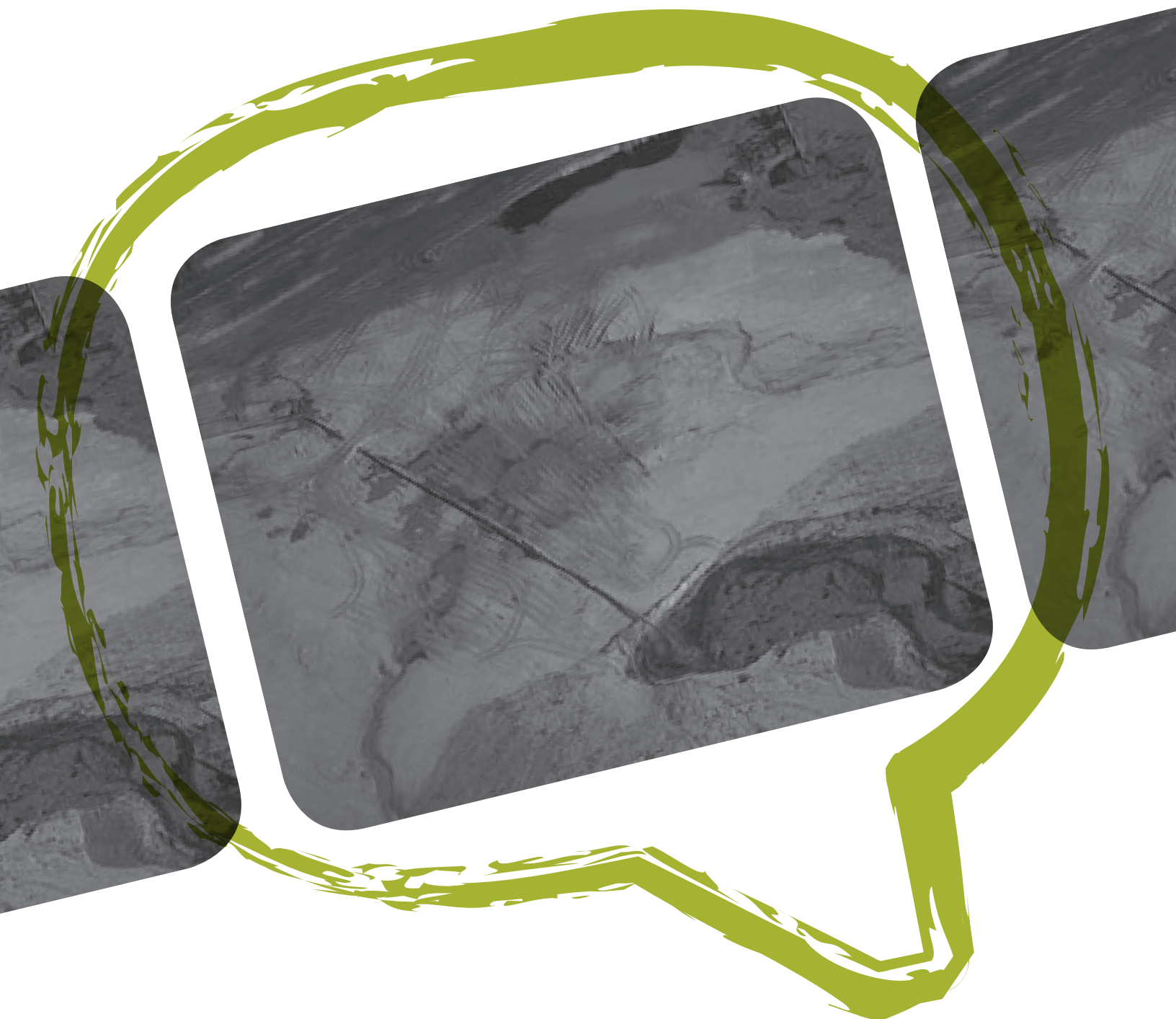


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LAND OF OIL AND WATER

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LAND OF OIL AND WATER

Directed by Warren Cariou and Neil McArthur

Canada | 2009 | 44 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of documentary film by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their classes, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some web links that provide starting points for further research or discussion. In separate packages, there will also be support materials available with information regarding general viewing and teaching principles for documentary film and the fundamental aspects of making documentary films.

