

Improving Portrayals of Women of Colour in Canadian Screen Media

Reelworld Screen Institute

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	3
Key Findings	5
Detailed Findings Outlook on Canadian TV	7
Detailed Findings Portrayals of Women of Colour	10
Detailed Findings Looking Outward and Looking Ahead	15
Detailed Findings Content Evaluation	18

OVERVIEW

Ipsos conducted a qualitative research engagement exploring the lives of young women of colour and their understanding of stereotypes that exist in the Canadian television landscape. This research consisted of two (2) sequential phases:

Phase 1:

EyeJournal exercise with five (5) English and three (3) French participants between October 24 and November 1, 2022, to understand their perspectives of Canadian television shows and evaluate Canadian television content in detail.

Phase 2:

Focus Group discussions with four (4) English participants and triad with three (3) French participants on November 30, 2022, to understand portrayals of women of colour and stereotypes that exist in Canadian television, the impact that it has on women of colour, and steps that can be taken to improve these portrayals in Canadian screen media.

To qualify to participate in this study, Ipsos sought out women meeting the following characteristics:

- Ages 18-29;
- Women who are Black, Indigenous, or otherwise Women of Colour (with one white participant in each of the English and French groups);
- Reported watching at least three to five hours of television per week; and
- Reported having seen at least a few episodes of, or considering themselves a fan of, four out of ten given popular Canadian television shows:

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TELEVISION SHOWS	FRENCH-LANGUAGE TELEVISION SHOWS
<i>Transplant</i>	<i>Fugueuse</i>
<i>Nurses</i>	<i>Alerte Amber</i>
<i>Cardinal</i>	<i>Épidémie</i>
<i>Murdoch Mysteries</i>	<i>L'Échappée</i>
<i>Coroner</i>	<i>District 31</i>
<i>Schitt's Creek</i>	<i>Les Pays d'en haut</i>
<i>Departure</i>	<i>Toute la vie</i>
<i>Private Eyes</i>	<i>5e rang</i>
<i>Hudson and Rex</i>	<i>Mon fils</i>
<i>Kim's Convenience</i>	<i>Fragile</i>



This report outlines findings in two key areas:

- Understanding the portrayals of women of colour in Canadian TV and the impact of (identified) stereotypes on television viewers, and
- Evaluating the content of television shows (English and French) to offer insights around embedded stereotypes.

Note: The sample size of this research is considered small (5 EN & 3 FR participants), and, as such these results are directional in nature. Further research is required to validate the findings presented in this report.



KEY FINDINGS

- Young women of colour shared their thoughts and feelings on the current Canadian screen media landscape, the portrayal of women of colour specifically, and their views on where improvements are needed when it comes to these portrayals.
- Participants identified that while there are many shows they enjoy that are Canadian-made, **Canadian television is “lacking”** in a number of ways:
 - Consistent with what has been a common issue about Canadian media, Canadian television is thought to be **low budget, uninspired, and repetitive**, without pushing boundaries in terms of unique, creative ideas.
 - This is reflected in the **poorer quality representation and misrepresentation of people of colour**, particularly women of colour – **where or if it even exists**.
 - Canadian television is frequently compared to American television, with participants saying **American TV has a more diverse representation** and a higher volume of content to watch.
- The **portrayals of women of colour** overall were deemed to be ‘problematic’ in nature.
 - While there was a recognition that certain TV media represented women and women of colour in powerful characters, most believed that there are **more negative and stereotyped portrayals** than positive and acceptable depictions.
 - There is **minimal diversity and representation** of women of colour in television, and most felt that any **existing representation played on and contributed to harmful stereotypes**.
 - It was pointed out that **women of colour and specifically Indigenous women** are underrepresented in television, and, if they are, the **portrayals are reinforced stereotypes**.
 - Participants felt that the marginal portrayal of women of colour in television reflected a form of **‘tokenism,’** in which women of colour were included primarily for the **sake of inclusion**, rather than **attempting to create a space where women of colour were heard and adequately represented**.
- There was an in-depth explanation about specific Canadian television programs, and, overall, found **key issues with stereotypical representations of women of colour**. The portrayal of black women was a point of contention for most, in particular the use of the **‘violent/angry black women’** stereotype in television. There were other **‘ethnicity-based’** stereotypes and **‘generational’ stereotypes** (which have not changed over the years). The use of these stereotypes potentially leads to **restricting the behaviour of women of colour, for fear of playing into cultural stereotypes**.
- Negative representation of women was thought to **have an impact on broader society in a number of ways**:
 - Many felt it is incredibly **important to be “properly” and “accurately”** represented on television. This lack of representation and of authenticity was thought to **allow for the propagation of Eurocentric standards and ideals**, which could be **internalized and incredibly harmful** – **particularly for younger female audiences**.

