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# **Constructed Canadiana**

## Part 2

**Digital Study Guide**

## Introduction

A customized curriculum guide outlining activities for students and educators accompanies each Canada on Screen digital study guide. Each written guide has specific activities that expand on central ideas explored in the accompanying video.

Focusing on the nature of Canadian identity in film, and media, **Constructed Canadiana Part 2** provides an interactive, and collaborative resource for anyone wishing to develop critical thinking skills in the classroom, and beyond.

## Activity 1: The Vastness of Canada

There are many distinct regions in Canada that are interested in producing film about their region. Four obvious geographic regions include the East Coast, the West Coast, Quebec with their language mandate and the Northern region of Canada that includes coastal Northern Territories.

**Task:** Choose a film or portion of a film from each geographic region and watch each with an eye to analyzing what makes it distinctly Canadian, and also distinctly regional.

Resource List: <http://www.imdb.com/list/ls000091175/>

**Task:** Take any two of the movies listed below and do a stylistic comparison.

### Suggested films to watch:

#### NORTH:



#### **Atanarjuat, The Fast Runner** (2001)

**Director:** Zacharias Kunuk

*Atanarjuat* holds a number of impressive accolades: it was the first feature film written, directed, and performed entirely in Inuktitut; it premiered at the 54th Cannes Film Festival and was awarded the prestigious Camera D'Or. In 2015, Toronto International Film Festival members voted it the greatest Canadian film, ever. If you haven't seen it yet, well, what are you waiting for?

## Activity 1: The Vastness of Canada

### NORTH:



#### **Maliglutit (Searchers)** (2016)

**Director:** Zacharias Kunuk

Based on the 1956 western, *The Searchers*, Kunuk's second feature film takes off when a man returns from the land to find his wife and daughter missing, and sets off on a hunt to find his family and seek vengeance on their kidnappers.



#### **Angry Inuk** (2016)

**Director:** Alethea ArnaquqBaril

*Angry Inuk* is a multiawardwinning documentary that defends the seal hunt, examines the impacts of the European Union ban on sealskin on Inuit, and sheds new light on the motives and tactics of animal welfare groups.

## Activity 1: The Vastness of Canada

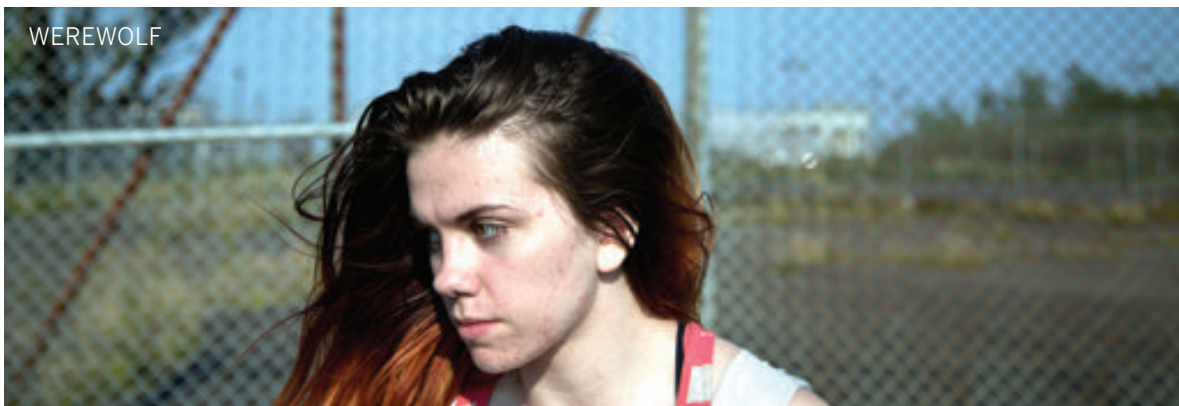
### EAST:



#### **New Waterford Girl** (1999)

**Director: Allan Moyle**

*New Waterford Girl* stars Liane Balaban as AgnesMarie “Moonie” Pottie, a teenager in New Waterford, Nova Scotia who dreams of life beyond her small-town home. She is inspired and fascinated when a family from New York City, with an idiosyncratic daughter her own age, Lou Benza (played by Tara SpencerNairn) moves into the house next door. Agnes discovers that Lou has a talent for boxing, leading to her taking Lou in as ‘muscle’ in an attempt to start some changes around their town.



