



New Filmmaker Empowered to Drive Social Change Through Storytelling

The Snapshot

Up-and-coming filmmaker, Andre Anderson is focused on telling the stories of African Nova Scotians that haven't been told. After watching his movies, Anderson wants to elicit ongoing dialogue about how these untold arcs of history help us connect with the experiences of others and reflect on the way we treat each other.

A gifted storyteller, Andre turned to Collide Validate to learn the business side of starting a film company, taking his part-time passion into a full-time opportunity.

The Idea

Thirteen years ago, Andre's high school drama teacher arranged for students to volunteer on a movie set and it changed his life. Anderson describes how the day flew by, "If this is something that I just did for free, for fun, for 12 hours, then I have to find a way to get paid for it."

Throughout high school and university, Anderson's acting talent landed him numerous roles, including being cast in the hit TV series, Mr. D. Being an actor also enabled him to build relationships with key stakeholders in the film industry, including two-time Oscar-winning filmmaker, Ben Proudfoot.

However, his true passion for wanting to craft his own stories and become a director, was ignited after watching director Ava DuVernay's Oscar-nominated film, 13th, a documentary about the criminalization of African Americans and the U.S. prison system.

"13th really opened my eyes to the power of a documentary and to how big an African American director can become," says Anderson. It was at this point that he pivoted from acting to directing. "My mission is to transform how we see ourselves and each other through the power of cinema and storytelling," says Anderson.

The Challenge

As a 10th-generation African Nova Scotian, Anderson's heritage is what fuels his enthusiasm to explore these secret arcs of history. While he walks audiences through a unique time in history, Anderson knows his movies can't just be educational, they must be entertaining.



Filmmaker Ben Proudfoot shows Andre Anderson his Oscar for the "The Last Repair Shop"

“ I think people have a hard time engaging in certain material, because it's not as easy to digest as it could be, or it's not as entertaining as it could be and, so, I want to make content that is very thought-provoking, and keeps you naturally engaged. ”

- Andre Anderson,
Collide Validate Alumnus

As a start-up, making films that are relatable, educational, and entertaining is expensive. To secure funding and keep his company moving forward, Anderson faced the challenge of finding mentors who understood the business side of the film industry and being able to persuade individuals of his ability to create films that would strike a chord with diverse audiences.

Collide Validate Success

To pursue his dream of becoming a social impact filmmaker, Anderson applied to and was accepted into the Dal Innovates Collide Validate program, while completing his diploma in business administration at Nova Scotia Community College. Collide Validate helps post-secondary student entrepreneurs conduct primary market research and validate their business ideas.



Senator Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard delivers remarks at premiere of Andre Anderson's short documentary titled, 'Standing Tall'

The Impact

Armed with a solid business plan, Anderson wrote and directed his first documentary, *Standing Tall*. The film features Senator Dr. Wanda Thomas Bernard who discusses her tireless efforts to break down systemic barriers.

Now Andre is marketing and distributing his debut documentary to film festivals, where *Standing Tall: Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard* has been well received and nominated for best documentary short at Beyond the Curve International Film Festival.

“

Collide Validate acted like a kindling to spark my career!

”

- Andre Anderson

Filmmaker and Entrepreneur,
Dal Innovates Alumnus

During Collide Validate, Anderson defined his value proposition and strengthened his network by adding key business contacts such as Jordan Banyan, George Wu, and Jon McGinley. He also sings the praises of Collide Validate facilitator, Gillian McRae, who provided him with invaluable advice on growing his business. “She said, ‘You’ve been the one-man show, but to scale your business you need to have systems in place for other people to step into certain roles to help you,’” says Anderson.

As Anderson Films grows, Andre describes how he feels confident and better equipped to pitch an idea or apply for a grant, “When I step into these arenas, I’m stepping in fully knowing what I bring to the table.” With a smile on his face, Anderson cheerfully adds, “Collide Validate acted like a kindling to spark my career!”

Anderson is a recipient of the Michaëlle Jean Power of Youth Grant and is developing projects that benefit African Nova Scotian Communities, including a project called Through Our Eyes. This is a four-part series on the experiences of African Nova Scotians and the need to learn more about our rich African Nova Scotian history in the education system. Anderson has also been nominated for Atlantic Business Magazine’s 30 under 30 Innovators.

Anderson continues to grow his experience on the business side of the film industry and will be involved in producing a feature film based on true events about James Robinson Johnston; Dalhousie Law School’s first black graduate. “This is my first time in a big producing role and I’m excited to learn these skills,” he says as the production team prepares to pitch to Telefilm Canada.

Collide Validate helped Anderson to lead with confidence to pursue his dream of making films that educate, build connections, and inspire others to drive societal change. When asked about long term goals for his company, Anderson coyly says, “I have a story idea that would connect with a lot of people, including Ava DuVernay. So, when I’m ready, I will ask my friend Ben Proudfoot, who knows her, to make the introduction.”

Dal Innovates is pleased to partner with NSCC and offer programs that help students and researchers gain the skills to turn their ideas into real-world solutions. The Collide suite of programs unfolds in three essential stages: Discover, Validate, and Launch. It is funded by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. Learn more at www.dalinnovates.ca