

Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister?

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AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA

A STUDY GUIDE BY
ALEX KOPP



What chance does an Indigenous Australian born today have of one day becoming the leader of our nation?

Synopsis

Australia prides itself on being a diverse, multicultural nation. But is this really the land of the fair go? *Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister?* analyses previous Prime Ministers' paths to our country's highest office and finds out what chance an Indigenous Australian born today has of one day becoming the leader of our nation.

Leading the first investigation of its kind, proud Nygina man, Mark Coles Smith, begins his journey by returning to his old primary school in Broome in Western Australia. Mark puts the big question to a group of Indigenous kids to find out what they think. He's inspired by their awareness of important social issues but realises they're not confident we'll get our first Indigenous leader anytime soon.

What follows is a trip across Australia, from impoverished remote communities to the halls of the country's most prestigious universities and the steps of Parliament itself. Along the way the film explores the educational, economic and social barriers standing in the way of a potential Indigenous candidate and offers a chance to meet inspirational individuals who are already on the path or helping others to close the gap. Confronting, fascinating and provocative, *Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister?* is agenda-setting documentary with the ability to provoke a deep discussion about equity, race, privilege and opportunity.

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11 DIRECTOR CATRIONA MCKENZIE

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Curriculum Links

Will Australia ever have a black Prime Minister? offers students the opportunity to:

- explore the nature of social justice and equity;
- consider the long term impact of colonisation on Indigenous Australians;
- discuss the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in modern day society;
- evaluate the importance of self-determination as well as government support and accountability with reference to Indigenous matters;
- explore the link between socioeconomic status and lifelong educational and professional outcomes

This study guide is suitable for secondary students at all year levels. It is best suited to the teaching of Humanities and Social Sciences, as well as English and Media, and supports the development of Australian Curriculum general capabilities: Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding and Intercultural Understanding.

LINKS TO THE HASS CURRICULUM

In HASS students investigate political and legal systems, analyse and explain characteristics between groups of people and consider the impacts of historical events and decisions.

Specifically, this guide can support teaching and learning in the following HASS areas:

Strand	Year	Sub-strand
Civics and Citizenship	7-10	Citizenship, diversity and identity
Geography	10	Geographies of human well being
History	10	Rights and freedoms (1945 – the present)

The film may also be used as a supplementary text to support the senior school Politics and Law and Modern History curricula.

Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister? addresses the following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross Curriculum priorities:

OI.5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.

OI.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of country or place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation.

OI.9 The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally and globally

Helpful Word, Hurtful Words

The saying 'sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me' is only true to a point. Words carry bullets of meaning and the weight of history and societal attitudes.

The meaning of words is influenced by the context – both in terms of time and place – in which they are used, the relationship of the speaker or writer to the audience and the tone in which they are pronounced and written. These issues are important to think about when discussing sensitive issues such as race, culture and identity. For example, the word 'native' or 'half-caste' to describe Aboriginal people was once used without a second thought in public forums such as newspapers, but this is recognised now as inappropriate. The term 'blackfella' might be broadly used as part of Aboriginal English, but does not sit as well when used within a Standard Australian English text. Likewise, the way that a youth might refer to his or her race amongst mates or in popular culture (think of the use of 'nigga' in the context of African American hip hop music) is different to what is acceptable in a classroom or workplace meeting.

Language can be destructive and empowering in equal measure. It may be helpful to begin the watching and study of *Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister?* with a discussion of the power of language, and how it can be a vehicle for discrimination and prejudice. In broadest terms, when referring to Australia's first people it is more appropriate to use the terms which stress their humanity, and use terms like 'Torres Strait Islander people', 'an Aboriginal person' or 'Indigenous Australians' instead of 'The Aborigines', 'Aboriginals' or 'blacks'.

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See https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/Indigenous-terminology for more information and advice on this topic.