- Stereotypical or otherwise harmful representations of women of colour were identified as being **discouraging for young girls, normalizing poor societal treatment and discrimination, damaging narratives, and othering**.
 - Canadian media was thought to be complicit in “**cultural amnesia**” regarding the lack of or **misrepresentation of Indigenous women** in particular.
 - Proper, authentic representation has the potential to help **validate and recognize the unique lived experiences of** women and girls of colour.
- In terms of recommendations of what can be done to improve portrayals of women of colour in Canadian television, most agreed that this largely boils down to **involving women of colour in the process of content creation**, via **proper casting, consultation with people of colour**, and **assuring women of colour are involved in decision-making** behind-the-scenes in positions of authority such as in the writer’s room or the director’s chair.



A photograph of a person sitting on a couch, holding a remote control. In the background, a television is visible, displaying a colorful image. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting an evening or indoor setting with artificial light. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt. The remote control is black with many buttons. The television screen shows a bright, colorful image, possibly a sports event or a news broadcast. The overall atmosphere is relaxed and domestic.

DETAILED FINDINGS

OUTLOOK ON CANADIAN TV

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When prompted to think about Canadian television in general, **popular TV shows were top-of-mind**. Most named the television shows they enjoyed, specifically those deemed to be “lighthearted,” such as *Schitt’s Creek* and *Kim’s Convenience*. However, despite a fondness for specific shows, many felt that Canadian television seemed “**very low budget**,” with mediocre cinematography, and storylines that fail to “capture” viewers.

Many noted Canadian shows **do not reflect diversity** and have **stereotyped representations** based on the characters’ ethnicities. A few felt that Canadian television seemed to be **outdated**, failing to reflect the current Canadian culture.



My favourite [show] would be Kim’s Convenience as it has some relatable elements of an Asian family and I can draw parallels between my life. & The Coroner because it’s on par with some of the other shows I’ve seen and enjoy [sic]. [Canadian TV is] low budget meaning stories and filming are not as great. Not as interesting. [I] find lighthearted [shows] like Schitt’s Creek, Kim’s Convenience are better. But the others the stories don’t really grab me.

Kim’s Convenience: I enjoyed this show but I noticed a lot of stereotypes and politically incorrect jokes. Such as the staff at Jung’s car rental company begin to call their white coworker Terence ‘Wasabi,’ after his love of the Japanese condiment; Shannon, Jung’s white girlfriend, says she can handle piquant ramen because ‘I’m dating a spicy Korean;’ and Terence makes a joke about how ‘going Indian’ had gotten him ‘sent home’ on Halloween.

In terms of cinematography, it doesn’t have any art to it. Doesn’t seem very artistic to me. It isn’t dynamic and modern because it is not reflecting current culture. [I] found a lot of Canadian TV a little corny, kind of cheesy, indicative of Canadian society from the 90’s and 80’s. I feel like that ideal [is] no longer [relevant] and I don’t think it was indicative of society back then.

It was noted that Canadian television has a **unique landscape that exists outside of “conventional Hollywood,”** given the advantage of Canada’s French and Indigenous influence and “multicultural connection as a nation.” However, this uniqueness **hasn’t yet been adequately leveraged** and there is a huge opportunity to showcase this diverse landscape. Despite numerous “**amazing**” **filming locations**, they were regularly unsure as to whether Canadian television shows are filmed in Canada.

Many also pointed out the **underrepresentation as well as a misrepresentation** of women and specifically women of colour in the Canadian TV industry.

Canadian and American Television

Unprompted, some compared Canadian television to American television and mentioned that the latter has more diverse and accurate representations of various segments of the population and addresses bolder, more creative topics.

