



Talent Development Weekend in Wānaka Strengthens Creative Pathways, Supported by Film Queenstown Lakes and Nikon

August 28, 2025

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The Outsiders has delivered its first **Talent Development Program Weekend** in Wānaka, New Zealand, bringing together emerging photographers, filmmakers, and digital storytellers for three days of mentorship, workshops, and creative challenges.

The program was **supported by Film Queenstown Lakes** and delivered in partnership with **Nikon New Zealand** as part of The Outsiders' August Content Residency.

Strong Response from Creatives

The program received oversubscribed application numbers, reflecting strong interest from both local and national creatives for structured mentorship and industry connection.

Applicants highlighted their enthusiasm to **expand skills, grow confidence, and collaborate with peers**. One participant commented: *"This felt like the step I needed to take my work more seriously, with the guidance and support to keep building my career."*

Participant Outcomes

Survey responses demonstrated the program's clear impact. 97% of participants reported gaining **valuable industry connections they would not have accessed otherwise**, along with new skills and increased confidence to progress their creative journeys. The weekend also fostered a sense of community, with participants emphasising the value of working alongside professionals and like-minded peers in a high-energy environment.

"Supporting projects like this aligns with Film Queenstown Lakes' mission to strengthen the local screen industry, particularly in the outdoor/adventure filmmaking niche that is distinctive to our region," said **Kahli Scott, Manager, Film Queenstown Lakes**. "It was inspiring to see such a strong turnout of local talent, and we're proud to have supported an initiative that will have lasting benefits for the region's creative economy and community."

Founder of The Outsiders, Michelle Bates, said: "The level of interest confirmed how important this type of program is. The energy and commitment we saw over the weekend

reinforces the value of investing in the next generation of storytellers, and Wānaka is the perfect place to nurture that growth.”

The Talent Development Weekend reflects The Outsiders’ wider commitment to **The Elevation Fund**, a long-term initiative reinvesting 1% of annual revenue into mentorship, grants, and opportunities for rising creatives.



Picture: Outsiders Talent Development Weekend Pilot - Participants and crew

By connecting international mentors, local talent, and regional support, the program highlighted Wānaka as a powerful location to grow the future of outdoor storytelling and demonstrated the strength of the region’s creative pipeline.

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About The Outsiders

[The Outsiders](#) is a content agency led by industry veteran [Michelle Bates](#) (AUS/NZ), with a global network of photographers, filmmakers, travel writers and creators who live and breathe adventure. We are not a traditional agency. We are a creative crew built from and for the

mountains, trails, rivers and oceans. We specialise in content that connects, stories that stick and brand content that really *delivers*.