as well. We do not want to lose the capacity to talk about art, and to understand its true importance and cultural significance.

Gordon Pepper  
Executive Director  
Saskatchewan Filmpool Cooperative



#### LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Well, hello!

As we head into an (already long and cold) winter, it's an excellent time to settle in with some high-quality viewing (but then, when isn't a good time to watch a movie?). We're pleased to present this issue which features first person accounts of filmmaking, filmmaker profiles, and production diaries of those making work around the province.

We want *Splice* to be a home for writing about film and filmmaking in Saskatchewan, and hope you'll consider submitting story ideas to

the magazine. In the months ahead, we look forward to taking our content online - making the magazine easier to access across the province and beyond. So, drop us a line - we'd love to hear from you.

Bon cinéma,

Wanda

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cultivating  
the arts



Ian Toews and Gordon Pepper

# VIEWFINDER: IAN TOEWS

University of Regina Film Student, Morgan Jones,  
reflects on alumnus Ian Toews' visit  
to the 2018 Living Skies Student Film Festival

BY MORGAN JONES



Ian Toews Workshop

When we began planning the 30th edition of the Living Skies Student Film Festival, I really had no idea what lay ahead for me. I knew that we would show some films, have some guests, and hopefully bring a small community together to celebrate what students have been working so hard on. What I did not know was that I would be meeting Ian Toews, someone who, after getting to chat with him while writing a profile, has furthered my appreciation for the work that filmmakers do.

Along with curating films for Living Skies, we were tasked with planning an event for the University of Regina Film Department's Distinguished Alumni Award. This award is given out every two years to graduates of the film program who have made their mark both in filmmaking, as well as in film culture. For Ian, this year's recipient, this was an easy list of criteria to meet.

## Ian has worked extensively in documentary filmmaking since his own days as a film student at the University of Regina.

Some of his most prominent works filmed in Saskatchewan include *Saskatchewan River Delta* (2009), and *Grasslands*, which was completed more than four

years ago. Ian had left Saskatchewan one year prior, however, to shoot *Bugs on the Menu* for CBC, and was able to secure funding for that production in British Columbia. This was money, Ian reminded me when I spoke with him on the phone, that could have been spent in Saskatchewan if it hadn't been for the cut of the Saskatchewan Film Employment Tax Credit.

When he left Saskatchewan, Toews was in the middle of shooting *Grasslands*, which was being produced for SCN at the time, and he felt this film to be a sort of "goodbye" to Saskatchewan, as well as a goodbye to, as you may have guessed, the tax credit, as *Grasslands* was the last of his films to be produced with the credit.

Since his departure from the province, Ian has been travelling between his Victoria-based production company, 291 Film Company, to other parts of the country (Saskatchewan included) to continue work on his projects. One of his current productions, a series for Vision TV entitled *Ageless Gardens*, focuses on gardening through the lens of aging and wellness. The series is in production for its second season, and is about to head into post.

When I asked Ian what it is that seems to keep pulling him back to our neck of the woods, his answer was nature. "I always come back to nature because that's what I'm drawn to," Ian says. "I can find beauty anywhere. In many ways, it's sort of easy for me to film." With the



abundance of natural beauty in Saskatchewan, it's no wonder Ian keeps coming back for more.

I'll be perfectly honest; you can tell when someone loves what they do, and it's clear that this is true of Toews. His excitement and commitment to his work is obvious, both from what I saw from his time at Living Skies, and from our conversation during his interview. During his documentary workshop at the festival, he showed us several different clips from his work over the years. Although I was unable to stay for the entirety of the event – we had a reception to set up for the Alumni Award, after all – I was able to hear a lot about what it's really like to do something you're proud of.

I told Ian that I would be writing about my experience of his workshop when I spoke with him again over the phone, and he mentioned how important gratitude is to him when he thinks about his work. "I went to film school, just like you, and all I wanted to do was make films, and lo and behold, that's what I do."

**Ian says that he's always grateful for his experiences, and those who help make them possible.**

I also told Ian about my feelings with taking any sort of desk job, and how it really solidifies my determination to be a filmmaker whenever I do something not related to film, and he admitted to feeling the same when he was new to the industry. He felt as though doing something he didn't want to do only focused him more on his final goal of filmmaking.