The Film

Land of Oil and Water pairs aerial views of decimated landscapes created by open-pit oil extraction in Alberta with shots of the still-pristine forests and muskeg surrounding Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. Although northern Alberta is the home of Canada's tar sands operation, the tar sands can also be found in northern Saskatchewan, and oil companies such as Syncrude and Suncor want to start operations there. In *Land of Oil and Water*, filmmakers Warren Cariou and Neil McArthur travel to First Nations communities to speak to elders, youth, politicians and community members. In Alberta, where the tar sands have been in operation since the 1960s, there are those who say the money they've made doesn't make up for the environmental degradation, loss of habitat and destruction of traditional Aboriginal ways of life. There are also those who say that "progress" is inevitable, and that native people should benefit from the industry. In Saskatchewan, where oil extraction has not yet begun, community members are divided: Can the knowledge Aboriginal people have about the land mitigate the oil industry's impact? What's more important: providing jobs for the community or ensuring that the land and ways of life are passed down to future generations? Is oil exploration development or destruction? These and other questions are at the heart of *Land of Oil and Water*, a film that probes into the divisions between ancient holistic systems and contemporary capitalist ventures.

The Filmmaker

Metis writer Warren Cariou grew up on a farm outside Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. He is the author of two books, *The Exalted Company of Roadside Martyrs* and *Lake of the Prairies*, which won the 2002 Drainie-Taylor Prize for Biography. Cariou is currently an associate professor in the Department of English, Film and Theatre at the University of Manitoba, where he is Canada research chair and director of the Centre for Creative Writing and Oral Traditions. *Land of Oil and Water* is his directorial debut.

Neil McArthur is a professor at the University of Manitoba, where he teaches European philosophy and literature. He was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, and spent part of his childhood living in northern Saskatchewan. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California. McArthur, whose film *Out of the Way* premiered at the 2006 Calgary International Film Festival, is a member of the Winnipeg Film Group. He is also the author of *David Hume's Political Theory: Law, Commerce and the Constitution of Government*, published in 2007.

Educational package written and compiled by
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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

There are important themes in this film that have broad implications for students and their futures. Take time to activate your students' background understanding of these themes before viewing. This will help them as they come to their own understanding and develop their critical abilities.

The following three subsections, on this page, 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 web links for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Begin with the Examining Images and Making Predictions activity on page four. Have students complete the prediction chart on page five.

Show students the first few minutes of the film (the opening shots with music, before the director's voiceover begins). Have students work in small groups to answer the following questions:

- What kind of media text is this?
- Who is the target audience for this media text? How can you tell?
- How and why does this media text appeal to its target audience?
- How does this media text appeal to you?
- Print several of the quotations from page seven on individual sheets of paper. Have students work in small groups or in pairs to discuss the ideas in the quotations. Ask them to share their conclusions with the large group. To get them started, ask them to think about the following:
- What values are being promoted? How do you know this?
- Whose point of view do the values represent?
- Are your values represented? Why or why not?

Set a purpose for viewing by sharing with students the six steps toward making meaning of any text: select, describe, analyze, interpret, evaluate and reflect. Ask students what they think each of these steps might involve. Then screen the film. The viewing and post-viewing activities will demonstrate what each step actually involves.

Viewing Activities

Ask students to describe what they see. Ask them to withhold judgment and observe carefully. They can choose to write down or describe orally their observations. Stop the film periodically if students choose to describe their observations orally.

Have students take notes on, or jot down connections to, one of the big ideas on page five of this guide.

Have students use a graphic organizer to summarize the film as they watch it. Have students draw their own organizers using the five-W format (who, what, when, where and why).

Stop the film at various points and have students provide oral summaries at each point. Have them do the summaries using the five-W format.