#### **Werewolf** (2016)

**Director: Alethea ArnaquqBaril**

Shot on Cape Breton Island, the film was inspired by a real-life couple in New Waterford; McKenzie learned they were referred to as “the lawnmower crackheads”.



## Activity 1: The Vastness of Canada

### EAST:



### **Across the Line** (2015)

#### **Director: Director X**

The film is set in North Preston, Nova Scotia where Mattie (Stephan James), a black hockey player, is being considered for a professional career. However, his hopes are threatened by growing racial strife at his school while his brother Carter (Shamier Anderson) is involved in criminal activity. The film was inspired by the 1989 Cole Harbour District High School race riots.

#### **Addendum:**

Interview with producer/ screenwriter Floydd Kane about *Across the Line*:

Resource: <http://torontorappers.com/director-xs-film-exposes-something-dangerous-problematic-canadas-east-coast/>

Link: *Deeply Rooted*: Cazhmere's film about being a 7th generation Nova Scotian Black family.

Resource: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCg1t3mdWwM>

## Activity 1: The Vastness of Canada

### WEST:



#### **One Week** (2006)

**Director: Michael McGowan**

Jackson plays Ben Tyler, who has been diagnosed with cancer. Requiring immediate treatment, he instead decides to take a motorcycle trip from Toronto across Canada to Vancouver Island. The scenic backdrops of Canadian landscape as well as an all-Canadian soundtrack both serve as prevalent influences in the film.

#### **Whale Music** (1994)

**Director: Richard J. Lewis**

The film stars Maury Chaykin as Desmond Howl, a former rock star who has lived in seclusion in a seaside mansion since the death of his brother Danny (Paul Gross). Howl spends his time composing a symphonic masterpiece for the whales that congregate in the ocean near his property. His reason for this is revealed in the title of one of his songs, "Have You Seen My Brother?" — Danny died by losing control of his car and driving off a cliff into the ocean. One day, however, Howl awakens to find Claire (Cyndy Preston), a mysterious young woman, in his living room. Although Howl's world is disrupted, Claire ends up inspiring him to complete the symphony, to write his first great pop song in years, and to begin seeking connections with people again.

## Activity 1: The Vastness of Canada

### QUEBEC:



**Bon Cop Bad Cop** (2006) (*cautionary note: some violence*)

**Director: David Bouchard**

This buddy comedy thriller, directed by Eric Canuel, offers insights into cultural stereotypes by exploiting the opposing crime fighting styles of a conservative Anglophone cop (Colm Feore) from Ontario and a reckless francophone cop (Patrick Huard) from Québec. Forced to work together after the body of a murder victim is found on the border of their neighboring provinces, they must resolve their differences but overcome their individual prejudices. The movie features cameos by such famous Canadians as comedians Louis-José Houde and Rick Mercer and the actor Sylvain Marcel, who is famous for his Familiprix pharmacy commercials. *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* was released in Anglophone and francophone versions.

**Les Boys** (1997)

**Director: Louis Saia**

The Quebec based *Les Boys* is a 1997 comedy about a low-level amateur hockey team that can only stop its coach from losing his tavern by defeating a Mob team on the ice. As well as evoking the atmosphere of such Québec cities as Montréal and Longueuil, Louis Saia's movie demonstrates the importance of hockey in Canadian culture and the endurance of Québécois masculine stereotypes. Three sequels followed the original movie; they are collectively considered Canada's most successful film series.



