

Area actors hitch a ride on AMC gravy train

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Mad Men, Breaking Bad, The Walking Dead ... Hell On Wheels?

Two Calgary-based producers and numerous area actors certainly hope AMC's newest offering follows in the footsteps of its successful predecessors.

After all, they helped put its wheels in motion, so to speak.

Filmed on the Tsuu T'ina Nation near Calgary, Hell on Wheels is billed as a new-age western, focusing on a group of workers helping construct America's transcontinental railway in 1865. The show's primary anti-hero, Cullen Bohannon, enlists with the construction crew but has eyes on avenging the death of his wife at the hands of Gen. Sherman's army.

Behind Bohannon is a cast of about 150 others, 80 per cent of which are from Alberta, said Calgary-based co-producer of the show Chad Oakes.

"They were critical," he said of the local talent. "These people just came out and wowed our U.S. partners."

For Calgary actor Duncan Ollerenshaw, who plays Irish working boss O'Toole, the show marks his biggest achievement on screen to date.

His role was initially set for three episodes but Oakes said producers loved the portrayal so much they quickly signed him on for the full first season.

"The writing is truly great," Ollerenshaw said. "For me to be able to sink my teeth into such great words on such a large stage is a really rare opportunity."

Fellow Calgarian Chris Ippolito also saw his role as a civic engineer extended past its original billing.

"It's going to be good," he said of the show. "It's definitely going to appeal to a large part of the population here in Alberta."

More about Hell On Wheels



CONTRIBUTED

Calgary's Duncan Ollerenshaw is seen as Irish working boss O'Toole in a handout photo from the set of AMC's new show, Hell On Wheels.

More about Hell On Wheels

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Full steam ahead

- The first season of AMC's Hell On Wheels will consist of 10 episodes.
- Rumours already abound of the show being renewed for a second season.