

Saskatchewan

Deaf Crows Collective shoot and produce short film in Regina

Fabel Deaf is set to premier next summer

[Jennifer Francis](#) · CBC News · Posted: Aug 12, 2021 11:41 AM CT | Last Updated: August 12



Actor Fatima Nafisa (centre) says her experience on the special effects heavy film has been great. (Deaf Crows Collective/Facebook)

An indie short film featuring an all-Deaf cast is being shot and produced in Regina.

The film being made by the Deaf Crows Collective, a group in Regina that aims to express the Deaf experience through art. It is also made in partnership with the Saskatchewan Film Pool.

The upcoming 15-minute film is called *Fabel Deaf*. It bridges the genres of magical realism and fantasy.

According to director Chrystene Ells, the film mirrors old fashioned silent films, as there is no speaking and it mainly uses gestures so everyone can understand what's happening.

"There were a lot of issues we wanted to look at including Deaf culture, Deaf literacy, Deaf education and things like that," Ells said. "My focus is always on telling stories visually. We kind of meshed together by making visual stories that are appealing for Deaf audiences because so much of the narrative is held in the imagery."



Director Chrystene Ells says the film has multiple layers and focuses on things like multiculturalism in Saskatchewan and Canada. (CBC News)

All of the actors on set identify as culturally Deaf.

Culturally deaf people identify with and participate in Deaf language (such as ASL), culture and the community of Deaf people. Culturally Deaf people do not always suffer from profound

hearing loss.

- [From refugee camp to centre stage: Deaf teens share experiences through Regina play](#)
- **PHOTOS** ['3D storytelling': Deaf Crows slam brings poetry to life](#)

Fatima Nafisa said this her first time acting in film, but she has been a part of the Deaf Crows Collective for past stage performances.



Actor Fatima Nafisa, who is culturally Deaf, has enjoyed communicating with the non-Deaf crew. (CBC News)

Nafisa said the film acts as a sort of warning to the future Deaf generations as to what can happen if ASL and other Deaf languages are not passed on from older generations.

"Young people do have things to contribute. If they don't understand and they're not learning language how are we going to get this learning?" Nafisa said. "The older Deaf, they generally pass this language on, so if we don't have a Deaf community, how are we going to learn?"

"If there is an emphasis from the hearing community on lip reading and speech, we won't have a future."

- [Regina-based deaf actor relishing role in recently released Netflix series](#)

Joanne Weber is an ASL consultant on the film and artistic director for The Deaf Crows Collective. She also makes sure the film is culturally appropriate while following Deaf protocols.

She said the Deaf community has experienced oppression for years. She said many Deaf children are now growing up without exposure to sign language.

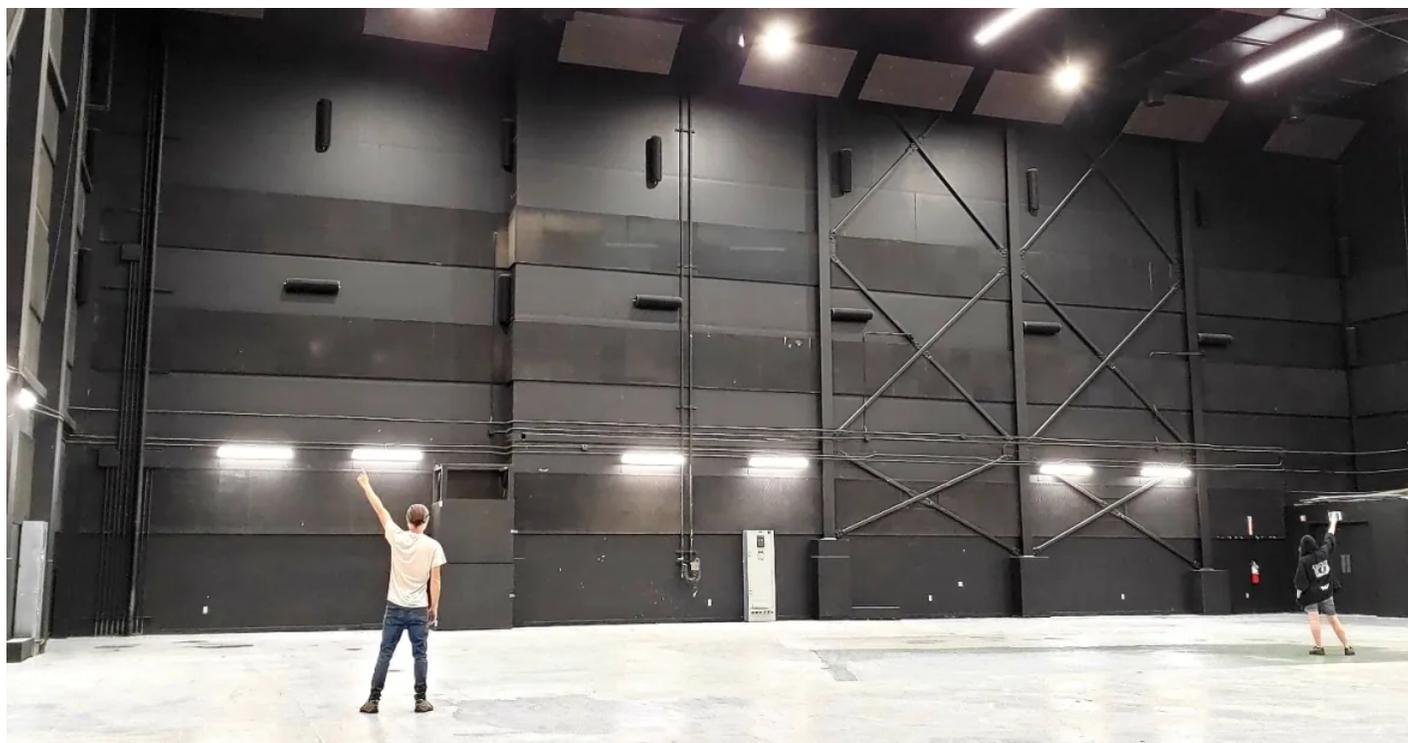
"This is because many professionals: teachers, doctors, speech therapists, audiologists, they are pushing aside the culture and ASL," Weber said.

"They are rejecting that and focusing on oralism, on the development of speech."

Experience on set with hearing crew

Nafisa said she has really enjoyed being on set, due to the effort from the non-Deaf crew to communicate with the all-Deaf cast.

"They are learning sign language with us. I don't read lips well so it's been nice to have that ability to learn from each other," she said. "We're really communicating with each other and figuring out ways to do that."



The film was shot on the Creative Saskatchewan Soundstage. (Deaf Crows Collective/Facebook)

Ells said the experience on set has been amazing and the crew is really special.

"The way that the hearing crew, most of them have never known a single sign in their lives, and they're all learning to sign," Ells said. "They're learning to use gesture and communicate with people who are Deaf."

Ells said the Deaf cast members are also learning to communicate with the crew by not always using sign language, but using gestures to communicate.

"I'm starting to see them at lunch sitting together and trying to communicate and working together," she said. "It's been really touching."

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