



FRONTIER CENTRE
FOR PUBLIC POLICY
Profile Series

Profile of:

BAILEY MACKEY

" You either have it or you don't "



For Māori business leader Bailey Mackey, entrepreneurs are born, not made.

"You either have it or you don't," said the award-winning producer and CEO of Pango Productions, a production company he founded that is involved in TV and movie productions around the world.

So far, Pango Productions has developed a strong focus on Māori content programming for wider audiences. After making a name for themselves in television shows, they moved over into the film business.



Being an entrepreneur, he said, involves a "massive appetite for risk" and good ideas, as well as the ability to execute those ideas. Capital also should not be a problem, he said, "If it's a good idea, money will find good ideas."

Throughout his career, he has always stressed the "explorer" side of the Māori people and encouraged his people to not lose connection with their heritage. Drawing upon Māori mythology, he said modern

Māori should not forget there are descendants of Maui Tikitiki-a-Taranga, the trickster, cultural hero and explorer within Indigenous Polynesian traditions.

Mackey is a Māori, one of the Indigenous people of New Zealand. In the 2013 New Zealand census, there were approximately 600,000 people in New Zealand identifying as Māori, making up roughly 15 percent of the national population. Heavily urbanized and integrated into New Zealand society, they are active in many areas of commerce and other businesses. Despite their movement to cities, New Zealand Māori maintain a strong sense of their identity. Māori are different than Indigenous groups in many other countries as there is one treaty – the Treaty of Waitangi – that covers all New Zealand. Māori also have some guaranteed seats in the New Zealand Parliament and there are Māori political parties.

He is of Ngati Porou, Tuhoe and Rongowhakaata lineage and he was brought up by his grandparents in Kaiti, on the outskirts of Gisborne, a city on the east coast of New Zealand's North Island.

Growing up in the second largest tribe, Mackey is also a fluent speaker of the Māori language, which has always given him an advantage in life. His grandparents were very formative in his life. He grew up in a rural community where his father worked in sheep shearing, common work in rural New Zealand.

"My father had a work hard, play hard mentality," said Mackey, saying that he believes he received his strong work ethic from his father. Schooling was also important in his upbringing. He attended Gisborne Boys' High School where he excelled in Manu Korero speech competitions. Originally flirting with going into reporting, he found his real love in broadcasting later.

After a short stint in college, he left to commit to playing rugby (he represented the Ngati Porou East Coast rugby team), but really found his passion when he began a broadcasting career at Radio Ngati Porou in Ruatoria where he started work as a DJ. He then became a reporter for Te Karere. His work at the Māori news service finally convinced him that he knew where he belonged.

"I discovered I was a communicator," he said. "I then went on to work in television and have been there ever since."

He went on to work in mainstream television, spending some time writing for Shortland Street and then went on to become a reporter for TV3's sports department. Finally, he became Head of Sport for Māori Television.

He founded Black Inc. Media in 2008 and after the firm was bought by Eyeworks, he became company director alongside New Zealand reality TV queen Julie Christie.

Mackey said he has found a very good business and personal mentor

in Christie, who taught him about the sustainability of the business. She helped him discover the mechanics and finances of show business, something he said not all producers are good at. Many are strong on the creative aspect but weaker on the business side.

Eventually he started Pango Productions with business partner Jonathon Ulrich (who is now in Ireland pursuing other work) and has enjoyed working on many successful projects.

After founding his own production company, he said he really found his element as he was able to work in any area of television program-



ming that he wanted. Through his work, he is able to present the Maori people and perspective to the world, something that is near and dear to his heart.

"Being Maori is a strength. We do a

lot of overseas projects and being Maori gives you a unique point of view and view of the world.”

In terms of any barriers of being an Indigenous entrepreneur, Mackey said he is conscious of the struggles Maori still deal with in New Zealand society.

“We are 15 percent of the population and we are like 50 percent of the prison population.”

“We still make up a large part of the low socio-economic indicators in this country.”

Mackey discovered these struggles were common to other Indigenous populations in the world. He recalled one time where he visited the Tsuu T’ina Nation, a First Nation community in southern Alberta. “It reminded me of a rural Maori community,” he said.

By way of advice for aspiring Indigenous entrepreneurs, Mackey always mentioned that in his business dealings he has always adopted a “people first mentality” and promoting good relationships, a feature of many Indigenous societies. He also said integrity was a big part of his business life, as well as asserting authenticity in everything you do.

He did not encounter specific barriers as an Indigenous entrepreneur, but acknowledged it has been tough at times. Showing initiative and being an energetic person helped along the way. He has a resilient personality which allowed him to keep going.

Beyond the awards and accolades he has received for his programming, Mackey was also the first person to receive the University of Auckland’s Māori Entrepreneurial Leader Award in 2017.



The Frontier Centre for Public Policy is an independent, non-profit organization that undertakes research and education in support of economic growth and social outcomes that will enhance the quality of life in our communities. Through a variety of publications and public forums, Frontier explores policy innovations required to make the prairie region a winner in the open economy. It also provides new insights into solving important issues facing our cities, towns and provinces. These include improving the performance of public expenditures in important areas such as local government, education, health and social policy. The authors of this study have worked independently and the opinions expressed are therefore their own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the board of the Frontier Centre for Public Policy.

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Profile Series No. 13 • Date of First Issue: March 2018.

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ISSN 1491-78

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Joseph Quesnel is a research fellow for the Frontier Centre for Public Policy who mainly focuses on Aboriginal matters and property rights. Presently based in eastern Nova Scotia, he is from north-eastern Ontario and has Métis ancestry from Quebec.

He graduated from McGill University in 2001, where he majored in political science and history. He specialized in Canadian and U.S. politics, with an emphasis on constitutional law. He also has a Master of Journalism degree from Carleton University, where he specialized in political reporting. His master's research project focused on reformist Indigenous thinkers in Canada.

He is currently studying theology at the Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax.

In the past while as a policy analyst, he was the lead researcher on the Frontier Centre's flagship Aboriginal Governance Index, which is measured perceptions of quality of governance and services on Prairie First Nations.

For over two years, he covered House standing committees as well as Senate committees. Quesnel's career in journalism includes several stints at community newspapers in Northern Ontario, including in Sudbury and Espanola. He also completed a radio broadcasting internship at CFRA 580 AM, a talk radio station in Ottawa, and the well-known Cable Public Affairs Channel (CPAC).

He is a past editor of C2C Journal, an online Canadian publication devoted to political commentary. He wrote a weekly column for the Winnipeg Sun and contributes to The Taxpayer, the flagship publication of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

Quesnel's policy commentaries have appeared all over Canada, including the Globe and Mail, the National Post, the Financial Post, the Vancouver Sun, the Ottawa Citizen, the Montreal Gazette, the Calgary Herald, Winnipeg Free Press, among many other major papers. Over the years, he has been featured as a guest commentator on many radio and television news programs.