## Activity 2: A Look at “Cultural” Comedy

Read the following article:

Resource: <http://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/features/finding-humour-in-the-canadian-immigrant-experience>

Canada supports immigration. The migration of people from their home country to Canada is massive. And influential. And permanent. Where the word diaspora might indicate that there is an intention to return to the home country, migration, leaving and moving one's home to immigrate, infers finality in the choice.

Film and TV attend to a growing need to represent these diverse and growing populations within our cultural context in Canada. Below are a few media (film & TV) offerings and personalities that have been developed as either second or third generation Canadians (or in the case of the *Trailer Park Boys*, a legacy of generations). One of the best ways to show that you understand a culture is to understand the humor of that culture. Humor is a system of information processing. When we begin to understand the social structures and beliefs of a certain culture, we test our understandings by challenging the information we were given. Sometimes the challenge is where the humor lies.

**Task:** Watch an episode of any of these shows to gain an understanding of social landscape that is being challenged.

**Note:** *Russell Peters* has some explicit content.

### Resource List:

- *Trailer Park Boys*
- *Kim's Convenience*
- *Little Mosque on the Prairie*
- *Dr. Cabbie*
- *Lilly Singh*
- *Russell Peters*
- *Corner Gas*
- *Arctic Air*

## Activity 2: A Look at “Cultural” Comedy



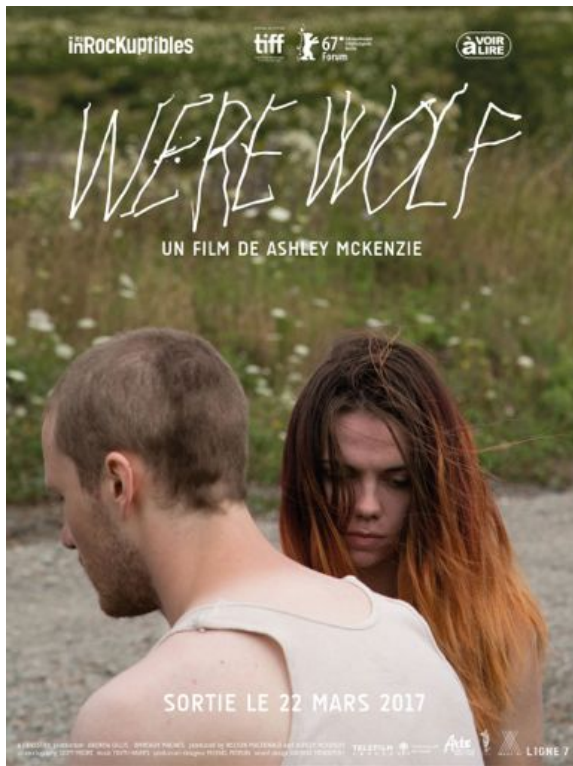
Discuss what the understanding is that we are supposed to have vs. the understanding of the culture that is being shown to us. For instance, Lilly Singh is often playing/performing her IndoCanadian parents as closely as possible, giving us all the hallmarks of what the social norms are around their enculturation into Canada, but Lilly puts them into situations that challenge all of these ideas.

### Task:

Using connections that you have within your school community, gather information about that community- whether from your own experiences as a second or third or fourth generation immigrant, or a new immigrant. Decide if there is someone who can speak to these experiences from that community and interview them about what some of the assumptions are about that experience as an immigrant.

Get to the truth of how a person feels as they learn to balance between Canadian culture and their home culture. Use that taped interview as the audio track to add video to what they are expressing, whether it be through staged footage, archival footage or found footage. Create a montage style video that uses the interview to guide viewers to a deeper understanding of what it feels like to negotiate Canadian culture.

## Activity 3: Draw Me A Picture



Read the pitch and/or watch the trailer (or watch the entire film) for any of the Canadian films found in the accompanying list of regional films to watch, and create an original design for (or copy the intention of...) a poster digitally or by hand that responds to the ideas embedded in the offering. Include a landscape, a character, an object, a title and a catchphrase to draw us into the poster design.

