

COLONIZATION ROAD



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COLONIZATION ROAD

Directed by Michelle St. John
2016 | Canada | 44 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *Colonization Road* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussion with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film

Colonization Road discusses the roads built by the colonial government to bring settlers across the country, connect them with resources to create industry and create a nation. Many of these interconnecting roadways are actually named Colonization Road. *Colonization Road* follows Anishinaabe comedian Ryan McMahon as he travels across Ontario speaking to Indigenous and settler lawyers, historians, researchers and policy makers who provide history, context and solutions for colonization roads and their impact on Indigenous peoples. Along the way, the film sheds light on treaties and what the process of reconciliation will demand of settlers in the country we now call Canada.

The Filmmaker

Michelle St. John is an actress, producer and director who won a Gemini Award for her role in the 1989 CBC film *Where the Spirit Lives*. She has appeared on many television series, including *Northern Exposure* and *By Way of the Stars*, and also voiced the character of Nakoma in Disney's 1995 animated film *Pocahontas*. St. John has also appeared in two films based on the work of Spokane-Coeur d'Alene writer Sherman Alexie: *Smoke Signals* and *The Business of Fancydancing*. She has co-produced two Heritage Minutes for Historica Canada, and made her directorial debut with *Colonization Road*, which premiered at the ImagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival in 2016.

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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three subsections are intended to provide you with a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Watch the trailer for *Colonization Road* on the film's website (<https://www.colonizationroad.com>). As they watch the trailer, have students make a list of all the themes or issues they predict may emerge in the film. Use the following prompts to get students started: What is the subject of this film? Whose stories are told in this film? What emotions will this film elicit in viewers? Have students keep their list of predictions so they can use it in a Post-Viewing Activity.

Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to brainstorm definitions or descriptions of the following words: colonization, expropriation, commodification and reconciliation. After they brainstorm their ideas, have them check a dictionary to confirm or correct their thoughts. Then have each pair/group present their thoughts and definitions to the large group. When each word has been defined or explained, ask students to create a T-chart with these words listed in the left column. Have students keep their T-chart for use in a Viewing Activity.

As a class, have students brainstorm what they already know about colonization as it applies to Indigenous peoples in Canada and to other populations around the world. Use the following prompts to help students become familiarized with the issues: What are the effects of colonization, for both Indigenous peoples and settlers? Do the effects of colonization translate into benefits and barriers later in a country's history? For which group?

Have students read Ryan McMahon's opinion piece "Why I Won't Be Attending Canada's 150th Birthday Party" on the CBC Firsthand website (<http://www.cbc.ca/firsthand/blog/why-i-wont-be-attending-canadas-150th-birthday-party>).

Ask students to reflect privately on their own intellectual and emotional response to this piece. Have students consider the ways that they might play a role in creating a more inclusive Canada for Indigenous peoples.

Viewing Activities

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf>). Students will revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

Ask students to jot down any images in the film that they feel are especially interesting or surprising, or that raise questions. After the film, have students share one of the images they documented and why this image stood out for them. Use the following prompt to generate discussion on any of the images: Why do you think the filmmaker used this image?

As they watch the film, have students fill in the T-chart they created during the Pre-Viewing Activity. Ask students to use specific ideas or images from the film to illustrate each word on the chart (colonization, expropriation, commodification and reconciliation). After the film, have students share one of the ideas/images they documented and their thoughts on why this idea/image illustrates the word on the T-chart.

Have students jot down three to five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

As they watch, have students paraphrase one quotation from the film that they feel is especially interesting or inspiring. After the film, have students share the quotation they documented and why this quotation stood out for them.

Post-Viewing Activities

Ask students if the predictions they made using the trailer in the Pre-Viewing Activity were correct. Have them give specific evidence from the film—images, ideas or dialogue—that supports or disproves their prediction.

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the film, the featured individuals and the issues the film raises. Did their feelings about the people or the issues evolve over the course of the film?