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Before Viewing Activities

- How does a person become a Prime Minister of Australia? Describe the political process that needs to take place before someone can get the top job.
- Australia has had thirty Prime Ministers since Federation. How many can you name?
- What sort of skills, experience and personal qualities do you need to become a Prime Minister?
- Would you ever consider running for Prime Minister? Why/why not? Are there any personal challenges that you think you might need need to overcome to get into that role?
- Why do you think Australia hasn't had an Indigenous Prime Minister yet?
- Do you think that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person would need an additional and/or different set of skills, experiences or personal qualities to a non-Indigenous person in order to lead the country?
- On a scale of 0-10, how likely do you think it is that Australia will have a black Prime Minister in your lifetime?

POST WW2 PRIME MINISTERS

Working as a class or in groups, choose a Prime Minister to research. Go to the National Museum of Australia website and find out about their career before they entered office. Share findings with the rest of the class to complete the table overleaf. How do you think your chosen PM's professional background might have prepared them for the role?

LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND LEARNING

Most learning theories suggest that children learn by linking new concepts to what they already know. Furthermore, this learning process is assisted when children have an opportunity to positively interact with others, in an environment which fosters a sense of belonging. Research has also shown that children learn best in the language that they use most often and at home, and with reference to the concepts, ideas and practices of their familiar culture.

At the time of colonial settlement, Australia was home to more than 250 Aboriginal language and cultural groups. Although today many of these languages are at risk or disappeared altogether, others, like Pitjantjatjara in the Western Desert region, remain strong. Many Aboriginal children, especially those in remote communities, are growing up in a unique culture which can at times be vastly different to non-Aboriginal, English speaking Australia. If these children enter schools where they are only taught in English, or if they are taught from a perspective that is far removed from their own culture, they start learning from the back foot.

Most general primary school teachers are not trained to teach English as a second language. A non-English speaking student will therefore need to first translate what the teacher is saying into their own language, connect ideas to what they know of their own culture, and only then find a way to process, retain and use the academic content presented. This places a huge cognitive load on that child compared to others. Literacy in particular can become a problem, since learning to read begins with linking the idea behind a word with the word's written form. If a child doesn't understand the meaning because it is in an unfamiliar language, or is unfamiliar to their culture and day-to-day life, learning to read and write is nothing more than repetition. Since the parents of non-English speaking children are themselves likely to have difficulties with English, the children often also lack support with literacy at home. These early issues with literacy – compounded by poverty and intergenerational trauma – can become a foundation of a lifelong educational disadvantage.

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NAME AND PARTY	TERM OF OFFICE		CAREER PRIOR TO BECOMING PM
Frank Forde Labor	6 Jul 1945	13 Jul 1945	
Ben Chifley Labor	13 Jul 1945	19 Dec 1949	
Robert Menzies Liberal (Coalition)	19 Dec 1949	26 Jan 1966	
Harold Holt Liberal (Coalition)	26 Jan 1966	19 Dec 1967†	
John McEwen Country (Coalition)	19 Dec 1967	10 Jan 1968	
John Gorton Liberal (Coalition)	10 Jan 1968	10 Mar 1971	
William McMahon Liberal (Coalition)	10 Mar 1971	5 Dec 1972	
Gough Whitlam Labor	5 Dec 1972	11 Nov 1975	
Malcolm Fraser Liberal (Coalition)	11 Nov 1975	11 Mar 1983	
Bob Hawke Labor	11 Mar 1983	20 Dec 1991	
Paul Keating Labor	20 Dec 1991	11 Mar 1996	
John Howard Liberal (Coalition)	11 Mar 1996	3 Dec 2007	
Kevin Rudd Labor	3 Dec 2007	24 Jun 2010	
Julia Gillard Labor	24 Jun 2010	27 Jun 2013	
Kevin Rudd Labor	27 Jun 2013	18 Sep 2013	
Tony Abbott Liberal (Coalition	18 Sep 2013	15 Sept 2015	
Malcolm Turnbull Liberal (Coalition)	15 Sep 2015	24 Aug 2018	
Scott Morrison Liberal (Coalition)	24 Aug 2018	Incumbent	

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* INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

European colonisation and subsequent government policies had a devastating effect on Australia's Indigenous population. Amongst other impacts, Aboriginal people were successively dispossessed of their land, exploited for their labour, exposed to introduced diseases and forcefully separated from their families and culture.