Prompted, in comparison between Canadian television and American television:

- **Canadian television** is seen as somewhat mediocre, for reasons related to budget, casting choices, storylines, and simply because it is “not as interesting.”
- **American television** was noted as having the infrastructure that allows for greater volumes of content to be produced and, therefore, more opportunities for success.



[I] don't find Canadian TV shows as good as American. I don't know why, if it's budget, [or] not right actors.

America has more content, more opportunities to succeed, and more opportunities to fail. They have more wiggle room to do that because there's so much infrastructure there to support filming. Maybe what Canada doesn't have is enough infrastructure to do those kinds of experiments so to speak.

When it comes to preserving culture, in an American series we'll more often hear various languages. You hear more dialects, conversations in the language the character will speak. In Quebec, you'll hear just one word. It's as if [Canadian TV is] timid. It's a French-speaking series and we can't shy away from that. There is more linguistic diversity in the US. But of course, the budgets are not comparable. The budgets to make a movie are way different.



Many feel there exists an **opportunity for new concepts and uniquely Canadian stories** to be told through Canadian television. However, Canadian television seemed to be “unoriginal,” borrowing ideas from American television.



A lot of stories seem to just be taken from American shows, a lot of true crime things [have] all been done before, it's like, 'we're over this.' We need something new, [it] seems not very original, using ideas already done before.

My impression is that Canadian TV is trying to duplicate successful American TV shows like The Masked Singer. I'm not into TV shows that much. I don't find them to be phenomenal.

A woman with curly hair is holding a clapperboard. The clapperboard has the following text: "HOLLYWOOD PRODUCTION", "DIRECTOR _____", "CAMERA _____", "DATE _____", "SCENE _____", and "TAKE _____".

DETAILED FINDINGS

PORTRAYALS OF WOMEN OF COLOUR

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Overall Perspectives

Participants shared mixed feelings about the portrayal of women in Canadian television.

- They were able to **recognize certain television shows that depicted female characters** as individuals with agency and dimension (for example, shows like *Maid* and *Heartland* showing women in key and central roles), and without objectifying them based on their struggles as females.
- Some also felt **international producers and creators tended to push for a more diverse cast** to attract a wide audience as well as they were seen to be cognizant of the need for diversity and inclusion in TV shows, in contrast to Canadian producers.
- While there was a recognition of certain shows containing strong, independent female characters, many shared perceptions that the importance of female characters is defined **based on their relation to men** or surrounding important male characters.
- Some noted that there have been improvements in the portrayal of women in television. However, they argued that the pace of improvements has been **too slow** and **has not included all women** – any progress made has primarily benefitted white women, and left women of colour still advocating for appropriate representation.



*In terms of woman's portrayal, I really liked the female characters in [the show] *Maid*. *Maid* is on Netflix; it showed good dimension of a female character with her own agency, her own struggles, and discourses throughout life. And her pain. It was pain that wasn't objectifiable, pain that was raw. Honest. I thought that was really well done.*

Big Brother Canada, I know it's supposed to be a reality show, but the people and curators of the show really were intentional about whom they put on the show which was well done. [It] made a point to have diverse casts, and diverse stories from all over Canada.

*Personally, I have watched a bit of the show *Heartland*; the protagonist, Amy, you see her go through all these struggles. Some of them like single motherhood is an experience only women would go through. But she was portrayed as a regular human being and wasn't dramatized or anything too much. She was seen as an equal, strong protagonist. I really like that on the show.*

I think often women are portrayed as being only important within proximity to men. If something happens to a woman, it's like, 'that's somebody's daughter or sister, what would you do?' We're important just because we're people, not because of proximity or relationship to men.

I've seen more stories with a female lead, that's a step in the right direction. Definitely a step in the right direction but taking way too long. This is ridiculous.

Most recognized an **underrepresentation of women in key roles on television** and, when they are represented, these **portrayals are largely inaccurate or harmful** – specifically for women of colour. Participants felt that women are frequently represented as **weak**, with television shows such as *Kim's Convenience* and *Murdoch Mysteries* echoing **outdated norms and stereotypes** of how women should behave; this type of portrayal was seen as representation simply for the sake of it, or “**tokenism**” as one participant stated, rather than giving women a voice and accurately portraying their experiences.

