



## **WOMEN IN FILM & TELEVISION – TORONTO ANNOUNCES THE 2019 CRYSTAL AWARD HONOUREES**

*Empowered women empower women.*

The 32nd annual WIFT-T Crystal Awards Gala will take place on Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario. [Tickets are available via Eventbrite.](#)

### **Social Media:**

Twitter.com/WIFT | Facebook/Instagram: WIFT.Toronto  
#WIFTCrystals

**TORONTO, ON—Women in Film & Television – Toronto (WIFT-T)** is pleased to announce the six outstanding women to be honoured at its **32nd annual Crystal Awards Gala** on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, hosted by Shakura S’Aida.

The Crystal Awards, established in 1988, is WIFT-T’s annual tribute to individuals who have made significant contributions to Canada’s screen-based media industry. Since its inception, over 145 industry trailblazers have been recognized for excellence in creativity, innovation, and leadership; and their commitment to mentoring the next generation of creators and industry leaders.

This year’s honourees are: **maxine bailey**, cultural maven and former vice-president of advancement at Toronto International Film Festival; **Alison Duke**, co-founder of Oya Media Group; **Tammy Frick**, executive director at Cinéfest Sudbury International Film Festival; **Kim Gibson**, program consultant, Ontario Creates; **Esta Spalding**, writer, producer, showrunner; and **Mary Young Leckie**, creative producer at Solo Productions.

“The six women we are celebrating this year are incredibly dynamic,” says **Karen Bruce, Executive Director at WIFT-T**. “What unites this year’s honourees is a commitment to mentoring and an innate instinct for spotting talent and empowering others to bring and be their best. Collectively, they have influenced, supported, educated, mentored, and advocated for their peers and the future of this industry. We are also thrilled to return the International Achievement Award; Canadian women are not only making a mark



# Crystal Awards 2019

national but also on a global scale. It is our absolute pleasure to recognize and celebrate their many accomplishments.”

The 2019 Crystal Award Honourees were nominated by WIFT-T members and selected by a jury of past winners: **Deb Day**, CEO and chief strategist at Innovate By Day (Digital Trailblazer, 2018); **Dr. Carol Whiteman**, producer and co-creator of Women in the Director’s Chair (Mentorship, 2011); and **Tonya Williams**, founder of ReelWorld Film Festival (Special Jury Award of Distinction, 2017).

WIFT-T thanks the following 2019 Crystal Awards’ partners and sponsors for their support: Presenting Partner, **Deluxe Toronto**; Reception Sponsor, **Entertainment One**; and Supporting Partners, **NBCUniversal** and **Super Channel**.

The 32nd annual WIFT-T Crystal Awards Gala will take place on December 3, 2019 at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario. [Tickets \(individual and tables\) are available via Eventbrite.](#)



## HOST

Shakura S’Aida

Shakura S’Aida has been consistently thrilling audiences with her powerful pipes for years, most recently as a guest host on CBC Radio 2’s Weekend Morning. As a veteran of the international music scene, she’s performed both as a featured artist with musicians like Jimmy Smith, Lee Oskar (WAR), Bettye LaVette and Keb Mo’, as well as an award-winning solo artist.

###

**For media inquiries, please contact:**

**Kadon Douglas**, Communications & Engagement Manager, WIFT-T  
416-322-3430 ext. 226 | [kdouglas@wift.com](mailto:kdouglas@wift.com)

## 2019 WIFT-T CRYSTAL AWARDS HONOUREES



### CREATIVE EXCELLENCE AWARD

Mary Young Leckie, Creative Producer, Solo Productions

*“A force of nature; generous, visionary, unstoppable.”*

– Michael Levine, Westwood Creative Artists

Mary Young Leckie is a creative producer with over 70 hours of scripted content to her credit. Her most recent feature *Maudie*—a Canada-Ireland co-pro starring Sally Hawkins and Ethan Hawke, released last year by Mongrel Media and Sony Classics—was awarded seven Canadian

Screen Awards including Best Feature Film.

Amongst her acclaimed films is *Prom Queen* the true story of gay teen Marc Hall and his fight for the right to take his boyfriend to prom. Reimagined for the stage and titled *The Louder We Get*, Leckie’s first live musical bows at Theatre Calgary in 2020.

