

"black whiteman", was a runaway slave who escaped to Canada and became a successful cattle rancher, contributing a great deal to the province's development. The details of his life are fascinating but the substance of his story comes from the type of man he was.

Samuels has negotiated a pre-sale to First Choice, but because of the scope of the effort (approximately \$3-3.5 million) she is also looking south of the border to Home Box Office.



Alberta Film & TV

Her repeated work with outdoor stories is no accident. She is an avid rider who

Independent thinking

by Anna Gronau

Technologically Native, the first workshop production of the Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers, had its premiere on June 10. And while that in itself was something to celebrate (for the members and Board of Directors of this co-op) the event had wider significance. It was concrete evidence of the success of new directions and philosophies affirmed and developed by the Society over the past year (In May, 1982 the current Board - Marcella Bienvenue, Douglas Berquist, Andy Jaremko, Leila Sujir and Wendy Hill-Tout - were elected as a slate at a time when the organization was suffering from a lack of identity and purpose.)

To be sure, much had been accomplished since the initial meeting in 1977 established the Calgary Film Group, incorporated later under its present name. A permanent location with office, production areas and an excellent screening-room had been set up, and a number of productions had been completed. But cohesion had become difficult to maintain. The original members were all technically proficient filmmakers, many of them already working in media-related organizations. When sincerely interested but less experienced people began to join, it became much more difficult for the co-op to serve all members equally. On top of that was a problem Marcella Bienvenue, the Society's current co-ordinator, attributes to the very broad interpretation that can be given to the word "independent" when applied to filmmaking. "We had to keep telling people this is not a place for hobbyists" she recalls. On the other end of the scale, filmmakers who were "independent" in the sense of having no affiliation to large institutions or organizations, but whose work was indisputably commercial in intent were also using co-op facilities.

C.S.I.F. members were also beginning to realize that the group's dispa-

rate functions were making their public image unclear. And in Alberta, where arts funding seems to be at a very formative stage, groups lobbying for public money have to present themselves in a forceful, clear and visible manner. According to Bienvenue, provincial funding bodies, unlike the Canada and Ontario Arts Councils, tend to regard film only in terms of an industry. Independent and experimental film are new and not well understood in the province. "It's hard to be taken seriously," she claims. "Our values are seen to be out of step." A strong case for non-industrial film had to be made, and new approaches that would help to drive home the point had to be discovered.

Leila Sujir, who has been on the Board of Directors of the C.S.I.F. since it began, also sits on the Board of the Independent Film Alliance du Cinéma Indépendant, a national federation of film co-ops. Some of the Federation's first conferences provided an opportunity to meet other like-minded filmmakers and to see how the co-ops had successfully (or otherwise) dealt with problems. Another model was the Association of National Non-profit Artist-run Centres. Both Sujir, a writer, and Bienvenue, a performance artist, had previously worked for Artons, an artist-run organization now operating in Toronto. They felt that strategies borrowed from the artist-run centre could be successfully transferred to this filmmaker-run enterprise.

In discussion of the C.S.I.F.'s policies of the last 12 months with co-op members, the term "arts context" seems to come up again and again, along with apologies for the inadequacy of the phrase which, like "independent", could easily become a catch-all. But the difference lies in the assiduous program of implementation that has been initiated and followed through. The co-op has gone back to its original mandate of providing a means for the production of films of social and cultural import, "in an indigenous context." Hobbyists are out. So are commercial films - regardless of how independent they may be. Marcella Bienvenue is quick to explain this position. "Most independents would view their films as being creative or culturally orientated, and

chooses her home address on the basis of its proximity to both the office and the stables. Her goals as a producer sound simplistic: to produce the thing well, and make sure it's viewed. She backs the statement up with an air of conviction and toughness that tells you she'll succeed.

Developing writers

The quality and quantity of local material available to producers is due in part to the long-standing writer's program run by Alberta Culture. Grants are awarded annually to novice, advanced and senior authors to a maximum of \$15,000. For 1982-83, \$120,000 was distributed to 40 writers. Culture's support is typified in the Sharon Riis story. In 1974 she received a \$500 grant to revise the novel, "The True Story of Ida Johnson." Three years after its publication in 1976 she got another grant to turn the novel into a script. The result is the movie *Latitude 55* which was produced by Fil Fraser of Edmonton and directed by John Juliani.

