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Indigenous Representation in Cinema

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Western University with Indigenous Services, Student Experience, and Research Western



Western

Western Research

Western Student Experience

Introduction

Research Questions:

1. In what ways does Dead Man represent the critical changes that mainstream cinema must make regarding representation of other cultures.
2. How does mainstream cinema represent other cultures, women, and minorities?

Indigenous people are underrepresented offscreen on film-sets, and misrepresented onscreen. This has always been true in cinema and progress towards proper representation has been incredibly slow.

This has effects both on Indigenous people, and how the rest of society views them. It limits career opportunities for Indigenous filmmakers, restricts Indigenous role models on film, and reinforces cultural misunderstandings in society.

Methods

I spent time watching and reading about Indigenous films and attempted to find what was important to those film makers. I also watched and read about movies by non-Indigenous film makers and considered what they did well, and what they needed to work on to improve cultural representation. I used Dead Man as an example of cultural representation done well.



Results

While Indigenous representation in film has hugely improved in the last 100 years, the improvement has seemed somewhat stagnant for the last two decades.

The literature on these topics remains underdeveloped compared to other fields within cinema, although it has increased in the last several years.

Conclusions

Without critical thought from all audiences, as well as new rules and regulations put on larger film studios, these issues are unlikely to fix themselves.

While Canada has done some of the necessary work towards more equal representation, it's still likely inadequate, and the U.S. has yet to match that effort.

Major Studios (including subsidiaries) – DGA Signatory

Studio – Box Office \$250k - \$10M

	#Films	#Directors	#Caucasian	#Minority	#Unknown	%Caucasian	%Minority	%Unknown
2017	13	13	11	1	1	85%	8%	8%

Studio – Box Office >\$10M

	#Films	#Directors	#Caucasian	#Minority	#Unknown	%Caucasian	%Minority	%Unknown
2017	64	67	60	5	2	90%	7%	3%