The **Creative Excellence Award** is presented to a woman in recognition of dynamic quality of her work in screen-based media. Her recent work has gained national and/or international attention in the previous year, and has established a standard for those working in the industry. **Past winners include:** Edwina Follows, Mary Harron, Michelle Crespi, Christina Piovesan, Sally Catto, and Semi Chellas.



### DIGITAL TRAILBLAZER AWARD

Kim Gibson, Program Consultant, Ontario Creates

*“A constant beacon of support [...] and an essential connector in the industry who understands producers’ needs and enhances their work to ensure their success.”*

– Evan Jones, Stitch Media

Kim Gibson is a respected veteran of the interactive digital media industry, boasting more than 20 years of experience working with content creators through her



role at **Ontario Creates**. Since 1999, she has designed and operated highly sought-after programs that have contributed to the growth of the province's IDM industry most notably the Interactive Digital Media Fund which has been instrumental in providing funding for concept development, production, international business and audience development activities for a variety of projects from video games to web series. She is widely recognized by industry peers for her leadership, and commitment to the industry, and is known for her ability to discover and nurture emerging talent.

The **Digital Trailblazer Award** is presented to a woman in recognition of her significant contributions to Canada's digital and interactive media industry, as demonstrated by her creativity and leadership—including but not limited to, idea generation, content creation, distribution, technology, audience engagement, and funding models. **Past winners include:** Deborah (Deb) Day, Diane Williamson, Barbara Bailie, and Lucie Lalumiere.



#### **INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

Esta Spalding, Writer, Producer, Showrunner

*“One of the most prolific, talented, committed, and creative women in the business.”*

– **Semi Chellas, director (2013 Crystal Awards honouree)**

Esta Spalding is an award-winning showrunner, screenwriter, children's author and poet. She's currently the executive producer and showrunner of Showtime's *On Becoming a God in Central Florida* (starring Kirsten

Dunst). She has worked on many prestigious television series including Showtime's *Masters of Sex* and FX's *The Bridge*. Spalding hails from Canada, where she has contributed to many award-winning shows, winning two Writers Guild of Canada awards and five writing nominations from the Canadian Academy of Film and Television, including best writing and best show for her mini-series *Would Be Kings*. She penned independent features, Scott Smith's *Falling Angels*, and the upcoming adaptation of Jojo Moyes' *The Last Letter From Your Lover* (directed by Augustine Frizzel). Esta currently has an overall development deal with Sony Pictures.

The **International Achievement Award** is presented to a woman in recognition of her significant and well-renowned body of work in Canada and abroad. **Past winners**



**include:** Anne Dorval, Mia Kirshner, Sarah Gadon, Samantha Bee, Shirley Douglas, Catherine O'Hara, and Sandra Oh.



#### **MENTORSHIP AWARD**

Alison Duke, Co-Founder, Oya Media Group

*“She has created a legacy for herself, not only through the content that she has created, but also in the hearts and minds of the young people she continues to mentor and believe in.” – Fonna Seidu, mentee*

Alison Duke is an artistic activist, award-winning filmmaker, and passionate producer committed to the Canadian visual art form. She established **Goldelox**

**Productions** to produce social issue content. In 2016, Alison produced the *Akua Benjamin Legacy Project*, a digital web series which celebrates the legacies of Toronto-based Black activists. Inspired by Ava Duvernay, #metoo and the reality that opportunities for women behind the camera in Canada are long overdue, Alison hired five Black female Canadian directors to helm the films. Recently, she co-wrote and co-produced the television documentary *Mr. Jane and Finch* ('19) directed by Ngardy Conteh George (and edited by Sonia Godding Tobogo) for CBCDocs POV. She also directed *Cool Black North* ('19), a two-hour television documentary special for CityTV/Rogers. Current activities see her producing Laurie Townshend's, feature documentary, *Mothering in the Movement*, under the **Oya Media Group** banner; kickstarting Year 2 of **Black Youth! Pathway2Industry**, a 3- year initiative to support Black youth access to essential training, mentors, networks and film industry spaces. She's also finishing post-production on, *Promise Me*, a dramatic short inspired by her *The Woman I Have Become* ('08).

