



# REEL CANADA Film Festival Kit

## Welcome, Teachers!

Thank you for your interest in planning a REEL CANADA Film Festival at your school.

This is a step-by-step guide to putting together your school's own customized REEL CANADA Film Festival — with our help, of course.

We've created this resource to provide you with support, models, a checklist, and tips to help guide you. As you go through these resources, remember that you're not alone. We are always just a quick call or email away and are eager to help you create an enjoyable and rewarding film festival experience for your students.

Please get in touch via [contactus@reelcanada.ca](mailto:contactus@reelcanada.ca) or 416-642-5796.

We look forward to working with you!



## WHAT IS REEL CANADA?

### WHO WE ARE

REEL CANADA is a charitable organization whose mission is to introduce students to the power and diversity of Canadian film and engage them in a conversation about what it means to be Canadian.

### WHAT WE DO

Since 2005, we've been helping teachers and students across Canada organize festivals of Canadian film in their schools, and integrate Canadian film into the classroom.

Started by members of the national film and television industry, **REEL CANADA is a travelling film festival that brings Canadian films to Canadian students across the nation.**

Through our experiences with schools and school boards in almost every province, we've developed a variety of festival models that allow us to create events at any school regardless of size, location, or resources.

Our festivals and educational resources are geared toward French and English high school students grades 9 through 12, and English Language Learners of all ages.

Best of all, we provide our services **FREE OF CHARGE!**

### HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

#### Film Festivals

If you'd like to organize a Canadian film festival at your school, reading this document is a great first step. We can help you put on an event of any size or scope, just read on!

#### Educational Resources

If the festival experience is not for you, but you'd still like to incorporate Canadian films into your classroom, we offer lesson plans for grades 9 – 12 in a variety of subject areas, as well as access to our DVDs, to help you bring this important part of our culture to your students. If you are interested in using Canadian film as a teaching tool, please get in touch.



## WHAT IS A REEL CANADA FILM FESTIVAL?

Your REEL CANADA film festival can take many forms, depending on your interests and the needs of your school. You can choose to show only a single film, or several. Your festival can take place in a single venue (such as a classroom, auditorium or drama room) or multiple rooms across the school. It can take place over the course of a half-day, a whole day, or several days.

We will help you make the right choices for your school, and you will find lots of helpful tools on the following pages. But before we start planning a festival, we'd like to explain our philosophy and give you a few basic guidelines.

A REEL CANADA film festival is more than just showing films in a classroom. We hope it will expose your students to Canadian film in a way that is engaging and fun in the hopes of opening a dialogue with them about Canadian culture and identity.

There are three key elements that we believe are crucial to a great film festival experience

- An uninterrupted “big screen” experience
- Student engagement in the planning process
- Live discussion

Because we believe in creating an exciting film festival experience for students, we recommend that all festival presentations use the largest screen available to your students, and that the screenings be uninterrupted. That is, if you're planning to show a feature length film, you should plan on booking a minimum of two class periods in a row for your festival so that you can show the film in its entirety without breaking it up over two classes. We also discourage breaks and intermissions, as they too interrupt the flow of the event.

We also believe that the key to engaging students and making them excited about the REEL CANADA experience lies in involving them as much as possible in planning the event. **This includes giving them copies of the REEL CANADA catalogue to look at, including them in the process of selecting films, and encouraging them to volunteer on the Festival Day to help things run smoothly.**

Student roles are discussed in further detail on page 7.

One of the ways that we have found students engage and connect most with the films they've seen is if they are given an opportunity to think about and discuss them immediately after the screenings.

For this reason, we always schedule time for discussion at our festivals and recommend that all screenings be “facilitated” by an adult who can get the conversation started. Facilitation is explained in more detail on page 8.



## SUPPORT FOR YOUR REEL CANADA FILM FESTIVAL

Every school that participates in a REEL CANADA Film Festival receives:

- A copy of our catalogue (which lists all the great Canadian films we offer) for every participating student
- Advice and support during the festival planning process
- Access to DVDs of our films
- REEL CANADA lesson plans
- REEL CANADA posters and other promotional help for your event

Depending on the scope, timing and location of your event, REEL CANADA can occasionally provide:

- Trained facilitators to introduce films and lead discussions after screenings
- Technical support or assistance with equipment
- Special guest speakers (who can appear live or via Skype)
- Specially printed admission tickets for the films

We will work with you to develop an event that is right for you and your school.