As I spoke with Ian for this article, he was on the road to La Ronge for a seven-day canoe trip. This was not just a leisure trip, though; he was on his way to shoot footage for *Etthen Heldeli: Caribou Eaters*, an upcoming documentary about Dene culture in Saskatchewan and its ties to the caribou. This film will likely be his last one-hour film shot in Sask, but Ian feels that things have played out the way he hoped. "I always had an idea of doing a trilogy of nature films in Saskatchewan." With *Etthen*, he will be doing just that.



As Ian and I talked and I learned more about his outlook on the film industry here in Saskatchewan – and about the province itself – it’s hard not to feel a sense of loss for the film industry that once was, and could have been. Opportunities were taken away from Saskatchewan filmmakers, sending veteran and up-and-coming filmmakers alike away from the province in the aftershock of the tax credit. However, Ian did provide me with his outlook on the situation, and with it, a renewed hope that filmmaking is definitely a community for me. He recommends that emerging and veteran filmmakers alike stay true to themselves.

**“There is an opportunity in this wreckage of the film industry to get back to the core of being a real filmmaker,” he says.**

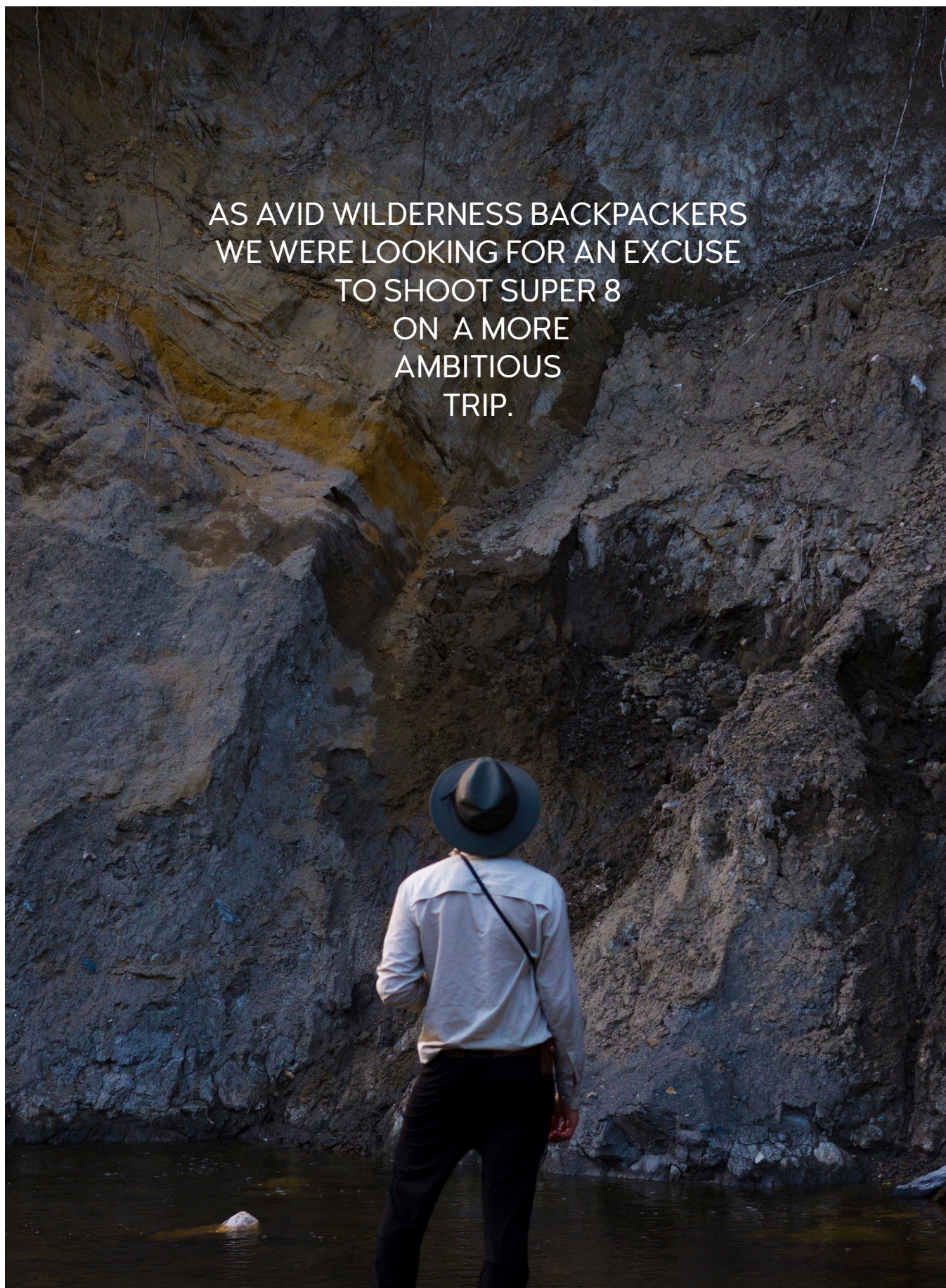
“Having an idea, getting it funded and produced, and doing it yourself, all the way through – that opportunity exists. The opportunities weren’t as obvious before