Have students form small groups to consider the following questions: Are there roads and other physical structures in their own community that helped create colonization in Canada? How are these structures like or unlike the structures discussed in the film? What could they do to let other people know about the history of these structures, and the effect they've had on Indigenous peoples?

The film talks about the literal infrastructure of colonization, as well as the idea of colonization. Ask students to draw a page for a graphic novel that engages with the following prompts: How does the construction of the railway connect to colonization? How did/does colonization affect Indigenous peoples?

The film discusses polarizing issues that sometimes upset people. But the filmmaker has chosen to use comedy as part of the film's approach. Have students write a two-paragraph response to the following prompt: The use of comedy is appropriate when discussing serious subjects—agree or disagree?

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here:

[http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/
WhatSeminar04.pdf](http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf)

Have a large-group discussion guided by student questions written during the Viewing Activity.

Ask students to revisit the PBS viewing guide on documentaries that they completed during the Viewing Activity. Do they think the storytelling techniques used in the film are effective? Do they think the information sources contained in the film are trustworthy? Why do the filmmakers choose certain images, for example, shots of the land and concert footage?

Have students complete an exit note. The exit note should contain one idea that demonstrates what they learned from the film, as well as one question that they still have about the topic.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

<https://www.colonizationroad.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/colonizationroad>

Additional Resources

The Canadian Encyclopedia: The encyclopedia's entry on Treaty 3 explains the negotiations for that agreement, the impact it had on Indigenous peoples in the area and contemporary interpretations of the treaty-making process and its effects.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/> Type "Treaty 3" into the search engine and click on the first result in the list.

The Canadian Encyclopedia: The encyclopedia features a national colonization timeline that details the events that created Canada, from both settler and Indigenous perspectives.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/> Type "colonization timeline" into the search engine and click on the first result in the list.

Grand Council Treaty #3: The Grand Council's website features information on treaty rights and inherent Aboriginal rights, as well as a map of the territory, a list of communities signatory to Treaty #3 and information on local community councils.

<http://gct3.ca>

Muskrat Magazine: The article "Michelle St. John Uncovers Colonization Roads With Comedian Ryan McMahon in New Doc" provides information on the inspiration behind *Colonization Road* and what it might mean for settlers to consider their relationship to what it means to be Canadian.

<http://muskratmagazine.com/> Type the title of the article into the search engine.

TVO: The article "Northwestern Ontario Debates Its Colonization Roads" on the TVO website discusses historical names and how they are understood in contemporary society.

<https://tvo.org/> Type the name of the article into the search engine and click on the first result on the list.

Fort Frances Times: The article "Road Name to Stay as Is" explains the town council's 2017 decision not to rename Colonization Road.

<http://www.fftentimes.com/> Type the name of the article into the search engine and click on the first result on the list.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

What are the issues and themes explored in this film?

Choose one of the issues or themes explored in this film and discuss what this film made you think/realize about that issue or theme.

Why do you think the filmmakers included the image of Ryan McMahon doing an Indigenous powwow dance next to a museum flagpole in the film? What is this image saying to the viewer?

In the film, a clip is shown of former Prime Minister Stephen Harper saying that Canada has never experienced colonialism. In what ways does the film show this statement to be true or false?

Is racism and discrimination a factor for Indigenous peoples living in Canada today? How are racism and discrimination shown in this film?

What are the issues faced by Indigenous peoples and communities shown in the film? Are these issues the same or different from the issues faced by yourself, your family or your community?

Before viewing this film, did the topic of colonization play any part in your life? If yes, why? If no, why not? Will this change now that you have seen this film? In what way?

The film makes ties between Christianity and colonization through the Doctrine of Discovery. What are some other ways that Christianity was used to colonize Indigenous peoples?

The film discusses how colonization roads led to the destruction of Indigenous economies by denying Indigenous peoples access to trade, land and infrastructure that were provided free to settlers. How does this inequity play out in contemporary society? What effects has it had on Indigenous communities? On settler society?