REEL CANADA provides all our services **free of charge**. However, there are several things we will require your help with:

- Promotion of the event: You and your team must do your best to get your students excited about the festival
- Teacher Supervision to ensure all participants have a great experience
- Feedback from teachers and students on how the event went
- A signed School Agreement, confirming your school's commitment to working with us
- A fully refundable deposit for all of the DVDs we lend out, which we ask you to return after your event is over



## CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING YOUR REEL CANADA FILM FESTIVAL

### How Many Students?

Your film festival can be as large or small as you want — we've planned events for 60 students to over 1,000 students.

Deciding on which and how many students participate is something you will want to do in consultation with us, as well as with your Principal, and your colleagues. You can:

- design an event for your entire school; or
- a specific grade level or subject area; or
- invite teachers to sign their classes up on a first come, first served basis

Another factor to consider when determining the maximum number of participants for your film festival is the seating capacity of your screening venues. Are there enough seats for everyone?

### Choosing The Type Of Festival Model

Your festival can take place over a half day (the length of time it takes to screen a single feature film) or a whole day. It can also take place over multiple days or even an entire week. In an attempt to determine which festival model is the best fit for you and your school, try answering the following questions:

- How many films would you like to show at your festival?
- Will you be able to recruit other staff to help you plan and manage this festival?
- A REEL CANADA festival day is like an in-school field trip – Will your principal allow you to plan an event that requires students to be excused from one or more of their other classes?
- How many rooms are available for your festival?
- How many students will be involved, and can they help you plan a film festival?
- Is there a special week or school-wide activity (eg. "Social Justice Week," or "Arts Week") that the film festival could be incorporated into?
- Could additional classes, departments, or student groups be enticed to participate if a film was chosen to suit their interests or needs?



## Venues

You will require at least one screening venue (room) for the festival. Each venue requires a projector, a DVD player (or laptop that can screen DVDs), a screen, a sound system, and speakers.

You can mount a festival in a single venue (such as an auditorium, large lecture hall, or even a classroom) or in multiple venues.

Multiple venues add to the “festival feel” of an event by giving students the option of seeing multiple films in a single day, and additional venues sometimes allow more or all students to participate in the festival. However, multiple-venue festivals do require more resources, equipment, and planning than a single venue festival.

Things to consider when selecting a venue:

- How many seats do you need?
- Will technical equipment be easy to set up in that space?
- Will the classes or activities that normally take place in this venue have to be moved or cancelled, or can you invite those students to participate in the festival?

## Selecting The Films

Once you have determined the size and scope of your event, the fun begins!

We will send you as many copies of our catalogue (containing the full, curated list of films we offer) as you need, so that every participating student can have one.

**It's important to us to expose students to the wealth of Canadian films that are out there, not just the one or two films they might see on the festival day, so we ask that all students be encouraged to browse through the catalogue at some point during the planning process.**

You can assemble a “student programming committee” to help you choose the films you will screen — this can be just a few students, or all the participants.

If you are concerned about content or wish to steer your students toward films on certain subjects, we will work with you to narrow the choices down to an appropriate “short list” for the students to pick from.

This selection process can be as flexible as you wish, but we strongly encourage you to include students in it. Choosing the films will significantly increase the students' sense of engagement with and excitement for the event.



## Educational Resources

In order to enrich the film festival experience and increase its educational value, and to help you connect the event to what you are teaching in class, we offer a wide range of lesson plans FREE OF CHARGE.

Depending on the type of festival you are organizing, we will send you the lesson plans that apply, all of which can also be downloaded from the “Teachers” page on our website.

We have a 13-Lesson unit on Canadian film that is appropriate for grade 9 through 12 English / Media classes. These lessons are not film-specific, but include lessons that can be applied to any film. They include fun games and activities, journal topics, and lessons about storytelling, film, and the Canadian film industry.