Many opposed showcasing stereotypes or harmful portrayals around women and women of colour, **even though shows such as *Murdoch Mysteries* take place during earlier time periods** during which these women would have faced discrimination or mistreatment.

Participants felt the **lack of diversity in Canadian television is something they struggle to overlook**. Further, **women of colour and Indigenous women** are hardly represented in television, and, if they are, they are portrayed in a way that is deemed appropriate based on Eurocentric standards (e.g., not wearing traditional, culturally appropriate attire or characters wearing wigs). Despite women being seen as equally capable to men in most fields, the number of women represented in television doesn't seem to increase – especially the portrayal of women in powerful or leading roles in television.



[For the show] Murdoch Mysteries - This is negative, but I find the Black women in the show, they're representing these women and putting them in these roles and portrayed as so weak, everyone talks down to them. [It's] really disappointing.

It's great you're having representation, but it's almost like tokenism because it's not actual representation. These people don't have actual say in what's going on. It just looks like representation, but it's not.

I know it's back in the day but [I] feel there's still a better way to have these characters, break norms, make them strong women, and not have everyone talking down to them, and acting like they're not even there.

Representation...the characters will often have straight-haired wigs. Very rarely will they show their natural hair. Yeah, smooth, straight hair. Personally, I've never seen a wink, traditional attire or specific fabric from African communities. [Producers] don't want the character to show eccentric colours. And it has to be low-key with a very smooth flat wig. And something combed back neatly.

Portrayals of Women of Colour

In addition to recognizing the inaccurate (and infrequent) portrayal of women in Canadian television, many shared a **sense of disappointment towards the portrayal of women of colour**:

- It was felt that their portrayal reflected **harmful stereotypes related to their ethnicity** while minimizing the actual lived experience of women of colour and their cultures (for example, the stereotype of the “angry Black woman” in shows like *Scandal* and *How to Get Away with Murder*).



[It] shows how women of colour are not seen as human, seen as something else that is allowed to be violated against.

- There was also recognition of the **use of stereotypes in the portrayal of Asian characters** within Canadian television, specifically the Eurocentric perspective within CBC’s *Kim’s Convenience*, despite the show meaning to represent the experience of a Korean family in Canada. Participants commented that the common stereotypes for Asian women are that they are submissive or yielding.
- Many were upset by the **representation of Indigenous women, or lack thereof**, in Canadian television. Some felt that any minimal representation they had in any form of screen media is **characterized by “white supremacy,”** with their depictions representing racist stereotypes.
 - **Negativity and victimhood** were thought to be touchstones of the portrayal of Indigenous women, as opposed to what happens in “real life” among Indigenous families and cultures.



There are few stereotypes about Indigenous people because of very little representation of them. If they are, they’re once again the token Indigenous person in the show.

There’s very little representation of Indigenous women within TV at all, especially within Canada where it’s a huge thing of our culture.

I think there’s a lot of victimhood that is associated with Indigenous women, lacking agency, or being impoverished. A lot of disparaging images and characters where it’s like, ‘that’s not our culture. That’s not what we emulate in the family or in communities.’

It’s deeply racist and comes from a place of white supremacy when we see these images. Even if an Indigenous woman is to wear anything scandalous, she is going to be ostracized for it. It’s like a woman isn’t even free to express herself sexually without the concern that she’s going to be called a sex worker, seen like this.



- Moreover, there seemed to be a **lack of representation for Indian and Muslim women** and a **lack of intersectionality**, such as the representation of **transgender women or non-binary individuals**, in Canadian television.



When we talk diversity, [with] Kim's Convenience you see a lot of Asian people portrayed on-screen, but when really look into it, these people have no say. It's all coming from Euro-centric views on what they think Korean living in Toronto would look like.

With Asian woman we'll often see portrayals of a submissive timid woman. And this stereotype tied to intelligence, intellectual, and that's all they're doing with their life.

Also noticed in shows watched there's a stereotype perpetuated where Asian woman is seen as more meek or submissive, their importance due to man's proximity.

The immigrant ethnic woman that is submissive, a stay-at-home woman. Her French is not up to snuff and she's always tired. The family mom who's always tired. You see it in the series Tactic, I think it's Diego's mother. She's at the restaurant, always busy, working, doing a whole bunch of things. And Sasan's mother. She's so afraid of her husband, she can't go against him or else there's anger. That's a stereotype we'll often see.