because there were a lot of crew jobs to get your attention. Being your own creator, producer, or editor wasn’t the only path, and consequently, few people went down that path. Nowadays, it’s kind of the only path in the province for aspiring filmmakers.”

As much as we like to mourn the change in our province’s film industry, there is no shortage of enthusiasm. Some of Ian’s favourite moments in coming back for the festival was the opportunity to meet students. Their willingness to create and then submit to countless festivals to have their hard work seen gives Ian a lot of hope. Perhaps it’s hope for the future of the industry, or maybe just hope that these students will stick to their vision as Ian did, and work to create something they love. It’s funny then, that seeing Ian’s willingness to create and dedication to his own vision has given this student a lot of hope too. **/S**



AS AVID WILDERNESS BACKPACKERS  
WE WERE LOOKING FOR AN EXCUSE  
TO SHOOT SUPER 8  
ON A MORE  
AMBITIOUS  
TRIP.





# TERRARIUM

## SUPER 8 FILMMAKING ON WILD LAND

BY ANDY GOODSON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDY GOODSON AND SEAN HOOTZ

**C**hoosing an inspiring location for a shoot can be important. But what happens when the environment poses more of a challenge than you bargained for?

In early 2016, Mitch Doll, Sean Hootz and I submitted our first film to the One Take Super 8 film event in Regina. We shot our film at La Colle Falls Hydroelectric Dam and Fort à la Corne Provincial Forest, requiring us to scout the location, build a storyboard and shoot in just one day. It was the only film we had ever worked on together and thankfully our finished project was semi-coherent (and not *entirely* underexposed.)

The One Take Super 8 festival, however, did not allow any review or post production before screening — the premise is that filmmakers submit their cartridge of Super 8 film, sight unseen, with the results screened on the night of the event. We figured shooting our next film, with our own terms and constraints, would be a piece of cake.

As avid wilderness backpackers we were looking for an excuse to shoot Super 8 on a more ambitious trip. We chose Waskwei River as our location — a remote stream running from the Pasquia Hills in Saskatchewan. This area was known to us for its moody, isolated quality.

