

THE POWER OF CANADIAN FILM

YOUTH FILM CONSUMPTION
AND ENGAGEMENT



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REEL CANADA

TELEFILM CANADA PARTNER OF CHOICE



CREATIVE BC



ABOUT THIS STUDY

THE POWER OF CANADIAN FILM

METHODOLOGY

We began this project by conducting a 10-minute online survey of 600 High School students (ages 14-19) and 125 K-12 Teachers across Canada. Both groups were asked interest and awareness in Canadian films and organizations. Both were also asked to provide their respective perspectives on Canadian film integration in the classroom and interest in careers in the Canadian film and TV industry. Students were asked exclusively about their content consumption habits.

These populations are geographically representative of Canada, including the Quebecois population, with a 50/50 Male/Female split. All statistics referenced in this report are based on data from students.

Phase two of this project included 45-minute in-depth interviews with educators within the REEL CANADA network, which were used to deepen narratives and provide first hand knowledge of current classroom dynamics. Quotes from these interviews are denoted in the report as "INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM".

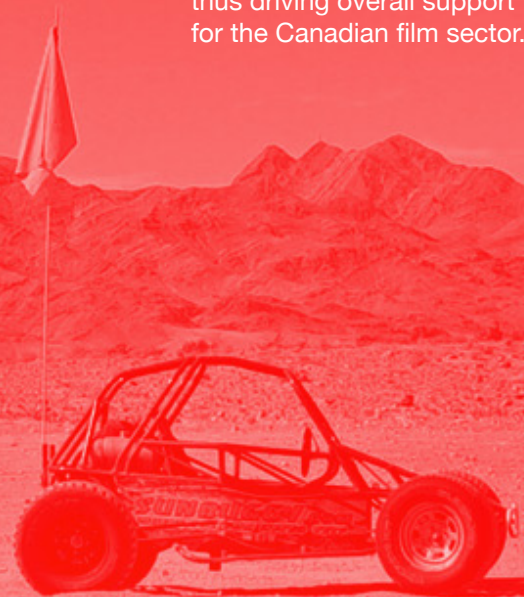
This research was conducted in October 2022 by VICE Media Group in partnership with REEL CANADA, Telefilm Canada, Ontario Creates and Creative BC.

THROUGHOUT THIS RESEARCH, CANADIAN FILMS WERE DEFINED AS: MOVIES THAT WERE ORIGINATED AND/OR CREATED BY PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN CANADA.

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the awareness and impact of Canadian film content on young people today, and its usage within the classroom environment. The learnings will:

- inform Canadian companies and content creators on youth attitudes and behaviors towards Canadian cultural film content,
- identify opportunities for Canadian creators to better connect with young audiences,
- support the integration of Canadian film content into Canada's educational infrastructure, thus driving overall support for the Canadian film sector.



CANADIAN YOUTH ARE FUELED BY PASSION AND OPTIMISM

The world is an unpredictable place, and Canadian teenagers today have every right to be disillusioned and disengaged.

The thing is – they aren't.

They have curious, passionate minds that are ready to embrace things that help them learn and grow, and, when given the opportunity, dive head first into a new – and perhaps previously underdeveloped – passion.

As they look to channel passion and optimism into a life full of happiness and contentment, they are influenced by a unique combination of physical and virtual surroundings – including Canada's varied geography and great diversity, and the interconnectedness of social media.

TOP PERSONALITY TRAITS

#1

My friends would say I'm really passionate about at least one thing

#2

I feel optimistic about where I'm at in life

TOP DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS

#1

When I feel happy/content

#2

I followed my passions



FREE TIME IS FILLED WITH CONTENT

The world is changing at the speed of imagination, and today's cultural environment is one flooded with content.

The media landscape is replete with captivating platforms – whether it's the freedom and experimentation of video games, the endless potential of YouTube, the trend setting nature of TikTok, or the community aspect of Twitch, students are engaging with content full of creation and expression, from both their peers and professionals around the globe.

Despite these flourishing virtual ecosystems, TV and film have not gone by the wayside – students are still voraciously consuming traditional forms of media and actively engaging in conversations with their peers about it.

The pervasiveness and popularity of video games and social media has not detracted from teenagers' interest in TV and film.

It's a rainy day and you're stuck inside. You have three free hours right now. How are you entertaining yourself? Rank your top three choices. (% in top three selections ; only data above 20% is shown)

#1 Play video games (35%)

#2 Use social media (35%)

#3 Watch TV shows (34%)

#4 Listen to music (33%)

#5 Watch/read online content (29%)

#6 Watch Films (27%)

1 IN 2

Say watching movies/TV is one of their favorite things to do in their spare time

1 IN 2

Say they love talking to friends about the latest movies/TV shows

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

"They are addicted to and obsessed with social media...but are still into going to see movies when big movies come out. They still go consume traditional media in that sense."