DETAILED FINDINGS

LOOKING OUTWARD AND LOOKING AHEAD

LOOKING OUTWARD AND LOOKING AHEAD

Impact of Current Portrayals of Women of Colour

More broadly, participants agreed there are **wider societal implications of perpetuating stereotypical portrayals of women of colour** within screen media.

Coming from their perspectives as **women of colour**, participants felt it is incredibly **important to be “properly” and “accurately” represented** on television. This lack of representation and of authenticity was thought to **allow for the propagation of Eurocentric standards and ideals**, which could be **internalized and incredibly harmful – particularly for younger female audiences**.



[I] think we internalize a lot of it. I remember my mom used to use whitening products on me as a child because prevalence of Euro-centric standards of beauty. It was not attractive to be darker skin tone. I thought I was ugly because I didn't see representation and I thought, it's hard not to internalize the standards that were everywhere.

The portrayal of an angry black woman, and I think even for friends, they've mentioned they can't act a certain way otherwise they'd be continuing on that stereotype. Have to really watch what they do. Even when participating in activism they have to be careful, versus I wouldn't.

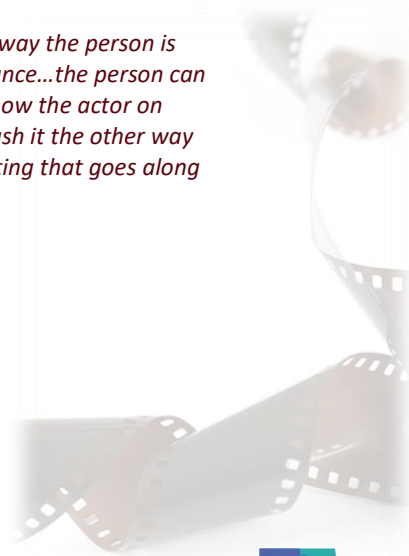
Find there's always like the token Black person. They're seen as funny, but people laughing at them because of their accent or something culture. It's mocked in TV.



In Quebec specifically, this sentiment was echoed with regards to accents women of color are forced to put on in their roles:



I don't recall the show. But there was a Haitian family and at some point they'll amend the way the person is speaking and they'll come up with a Quebec accent but the way they have the actor pronounce...the person can speak normally but they'll be extreme. They'll push the Quebec accent too much and you know the actor on social media, so you see he or she wouldn't be speaking that way. And they'll sometimes push it the other way around where they push the immigrant to have a very heavy accent without having the setting that goes along with that.



In upholding stereotypical representation, it can be **discouraging for young girls, normalizing poor societal treatment and discrimination, damaging narratives, and othering**. This “can be damaging for racialized women to relive their past experiences and puts the burden on them to prove they deserve equal respect and that they are more than the stereotypes.” It was further pointed out:

...symbolic violence is a very real thing. Racism might not look like you physically harming someone, but the stuff you put out, that's a form of symbolic violence. Racialized communities being harmed, [this harm] being perpetuated, other people will perceive that, and think it's okay to harm racialized communities.

Consideration of a lack of representation brought forth commentary on the **experience of Indigenous communities**:



I think the correlation between living in an environment that is rigorously denying your existence and mis-telling your stories, in addition to a myriad of socio-economic issues, has impacted the lives of Indigenous youth and our parents' generation greatly.

This topic was emphasized in **appraisals of the show *Murdoch Mysteries* as being an example of a show that is “bad” when it comes to representation** (i.e., there is not enough representation, there is a lack of diversity, and there are stereotypes are being depicted):

[This show] conveys that indigenous people have no part to play in the history of Toronto; it makes me really angry to see a show that touches on Toronto's history fail to touch on such a huge part of how Toronto became Toronto. It leaves a bad taste in my mouth that these "Canadian" TV shows, especially one that is set in the past, just glosses [sic] over Indigeneity.

Canadian media should take ownership for portraying more about Indigenous experiences as there is a sense of **“cultural amnesia”** with regard to Indigenous history and past oppression:

I want to see more works taking responsibility for our history [...] [Canadian media has] the power to help create a movement towards bringing awareness so that we can create enough traction to mobilize and start the process of reconciliation.