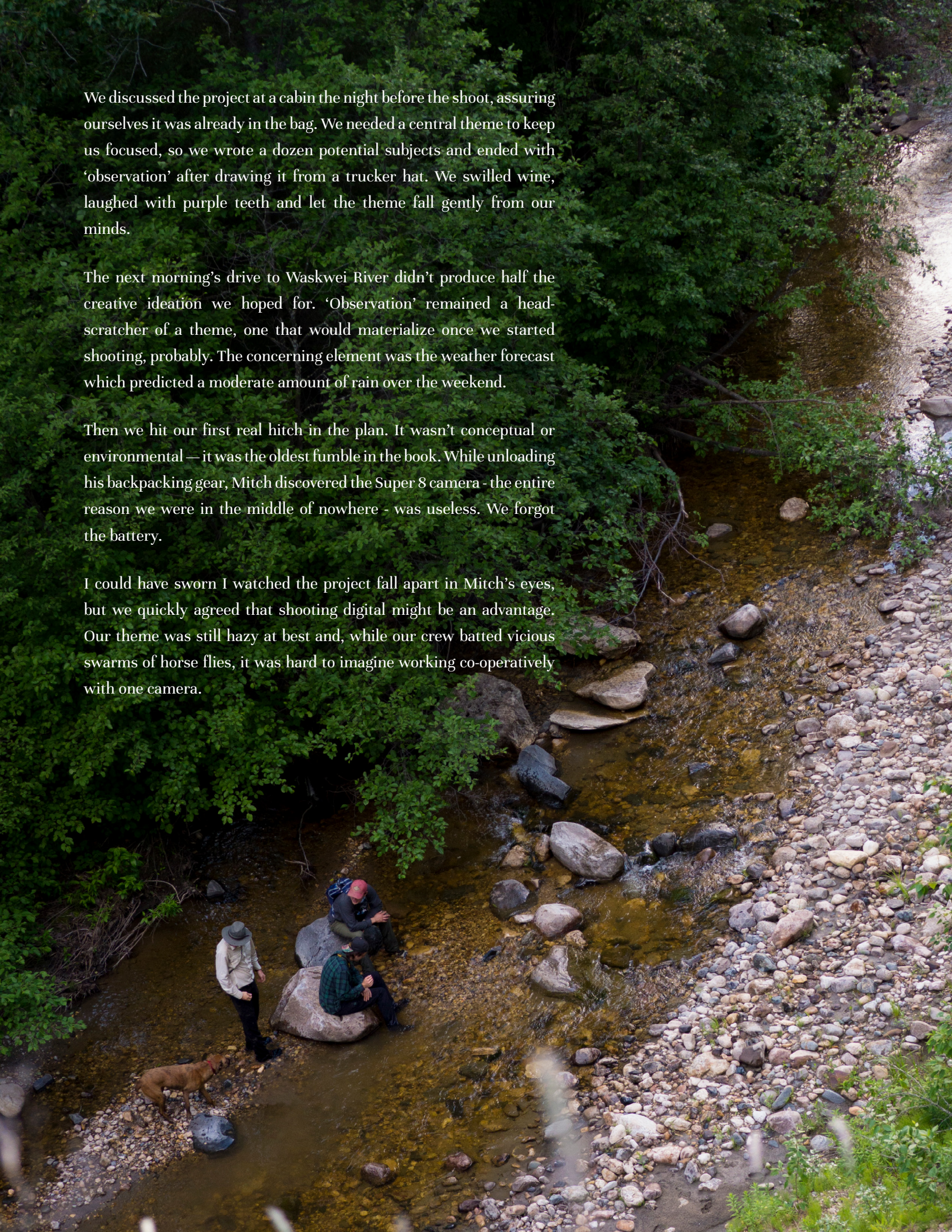


We discussed the project at a cabin the night before the shoot, assuring ourselves it was already in the bag. We needed a central theme to keep us focused, so we wrote a dozen potential subjects and ended with 'observation' after drawing it from a trucker hat. We swilled wine, laughed with purple teeth and let the theme fall gently from our minds.

The next morning's drive to Waskwei River didn't produce half the creative ideation we hoped for. 'Observation' remained a head-scratcher of a theme, one that would materialize once we started shooting, probably. The concerning element was the weather forecast which predicted a moderate amount of rain over the weekend.

Then we hit our first real hitch in the plan. It wasn't conceptual or environmental — it was the oldest fumble in the book. While unloading his backpacking gear, Mitch discovered the Super 8 camera - the entire reason we were in the middle of nowhere - was useless. We forgot the battery.

I could have sworn I watched the project fall apart in Mitch's eyes, but we quickly agreed that shooting digital might be an advantage. Our theme was still hazy at best and, while our crew batted vicious swarms of horse flies, it was hard to imagine working co-operatively with one camera.



## We stumbled out of the woods and into the rocky riverbed like newborn fawns.

The air was thick, humid and hard to breathe. We trudged through the shallow river, dizzy from the heat and fumes of insect repellent, shooting video in ten-second chunks or for however long the mosquitoes would allow.

The smartest choice we made was to hike a modest distance of less than two kilometres before setting up camp. We found an elevated ridge with relatively flat terrain and a view of the river curling around a gravelly beach – a perfect base camp for the shoot. Knowing where we were going to sleep renewed our energy for a short while and allowed us to focus on the project again.