Set a purpose for viewing. Give students some or all of the following guiding questions:

- Did the predictions you made in your prediction chart come true? Jot down information from the film that supports or disproves your prediction.
- In what ways does this media text tell a story? What type or category of story is it? Does it follow a formula?
- What are the main conflicts we encounter in this film? Were the conflicts resolved at the end of the film? Why or why not?
- How was this message constructed? How well does it represent reality?
- How might others understand this message differently?
- Who are the key characters? What characteristics do they possess that make them interesting to watch? Are the motivations of the characters clear to the viewer? What other options do the characters have and what are the consequences of their actions?

- Who produced this media text, and for what purpose? Who profits if the message is accepted? Who may be disadvantaged?
- How was the text made? What conventions or production techniques are used?
- How would this story be different if told from the perspective of another character in the film (a character shown in the film or referred to in the film)?

Post-Viewing Activities

Have students revisit three questions from the pre-viewing activities: Who is the target audience for this media text? How can you tell? How and why does this media text appeal to its target audience? Have students' answers changed? Were their initial impressions of the film correct? Were the themes they saw in the first few minutes of the film expanded upon later in the film?

Have students revisit the quotations from the pre-viewing activities. Were their minds changed or opinions altered/enhanced by the film?

Have students build a conceptual map showing the web of ideas, topics and associated sub-topics in the film. Ask students to identify questions they think will represent the important issues.

Using the information and the questions students created in the previous activity, ask students to make interconnections among textual elements. This should take the form of an argument, including a thesis statement and evidence from the text.

Have students make a final judgment about the text based on the argument they created in previous activity. Students will learn that their evaluations and feelings are informed by description, analysis and interpretation.

Ask students to reflect on the processes of description, interpretation and evaluation. Did these steps help inform their ideas? Ask students to write a personal reflection to summarize what they have learned.

For further ideas around how to explore this documentary, use the guiding questions on page six.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY: EXAMINING IMAGES AND MAKING PREDICTIONS

Below you will find images taken from the film. View each one and use the organizer on the following page to record what you think these images are telling us about in the film. Use clues from the image as well as your own experience to support your answer.



IMAGE A.



IMAGE B.



IMAGE C.



IMAGE D.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY: IMAGE AND IDEA ORGANIZER

	My prediction	Clues from the image	From my own experience
Image A Sign			
Image B Industry			
Image C Fishing			
Image D Water			

THE BIG QUESTIONS/IDEAS/THEMES

Multiple Perspectives

What is the subject of this film? Can you determine the filmmakers' perspective on this subject? What evidence can you find in the film to support your view?

How does this film help you analyze and interpret points of view about issues that concern people?

Does the filmmakers' perspective foster respect for diversity and an inclusive society? If so, how?

Identity

Whose story is told in this documentary? Whose story is not told? How does this story, and the way it is told, help you understand your own community/life?

How do the people in this film identify with their community? What are the common bonds among the people in this film? What challenges do they face in expressing their identity?

What film techniques do the filmmakers use to convey the identity of the people in this film?

Citizenship

What insights does this documentary offer about the ideals of good citizenship in the community depicted in this film?

How does the film deal with issues of freedom, equality, human dignity, and individual and collective rights and responsibilities?

Change and Continuity

How does this film help you understand a community's values and its attitudes towards an issue at a particular time?

What changes do the people in the film experience? What causes those changes? What are the consequences of those changes for the people in the documentary?

Culture and Community

Which aspects of a people's culture does this film focus on? Why do you think the filmmakers focused on those aspects?

How do the images, themes and message of this film help you understand the filmmakers' attitude towards the subject? What do you think might have been the intended audience's attitude towards the documentary subject?

Individuals, Societies and Economic Decisions

What economic systems are at work in this film? What are some of the causes and effects of the economic decisions made by the people in the film's community?

Does money play a part in the decisions being made in the film and what does it tell you about their local culture?

Power and Governance

What system of government control do we see in this documentary? How is power distributed within this society? What are the implications of that distribution on issues affecting the people's well-being and freedom?

Global Connections

What global issues are addressed in this film? What is the filmmakers' point of view on the opportunities and challenges of those issues?

