

# Canadian son directs American Dad

Last Updated: Wednesday, October 7, 2009 | 10:54 PM CT [Comments5](#)[Recommend 16](#)  
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*This image, from the official website of the program, shows the main characters in the cartoon show American Dad. (Fox Television)* Saskatchewan raised animator Bob Bowen has taken a life-long passion for drawing and crafted a successful career directing episodes of hit cartoon programs in the United States, including *Futurama* and *American Dad*.

In an interview with CBC News, Bowen revealed Wednesday that new episodes of *Futurama*, a science-fiction themed cartoon, have been greenlighted by television network executives.

Bowen was raised in Rosetown, Sask., a community of 2,277 about 115 kilometres southwest of Saskatoon.

"I was that kid in school that could draw a little bit," Bowen, 39, told CBC News. "I wasn't really sure what to do, career-wise. I wasn't familiar with any of these jobs that are down here."



*Bob Bowen, from Rosetown, Sask., is one of the directors of the hit cartoon American Dad. (submitted by Bob Bowen)* Bowen is living and working in Los Angeles.

His first job, with the electric utility SaskPower, found him in Estevan, Sask., drawing as much as he could in his spare time. Initially Bowen had aspirations to work as a cartoonist for newspapers.

Bowen said he found a school in New Jersey and leapt into the world of animation.

"I packed up, sold the house, [and] sold the cars," Bowen said. "We moved to New Jersey and I went to school three years there."

That experience led to work doing story boards for film and television programs. Story boards are a production device used to map out action sequences using animation. A story board artist transforms a written script into a visual guideline.

"There's nothing bad about being able to draw all day get paid at the end of it, I guess," Bowen said with a chuckle.

Bowen said he is currently one of eight people assigned to direct episodes of *American*

**'I'd watch these shows if I wasn't working on them.'**

—*Cartoon director Bob Bowen*

*Dad.*

"I enjoy the humour of these types of shows and getting to shape it in the way I want to make the jokes play out," he said. "I'm very lucky."

Delivering complete episodes for network television can be a challenge, he added.

"It wouldn't be unusual, if you're on a particularly large show, to put in 12-hour days sometimes for weeks on end," he said. "It's a deadline-driven business. It's not about the hours you're here. It's about handing over that product, in this case: the drawings."

Bowen works from audio recordings of the voice actors and the writers' script to build an episode.

"The job we do here is taking the written script and setting up the staging," Bowen explained. The director must decide what elements will be on screen and how characters move.

While the shows are cartoon images, Bowen said the characters are acting, in a way.

"The little, subtlest expression changes we have to work out," Bowen said. "Trying to get a performance out of the character."

Bowen's first major cartoon assignment was with *Futurama* nine years ago. He said work has begun on episodes to be broadcast in 2010.

He said he was thrilled when *Family Guy* was resurrected in 2005 and he was asked to work on the show.

"This is the kind of humour I enjoy," he said. "I'd watch these shows if I wasn't working on them."

Bowen, who added he still has family in Rosetown and visits regularly, advised aspiring artists to practise their craft as much as possible.

"It's like anything: just keep drawing. And show everyone around you your stuff," he said. "Get feedback to improve."

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at 10:32 AM ET Good to hear. I love both of those shows, its nice to have a local connection to them.

As with any good story on here, I can't wait to see how the Sask Party tries to take credit for it.

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