We spent the rest of the afternoon hiking upstream, searching for subjects that might possibly be construed as metaphors for ‘observation.’ Getting into that cerebral territory did not hold very long in remote wilderness. We were constantly drawn to the nearest distraction, shooting spooky-looking branches, scurrying ants, and riverbanks of clay.

Far upstream, there were washouts that left steep cliffs along the river. These provided an opportunity for voyeuristic (somewhat creepy) shots of the group hiking the riverbed. It not only captured the theme, but effectively



Our theme was still hazy at best and, while our crew batted vicious swarms of horse flies, it was hard to imagine working co-operatively with one camera.



used the river's environment to produce shots that were unique to the area.

Topography of this kind was also not stereotypically 'Saskatchewan', something we wanted to prove, even if we had to venture into remote backcountry to find it.

Feeling that we had done enough for one day, we returned to camp. The next morning introduced a distinct change in ambience.

I crawled out of the tent and saw grey clouds sagging dully above the forest canopy. I was immediately assaulted by legions of mosquitoes and proceeded to build a campfire smudge to deal with the blood-sucking demons. The misty rain had soaked through to the bottom of the forest and made fire-building a frustrating chore.

Morale was low. We didn't pick up cameras until early afternoon. The morning mist had converted to full-on

rain and saturated everything that wasn't sheltered. But it was our only remaining day to shoot, and the project was to continue, rain or shine.

I managed to shoot about 30 seconds of footage before my camera's shutter stuck half-closed. This was an issue I later learned can be resolved by simply shooting a blast of photos until it becomes unstuck, but at the time I considered it divine intervention: the project was over. I was getting tired of mosquitoes biting my eyelids anyway.

Sean had given up in a less absolute way and had shifted his focus entirely to still photography. For him (and myself I'll admit) the theme was too abstract while very real subjects like insects, thunderheads and exhaustion demanded attention.

Mitch, on the other hand, was shooting video until the bitter end. I watched him crouched in ankle-deep water – his coat and full-brimmed hat both drooping sadly with moisture – holding his camera steady while mosquitoes bit his fingers. This was the moment he called it quits as well.

The river before





The river after

We hiked back to camp but had travelled an impressive distance considering the conditions. The boulders lining the riverbed were slick and perilous, and the bugs relentless. Gathered under the tarpaulin, we watched the fire smoulder and the river sizzle with rain.

The weather showed no intention of changing. We took the opportunity to shoot with some artificial lighting and a mask fashioned out of a hollowed piece of birch bark, which we used to create a shift-eyed tree character — an overly blunt nod to the ‘observation’ theme.

Without a camera, I shifted my attention to recording sound samples from the area on an H4 audio recorder. It was my intention to build a musical soundtrack that incorporated elements of the environment and I was able to build percussion tracks from falling rocks, snapping twigs and scratching bark, as well as an ambient layer of rain and running water.

From nightfall to morning the river continued to rise. The large gravel beach that was there when we built camp had become half-submerged in coursing water. The rope we used to tie our food in a tree had come undone overnight sending the bags afloat downstream.



The river, which was only ankle-deep upon arrival, was now up to our waists.

Despite these challenges we still managed to make it home and finish the project, although it was nothing like we had planned. It was certainly a learning experience. We can watch it happily now as a tribute to our perseverance through mass frustration. /S

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This story is adapted by the writer from a post on [saskborder.com](https://saskborder.com)  
[saskborder.com/stories/come-hell-or-high-water](https://saskborder.com/stories/come-hell-or-high-water)

Terrarium may be viewed at:  
[vimeo.com/301719701/99ac6181fe](https://vimeo.com/301719701/99ac6181fe)



# FIRST PERSON

## SPOOKSBURY: THE DEFINING MOMENTS OF A GHOUL

BY DANA LESIUK

The idea for *Spooksbury* came in 2013 when Jon Tewksbury suggested to me (his wife and co-producer) that the local community channel should air old public domain movies after hours rather than go off the air. I told Jon that an even *better* idea would be for him to host the program himself in character. We joked that his character's name could be Spooksbury (a play on Jon's last name) and that this character could be the worst television host to ever appear on the small screen. The public access show was not pursued, but a few years later, Jon was inspired to write a short film based around that same character and idea.

In modern fiction, the term 'Ghoul' has often been used for a certain kind of undead monster.

