



## Why APTN's Blackstone is connecting with Canadians

January 10, 2012 by Etan Vlessing



When APTN's Blackstone returns Wednesday night with a second season debut, series creator Ron E. Scott believes the homegrown drama will have continuing momentum as it attempts to build its TV audience at home and abroad.

The sophomore season dwells on familiar themes of corrupt power and inequality on a fictional First Nation reserve.

But Scott, who also co-writes and executive produces the Prairie Dog Film + Television series, says a funny thing happened to Blackstone as production on the second season took place in Edmonton this past summer.

The Occupy Everywhere movement began to dominate the news, revealing the same public outrage among ordinary Canadians that's reflected in the tumultuous lives of fictional Blackstone residents battling for better lives in their own community.

Scott calls it a "universality of corruption," only told in Blackstone from an Aboriginal point of view.

"It's safe to say people in power, or who have extreme amounts of money, can lose touch with reality," he tells Playback Daily. "And that also happens in our story line."

In the season-one cliffhanger, chief Andy Fraser, played by Eric Schweig, walked into a room at the Roxy strip club with a gun and shut the door behind him, leaving Canadian TV viewers to wonder whether the chief, who will stop at nothing for power, killed his own brother with the two gun shots that rang out behind the closed door.

Ordinary Canadians, who today question whether politicians and business leaders are out of touch and even hostile to them, can relate, Scott insists.

"There's an above-the-law attitude, where sometimes these people really believe they do what they do for our good, that's the core of the dark element in Blackstone," he explains.

Another creative element driving Blackstone in its second season is the continuing development of its dramatic characters, including former chief Leona Stoney, a role performed by Carmen Moore, and her sister Gail, played by Michelle Thrush, who picked up a Gemini for best actress in a continuing drama.

"Some of the success of the show is the characters are rich and deep, and that's something you don't see all the

time," Scott said.

Members of the ensemble cast returning for the second cycle include Nathaniel Arcand, Roseanne Supernault, Steven Cree Molison, Andrea Menard, Justin Rain and Ashley Callingbull.

The Blackstone cast and crew also had to deal with the sudden death in July 2011 of the veteran Canadian actor Gordon Tootoosis, whose credits included North of 60 and Legends of the Fall.

"This was a big loss. It was so difficult, coming two weeks before we went to camera. We could never replace Gordon. It was tough on the production cast and the crew. We all felt so much for him," Scott recalls.

The second season of Blackstone also has a more "refined and polished" look, the series creator adds.

That follows Los Angeles-based PPI Releasing acquiring the worldwide distribution rights to Blackstone, and now shopping series to broadcasters in the U.S. and elsewhere internationally.

If European and Asian broadcasters do acquire Blackstone, it will likely be as part of a package of the first and second seasons.

Back home, however, Scott says a number of First Nation reserves countrywide, often faced with the ravages of poverty and dislocation, have enacted legal and policy changes in reaction to storylines on Blackstone.

"They [say they] did this or that because they're watching Blackstone," he adds.

Read more: <http://playbackonline.ca/2012/01/10/why-aptns-blackstone-is-connecting-with-canadians/#ixzz1jAnrRFsT>