Through the proper portrayal of women of colour in television, they would be **validated and recognized**:

There still isn't a lot of representation for people in my community on TV. But I know seeing stories told can be very validating, feel seen, feel we can personally relate to it.

As an example, a participant reflected on **Disney's upcoming *Little Mermaid* film**, in which Ariel has been cast as a Black actress, saying she saw “videos online of little Black girls literally crying because there's a princess that looks like [them].”



DETAILED FINDINGS

CONTENT EVALUATION

CONTENT EVALUATION

Participants were asked to watch clips of Canadian television shows and respond to questions about the content and the female characters portrayed on-screen. The content shown to participants was selected based on each show's inclusion in ongoing research conducted by Reelworld Film Institute.

SHOW #1 (EN)

Coroner, Season 1 Episode 1 (first aired 01/07/2019)

"Coroner follows Dr. Jenny Cooper, a coroner who investigates suspicious, unnatural, or sudden deaths in Toronto. Fierce and quick-witted, Jenny is a single mother with secrets of her own to unearth."¹

Initial reactions to this television show were positive. The linkage of the **lead character's personal connection to the case** was appealing, and participants were drawn in and wanted to learn more about what would happen next. The production, dialogue, and pace were also positively received.



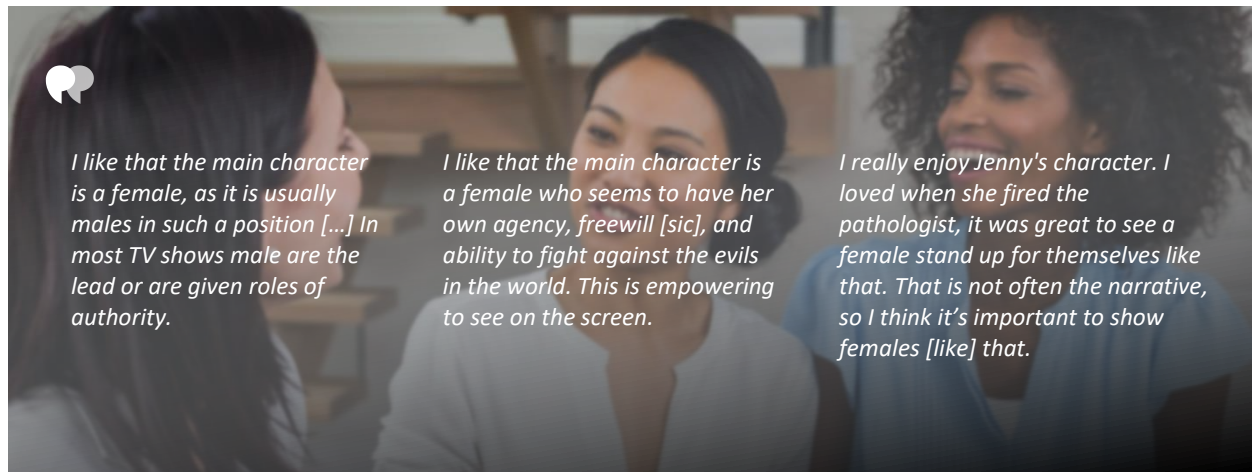
I like how they gave a small glimpse into Jenny's life at the beginning. As I was engaged with the story of Jenny's career, I was also curious about Jenny's own life and what happened to her husband. I felt sympathy for Jenny about her situation with her family, as well as how she was treated at her new job. I also enjoyed how the quality of the actual filming was very clear.

I'm already interested in watching more despite watching 25 minutes. Jenny seems like a solid protagonist who stands up for what is right, despite facing some criticism and judgement from the pathologist and the detectives. I liked seeing her personal connection to this case, as her husband died mysteriously and I want to learn more about how she got to the point of helping others in similar situations. The dialogue throughout the show isn't too outlandish or fictitious and more realistic which I like as well. The pace so far is engaging enough for me to want to keep watching, without being drowned by backstory, I like how it is gradually revealed.

