

# NSI Business for Producers 2016 boot camp: our first students tell us what they thought

At the start of August our very first **NSI Business for Producers** students began their training with help from a roster of expert producers, strategists, production accountants, executive producers, financial strategists and business agents.

Below, the students share their thoughts on that first training boot camp.

## Carlyle Paetkau | Build Films



The greatest aspect of this course was learning about the other producers: how each of us run our business, the struggles we've encountered, and sharing tips on how to handle those struggles.

I'm very happy to have taken the course, no matter how difficult the week was for my time management skills (or lack thereof). That is to say, it was a real challenge to run my business and take the course at the same time.

However, for each topic we discussed in class, I was able to apply it to my business that very same day, and sometimes even as we were discussing it (but don't tell Brendon [Sawatzky, program manager] that).

The boot camp was a fantastic community building and networking exercise.

I'm looking forward to seeing my colleagues again in a few months to see the progress they're making towards their goals and to take part in another grueling, difficult, yet exciting week.

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## Eric Rebalkin | Mosaic Entertainment



Author: **NSI**

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2016, **NSI Business for Producers**, Training

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I didn't really know what to expect when I signed up for the NSI Business for Producers program, but I was excited there would finally be some professional development geared towards my area of producing instead of the usual combination of creative and business, which usually applies more to what my business partner Camille [Beaudoin, an [NSI Features First grad](#)] does.

As a producer 10 years into his career, I know a lot about the day-to-day stuff but I have a hard time thinking past that. It's hard looking big picture at your business when you're stuck reacting to things all the time instead of being proactive.

The first five days of the program were a really good first step for me looking objectively at my business.

The speakers had a diverse knowledge and experience base which helped reinforce topics I already knew and gave me some fresh perspectives.

I really enjoyed all the business planning exercises that got me thinking about my goals and values. I look forward to sharing these ideas with my team and really starting to build a shared vision for our company.

My fellow colleagues at the boot camp also brought their own unique experience and perspectives to the conversations which I found interesting. I like that everybody is doing different things in their careers but there are common challenges for everyone, like cash flow and discoverability. I look forward to the upcoming webinars that will address the latter.

Within our digital world, the risk is real that we and our products can be lost wandering in this new frontier forever. [I hope] we will continue to focus on an overall corporate strategy and business plan to really diversify our businesses and help us find our audience, create content specifically for that audience, and successfully market to that audience. Then we might begin to find our way in this scary yet exciting new world of media and entertainment.

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**Dawn Bird | B.E.ZEE Productions**

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Considering this is the first NSI Business for Producers program, I think it's off to a good start.

During my first week at the Winnipeg boot camp, I met some very talented and enthusiastic producers who share a lot of the same passions I do.

Although we're all at different levels of experience, I felt this first week had enough information, covering so many topics, that it effectively filled in gaps in areas even some of the most experienced producers didn't know.

The instructors did a fine job of taking this information and explaining each process in an orderly, point A to point Z format, rather than a scrambled format I would have to figure out on my own.

Here's looking forward to what the rest of the program has to offer. Thanks NSI!

Visit [B.E.ZEE Productions](#)

## **Orlando Braun | Prairie Boy Productions**



Phase one of the boot camp was reminiscent of the structure of my MFA coursework: such intense learning from the industry's best condensed into a short time period.

The NSI course was great in two ways:

- 1) Reaffirming certain practices I have in place for my company – that I am on the right track – while offering tips to amplify those efforts.
- 2) Giving me structure and tools to build my business with a plan I can actually use. I have never been able to fit my company into other startup business plan templates but having a new way of looking at my business plan, I think it will work. There's a lot of work ahead to put this



into action but I'm excited to get on it.

I like how the various experts brought their tools to the table for us to use. Even the dry topics offered some new and useful information.

Another unexpected benefit I found was the comradery among the producers. [I built] relationships with some talented like-minded individuals with whom I would be delighted to collaborate in future.

Visit [Prairie Boy Productions](#)

## Frederick Kroetsch | Open Sky Pictures



Within days of completing round one of the producer boot camp I'm already employing everything I've learned. My only regret is not taking the course sooner [Ed: this is the first intake for this course.]

I have new confidence in writing agreements and contracts. I think I understand what branded content is. I have many new friends and mentors. And my company now has a mission statement.