The inspiration for *Spooksbury* followed a bout of ill health — from which Jon has since recovered — that reached its most dire point on Good Friday 2015, when his blood count numbers plunged to the lowest they had been. After the most frightening weekend we have ever faced together, we watched his numbers rise again on Easter Sunday. Though he seemed to be re-enacting a version of the Passion Play, the “undead” that emerged from Jon's near-afterlife turned out to be an awkwardly ghoulish character now known as Spooksbury – which recently raised his acting profile with a best actor nomination (NOLA Horror Film Festival). The nomination read ‘Spooksbury: as Himself’. In many ways, Spooksbury couldn't be more different than the actor who portrays him, but there may be a few similarities ...

The word ghoul is also used in a derogatory sense to refer to a person who delights in the *macabre*.

Anyone who knows Jon well knows that underneath all his well-bred dignity, polite charm, and trustworthiness, he does delight in the macabre ... but only when it comes to cinema. Jon's fascination with monsters and late-night horror hosts started when he was young... maybe a little too young. Shows like *The Monster Squad* and *Hilarious House of Frightenstein* inspired him to focus his Grade Two art projects on bloody, ghoulish creatures – so much



so that his teacher grew concerned about Jon's creations and brought the issue up with his parents. But it wasn't until almost twenty years later that he would get the chance to become a ghoul himself, donning a cape and white clown makeup, while playing the world's most awkward creature of the night and terrible late-night horror host. Mixing comedy and horror makes a perfect entertainment world for Jon. Though *Spooksbury* doesn't really contain macabre elements and has won two "Best Comedy" awards at film festivals, it has also been all the rage at some of the biggest horror festivals across the United States.

A ghoul is a demon or monster originating in pre-Islamic Arabian religion (and appears in Islamic mythology) associated with graveyards and consuming human flesh.

Spooksbury, the character, is not depicted as the archetypal ghoul who gluttonously feasts on corpses – instead, he preys on the patience of his crew, deadening them inside as he pursues his narcissistic nirvana – to outperform his rival TV Show, *Sir Ghastly the Ghoul*.



Jon tried to be as considerate of his crew as possible. With a narrow window of time (one weekend), and no budget, we tried to figure out cheap, but non-exploitive, ways to make the film happen.

Jon had spent a lot of time volunteering as an editor at a community access channel, so the station agreed to let him borrow the TV studio for a weekend as a return favour. Jon retained copyright of *Spooksbury*, but granted the broadcaster the opportunity to air the program as a midnight Halloween special, and use his personally financed set for another Halloween special that was shot the following Monday as his thanks.

Jon had made several films with his long-time friend and collaborator Jason Shabatoski, and Jason was willing to play the role of a blue-collar nonplussed janitor in the film. The rest of the cast was made up of talented friends who agreed to volunteer for a day of filming, with blocks of time carefully arranged to ease the burden on their schedules. Jon tried to take on as

much as he could himself, but to make a good film, we needed help from our friends to lend their skills and hang out in a crafted graveyard for a day.

The prep crew consisted of the formidable Wayne Slinn, who helped with lining up talent, and the promising Catherine Bridge, who was a U of R theatre student at the time and looking for some production design experience. Luckily, the Halloween season provided a plethora of options for set pieces, and Bridge knew all the avenues to get good deals at Michael's. So, Friday evening before shooting, I teamed up with her to acquire the set, and construct it. The cost of moss alone could have blown our \$300 total production budget, had it not been for her coupons. Meanwhile, Jon drove around finding felled tree branches, which also had fortuitously freed themselves during a recent wind storm.

Saturday was the day of the shoot with a skeleton crew of two to complement the only somewhat macabre element in the film – the severed skeleton head within the set. One crew member monitored the rented camera and one was stationed to run the fog machine (thank you Shawn Bauche and Chloe Chen). The crew rotated according to our friends' availabilities. Jon was able to auteur-it-up to the fullest, sole writing/directing/starring ... hair/make-upping... He shot as fast and efficiently as I've ever seen.



## Ghoul is originally from the Arabic ghūl, from ghāla, “to seize”.

Despite being scheduled over the course of one long day of shooting, the production wound up taking two days because of something that caused some strife in our typically pretty strife-free relationship.