David Scorgie, assistant director, Film and Literary Arts, Alberta Culture, lists what's happening now and what his office hopes to achieve. Writing workshops on various literary topics and at different levels of expertise are held throughout the province. A prime example is the two-day script writing symposium to be held in early summer at the University of Lethbridge. Support also goes to the Television Film Institute and to a program in the schools which fosters film literacy. (Not surprisingly, Stats Canada pegs Albertans with the highest level of movie attendance per capita in the country.)

Another integral part of the program is the "Alberta Authors Bulletin" which is distributed to any writer in the province free of charge six times a year. It discusses markets, workshops, trends and opportunities and provides an invaluable link for the province's literati.

What Scorgie hopes to add as early as the spring of '84, pending approval, is a Film Arts Program. It would have roughly the same structure as the writer's pro-

gram, except that its recipients would be film and video artists who hadn't as yet established a track record. This would be an entry program to develop production and direction talent.

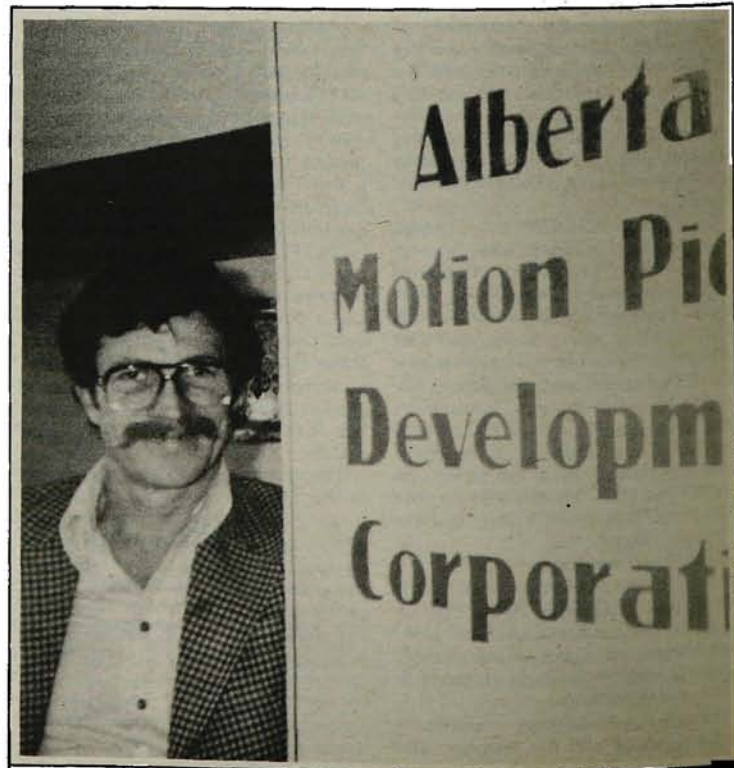
Special events

The services essential to the industry come in all forms. For international and local producers, the Banff Television Festival is an ideal opportunity to make contacts and do business in a relaxed atmosphere. Carrie Hunter, the Festival's executive director, worked closely with AMPIA this year to ensure that attention was given to areas of concern to Canadian producers, as well as focussing on issues that make the Festival appealing world-wide. Scheduled for August 14-20 it includes sessions on marketing, international co-productions, ratings and how they affect what we see. Special guests are American series writer Stephen Cannell, Pat Ferns of Primedia and Harold Greenberg of Astral Bellevue Pathé, Inc. Other notables who will be attending are: Murray Chercover, president, CTV; Bill Armstrong, executive vice-president, CBC; Colin Watson, president of Rogers Cable Systems Inc.; Don MacPherson, president, First Choice; Mark Fowler of the American FCC; and John Miessel, chairman of the CRTC.

The Alberta Government is one of the Festival's many sponsors and will contribute \$200,000 to this year's event.

For the province that housed the Commonwealth Games, runs the greatest outdoor show in the world, is home to Superman and has a lion's share of year-round tourism, providing support services to any size movie venture is second nature. For out of province producers, Calgary has a Film Industry Development office run by David Crowe. Crowe's job is to cut through red tape and smooth the way for those unfamiliar with the Calgary scene. It also means advertising the city internationally as a production site and generally promoting available services and locales.

Crowe keeps in close contact with Bill Marsden, Director of Film Industry



Headed by Lorne MacPherson, the AMPDC shows consistent growth