Before you begin, make sure that you have attended to the design principles of Contrast, Repetition, Alignment and Proximity in your poster idea. Google search "poster design graphics movies" for inspiration, or have a look on [Designspiration.net](http://Designspiration.net).

### Activity Extension:

Print out movie posters for the films listed above and have students discuss what they think the movie is about based on the poster alone. What is the genre? Where in Canada is it's main location? What are some of the plot points?

## Activity 4: The Rant



Rick Mercer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation icon and outspoken advocate of human rights produced a Rant series on CBC up until 2017. His legacy of railing against the injustices of Canadian policy should live on in the work of engaged citizens. You.

**Task:** Either read on his website or watch on YouTube some of his rants. Then write a rant that reflects an injustice that is near to you. Or even more to the point, write a rant that is filmic in nature. That is, a rant from one of the following topics:

- Why are there so few women in key creative power positions in film?
- Why does Canada act as so many other cities? Why can't Toronto be Toronto? Why does it have to be New York?
- Why did it take so long for Indigenous filmmakers to start their practice in Canada?
- Who decides what productions get funded in Canada and why do they have so much power?
- Why is there this myth that Canada film is so nice when most of it cannot be shown in the classroom?
- Why do American films get so much more screen time than Canadian?
- What are the Pros and Cons of Netflix investing 500 million dollars in Canadian Content productions?
- How have iPhones and hand held devices democratized video production- Is YouTube good for us?
- How am I supposed to sit through a feature length film when all I see all day long is Snapchat?

If you don't immediately think of 12 on your own, read the news and engage in the conversations around you. There is much to be agitated about.

Each rant should be about 4 paragraphs exploring as many sources of information as possible before reaching the conclusion.

Choose a location that has visual interest, create good mise en scene, and film your actor making the rant come to life.



## Activity 5: Film Pals |Call and Response.



Many of us have connections across Canada, interprovincially or inter-territorially. It is time to take advantage of these connections. It may not have occurred to you that students all over Canada are doing similar work to you in film classes, but are insulated by the sheer distance it would take to travel outside of the confines of province or territory. It is time to use the power that the Internet has given us for good.

Reach out to a school that is at least 1 province/territory away and see if they will do a film exchange. You send a series of themed (one minute each) short films and they respond with their own versions. In this way students see what locations, attitudes, structures and resources there are in other parts of the country by interacting with a film pal.

**Task:** Start by creating a video that takes viewers on a tour of your neighborhood surrounding your school. It can be no longer than 1 minute in length. You must have no fewer than 15 shots, and an accompanying soundtrack and voiceover. By the end of the tour there should be a feeling of overwhelm and satisfaction. Edit and send to your film pals via drop box or Google drive or, mail a USB stick through Canada Post. If it ends there, so be it. But if it continues, there is great potential to investigate all sorts of socio economic issues at a grass roots level. If you do not have access to a school in another part of the country, perhaps someone on staff does. Ask around.

## Activity 6: Timeline



Create a timeline of Canadian film from the inception of Film in Canada to present day. This could include photographs, film clips, articles, written work, and drawings. Make it as interactive as you want. There are many free timeline creators online.

Or break it down into subcategories: a timeline for Indigenous Film in Canada, Female film makers in Canada, Early Film making in Canada, The advent of digital, Directors and films themselves, etc....

Here are suggestions of what to include:

- Major Broadcasting (Telefilm, NFB, etc.)
- Key Creatives (Producers, directors, actors, writers)
- Awards
- Festivals
- Production Companies
- Advent of Digital

\*\*\*\*\* Brainstorm with your class what the important ideas to include are and use their knowledge to build the criteria.

PRESENTING PARTNERS / PARTENAIRES DE PRÉSENTATION



Canada



ONTARIO  
150

TELEFILM  
CANADA 50

CO-PRODUCING PARTNERS / PARTENAIRES DE CO-PRODUCTION



Bibliothèque et Archives  
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Cinémathèque

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