

Riel Country

Riel Country features young adults from two distinct Winnipeg neighbourhoods, on either side of the Red River as they struggle to overcome geographical and cultural barriers.

High school students from the predominantly Aboriginal North End, with the support of their peers from the Francophone district of St. Boniface, work to produce a play on the origins of the Metis - a theme which links both groups to Louis Riel's dream of a society in which respect for difference is a founding principle.

How do these youths foresee their role and place within their respective communities? How do these minority communities co-exist with the predominant culture? How are prevailing intolerance and racism dealt with from both sides of the river? Victims of discrimination, these two groups share their experiences in view of better understanding themselves and others.

Director: Martin Duckworth

Producer: Jacques Vallée, Joe MacDonald

Produced by the National Film Board of Canada in collaboration with the Commission nationale des parents francophone and the financial assistance of Canadian Heritage and Société Radio-Canada CBWFT Winnipeg
49 minutes 5 seconds

Produced by the
National Film Board of Canada



© 1996 National Film Board of Canada
P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3H5



RIEL COUNTRY



VHS
C 9196 013

FROM THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA

RIEL COUNTRY

A FILM BY MARTIN DUCKWORTH



OBJECTIVES

This guide is designed to encourage high school students to reflect on the impact which intolerance, racism, and discrimination have on individuals as well as society as a whole.

PRE-ACTIVITY

Evaluating student's knowledge:

1. Define the term "Metis". Is there a difference between the Francophone Metis and the Anglophone Metis? What do Francophones mean when they use this term in French? Is there a distinct Metis culture or nation? Can anyone today of mixed racial origin call themselves Metis?
2. Make a class survey to record the students' ethnic backgrounds. Compare these results with those statistics from the film's opening.
3. What do you know about the Francophone and Aboriginal minorities? Discuss, then sort according to what is fact and what is stereotype. Points to consider: culture, origins, history, cultural activities, organizations, schools, artists.
4. Define the term "discrimination" and provide examples. List the different types of discrimination. Have you ever been a victim of discrimination? If so, how did it make you feel and how did you react? If not, how do you think it feels to be a victim of discrimination?
5. Define the term "prejudice". Do you have any prejudices? Is it possible to live without any prejudices? Who teaches us these prejudices? What will you teach your children?

ACTIVITY

Analyzing the film:

1. In the film, certain people admit to being a victim of discrimination. Who and why?
2. What was the message of the R.B. Russell play "The First Metis"? How would you apply this message to everyday life today?
3. "But when we, Metis, gave lands in Manitoba to the Canadian Government, we did not give it only to the Anglo-Saxon race. My heart will never abandon the idea of having a new Ireland in the Northwest, a new Scandinavia..." According to this speech Louis Riel gave before his execution, what was his vision of the new society taking form in western Canada a century ago? Do you think that Louis Riel's dream has been realized? React to the speaker on the radio who said, "One country, one language".
4. What did Louis Riel mean when he said, "God cannot create a tribe without locating it. We are not birds. We have to walk on the ground." Establish a link between these sentences and the situations in the film.
5. Why did the film's director choose to have an elderly Metis woman speak to the students?
6. Should we encourage Canadians to keep their culture and traditions? Do cultural differences make Canada a stronger country? What does it offer you personally?
7. In which ways can a group express their ethnic pride? Is it possible for Francophones to live their culture above and beyond cultural events such as the Festival du Voyageur? Does this hold true for Aboriginals?

POST-ACTIVITY

Application:

1. One of the students in the film admits that he does not get along with his family. Where does he find the support he needs? What are his needs? What does his adoptive family have to offer him? Why is the feeling of belonging so strong in humans?
2. Form two groups of four. Appoint one student to leave the classroom. Inform him that he/she will have to try to make friends among the groups. Upon re-entering the class, the student is to ask the following question: "Hey, I've got two tickets to the symphony. Would you like to go with me?" To which the other students will respond in turn with a pre-assigned response, such as:
Oh, don't be such a sissy.
Can't you see that everybody here likes alternative music?
We don't want to hang around with people like you.
I don't have the time. I'm busy that night.
I can't stand classical music, it's stupid.
You're strange.
Get lost!
You couldn't even pay me to go to an event like that.
Ask the student afterwards to report how he/she felt. Has he/she ever felt this way before? How does this situation relate to that of the students in the film?
3. Invite the students to express themselves on the topic of discrimination through the use of a medium of their choice (e.g. drawing, poetry, story-writing, posters, song, painting, skits, video, etc). The students may work individually or in groups. Their product will be presented during an anti-discrimination exposition.
4. It is the year 2200. Because of a huge wave of Liponese (fictitious people) immigrants, only 2 million of your area's 100 million people are anglophone. There are 20 Liponese television stations to one Anglophone sta-

tion; there are 30 Liponese radio stations to only one Anglophone station. Practically all music is Liponese and there is only one English film per year, one professional English-speaking theatrical group, and one English weekly newspaper. When shopping, you must communicate in Liponese to be understood. How do you feel? Do you want to keep your language? If so, how? How is it different to be a part of a minority?

Text: Carole Freynet-Gagne

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cultures in Canada, Kanata, Weigl Educational Publishers, Edmonton, 1986.

Les métis, un témoignage à coeur ouvert, Bureau de l'éducation française, June 1993.

Multiculturalism is for all Manitobans: Towards a Horizontal Mosaic. Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation of Manitoba, August 1988, 84 p.

Multiculturalism, Racism, and the Classroom. A CEA Report, November 1982, 68 p.

