



Behind the scenes with a sound man for the CHANTÉ Project



Thompson Falls students film a scene in their high school's dark library

Thompson Falls High School Students Create Film in One-Week Intensive Workshop

By MAPS Media Institute

When MAPS Media Institute film instructor Dan Molloy worked with Thompson Falls High School students to create their film “Dragonfly” in a one-week intensive workshop, he knew the students were creating something uniquely powerful. The student filmmakers communicated a Stephen King-like internal drama which resonated on different levels—a teenager’s perspective on the global pandemic; the isolation caused by bullying; commentary on teen suicide.

After viewing the film, some might wonder, what is the MAPS secret ingredient for helping students create “something uniquely powerful?” The secret has little to do with technology and more to do with creating a supportive and collaborative environment that encourages students to organically explore their ideas and, with professional guidance, bring them to life.

“MAPS is about helping students learn to communicate ideas, whether through a film, a song or photo essay,” said Clare Ann Harff, executive director of MAPS. “We often witness a creative evolution with students.”

This evolution was one MAPS Director of Programming Dru Carr witnessed firsthand working with students in the Fort Peck Community College CHANTÉ Project. Throughout the school year, **MAPS taught online media classes in podcasts, photojournalism and film.** “The work and the stories are completely student driven. The opportunities we create support their willingness to be vulnerable which powers creativity,” said Carr.

MAPS provides free-of-charge media arts opportunities for youth across Montana, including those in rural and reservation communities.

This effort has seen stories shared through local and state media and on regional and national levels through film festivals culminating in celebrated awards.

Quin Vulk is a MAPS teaching assistant, filmmaker and creator of the stop-motion animation film “Behind the Scenes,” which was nominated for a regional High School Student Production Award (equivalent to a student Emmy). This piece was one of several MAPS films showcased in the Montana PBS series, *Stories from Montana’s Future*. Although Vulk didn’t take home the award, she points out, “When I made my film, I wasn’t thinking about awards. I was just doing what I love most—creating. When MAPS submitted my film and it was nominated, I realized anything is possible if you have a chance to tell your story.”

The third episode of *Stories from Montana’s Future* begins airing on July 15, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. This episode features two MAPS films created with students from Fort Belknap and Fort Peck—“Looking Forward From Yesterday” and “In This Together, We Are One.”

To watch “Dragonfly,” go to <https://mapsmediainstitute.com/programs/maps-media-lab>.

For more information about the CHANTÉ Project, visit <https://mapsmediainstitute.com/programs/fpcc-chante-project>.



Teaching Assistant Quin Vulk teaches stop-motion animation

The July 2021 viewer’s guide for Montana PBS with more information on the broadcast can be found at <https://www.montanapbs.org>. A livestream of this program will also be available at <https://www.montanapbs.org/watch>. In addition, episode four of the series will air later this year on Montana PBS.

For more information about MAPS or to pre-register for their fall classes, please visit <https://mapsmediainstitute.com>.

Photos courtesy of MAPS Media Institute