Kara Wickstrom-Street,
Social Sciences Teacher – Winnipeg, MB

ENTERTAINMENT RULES

CULTURE CONNECTS

TOP GENRES

COMEDY

61%



ACTION

51%



SCI-FI/ FANTASY

41%



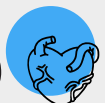
THRILLER

39%



DRAMA

34%



Content has to be entertaining if it is to have any chance of resonating with Canadian teens. Canadian high school teachers point to films that are fast paced, engaging, and feature characters of a similar age as being the most entertaining for their students. Genres like comedy and action tend to rank high on the entertainment scale.

The next step in gaining eyeballs from this young generation – one already inundated with content options – is to offer ways to connect to cultures familiar to them and/or their identities and experiences as young people. Canadian high school teachers reinforced the importance of this connection when they spoke about how much students connect with lived histories and experiences, stories of identity and a sense of belonging. The ability to see themselves reflected in films ultimately opens up opportunities for deeper engagement – especially when specific Canadian identities are highlighted and explored (e.g., Indigenous communities, immigrant communities).

Cultural connections do not need to be over the top or heavy handed – they merely act as entry points. One teacher relayed an experience she had during a class discussion, after showing the Canadian animated short film *Window Horses* (2016), during which a unique version of the call to prayer caught the attention of two Muslim students, and a Chinese student related to the main character's mixed descent. By seeing pieces of themselves reflected in the content, these students were able to transcend film as entertainment and come away with a true connection that yields a better understanding of the world around them.



TOP ATTENTION-GRABBING CONTENT ATTRIBUTES

74%

It is entertaining

50%

It is related to my passion/interests

45%

It involves people/characters I like

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

"Identity and a sense of belonging seems to resonate with a lot of them – especially where they can see themselves somehow depicted – whether it's through culture or whether it's through values or whether it's through life experiences."

Tanya Feick,
Drama and English Teacher, — Kitchener, ON

DISCOVERY THROUGH SOCIAL INTERACTION AND SCROLLING

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

“One of our favorites was Grandfather on the Prairies (2018). It’s quite a short film and really experimental. First of all, it’s funny – it’s one of those things where we’re also trying to twist the narrative that not all indigenous stories end in devastation and trauma and tragedy.”

Tanya Hobbs
Teacher-librarian – Golden, BC

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL SOURCE OF NEW FILMS TO WATCH ARE THEIR PERSONAL CIRCLES – WHETHER IN THE FORM OF IN-PERSON CONVERSATIONS OR WHAT THEY SEE ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

These recommenders are highly trusted as they are deeply personal connections; people who understand them and know their individual tastes and values. These tightly knit circles are driven by a collective curiosity and shared sensibilities – when content strikes a chord it is likely to resonate widely.

PRIMARY SOURCES OF FILM DISCOVERY

76%

Personal network
(NET)

55%

Word of mouth / in-person
conversations

49%

Family and friends
social media

28%

School/in class

There is a clear opportunity for students to discover more film in school, as these recommendations would come from teachers – trusted sources who understand them and their interests.

OTHER SOURCES

60%

TV/movie streaming services

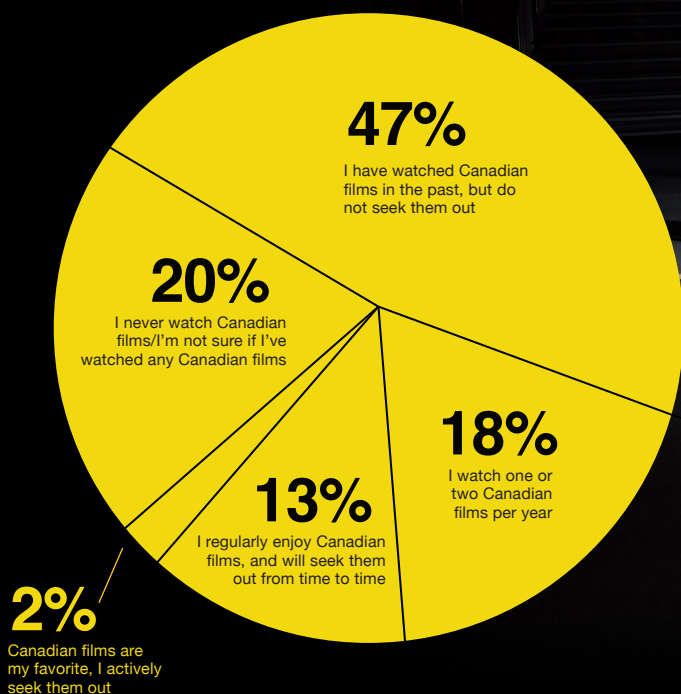
37%

Advertisements online
(e.g. YouTube)

Ads are still effective among young generations. With as much time as they are spending browsing content, they are gathering a significant amount of film inspiration from ads in their feed.

