

## Videocamp Film Fund 2018

### Final Five Q&A: Genevieve Clay-Smith, director of *All Means All*

Competition has been tough for the Videocamp Film Fund 2018, with hundreds of filmmakers submitting their proposals for a film about inclusive education. We're now down to the Final Five, one of whom will be selected to win \$400,000 to produce their film. The jury, made up of highly respected members of the film industry along with inclusive education specialists, will select the final project, announced on 21st September.



One of the films still in with a chance to be selected is *All Means All*, directed by award-winning Australian filmmaker Genevieve Clay-Smith. We caught up with her to discuss her film, her background in inclusive filmmaking, and her not-for-profit initiative Bus Stop Films.

#### **How does it feel to be in the Final 5?**

It's so exciting! I've been an advocate for inclusion for over ten years now so to be considered to tell this story is just awesome.

#### **Where did the idea for *All Means All* come from?**

I've been working closely with an incredible advocate for inclusive education, Catia Malaquias, for a couple of years now. She contributed to General Comment No.4 in the UN Convention, which states that all children have the right to an inclusive education.

#### **Tell us about your attitude to inclusion**

One of my goals as a filmmaker is to show that inclusion is not difficult. In my eleven years of employing people with disabilities on film sets and engaging with people with disabilities in the workforce, I've never seen a negative outcome from inclusion. When people are given opportunities they rise to the challenge and they thrive.

#### **How did you first get involved in inclusive filmmaking?**

When I was 18, I got my first filmmaking job working with Down Syndrome New South Wales, documenting six people with Down syndrome. Each of them had a circle of support helping them to achieve their life goals. One guy's goal was to get a job, going to the city

every day in a suit and tie like all the other businessmen. Through his circle of support somebody knew somebody in the HR department of a large accounting firm, and he got a job there.

When I first met another participant, he recited the entire balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet to me — his life goal was to be an actor. That meant trying to break into the most exclusive and judgemental industry on the planet. I realised that the industry I was part of, the industry that's responsible for telling stories to the world, was only giving us one perspective.

So I decided to make a short film with that actor, Gerard O'Dwyer, starring in the lead role, and I wanted to make the film set inclusive. I held a workshop for six people with disabilities and brought them on set to make the film. That film went on to win Australia's largest short film festival, Tropfest, where Gerard also won Best Actor. When we made this film inclusively, it didn't slow things down, we actually finished filming an hour ahead of schedule! It didn't compromise on quality; we won Australia's largest short film festival. And it wasn't hard, we just did it.

### **And that led to Bus Stop Films?**

Yes! My producer and I co-founded the not-for-profit Bus Stop Films to work with people with disabilities trying to break into the film industry. Ten years on we provide at least 40 work experience opportunities every year on professional film sets, as well as paid employment, and we consult, helping other productions with inclusive and authentic casting. The films we've made, with usually twelve people with intellectual disabilities on set working alongside mentors, have screened at over 130 film festivals, including Oscar qualifiers. Of course we want to make this project inclusively as well. We want to show that inclusion doesn't have to be complex or take lots of money and resources, it's just an action.

### **What would *All Means All* be about?**

Its main anchor point is a good friend of mine, Nathan Basha. He's a motivational speaker and disability advocate, as well as working at one of the most popular radio stations in Australia, Nova 969. He has Down syndrome and his parents fought for him to be included in a mainstream school. That opportunity to be educated inclusively allowed him to dream big for himself, giving him success in his own life as well as benefiting society as a whole. Then we also want to look at inclusive education models, like a school in Queensland where they dismantled the special education unit and made the school inclusive. By showing successes like this we want to drive action through heartfelt stories, as well as 50 years of research which shows that inclusive education is a human right, and the best way to educate all children.

### **What would you want to achieve with this film?**

*All Means All* isn't about preaching to the choir; we want to make a film that will reach people who have nothing to do with disability. With an inclusive education kids grow up knowing how to socially engage with someone with a disability, how to work with them. And kids with a disability grow up to be adults who believe they can be employers and employees, who know they have an equal part to play in society. The benefit is huge for everyone.

So we want this film to empower audiences to take action. We want people to go and talk with their local schools, or with their representatives in government, to share stories of inclusive education on social media and become advocates in their own way. And we want parents of kids without disability to be part of that too. We want them to be saying, "my kid needs to be an inclusive education too. I want my child to be educated alongside peers with a disability, I'm going to advocate as well".

### ***About Genevieve Clay-Smith***

*Genevieve Clay-Smith has 11 years experience writing and directing inclusive film projects which represent disability and minority groups. Her work in developing inclusive filmmaking led to her appointment by the Minister for the Arts to the New South Wales (NSW) Arts and Culture Advisory Board Committee. She has been the recipient of awards including the 2015 NSW Young Australian of the Year, 2015 Australian Directors Guild Award, 2017 B&T's 30 Under 30 award winner. In 2017 she was awarded a prestigious Sidney Myer Creative Fellowship grant, to support her professional work for the next twenty-four months. Her work has been screened at the United Nations, various Oscar Qualifying film festivals and has won over 50 awards. She recently finished her first international project, creating Japan's first inclusive film project, which combined a workshop and professional work experience for six Japanese people with Down syndrome.*