

Stuntwoman- turned-producer

JANINE FROM CHICKEN AND CAT PRODUCTIONS SHARES HOW YES HELPED WITH HER CAREER CHANGE.

Janine Parkinson is a YES client who has been working with an Entrepreneurship Business Coach over the past year. We asked Janine about her experiences with YES since she moved to Montreal from Toronto and decided to switch career paths, moving from stunt work to starting her own production company, Chicken and Cat Productions.

What sparked your idea for Chicken and Cat Productions?

Working a range of different jobs in the film industry, you begin to notice that a lot needs to change. I did stunts for over 10 years and it's a very male-dominated industry with many glaring inequalities. I began to realize that things in film and in TV don't just change spontaneously, you have to actually be the change. Rather than writing a short-lived opinion piece about the issues in the film and TV industry, I decided to create my own company based on the values and principles that I wanted to see. I decided to become a changemaker. I wanted to create a production company that would practice diverse casting, that would be inclusive - so I did. I wanted to open up opportunities for those who are often underrepresented in film. I wanted to tell stories through my (often comedic) films that can lead to change in society - entertaining social commentaries with a real purpose.



Did you look up to any female producers as role models?

Like in stunt work, directing and producing are still very male-dominated areas of the film industry -there is an unequal ratio of female to male CMPA Producers working in North America, particularly in Canada. That said, I have always looked up to Wendy Grean and Denise Robert on the Canadian side. I am looking forward to a day when being a female producer won't be unusual anymore. I am actively driving change by hiring women to work with Chicken and Cat. I'm also very mindful that other groups are also underrepresented in film so not only do I practice diverse casting, I also hire people who are often underrepresented to work on my sets. I try to build bridges between the anglophone and francophone communities in my hiring. I have been lifted by the strength and courage of other women - especially Angelica Lisk-Hann, the first female black stunt coordinator in Canada, who helped me to gain a voice as a woman in the industry. Inspired by Angelica, I decided to become courageous with my own projects and transition into the production side of film and television. I want to give back by ensuring proper equal pay for everyone who works for me. I also want to inspire others by ensuring that my crews get mentorship opportunities on set and the chance to try new things. This is pretty rare. We can all teach each other something, and I encourage that.

How has YES helped you to further your goals?

Through YES, I have received work-specific French language training, I have participated in workshops on networking, data analytics, and grant applications, and I have received expert business coaching. Through this coaching, I gained the confidence that I needed to pursue my own business bilingually. I created a business plan and began approaching francophone companies that I would never previously have reached out to. Moving to Montreal, shifting career paths, and starting over again was incredibly daunting, especially since my lack of French was holding me back when I arrived. It may sound dramatic but YES saved my life, because before I approached them, I was running out of options.

What do you think is special about YES?

YES delivered exactly what I needed and I began seeing results almost as soon as I started. As a newcomer to Montreal, YES helped me sort out a job, build a network for myself, and introduced me to fellow entrepreneurs, some of them female entrepreneurs about my age who I had a lot in common with - they wanted to be changemakers too. YES is very special, particularly because of the diverse community that uses its services. Through the language classes, I met people from a range of different countries. Whoever you are and wherever you're from, YES is unique in Quebec because it bridges the gap for English-speakers in the province, giving them the confidence and the tools they need to reach out and get bilingual opportunities, which they may initially have stayed away from. Thanks to YES, English speakers living in Quebec can shine.

What's coming up next for Chicken and Cat Productions?

Following our short film, Le Parking, which premiered at Kino, a feature film is now in the works. We want to showcase the linguistic diversity in Canada and ensure that our films retain a strong Canadian essence. As with all Chicken and Cat Productions, we want our audience to see themselves or people they know in the characters. For us, that means ensuring equity and casting people of different weights, different ethnicities, different ages, and so on. 90% of the cast of our upcoming feature film will be over the age of 60. Another ground-breaking aspect of our upcoming productions is that we are aiming for zero waste sets. We want to set a precedent!

 **CHICKENANDCATPRODUCTIONS**
 **CHICKENANDCAT.COM**

