

Caledon student part of team creating film about homelessness

Michael Rosa is a media production student at Toronto Metropolitan University

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

A local student is hoping to raise awareness about homelessness and poverty.

Michael Rosa, who is from Bolton, is currently in his fourth year of study in a media production program at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU).

He and a group of fellow students are in the midst of their thesis project: the creation of a film about homelessness and poverty called 'Last Night'.

'We are very passionate about it,' said Rosa, who is a writer and producer on the project. He's also helping to market the film.

'We're hoping to change perceptions about homelessness,' said Rosa, who said people experiencing homelessness are often portrayed differently in media than they should be.

The film has been in development since February, and the crew are undergoing final preparations and planning to start shooting in mid-October.

'We're very much in crunch time,' said Rosa.

He and his team are hoping to have the movie released in early 2024.

Last Night is set in Winter 2021, when COVID-19 restrictions were beginning to come back after they'd initially been lifted.

'It was really cold, and a lot of people were getting laid off again,' said Rosa. 'There was a lot of uncertainty.'

Rosa said the pandemic led to an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness.

Last Night's protagonist lives in her car, and it's a situation Rosa said is not as uncommon as one might think.

'It's hidden homelessness,' said Rosa. 'Homelessness can look like so many different things.'

The script for Last Night is currently in its sixth draft, as it's been constantly updated during the production process. Rosa said the Last Night team has done as much research as they can to make sure the script is as authentic as possible.

In Last Night, it is never explained why its characters are homeless.

'What's important is the characters themselves, the relationships they have and the message we're trying to convey,' said Rosa. 'We don't want to treat them differently than we would other characters.'

People that have experienced homelessness themselves are playing a big role in Last Night's creation. The film's main actress and a member of the film's sound team have each experienced homelessness.

?These people came to us? it was very important that we worked with them,? said Rosa. ?We've shared the script with them because we want it to be as accurate as possible? they love the direction we are taking.?

Rosa said while the film will of course not solve homelessness, he and his team are hoping to make a real contribution to raising awareness and changing perspectives on the issue.

Rosa is looking forward to sharing more about the film at a later date.