We also have film-specific lessons for all the features and documentaries in our catalogue, in various subject areas including English, History, Geography, Drama, Music, Social Science and more. Get in touch with us for a complete list of lesson plans.

We also offer ESL lesson plans appropriate for beginners and more advanced students of English for all the films that are marked as “ESL appropriate” in our catalogue.

If you would like to make your REEL CANADA festival a more educationally rewarding experience, we encourage you to make use of our resources.

## EVALUATIONS

We will send you feedback forms for each of the participating students and teachers to complete after the REEL CANADA film festival. These evaluations take about ten to fifteen minutes to fill out, and we really rely on you to manage this as an in-class activity and collect the forms after they’ve been filled in. This feedback is really important to us — it is key to our being able to provide our services FREE OF CHARGE — so we really appreciate you taking the time out to fill them in! Once the forms are collected, we would be happy to send a courier to your school to pick them up.



## FACILITATORS AND GUESTS

### Facilitators

A facilitator is in charge of welcoming students at the beginning of a screening, briefly explaining REEL CANADA's purpose and mission, and introducing the film. After the screening, they lead a discussion, or moderate a question and answer period with another guest. Occasionally, REEL CANADA can send a facilitator to your school to do this. However, it can also be done by a teacher. We always recommend that screenings be "facilitated" as live interaction and engagement is key to connecting the students with what they've just seen.

If a teacher is going to do the job of facilitating a screening, we can provide them with notes, trivia, fun facts, discussion topics and sample questions about the film.

### Special Guests

In some cases, depending on availability and scheduling, as well as the location of your school, we might be able to bring a film industry professional or special guest to your school to speak with students. You too can invite guests from your community to participate in your film festival.

Guests could include:

- Local filmmakers or representatives of local film festivals or film societies
- Local issue experts who can speak about the topics raised in a documentary (that can even include a teacher from the school)
- Other "local celebrities" such as TV personalities, or even politicians

### Student Roles

A team of student volunteers can really help an event run smoothly, and REEL CANADA can provide you with volunteer badges for anyone who's helping out with the festival. Students can help in many ways, including (but not limited to):

- Decorating the school for the festival – making displays, putting up posters
- Greeting special guests and ushering the audience into screening rooms
- "Covering the event" as journalists, photographers, or videographers
- Operating the technical equipment – running the projectors, DVD players, sound systems and/or microphones in your venues



## CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING A REEL CANADA FILM FESTIVAL

- CONTACT** REEL CANADA for support
- GET PERMISSION:** set a film festival date and have it approved by your department and administration
- SECURE THE SPACE:** decide on the venues for the screenings and make sure that it's ok to use them on your festival date
- ASSEMBLE A TEAM OF STAFF & STUDENT VOLUNTEERS**
- SCHOOL AGREEMENT:** Ask your principal to sign and fax or email us the School Agreement, affirming your commitment to working with us
- ORDER CATALOGUES:** Decide on the number of student participants and request a catalogue from us for every student
- TECHNOLOGY:** ensure the availability of projectors, DVD players, speakers, microphones, chairs, and any other equipment you need in each venue
- INTERNET ACCESS:** determine if your venues have a strong enough connection for a guest speaker to communicate with your students via Skype
- FILMS:** select the films you wish to screen from the catalogue
- CONTENT SIGN OFF:** make sure your Principal approves the films you have chosen by signing off on our content advisories
- ORDER DVDs** and pay your deposit, which is fully refundable
- FACILITATORS AND GUEST SPEAKERS:** connect with us to determine what we can provide, or how we can help you facilitate your own festival
- PUBLICITY:** if your school has a student newspaper or radio station, we encourage student journalists to cover the fest. If they do, we'd love a copy of their articles or photos afterwards!
- EVALUATIONS:** fill out and return the evaluation forms, and let us know how your REEL CANADA experience was.

Please remember: We are here to help you put on a great film festival. If you need assistance or advice at any point during the planning process, get in touch with us at [416-642-5796](tel:416-642-5796) or [contactus@reelcanada.ca](mailto:contactus@reelcanada.ca).