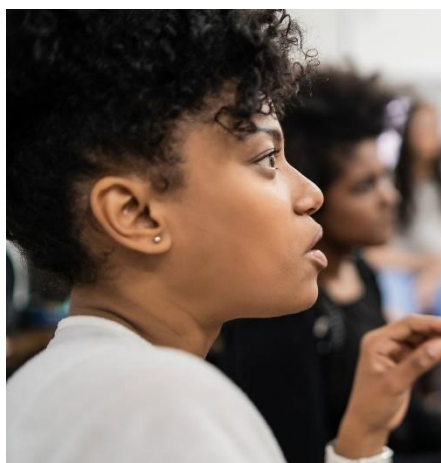
She keeps taking these pills after a stressful situation and I wonder why, it makes me want to keep watching to find out. I also notice that she picks up on things before others do such as the detectives and pathologist, and it interests me because I want to see if she is correct and what the consequences could be if she is wrong or does not perceive these little things (i.e. the Romeo and Juliet book, the heel abrasion). I would also say the pace of events, at least in the pilot is solid, if I find myself getting distracted while watching, something happens that makes me want to keep watching (i.e. when Danielle's mom refuses to give Jenny the body).

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/coroner/>

Participants were happy to watch a program that featured a **female lead who is assertive**, who demonstrates having her own agency, and who occupies a position of authority:



Others commented that **Jenny's character seemed developed** or that they could empathize with her experience of being **questioned on her judgement** based on their own personal experiences.



I did not like how the other characters made Jenny out to be weird or unusual for her ideas, because it is likely that as the show progresses, she will turn out to be correct about a lot of things. While I like Jenny as a protagonist, I would like to see more support for her and her working more closely with other characters rather than being the sole voice of reason. I guess the reason why I dislike that is because I have personally related to that feeling of being judged, criticized, or questioned and having that burden to prove people wrong. It can be hard if you struggle with anxiety and doubting yourself, like Jenny might also have.

In terms of criticism, a **lack of people of colour** in the show was noted as something unappealing, in addition to the **sexualization of Jenny** as the main character:



There seems to be very few people of colour.

I was not a fan of the woman having sex with a stranger in the beginning as what I assume to be a coping mechanism. [...] I just think it's very cliché to start a show off with sexualizing a woman, because typically that is what would bring initial reaction from some groups of people in order to 'keep' them.

Character Associations



CHARACTER 1
Jenny Cooper



Jenny's character was described as stressed, strong-willed, intelligent, and dutiful, as well as analytical and tensed or detached. Many noted her struggles as featuring prominently in her character, describing her as anxious or hurt, but also warm and kind. Participants had the impression that she would have a positive impact on others.



She seems to be positive to those around [her]/seems to be in service of others and justice.

Jenny is a Coroner and a newly single mom. Jenny is anxious and hurt, but also strong willed and intelligent. I would be friends with this person because I enjoy people that build you up and challenge you to be better and I think she would do that. Jenny can seem a bit stand-offish with people, but I believe that is because of her husband's death. She is maybe hurting and unsure how to go through life at the moment.

She is a bit reserved, but dutiful and inquisitive. She can be warm when needed and sympathize with others, despite having her own struggles. She tries to hide her emotions from others possibly to prevent from making them worry or does not believe they would understand. [...] She seems like she is wise and open minded and that she would be able to provide insightful perspective. Her impact on others is positive, she was not unnecessarily rude or condescending with the pathologist when firing him, just firm and honest.

Jenny is a coroner. She is not afraid of advocating. She takes her job seriously, she might take it a little too seriously and might identify with the decedents [sic] which in turn might cause burnout.

Reflecting on *Coroner* more broadly, within the context of the clip participants watched, it was thought that "Canadian TV shows may look as though they are trying to show more women or women of colour but they are still portraying these women in stereotypical positions. [...] yes, Jenny was the main character, but I **believe they were still trying to make her look 'weak or hysterical.'**"



CHARACTER 2

Alison Trent

perfectionist
caring

open minded trusting
assertive aggressive private
stable analytical down to earth detached
wry reserved

Alison Trent was described as private not much was shown about her character to draw further conclusions; anxious or perfectionist in her desire for Jenny to be on time; and emotionless or detached in her lack of consoling Jenny while she was crying. Other descriptors included her being open-minded, down-to-earth, trusting, or assertive.



There was only a quick glance of this character and she seemed quite very anxious and a little aggressive when getting Jenny into her first day of work. She also mentioned how she had been late, making it seem like she is a perfectionist and likes things on time. She also appeared in the window while Jenny was crying, I would not enjoy it if a co-worker did this (unless it was an emergency).