CANADIAN FILMS ARE NOT CURRENTLY ON THEIR WATCH LIST

CURRENT RELATIONSHIP TO CANADIAN FILM



Many high school students in Canada lack an awareness of their country's national film output, and those who are aware are not necessarily craving more. Due to the influence and power of Hollywood, and the fact that Canada is full of so many different communities spread so far apart with a lack of understanding of each other, teenagers are missing an emotional connection to their country's content. While teachers note that students may feel a connection to Canadian sports teams or musicians, they don't see them looking at Canadian films in the same way.

Students are aware that actors like Ryan Reynolds and Rachel McAdams are Canadian, but really only perceive them as Hollywood stars. They're figures who have transcended Canada's borders into the zeitgeist of global culture. However, when given the opportunity to watch Canadian films in school, students' perceptions of the quality and enjoyment of these films is significantly different than their peers who don't have the same exposure. When shown Canadian films in school, students more often describe them as fun (+21 percentage points) and think they are good movies (+18 percentage points).

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

"Canadian content is seen as not as flashy and relevant and it doesn't permeate. Students don't think, 'Oh, I'm going to go see the big Canadian movie that's coming out next week or the big blockbuster hit from Canada.'"

Kara Wickstrom-Street
Social Sciences Teacher — Winnipeg, MB

There are gaps that need to be filled in terms of how Canadian films are accessed, discussed and framed. With only 15% of students aware enough of Canadian films to exhibit a sense of allegiance or fandom, there's a massive opportunity to re-frame the idea of a Canadian film for this generation. From teachers' perspectives, this is a wall that is easily broken down. And it is one that gives way to the reality of Canadian films, including the active and interesting world of the Canadian film industry.

Visibility is a significant barrier mentioned by both students and teachers. It is difficult to find Canadian films. Existing streaming services don't necessarily have a "Canadian" section – they simply aren't a large piece of day to day conversation. In order to discover, explore and immerse themselves in these films, students need to be pointed in the right direction via platforms and situations where they are spending their free time.

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

*"[I use Canadian film to aid in] rooting it to their place in the world. **This is Canadian. This is us. These are Canadian filmmakers. These are their jobs.**"*

*"I think [students' perception of Canadian film] is just **unaware** and **limited**. I remember when we had some of the REEL Canada workshop folks come in, and one of their questions would be, '**Can you name some Canadian films?**' And the reaction was kind of quiet."*

Tanya Feick

Drama and English Teacher – Kitchener, ON



REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT CANADIAN FILMS, WHAT WOULD GET YOU TO WATCH THEM MORE OFTEN?

MUST HAVES

#1

If Canadian films were available on my TV or streaming platforms

#2

If I was generally more aware of Canadian films

#3

If my friends/family watched Canadian films

WHEN STUDENTS ARE SHOWN CANADIAN FILMS IN SCHOOL, A SPARK IS LIT.



**STUDENTS SHOWN CANADIAN FILMS THINK
THEY OPEN UP NEW WORLDS**

+17 PPT

vs. students not shown Canadian films

Canadian films are able to fill a cultural void and establish awareness of the depth and breadth of what's currently being produced right in their backyards.