What did the film reveal to you that you did not know before? What did it show you that you had not seen or heard before?

Do you think this film will inspire people to learn more about the structures of colonization in their own communities? Why or why not?

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. "There are very few countries that can say, for nearly 150 years, that they've had the same political system, without any social breakdown, political upheaval or invasion.... We also have no history of colonialism." Stephen Harper
2. "Colonization is not just something that happened in the past. It is a structure, not an event. [It's] an ongoing process, something that we reproduce every day through our actions." Jeff Denis
3. "To me, roads, railways—they're like an infection. Not just metaphorically, but actually. It was a way of invading our territories without legal authority, without consent. And what are roads used for now? They literally bleed our territories dry of people, of resources—everything that matters to us." Pam Palmater
4. "It's a history that started with conflict." Doug Williams
5. "There was a colonial agenda that was behind all of that industrial activity.... They saw the West as their resource bank." Teika Newton
6. "We hear it a lot, over and over. 'Why can't you just be like us?' We want to be who we are." Al Hunter
7. "Indigenous peoples are accepted on an individual basis, on a daily basis, as long as they don't rock the boat. As long as they know their place. But if you start talking about colonization or treaty violations or land claims...." Jeff Denis
8. "What is distinctive about settler colonialism, as opposed to other forms of colonialism, is that the settlers come to stay. They make this their home, on Native land." Jeff Denis
9. "Nobody granted us anything. All of our rights are inherent. That means they were here before anyone else came here. And we have those rights because we were nations, and we had our own laws and our own territories." Pam Palmater
10. "Recognition of our sovereignty and nationhood is the basis of the legal legitimacy of this country. You take away that, and Canada has no legitimacy whatsoever. They need to recognize our sovereignty and nationhood in order to even exist as a state." Pam Palmater
11. "We signed treaties with them, which made them family, not friends." Niigaan Sinclair
12. "We don't need any new ideas to save Canada. We just need to go back to that original wampum belt and recognizing each other's abilities to govern ourselves and protect one another." Pam Palmater
13. "The root causes of every issue that Indigenous people are facing right now in Canada comes from dispossession, and it comes from erasure, and it comes from a system of settler colonialism in Canada that keeps us in an occupied state." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson
14. "The land is the basis of the Canadian economy. Indigenous peoples have been kicked off the land, dispossessed of it, to make way for the Canadian economy." Hayden King
15. "The creation of Canada is something that's been very violent. Very violent toward Indigenous women... very violent toward the land." Leanne Betasamosake Simpson
16. "The resource economy is a boom and bust economy. It's short-term gain for long-term pain." Al Hunter
17. "Canada has been very sneaky at the institutional and legal tools it's used to push Native people out of the way." Hayden King

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Colonization Road talks about a street in Fort Frances, Ontario, named Colonization Road, and how similar roads exist throughout Canada. In 2017, the Fort Frances town council voted not to rename its Colonization Road.

Write a two-page report or make an oral presentation on the issue of renaming streets or buildings that are named for colonization or people involved in the colonization of Canada. To start, do some research on the Fort Frances town council vote. Then do additional research on the issue across Canada as it pertains to streets and buildings. Evaluate the credibility of all the sources you use. Your report or presentation must contain the following:

- Information on places in Canada where streets or buildings have been renamed
- Opinions on the issue from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources
- The effect this issue has on identity, citizenship and heritage in Canada

As a final step in your report or presentation, choose a street or building in your town or city that is named for colonization or a person involved in the colonization of Canada. Do you think this street or building should be renamed? What effect would changing the name—or not changing the name—have on the community?

If you choose to do an oral presentation, your presentation should include at least one audio-visual resource. If you do a written report, your report must contain at least one graphic representation of the issue (table, chart or diagram).