Adapted from NFB Documentary Lens: <http://www.nfb.ca>

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Additional Pre- or Post-Viewing Activities

Have students write a letter to the creators of this media text. Is the film an effective tool? How would students produce the text differently?

Have students write a letter to the characters who appear in the film.

Have students make a five-minute video using whatever equipment is available to them (e.g., cellphone or digital camera video) on a local environmental issue that would be suitable for a documentary film. This activity can be as formal or informal as you wish: if students have studied film production and technique, they can create storyboards before filming.

Using whatever technology is available to them, have students create a three-minute sound collage reflecting the themes or messages in *Land of Oil and Water*.

A fast-paced television commercial or music video may contain more than 40 shots in 30 seconds. Some people think that when we return to the slower editing of other programming—such as documentary film—we find the pace too slow or dull. Have students discuss the effect of speed in commercials and music videos on our perception of other programming and on our lives in general.

Additional Questions for Pre- or Post-Viewing Activities

What environmental issues exist in your community? Are these issues related to development?

Are values of “development” and “progress” the same for everyone? What factors could make people disagree? Where do these values come from?

Do you think First Nations people can make a positive impact on decisions made by government and industry? Is it better for First Nations people to get involved in industry, even when they have concerns about the effects of that industry? Or should they stay out of the process?

What are your feelings about one or more of the characters you met in the film?

Is there unemployment in your ethnic or geographical community? Does financial gain or financial stability always have to come before the environment? How could people respect the environment and still foster financial/class equity at the community level?

Would you be willing to set up a roadblock or take part in a protest in order to stop industrial activities in your community? What would happen if you could no longer eat the food or drink the water in your community?

Do you think government and industry treat Aboriginal people differently from non-Aboriginal people when it comes to industrial activity? Does location play a role? Does race? Would this happen in a large city?

How does this film encourage you to see the world differently?

Quotations From the Film to Explore

"The people in the area face great opportunity, but there are also big risks." What are the opportunities created by industrial development? What are the risks?

"I think we've lost a bit of our pride. Too many of our youth are on welfare. And if we could get them working, [we'd] get the pride back." How do you think Aboriginal people have lost their pride? Will working in the oil industry help them recover what they've lost?

"If we can set the trend, as people that are building this community now, we can be involved in the decision-making and the policy-making. We can set up rules and policies for our communities, saying, 'This is the way it's gonna be,'... and we can pass that on to our younger people. Then I think we can build a community that will have a solid foundation." Consider who the speaker is here. To what “community” is he referring? Does he speak for everyone in the area?

"People have to work, and that's what they come for. It's the money." Discuss the individual and collective values and assumptions contained in this statement.

"You can have all the money in the world but you can't buy water or clean air." Compare and contrast the individual and collective values in this statement with values and assumptions in the statement above.

"[They] pretty much just stripped the land and fed everybody money to keep their mouths shut." Consider who the speaker is here. Compare and contrast his beliefs with other youth who appear in the film.

"You see the creeks even now, they're drying out.... It's all the companies taking our water.... What are we going to live by? Nothing." What does this statement say about the relationship Aboriginal people have to the land?

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 11 Native Studies: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices, University Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze themes related to sovereignty, as portrayed in media works by Aboriginal creators. • identify and assess solutions to challenges suggested in media works by Aboriginal creators. • use a variety of electronic primary and secondary sources to gather and assess information and develop ideas for writing.
Grade 11 Native Studies: Current Aboriginal Issues in Canada, University/College Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of how Aboriginal identity is linked to the physical environment. • demonstrate an understanding of Aboriginal peoples' strong relationship to the land. • describe how Aboriginal peoples adapt to external forces. • identify social, political and economic issues currently being addressed by Aboriginal individuals and communities in Canada. • demonstrate an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal health issues.
Grade 11 Native Studies: Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society, College Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain how Aboriginal peoples' links to the land and to a sustainable environment are part of their cultural identity.
Grade 11 Native Studies: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices, College Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze images in media works related to Aboriginal identity. • demonstrate an understanding of form, purpose, audience and production techniques by designing or creating media works, independently or collaboratively, based on ideas, themes and issues related to relationships examined in this course. • compare, through analysis, relationships presented in media works by Aboriginal creators. • analyze themes related to sovereignty, as portrayed in media works by Aboriginal creators. • identify and assess solutions to challenges suggested in media works by Aboriginal creators. • use a variety of electronic primary and secondary sources to gather and assess information and develop ideas for writing.
Grade 11 Native Studies: Aboriginal Beliefs, Values and Aspirations in Contemporary Society, Workplace Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples as a result of actions taken by the federal and provincial governments. • describe the efforts of Aboriginal peoples to attain autonomy in their lives. • demonstrate an understanding of the challenges facing Aboriginal youth. • describe competing values between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies on issues of ecological sustainability.