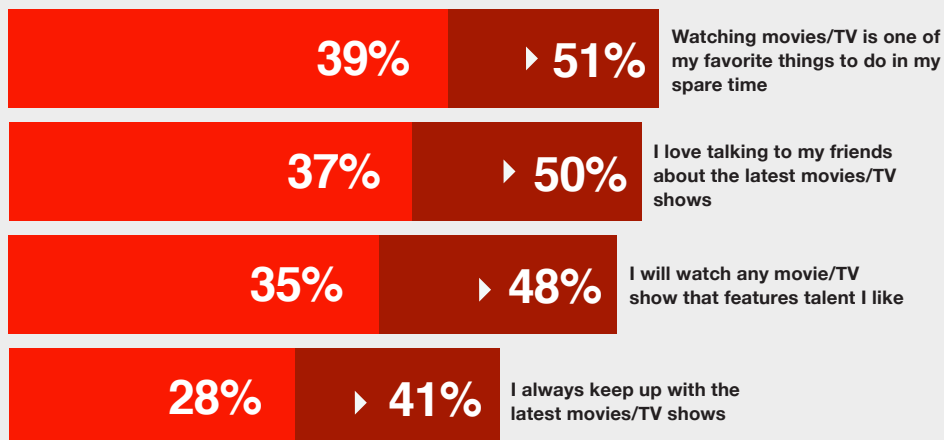
It's easy to see this as the power of visual learning – which it is – but the real impact of these films can be seen in how students learn and engage with Canadian identity and culture, how they consume media, and ultimately how they see the world as a whole.



CANADIAN FILMS DEVELOP MEDIA LITERACY AND FOSTER CURIOUS MINDS

Students who are shown Canadian films in school say that they make them more well rounded (+21 percentage points vs. students who aren't)

TV AND MOVIE HABITS (% WHO AGREE)



Students who are not shown Canadian films in school

Students who are shown Canadian films in school

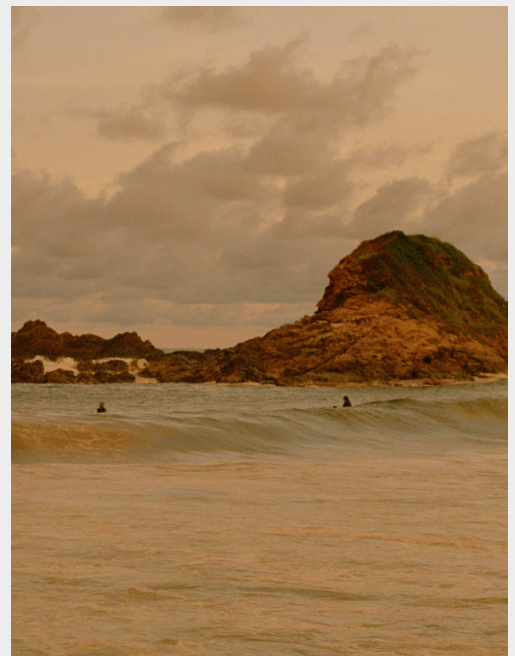
INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

"Being able to speak to issues through film, it's a great way to start conversations with kids, to get them to think about stuff that might be hard to access otherwise."

Nick Janzen,
Film Production Teacher — Nanaimo, BC

*"When we talk about Canadian films, students feel that things are happening here [in Canada] and have **more curiosity.**"*

Charanjit Deo,
Science Teacher — Gillam, MB



Film gives students avenues to understanding, acting as an easy entry point for teens because it's not text heavy and can be used to introduce fairly complex ideas in a way that everyone can understand. When film is studied in depth, it also works to pique students' curiosity across various aspects of culture.

Exposure to Canadian film in school is a crucial component in building the level of media and cultural literacy that is necessary for young people to wade through today's ever-changing landscapes, especially as teenagers prepare for life beyond high school.

Exposure to Canadian film content turns teenagers into content explorers, as they're more likely to spend their free time watching movies/TV and to be talking about and sharing content with their peers.

BUILDING A SENSE OF CANADIAN IDENTITY

Whether it's the expansive and disconnected nature of Canada's geography or the power of American cultural hegemony, today's students in Canada have a limited sense of what it means to be Canadian.

With exposure to Canadian films, potentially negative perceptions of homegrown content as boring or uninteresting give way to an elevated sense of identity and an ability to see Canada for what it is: a place of incredible diversity that is (and has been) creating content worth their time.

Teachers understand there is a dearth of established Canadian identity in young people, and are working to utilize Canadian films as tools of culture and connection.



INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

"It's important to have Canadian content and Canadian film because Canadian stories are often muted by American media and American pop culture...it's really important to have those unique Canadian experiences in the classroom and telling our history, our stories, our culture, kind of ensuring that all those different Canadian perspectives are part of what we're teaching our students."

Kara Wickstrom-Street,
Social Sciences Teacher — Winnipeg, MB



CANADIAN FILMS MAKE PEOPLE FEEL A SENSE OF PRIDE IN THEIR COUNTRY

66% vs. **51%**

of students who see Canadian films in class agree

Students who do not see Canadian films in class

CANADIAN FILMS HELP PEOPLE BECOME MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT CANADA/CANADIAN CULTURE

63% vs. **47%**

of students who see Canadian films in class agree

Students who do not see Canadian films in class

CANADIAN FILMS HIGHLIGHT GEOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

"I tell my students, if you ever want to visit a country or you ever want to travel around, the best thing to do is watch the films from that country. People watch films of Canada and what they're going to see is our cultural diversity."