ACTIVITY RUBRIC: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Knowledge/Understanding

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Knowledge of content and understanding of content	Demonstrates a limited understanding of content	Demonstrates a moderate understanding of content	Demonstrates a considerable understanding of content	Demonstrates a high level of understanding of content	/5

Thinking and Inquiry

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Use of processing skills, especially interpreting, analyzing,	Uses processing skills with limited effectiveness	Uses processing skills with moderate effectiveness	Uses processing skills with considerable effectiveness	Uses processing skills with a high degree of effectiveness	/5

Application

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Making connections between various contexts, especially between past, present and future contexts; in different cultural or environmental contexts; and in proposing and/or taking action to address related issues	Makes connections within and between various contexts with limited effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with some effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with considerable effectiveness	Makes connections within and between various contexts with a high degree of effectiveness	/5

Communication

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Communication for different audiences and purposes (e.g., to inform, to persuade) in oral, visual and written forms	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with limited effectiveness	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with some effectiveness	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with considerable effectiveness	Communicates for different audiences and purposes with a high degree of effectiveness	/5

Comments:

Total: _____ /20

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 & 8 Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gather information to support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and a wide range of print and electronic resources. make revisions to improve the content, clarity and interest of their written work, using a variety of strategies. establish a distinctive voice in their writing appropriate to the subject and audience. communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to both the topic and the intended audience. identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning.
Grade 7 & 8 Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create art works, using a variety of traditional forms and current media technologies, that express feelings, ideas and issues, including opposing points of view. use elements of design in art works to communicate ideas, messages and understandings for a specific audience and purpose.
Grade 9 & 10 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicate in a clear, coherent manner appropriate to the purpose, subject matter and intended audience. use several different audio-visual aids to support and enhance oral presentations. locate and select information to support ideas for writing, using several different strategies and print, electronic and other resources, as appropriate. establish an identifiable voice in their writing, modifying language and tone to suit the form, audience and purpose for writing. revise drafts to improve the content, organization, clarity and style of their written work, using a variety of teacher-modelled strategies.
Grade 9 & 10 Integrated Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply current technologies to present integrated art works/productions. use appropriate practices to prepare their art works for presentation. demonstrate an understanding of some of the ways in which art works can be presented to reach a variety of audiences.
Grade 11 & 12 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicate in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style effective for the purpose, subject matter and intended audience. identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expressions, gestures and eye contact, and use them effectively to help convey their meaning and with sensitivity to audience needs and cultural differences. locate and select information to effectively support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies and print, electronic and other resources, as appropriate. determine whether the ideas and information gathered are accurate and complete, interesting and effectively meet the requirements of the writing task. establish a distinctive voice in their writing, modifying language and tone skilfully and effectively to suit the form, audience and purpose for writing.
Grade 11 & 12 Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explore a wide range of traditional and emerging technologies, tools and techniques, and use them to produce effective media art works.

Grade 11 & 12 Canadian and World Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze ways in which cooperation among Indigenous peoples and/or between Indigenous peoples and other groups has shaped the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. • analyze the relationship Indigenous peoples have with the environment in Canada and how this relationship contributes to the development of Indigenous identity and culture. • analyze ways in which some social, economic, and/or political issues, events and/or developments in Canada have affected Indigenous peoples.
Grade 9 & 10 Native Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify social, economic and political issues within Aboriginal communities in relation to Canadian government policies. • identify issues currently affecting Aboriginal peoples and the responses of local and national leadership to these issues. • describe various ways of exercising autonomy used by Aboriginal peoples.
Grade 11 & 12 Native Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal-Canadian relations. • investigate potential topics by formulating questions, identifying information needs and purposes for writing, and developing research plans to gather information and ideas from primary and secondary sources. • demonstrate an understanding of the historical experience of Aboriginal peoples in asserting their sovereignty through treaties, negotiated agreements and other formalized processes. • identify areas of conflict between Aboriginal peoples and the government of Canada with respect to treaty interpretation.

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the *Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations, can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>