I had arrived after filming had already began, (due to transporting talent), and was a bit surprised to hear his characterization of Spooksbury. With several scenes already in the can, Spooksbury was speaking without any sort of accent. I had heard Jon use a mild-mannered, vampire-esque accent occasionally around the house, and couldn't let go of the idea that it would make the character more compelling and likable. I questioned his delivery between scenes, but the show had to go on. After shooting was complete, I insisting we “just try” reshooting all of his scenes (which was most of the film) on Sunday with the accent. We made room in our tight schedules – just the two of us – to reshoot all of his scenes with an accent. The tension was thicker than the fog, (granted the fog machine's output that day was pretty thin, since my fogging skills proved not as good as Shawn's or Chloe's.) But the dwindling fog – a significant part of the budget – was not my only worry as I simultaneously coaxed the accent out of Jon, monitored the camera, and encouraged him to continue even though he'd ultimately have to ADR the scene where he appeared with the brilliant Bollywood actress, Preetma Manohar (Shelly).

## Ghoul is also used to refer to someone whose profession is linked directly to death, such as a gravedigger or grave robber.

If you see the *Spooksbury*, the scene that is ADR'd takes place on the pièce de résistance of the film – the red, wood coffin that was graciously loaned to us from the University of Regina Theatre department.

Thankfully, in the end, Jon agreed that the accent made for a better version, and the tension dissipated. The editors at HorrorHound magazine also agreed, praising Jon for his “Kaufman-esque” chops.

## In Arabic, the term is also sometimes used to describe a greedy or gluttonous individual.

Spooksbury is greedy and gluttonous. He'll do anything to achieve the number one rated horror show. By contrast, Jon Tewksbury can stick to an abstemious diet like no other, avoids gluttony as



much as he avoids gluten for his good health, and is not known for putting himself before others. As *Spooksbury* is selected for more and more international festivals, and rolls out to more and more receptive audiences who are insisting they “want more Spooksbury”, Jon wants to give them what they want, and hopes for a green-light to produce a TV series for this golden ghoul. /S



# BEVERLY GLENN-COPELAND

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BEACH BODY

JUNIPER BUSH

THE DEFINITELAYS

YGRETZ

THE SEX GECKOS

THE WON'TS

KID KRIS DJ SID LENORE MAIER SWAMP DADDY

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# EVIDENCE EXPOSED

PHOTOS BY LEO KEISER

Swamp Fest 2018 ran over the weekend of September 7 and 8. This year's event included a selection of paranormal themed short films, presented in partnership with the Saskatchewan Filmpool. With work by Gerald Saul, Ania Slusarczyk, Kent Tate, Jane McWirter, Amber Christensen, Lenore Maier, Jamie Slawson & Michelle Harazny, Amber PB and Jeff M, Eric Hill, and Dianne Ouelette & Jason Britski.



# WINTER AND SPRING PROGRAMMING

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## OCTOBER, 2018

October 20

*Work Flow* – Before the Edit, After the Edit, with Tim Thurmeier

October 25

*TransCanada Screening* – A selection of short independent films from Winnipeg, Regina and Calgary. Program curated by Amber Christensen

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## NOVEMBER, 2018

November 23

*Fifth Annual Saskatchewan Independent Film Awards* - Showcasing and celebrating the best in Saskatchewan independent filmmaking.

November 24

SIFA UP CLOSE – film forum to critically discuss the 2018 SIFA nominated films

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## FEBRUARY, 2019

Collection of short films from the Winnipeg Film Group Distribution Centre, Two Programs: Time and Place – and Being Women in Canada

Master Class workshop with feature filmmaker Joyce Wong of Toronto.

\*Please check the Filmpool website for dates and times

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## MARCH, 2019

Filmpool Premiere Screening - Showcasing a collection of Filmpool member films produced in the past year

Listen to Dis' Community Arts Organization Inc. three-part production course presented at the Artesian. (in support of Saskatchewan's wheel chair artists and community)

Filmpool Second Annual 24 Hour Write In

\*Please check the Filmpool website for dates and times

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## APRIL, 2019

All Day Location Sound Recording Workshop

Holophon Audio Arts – workshop and exhibition

\*Please check the Filmpool website for dates and times