

JOURNÉE ROSE INTL. DAY OF PINK



International Day of Pink wanted to create an educational video that revealed the history of the term “Two Spirit,” the way it’s used today, and the roles Two-Spirit folks have always played in society, pre- and post-contact.

Typically, International Day of Pink produces their own mini documentaries in-house each year, introduced by scripted sponsor reads, and filming them in relatively straightforward, real-world sets.

We encouraged them to take a more strategic and conceptual approach to the project this year, letting the lived experience storytellers take centre stage, but helping imaginatively convey the topic in symbolic visuals—leveraging the virtual studio effects from Studio Lab xR.

Methodology

We were tasked with interviewing four sets of Two-Spirit pairs—each representing generational knowledge and lived experience with the term—including two Elders who were around for the emergence of the term and the Sixties Scoop, and folks who were in their twenties using Two-Spirit as an umbrella term alongside other 2SLGBTQI+ community terms.

Each could provide an understanding of what Two-Spirit means to them and what it’s like to be Two-Spirit, chronicling the experience across the term’s 35-year history.

We knew the content was going to be amazing—but we also knew our key audience was high school students who we needed to immediately hook, so we had to make it captivating. Our strategy consisted of two ideas.

The first lightbulb moment was to film b-roll of the participants looking in a mirror, seeing a multitude of themselves reflected back. We felt this symbolized the way the Two-Spirit experience was being described to us—as though your spirit is too big for your body, and you have a balance of feminine and masculine identities.

We had our second “a-ha” moment when we decided to film at Studio Lab. We could make the multiplying effect even bigger than our mirror concept thanks to their ability to project multiple camera feeds on their virtual screens. We had our subjects stand on a platform, posing or handling an object of significance, and multiplied what we were seeing twice over on a screen behind them, so the magnitude of their spirits would be visually represented in a larger-than-life way.

Challenges

High school students are the main consumers of this content, so we knew we had to ensure the 7-minute long short was engaging enough to hold their attention the whole time so they could retain the educational value of the content. It also needed to first catch the attention of teachers, because they needed to find the content worthy of bringing it into their classrooms.

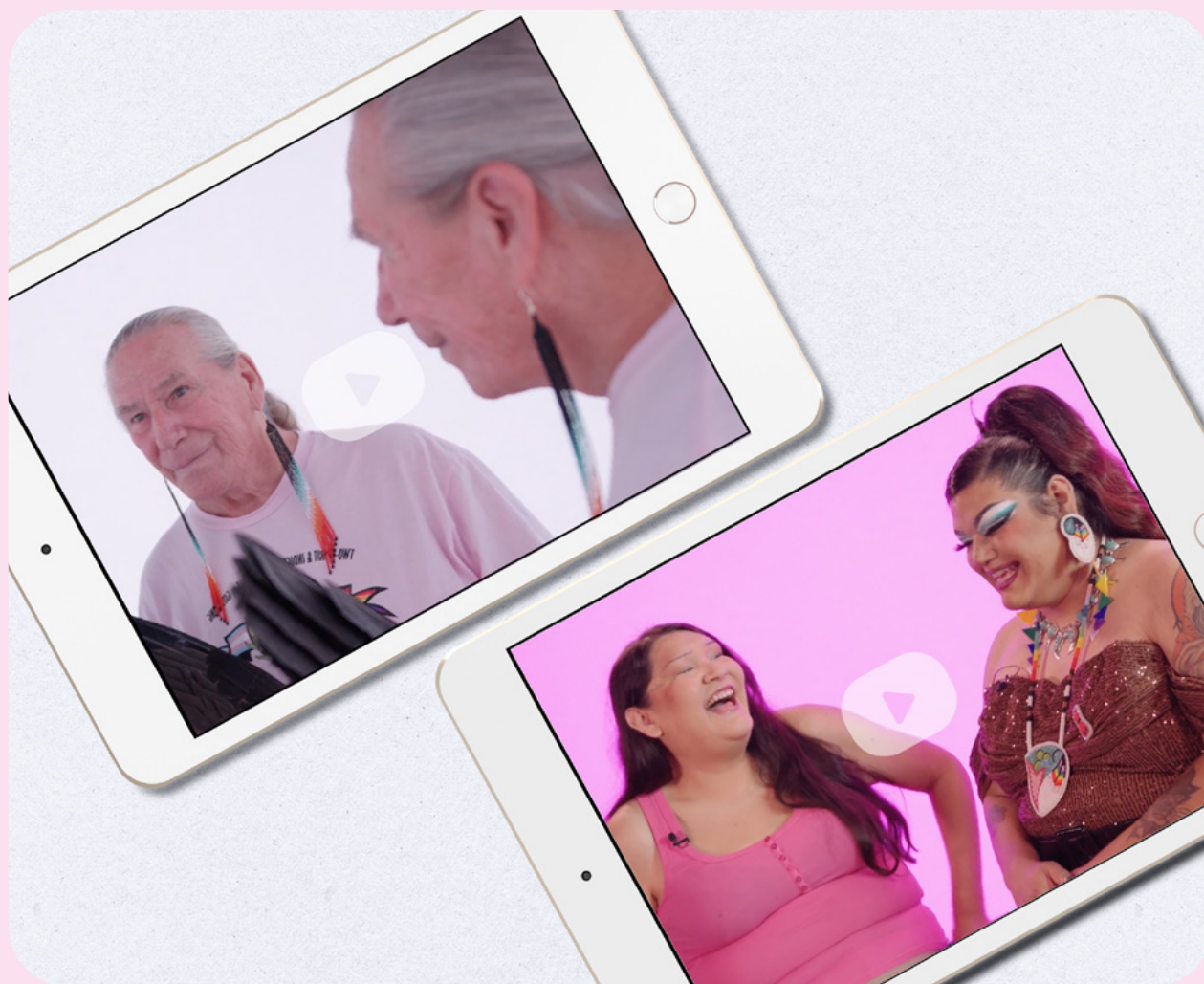
We had a short time window to interview all of our storytellers and gather b-roll, so we had them bring items of significance, and even had them write words associated with the term Two-Spirit on the mirror, to add to the richness and profoundness of the visuals without having to make too many scene and props changes.

Execution

The final film is a 7-minute short that was launched to the public at an event held at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, alongside the reveal of a new Two-Spirit flag created by Two-Spirit artist Patrick Hunter.

The launch included a panel, hosted by our creative director Brenlee Coates who had directed the film, alongside the interview subjects from the documentary.

Immediately following the launch event, the video was posted on International Day of Pink's social platforms and on their website and YouTube.



Outcome

International Day of Pink and the sponsors we filmed with said the shoots we did with them were the most professional they've ever been part of—meaning we not only did our job, but we made people feel at-ease on set—our ultimate goal, especially when working with sensitive and personal subject matter. We got universal signoff from everyone featured in the documentary immediately—which means they all felt seen and heard, and like we had authentically shared their stories.

The launch event attracted over 310 guests and was covered by the Winnipeg Free Press, Virgin Radio, and APTN. The video was launched alongside a Two-Spirit curriculum developed

by International Day of Pink, and approximately 1 in 3 Canadians are expected to actively take part in the upcoming year's International Day of Pink activities.

Lessons Learned

We learned a lot about working with Elders and the Indigenous community on this project. An ethos that came from this experience is, "it's our job to help people tell their stories—not to 'tell their stories,'" and because of the universal approval from participants on the piece we produced, we feel like we achieved that.