Today, Aboriginal people lag behind on almost every socio-economic measure. However, since in many cases the grossest injustice against Aboriginal people occurred years ago, some are wondering why they can't 'get over it' and 'move on'. The answer to this is often intergenerational trauma.

Trauma can be defined as a psychological response to an experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing. Intergenerational trauma is trauma that is transferred from the first generation of survivors to the second and further generations via complex post-traumatic stress disorder mechanisms.

The symptoms of unresolved grief and trauma include self-destructive behaviour, depression, suicidal thoughts and actions, anxiety, low self-esteem and anger. These factors in turn can affect the victim's ability to work or study (thus pushing them towards poverty), contribute to drug or alcohol dependence or lead them to engage in violent or antisocial behaviour and enter the criminal justice system.

Children and grandchildren of the original victims become the secondary victims of trauma when they witness the experiences of their family. They are also directly affected by the family violence, neglect or substance abuse that was the outcome of the original trauma experienced by their parents. When the children develop their own post-traumatic stress responses, the cycle of trauma continues.



So what can be done about it?

Some effects of intergenerational trauma can be alleviated by offering support in education, employment, housing and health. However, according to the Healing Foundation, a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions like the forced removal of children, for these interventions to be successful it is important to address the healing needs of families first. Appropriate healing programs place an emphasis on affirming and renewing a sense of pride in cultural identity, connection to country and participation in community. It is also essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities are empowered to identify their own problems and design and implement relevant solutions.

Check out the Australians Together website for more information about how issues and policies from the past impact on Aboriginal people today.

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* CLOSING THE GAP REPORT

'Closing the Gap' is a government strategy that aims to reduce disadvantage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes.

It was developed in response to the recommendations contained within the Social justice report 2005 and a social justice campaign led by a coalition of more than 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health organisations and human rights organisations. 'Closing the Gap' is a formal commitment made by all Australian governments to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality within 25 years.



To monitor progress, the Council of Australian Governments put in place measurable targets to track improvements in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The targets are to:

- halve the gap in child mortality by 2018
- halve the gap in Year 12 attainment by 2020
- ensure ninety-five percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four-years-olds are enrolled in early childhood education by 2025
- close the gap in life expectancy by 2031
- halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018
- halve the gap in employment by 2018.
- close the gap in school attendance by 2018 (this target was added in May 2014)

Every year, the Prime Minister releases a 'Closing the Gap' report to Parliament that details the progress on these targets. In 2018, the ten-year progress against the key areas of the framework indicated that only the first three of the target areas listed above were or were likely to be met, with ongoing concerns in areas such as education and school attendance and health.

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Viewing Activities



- What reason does one of the Broome PS children give as to why Australia hasn't had an Indigenous Prime Minister?
- According to *The Insiders'* Barrie Cassidy, what do post WW2 Prime Ministers have in common?
- What strategies does the Moorditj Noongar Community College use to help engage students and keep them in class?
- What does the Geelong Grammar Aboriginal scholarship student, Tahlia, identify as a positive and a negative of attending her school?
- How would you describe the conditions at Gunyangurra Aboriginal Community?
- According to Denise Bowden from Yothu Yindi Foundation, how much money that was meant to be set aside for Indigenous services in the Northern Territory was underspent?
- What are some problems that Mark's sister, Marlikka, is facing at university?
- What does media personality Stan Grant say about a) the media's representation of Aboriginal people; and b) Australia having a black PM?
- Why is Kevin Rudd's apology to the Stolen Generation so significant to people like Ken Wyatt?
- According to Aretha, PM of Indigenous Youth Parliament, what can the rest of Australia learn about Indigenous Australia?
- How does Yin Paradies feel about statistical calculations he took to work out the chances of an Indigenous person becoming a Prime Minister?
- Why do you think the close up of Mark's hand was included in the final scenes of the documentary?