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 11 Native Studies: Contemporary Aboriginal Voices, Workplace Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe images in media works related to Aboriginal identity. • demonstrate an understanding of relationships presented in media works by Aboriginal creators. • identify challenges addressed in media works by Aboriginal creators. • use a variety of electronic sources to gather information and develop ideas for personal, school and workplace-related writing.
Grade 12 Native Studies: Aboriginal Governance: Emerging Directions, University/College Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe social and political conditions that affect the current dialogue between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.
Grade 11 English: Media Studies, University Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. • create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques.
Grade 11 English: Media Studies, College/Workplace Preparation Grade 12 English: Media Studies, University/College/Workplace Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. • create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques. • reflect on and identify their strengths as media interpreters and creators, areas for improvement and the strategies they found most helpful in understanding and creating media texts.
Grade 11 English: Media Studies, Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • deconstruct a variety of types of media texts, identifying the codes, conventions and techniques used and explaining how they create meaning.
Grade 12 The Arts: Exploring the Arts, Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the concepts (elements, principles, styles, genres and techniques) used in various art forms. • analyze and interpret others' productions, demonstrating an understanding of the process of critical analysis. • analyze aspects of cultural identity found in productions.
Grade 11 The Arts: Media Arts, Open Grade 12 The Arts: Media Arts, Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe how various concepts (elements, principles) and techniques and procedures are used in the works of others. • evaluate the aesthetic components of media productions, demonstrating an understanding of the process of critical analysis. • analyze the impact of media productions on themselves and their communities. • analyze the function of media art in society.

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

Journalist Andrew Nikiforuk explains the tar sands.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjjnEzoxEI8>

An Al-Jazeera English news story on the tar sands. Note that Al-Jazeera English uses the term "Native Indian" instead of "Aboriginal" or "First Nations." Deconstruct the issue of terminology with students if you screen this video in the classroom.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch#!v=Eucr3700z60&feature=related>

A National Geographic TV trailer for an episode on the mega-structures of the tar sands.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch#!v=UYwHR9ybOIM&feature=related>

Clips from an interview with Celina Harpe, an elder at Fort Mackay First Nation.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch#!v=kG2sJAn47QI&feature=related>

Various Links for Lesson Plan Ideas, Media Awareness, Critical Literacy and Documentary Films

The Association for Media Literacy: This Canadian website examines how media impacts and influences culture.

<http://www.aml.ca/home>

Using Documentaries in the Classroom: This teacher librarian's personal website contains excellent resources for teaching with documentary films.

http://www.frankwbaker.com/using_docs_in_the_classroom.htm

Media Awareness: A Canadian non-profit media education and Internet-literacy resource library.

<http://www.media-awareness.ca>

Center for Media Literacy: A U.S. website which provides several resources for making, understanding and criticizing media.

<http://www.medialit.org>

The National Film Board of Canada website: On this site is an area with teaching resources and short documentary films that can be used as teaching aides.

<http://www.nfb.ca>

Hot Docs Looking at Documentaries: A teaching guide that sets out questions designed to help teachers include the study of documentary film in their curriculum.

http://www.hotdocs.ca/youth/docs_for_schools/2010_docs_for_schools_selections/