Dave St-Pierre,
Film & Video Production Teacher — Toronto, ON



Canadian films act as an important tool in terms of emphasizing Canada's geographic and demographic diversity, and establishing a sense of representation, as students see themselves and their country in a format and industry dominated by America.

Instead of being transported away from Canada, they're reintroduced to their surroundings and the people that make up their lives, but Canadian students currently see themselves and their country primarily through the eyes of an American-dominated industry.

Building on the sense of Canadian identity that is sparked by watching these films, students are quick to understand the importance of representing Canada's incredibly diverse culture, and in turn become more tolerant of different points of view.

STUDENTS SHOWN CANADIAN FILMS THINK THEY MAKE PEOPLE MORE TOLERANT OF OTHER POINTS OF VIEW

+21 PPT

vs. students not shown Canadian films



CANADIAN FILMS GIVE ME A LOOK INTO DIFFERENT CULTURES AND LIFESTYLES IN CANADA

59%

vs.

39%

of students who see Canadian films in class agree

Students who do not see Canadian films in class

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT CANADIAN FILMS REFLECT THE DIVERSE CULTURES AND LIFESTYLES OF ALL CANADIANS

72%

vs.

54%

of students who see Canadian films in class agree

Students who do not see Canadian films in class

UNLOCKING THE NEXT GENERATION OF CREATORS

INSIGHTS FROM THE CLASSROOM

"I am noticing this year more students coming to class who are putting an extra effort into our [film production] assignments in a way that makes me think that they're doing filmmaking on their own time. There are more students who are self-selecting into that creative field as a hobby and something they're passionate about just in their own time."

Nick Janzen,
Film Production Teacher — Nanaimo, BC



THE FILM SECTOR IN CANADA IS RELATIVELY SMALL – AND MANY STUDENTS AREN'T FAMILIAR WITH IT – BUT THESE CLASSES HAVE PIQUED THEIR INTEREST IN EXPLORING THIS NEW-TO-THEM INDUSTRY.

Creativity is a defining characteristic of this young generation of Canadians. Driven by an overall boom in the world of user-generated content, teachers told us that students are starting to see film and TV production as exciting: full of opportunities to collaborate, to be creative, to have a vision of something and bring it to life.

In class they are engaging with films - live action and animated - sparking curiosity about the creators and diving deeper into who was involved in the making of the film. This is opening young eyes to previously unexplored career options, as they are becoming more aware of the wide range of positions in the Canadian film and TV industry.

Some are able to unlock their latent creativity with film and production classes, where they are offered hands-on experience and a crash course in demystification of what the world of film has to offer in terms of employment. These types of courses, however, are not widely available throughout Canadian high schools.

Despite spending so much of their time consuming content, students are information starved when it comes to realistic opportunities of futures that tap into their creativity such as TV and film production. If the status quo remains, young people are not likely to pursue careers in the Canadian film or TV industries.

1 IN 2

Consider themselves to be a creative person

1 IN 3

Are interested in learning more about Canadian films and the people that make them

AND

1 IN 10

Are likely to pursue a career working in the Canadian film industry

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF CANADIAN FILM

The success of the Canadian film industry depends on producers, educators, non-profit organizations, and the young people participating in and pushing Canadian culture forward.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THE POWER OF CANADIAN FILM:

INCREASE AWARENESS

Awareness of Canadian films and film culture is the biggest hurdle in harnessing the power these films create. The industry must work to increase the visibility of existing Canadian film content via spaces where students engage (e.g., social media and streaming services) and sources they trust (e.g., word of mouth from family and friends and in school).

PROVIDE ACCESS

It is clear that when young people do see Canadian films, the connections are deep and the impacts significant. The hurdle lies in the ability for young people to access these films. Go beyond the normal reaches of the commercial system for distribution where young people can interact with content such as schools, community groups and organizations, etc.

Think not only about physical access, but emotional access as well. Young people need to know these films are relevant to them. Marketing efforts, mainstream or grassroots, should focus on the themes that resonate such as stories of identity and the lived experiences of Canadian young people.

PIQUE INTEREST IN FILM CAREERS

Demystify the film and TV careers in students' backyards by offering opportunities for hands-on internships and/or investing in film and production workshops in schools (or at other accessible locations outside of school) to give students the chance to realize their potential as creators.