In the course of the documentary, Professor of Race Relations and Indigenous Knowledges at Deakin University, Yin Paradies, discusses a range of differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Use the table below to record the statistics presented.

Yin's calculations indicate that an Indigenous child's chances of becoming a Prime Minister are _____ time less likely than a non-Indigenous Australian.

Measure	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Median weekly income		
Housing		
Kindergarten attendance		
High school graduation		
Leaders of ASX 200 companies		
Heads of Federal or State government departments		
University Vice Chancellors		
Politicians		

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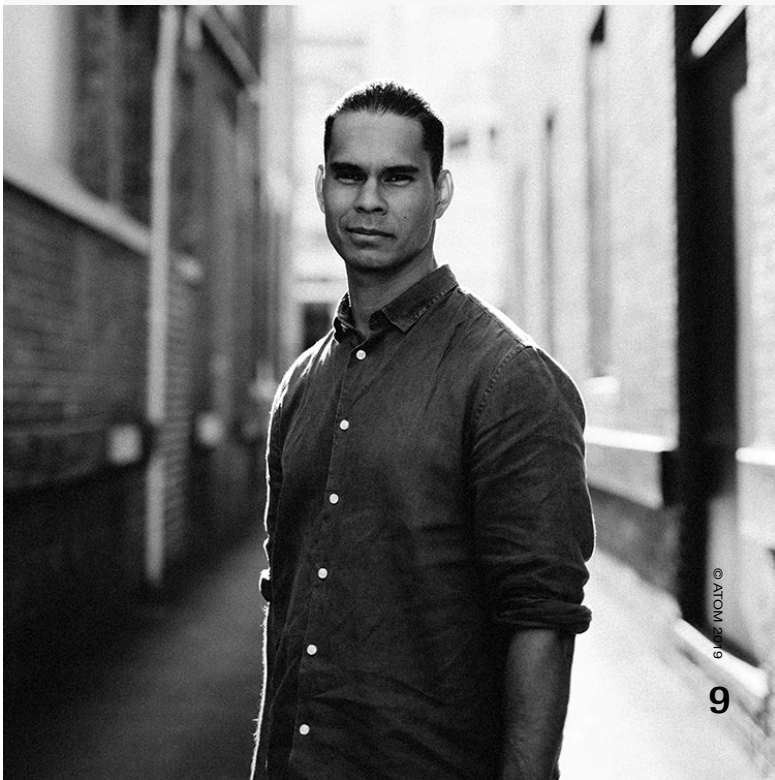
Post Viewing Activities

- Are the film's conclusions about Australia having an Indigenous Prime Minister similar or different to what you expected?
- Why do you think the term 'black' was used in the title of the film, as opposed to 'Aboriginal' or 'Indigenous'?
- Brainstorm a list of reasons explaining how economic disadvantage can contribute to poor educational outcomes, then consider what strategies a) governments b) schools and c) parents could put in place to combat these issues. Which solutions do you think would be the easiest and which would be the hardest to implement?
- What is 'affirmative action'? Complete a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of implementing affirmative action strategies to encourage and enable more Aboriginal people to enter roles of power and influence in companies and governments.
- What are some benefits of private schools offering scholarships for:
  - Economically disadvantaged students
  - Aboriginal students
  - Academic ability
  - Sport or other specialist endeavour (eg. music)?

  Can you think of any disadvantages?
- A number of statistics are quoted and discussed in the film. Play the role of a media fact checker, and carry out research to confirm the accuracy of the statistics. Note the sources you find which confirm (or discredit) the data, and rate the reliability/credibility of these sources.
- What was the 'Bringing them Home' report and why was it significant? Investigate the key findings and recommendations included in it.
- Create a time line of Indigenous history since Federation, focusing on the successes and the points which contributed to the achievement of Aboriginal rights and freedoms.
- What is the difference between 'equality' and 'equity'?