This boot camp has changed the way I perceive producing and taught me skills I didn't even realize I needed. Also, Winnipeg is pretty cool.

Visit [Open Sky Pictures](#)

## Janelle Wookey | Wookey Films



On the Monday morning heading into the first week of NSI's new Business for Producers program, I wasn't exactly sure what to expect.

On the Friday afternoon, heading out to drinks with a lineup of great new industry connections from across Western Canada, I had collected a full basket of new information and lessons I was actually able to use and apply numerous times while performing my regular producer tasks that same week.

My basket contained small, very practical lessons which have already come in handy, such as a review of useful accounting and legal terminology, red flags to look for in acquisitions agreements and the revealing of the actual words behind the acronyms I hear so often but am too afraid to admit I don't know.

My basket also contained bigger picture stuff: a better understanding of the importance of knowing and connecting with your end user: the audience, a refresher on the complex 'ecosystem' we live in as producers, a potent reminder of how important it is to take time regularly to revise the company SWOT to make sure we're on the path that leads us to where we want to go (both as business owners and storytellers) and eye-opening case studies about the potential in the branded content world.

The instructors and invited speakers were great at breaking things down and tailoring the course, even to our wide-ranging specific needs. Looking forward to filling another basket in November!

Visit [Wookey Films](#)

## Spencer Estabrooks | Insurrection Films



Just wrapped a fantastic week with fellow prairie producers. I really had no idea what I was walking into when I applied for the course.

The producers were spread across a variety of levels which was intimidating at first, but that quickly faded.

Everyone was amazingly open with themselves and their ideas. It proved to be fantastically useful as fellow producers shared their experiences which enhanced the course content. It gave us a chance to apply the ideas learned to our concrete projects.

Winnipeg was also awesome. I highly recommend Miss Brown's for sandwiches and The Kings Head for beer.

One night I was lucky enough to visit Half Pints Brewing for their 10th anniversary party and learn some of Manitoba's beer history. Did you know Winnipeg has over 300 years of brewing history?

Luckily, if I want to do a Manitoba-based followup to my historical beer series, [Aleberta](#), I know some great producers in Winnipeg now!

Visit [Insurrection Films](#)

## Lioz Bouganin | Landslide Entertainment



It was Monday, August 8 and my plane landed in Winnipeg just after 12 p.m. Less than an hour later I was at Red River College introducing myself to fellow classmates from Alberta and Manitoba, the instructor from Toronto and Brendon from NSI.

There was hardly any time to catch my breath as we got right into the business model canvas session. The highlight of day one for me was working with two of my classmates on a business model for a fictional children's series (which coincidentally was right up my alley since I produce television kid shows).

The instructors and guest lecturers were all prepared, professional and very supportive.

The boot camp experience was intense and by the end of each day we all felt a bit tired from information overload. But then we came back the next morning and everyone was energized again and ready to tackle important issues such as business affairs, contracts, finance and distribution.

I never would have imagined that I would enjoy a bingo game with business affairs terminology but somehow Brigitte [Sachse, program advisor] and Jeannette [Loakman, producer] found a way to make it a fun experience for all of us.

As the week-long training was coming to the end I found myself gaining new appreciation for all that it takes to be an independent producer in Canada.

As we were working through a SWOT exercise in class it also became evident that we were all facing similar challenges as producers in Western Canada.

As we were sitting at the local bar after the final day of class drinking beer, laughing and catching Pokémon, I felt fortunate that I had the opportunity to spend a week with this group of talented people.

The week in Winnipeg went by and it was almost time to go home, but I was already thinking about the next boot camp in November and even more about what all of us can do together in the future.

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**Chris McIvor | Frank Digital**



I wasn't sure what to expect the first week of NSI's Business for Producers course but it definitely exceeded my expectations.

The collection of speakers and presentations were varied and informative. Everyone attends for different reasons but, for me, Brigitte Sachse and Ian Dimerman's presentations on finance and contract negotiations were the highlights.

It was a great week spent with other producers from across Western Canada. The collaboration between the group was excellent and it was encouraged by Brendon and the rest of the NSI staff.

In the end we not only collectively learned a lot during the week but also came away with some terrific connections with our peers.

A terrific course that I would recommend to any producer, whether emerging or established.

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NSI Business for Producers is aimed at Western Canadian content producers in television, film and digital media running small and mid-sized enterprises who wish to grow their companies in the domestic and international marketplace.

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