

## Working with Consultants

In some situations authenticity can be ensured by engaging a cultural consultant. However, sometimes that is not enough and the production should hire a screenwriter or story editor who has the authority or responsibility to ensure authenticity and see it through to the end of production.

### Cultural Consultant

A Cultural Consultant can be a good solution for gaps in authenticity work in these types of situations:

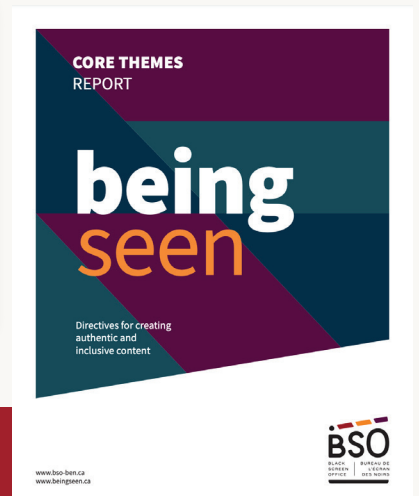
- An ongoing series that introduces for one episode a storyline or character that is not represented in the writers room
- During early stages of development to provide background insights into a community or identity based on expertise that engaged screenwriters might not have, for example based on professional or research experience.

Cultural consultants should not be used in these types of situations:

- To 'fix' problems or do a 'sensitivity pass' just before going to camera. This is too late in the process and is likely to result in only superficial adjustments. If the cultural consultant is an expert in the community or identity but not in screen-based media, there is an added risk that late consultation could result in recommendations that are not practical, such as changes in casting.
- As a rubber stamp to be able to point to the act of consultation, rather than actually listening and adjusting the creative as recommended to improve the creative.
- Without vetting the consultant for their expertise. Lived experience alone could lead to a situation where the cultural consultant could be communicating only the perspective of one person rather than a community.



*“Usually I’m not into the whole diversity consultant culture, because it feels like a cop out, but I’m in when there’s an opportunity to help create the character and be a more holistic part of the character development, even if I don’t have more agency on the rest of the show. And when I was in the writers room, when I said this doesn’t resonate or this would seem very colonial, people in the room and the producer were very respectful and acknowledged that perspective and changed accordingly.”*



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