Explain by giving an example in reference to two of the following groups:
  - People who are disabled
  - People from a cultural or religious minority
  - Elderly people
  - Women
  - LGBTQ community
- Define and research the following terms:
  - **MABO DECISION**
  - **NATIVE TITLE**
  - **LAND RIGHTS**

  Use the three terms in their appropriate context in one paragraph.
- In what way would your response to the film be different if the person who presented it was not Aboriginal? What are some issues – ethical or practical – that a non-Indigenous person would need to consider when developing texts (such as stories, films, reports) about Aboriginal people?
- Consider the following quote by Aretha, from Indigenous Youth Parliament:
  The kind of area that my activism is based in really is just the education system. I go to a school in Melbourne's inner suburbs and you know while it has incredible kind of you know facilities and teachers, Indigenous history is just not talked about at all. If we're not teaching Indigenous history in our school curriculums, it actually doesn't give me a context in which to live, you know. I walk around the city and I walk around my school and I'm not reflected anywhere you know, nowhere.
  To what extent is Aboriginal culture reflected in the area that you live? Should Aboriginal history be talked about more at your school?
- Read the following quote from Stan Grant:



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The thing that I think about a lot is that space between the ship and the shore. I had ancestors on the ship. Convict Irish ancestors and I had ancestors standing on the shore. ***That space between the ship and the shore. That's where we create Australia.***
Use the words in bold as inspiration for your own piece of reflective writing on the future of Australia.

- Research the backgrounds and achievements of one of the following Indigenous parliamentarians noted in the documentary:
  - NEVILLE BONNER
  - ADEN RIDGEWAY
  - KEN WYATT
  - NOVA PERIS
  - JOANNA LINDGREN
  - PAT DODSON
  - LINDA BURNEY
  - MALARRNDIRRI MCCARTHY

  To what extent would you describe the person you researched as 'inspirational'?
- Conduct a class debate on the following topic: 'Becoming the Prime Minister of a country is the epitome of success'.
- This headline was briefly shown in the documentary:
  $500m meant for Indigenous services was spent elsewhere by the NT government. Read the full article, highlight the facts included, then summarise the article into a few short sentences.
- Consider the following statement by *Will Australia ever have a black Prime Minsiter?*'s Director, Catriona McKenzie:
  I direct stories because I do believe in film, TV, docos; stories can and do change the world.
  Do you agree? Explain, in the context of this documentary or using other examples.

Presenter
Mark Coles Smith

Hailing from Broome, Mark has worked across several performing arts' genres, first and foremost as an actor, and also as a writer, producer and sound designer. His latest project is a presenting role for the television documentary, *Will Australia Ever Have a Black Prime Minister?* from JoinedUp Films. He also stars in Lucy Durack's writing debut *Lift,* which is a bite-sized rom-com web series produced by Mad Kids. In 2018, Mark voiced the character of Crash in the gaming world's long-awaited *Call of Duty Black Ops 4* for PlayStation. On stage, he played Jason in *Bottomless* at FortyFiveDownstairs, and Joel in the Melbourne and Sydney seasons of *Bliss* at Malthouse and Belvoir St theatres. On screen, he appeared in the reimagining of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* for Foxtel. In 2017, Mark won a Helpmann Award for Best Male Actor in a Play for his work on Leah Purcell's acclaimed adaptation of *The Drover's Wife*. On television, he was in *Doctor Doctor* and *Shaun Micallef's Mad as Hell*. He also starred in short film *Miro* (directed by Victoria Wharfe McIntyre), which was celebrated at CinefestOz and MIFF. Mark works as a sound designer under the alias Kalaji, which is a Nyikina word for 'whirlwind', originating from the Mardoowarra River of far north Western Australia. His show *Night River* is his first major experimental work and will be playing in the Yirramboi festival in Melbourne.