The **Mentorship Award** is presented to a woman or man who has made an outstanding contribution to the building of women's careers in the screen-based media industry. She or he vocally supports the advancement of women, offers guidance and support to emerging professionals, and assists women entrepreneurs in growing their own companies. **Past winners include:** Zoe Dirse, Karen Walton, Ken Dhaliwal, Deborah Osborne, Corrie Coe, Lalita Krishna, and Susan Ross.



### **OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN BUSINESS**

Tammy Frick, Executive Director, Cinéfest Sudbury International Film Festival

*“Tammy has played a vital role in establishing Sudbury as both an economic and cultural hub for filmmakers and creators in Northern Ontario.”* – **Cameron Bailey, Toronto International Film Festival**

During Tammy’s 25 year tenure as executive director, **Cinéfest** has developed into a full-service film organization and is applauded by industry stakeholders for its ability to inspire audiences, uncover emerging talent, and to create an immersive experience that generates meaningful consideration and dialogue about the power of cinema.

In 2007, Tammy led the development and introduction of **Laugh Out Loud Sudbury Comedy Festival (LOL)**. Aside from providing access to stand-up comedy, LOL carried out a first of its kind live simulcast of an onstage performance by Jason Alexander in over 60 Cineplex theatres throughout Canada. The event has also featured world class entertainers like Steve Martin, Howie Mandel, Rick Mercer, The Trailer Park Boys, Jim Jefferies, among many others.

Tammy has served on the board of directors of several organizations including, as a founding member of **Music and Film in Motion**, an organization which had a mandate to foster the development, growth and sustainability of Northern Ontario’s music, film and television production industries.

The success of Cinéfest can largely be seen as spurring interest in developing a vibrant film and television production industry in the North, and of securing public sector investments that have made Northern Ontario the envy of other national production jurisdictions. Aside from the leadership and insights she offered to the development of MFM, in 2012 Tammy was approached to manage its transition into an entirely new incorporation called **Cultural Industries Ontario North (CION)**. Today, as part of Tammy’s secondary role of Associate Executive Director, CION oversees the brands of



both MFM and LOL, and seeks to promote and foster ongoing expansion of the film and television production sector of Northern Ontario.

The **Outstanding Achievement in Business Award** is presented to a woman who—through the consistent quality of her work—has made a major contribution to the screen-based media industry as a leader in enterprise development. She has built a culture of excellence; inspiring her colleagues to push the boundaries of innovation.

**Past winners include:** Grace-Carnale Davis, Mary Bredin, Tracey Pearce, Lisa Olfman, Joy Rosen, and Barbara Bowlby.



### **SPECIAL JURY AWARD OF DISTINCTION**

maxine bailey, Cultural Maven

*“A dedicated champion of building a vibrant and diverse creative community, maxine has long been an advocate of creating opportunities for women in film, benefitting both filmmakers and audiences.”*

— **Chris McDonald, Hot Docs International Documentary Film Festival**

maxine bailey is deeply committed to advocacy and taking action when it comes to gender parity in the Canadian film industry. As former Vice-President of Advancement at the **Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF)**, maxine’s leadership and vision created critical opportunities for women in film and raised awareness about the systemic barriers facing women filmmakers, script writers and producers.

In 2017, maxine created **Share Her Journey**, a five-year strategic fundraising and awareness-raising initiative to invest in the next generation of women filmmakers. A committed volunteer, maxine serves on the boards of The Academy, The Walrus, and Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund (OCAF).

The **Special Jury Award of Distinction** is presented to a woman who has built a legacy as a ground-breaking force in our industry and whose life's work is dedicated to building a vibrant, diverse, and active creative community. **Past winners include:** Karen Thorne-Stone (Ontario Creates), Tonya Williams (ReelWorld Film Festival), Pat Ellingson



(formerly, TVO), Susan Cavan (Accent Entertainment), and Trina McQueen (broadcasting industry pioneer).

The **32nd annual WIFT-T Crystal Awards Gala** will take place on December 3, 2019 at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario. [Tickets \(individual and tables\) are available via Eventbrite.](#)

**Social Media:**

Twitter.com/WIFT | Facebook/Instagram: WIFT.Toronto  
#WIFTCrystals

###

**For media inquiries and interview requests, please contact:**

**Kadon Douglas**

Communications & Engagement Manager  
Women in Film & Television – Toronto (WIFT-T)  
416-322-3430 ext. 226 | kdouglas@wift.com