Mark received a Best Supporting Actor AACTA nomination and a Best Supporting Actor win at the Film Critics' Circle of Australia awards for his work in the feature film *Last Cab to Darwin* opposite Jacki Weaver and Michael Caton, and was also honoured with a Best Supporting Actor AACTA nomination for the film *Pawno*. His other screen credits include U.S. series *Hunters* for the SyFy Network; *Old School*, opposite Bryan Brown and Sam Neill; *The Gods of Wheat Street*; a lead guest in the hit American comedy *Modern Family; Hard Rock Medical*, a co-production between SBS TV and Canada's TV Ontario; the features *Around the Block* and *Beneath Hill 60; Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries; Blue Heelers; Dirt Game; The Circuit* and *Please Like Me.*

Mark's previous theatre credits include *Jandamarra,* under the direction of Phil Thompson, and *Wulamanayuwi and Seven Pamanuas*, directed by Noel Jordan for the Darwin Festival. With a gift for storytelling, he worked under the guidance of Gary Crew as part of the Indigenous Mentorship Program for the Australian Society of Authors. He has a certificate in Aboriginal Theatre from WAAPA and a Bachelor in Indigenous Studies. In 2007 he won the Yvonne Cohen Award from the VCA Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts. In 2008 he took out a grant from ScreenWest for the short film *Layoordoo*, which he wrote, co-produced and directed, while also featuring in a supporting role. *Layoordoo* screened at Toronto's ImagiNATIVE Film Festival. In recent years, Mark has pursued work in the field of audio production and sound design. He designed the sound for Ilbijerri's *Which Way Home* and he produces across an array of genres, including the debut album of Australian Hip Hop group 'Bare Minimum' and an electronica album under the alias 'Karate Surfing.' He is also a regular voice artist for animation, documentary and audiobooks. Mark was awarded the Casting Guild of Australia's inaugural Sirius Award for New Talent of the Future.

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Director Catriona Mckenzie

A highly experienced television drama director, *Satellite Boy* was Catriona McKenzie's first feature film which won two Special Jury Mentions at the 2013 Berlinale - Generation Kplus Programme, and Best Feature Film at the imagiNATIVE Media Arts Festival. *Satellite Boy* screened at Toronto International Film Festival 2012 as part of the Discovery Program.

McKenzie has directed outstanding television series including the Emmy-nominated *Dance Academy*; Logie and AFI award-winner *My Place* (Series 1 and 2) for ABC TV as well as *Satisfaction* for Showtime. McKenzie was the setup director of award-winning series *The Circuit*, *Redfern Now* and *The Gods of Wheat Street* (ABC).

She graduated with Honours from the prestigious Australian Film, Television and Radio School. She also studied screen writing at NYU, TISCH and interned at Ridley Scott's production company.

She restores mid 1960s cars, doing all the work herself on the engines and mechanics of the cars.

She is of Australian Aboriginal descent; her tribe is the Kunai Gurnai of South Eastern Australia. Dedicated to developing emerging filmmakers, McKenzie has mentored in various film education initiatives including the 2014 Sundance Native Lab and UCLA. Additionally, she was honoured to serve on the 2014 Berlinale Kplus jury, the 2015 New Zealand International Film Festival and is currently involved with Outfest in writing and filmmaking workshops.

Her latest film, *Stolen* was developed through the prestigious Aurora writing program and is filming in 2019.





Credits

Presented by: Mark Coles Smith
Director: Catriona McKenzie
Executive Producers: Jacqueline Willinge, Dan Brown, Anthony Willinge
Consultant Producer: Danielle MacLean
Story Producer: Darren Hutchinson
Edit Producer: Simon Hill
Directors of Photography: Nigel Rungen, Noel Jones, Darren McCagh, Josh McIvor

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