Private: so far not a lot is known about Alison except for that she works with Jenny and is in a relationship with her friend Sabina. Caring: she offered Jenny tissues when she saw her crying, came back from maternity leave so she cares about her child's welfare, and being there for Sabina during the difficult time.

Stable: So far, Alison has been supportive of Jenny and Sabina and has not shown signs of her own weaknesses or struggles.

Analytical → i think the way she handled jenny crying in her car was very analytical. No emotions involved. just straight up gave a tissue because she was crying and told it how it is. Assertive → rather than just take the baby, she reminded jenny of her job title.

Detached → again the way she just handled her coworker crying with no emotion and just handed her a tissue without consoling.

She seems anxious, assertive, and tensed. I'm not sure if I would be friends with them, I'm an easy-going person and she does not seem as though she would be. She seemed aggressive with others.

It was noted that it was “interesting how both [Alison] and the [detective] MacAvoy are both part of oppressed communities (one being Black, one being a woman) and it seems that **she's just not involved at all in the investigation, and she gets left behind.**”

SHOW #2 (EN)

Murdoch Mysteries, Season 14, Episode 1 (first aired 01/04/2021)

"Set in Toronto at the dawn of the 20th century, Murdoch Mysteries is a one-hour drama series that explores the intriguing world of William Murdoch (Yannick Bisson), a methodical and dashing detective who pioneers innovative forensic techniques to solve some of the city's most gruesome murders.²"

Overall Reactions

The show garnered positive reactions owing to its genre (mystery), the speed at which the plot progressed, and the use of distinct characters/personalities. Many pointed out the "realistic" appeal of the show and its attention to detail in costumes and settings.



I really like how each character has a distinct personality already, and how in 25 minutes there is already an introduction of characters, initial incident, and climax.

I enjoy the mystery aspect of the show because mystery is my favourite genre. I also enjoy the costumes of the characters, there looks like a great deal of effort put into them.

I like how the characters dress and how the 1800s setting is well done, and that their diction is consistent with this time period as well. I like shows that explore extraordinary concepts but still retain some realistic aspects.

That said, there were some concerns that were pointed out instantly:



- **Lack of portrayal of people of colour:** Some felt there was a lack of representation of persons of colour despite the size of the cast.



First thoughts and impressions were that I don't tend to gravitate towards shows that occur during this time zone. Not many people of colour either. It was very hard for me to follow.

- **The role of the [Black] coroner (Violet Hart) is cut short** despite the importance of her character to the plot (an official who was shown to be suspicious about the murder). Julia, another character in the show, on the other hand was seen in a light-hearted role, not "adding" much (some mentioned her being a distraction to the show) yet featured prominently during the episode. This was seen with a critical eye.



I believe her name was Julie? She just stood by the investigator the entire time and seemed like a distraction. I wasn't a fan of her personality, and she seemed a bit useless to the storyline thus far. I also hardly saw the coroner and considering this death was suspicious she really didn't provide a lot of input aside from when the body initially fell and I assumed she would've played a bigger role.

² <https://www.cbc.ca/murdochmysteries/>

The Julia character who was always at the hand of the detective. I feel like she acted dumb. She excused the behaviour of that man who made an inappropriate comment although it might have been to aid the investigation. I found her quite irritating, and I didn't see a need for her character.

- **The portrayal Black women was thought to be inappropriate.** Some felt it was unnecessary to depict stereotypes around Black women featured in the show even though they may be considered historically accurate, including the portrayal of not being accepted by white men in public (the father-daughter duo) and being abused/objectified as a means to extract information.



It's just distressing and as someone who is already fairly distrustful of men, it's not pleasant to watch women be abused or people of colour be abused even if it is historically accurate. I just don't think it's necessary.

Character Associations



CHARACTER 1
Violet Hart

Socially Assertive
Intelligent
Bold
Self Sufficient

Straight Forward
Precise
Lively
Moody
Reserved
Emotionally Stable
Organized
Confident

Violet Hart was described as a bold, feisty, and intellectual character who uses her intellect and attention to detail while examining a murder/suspicious death; gives her opinions openly without being afraid of people around her, irrespective of position in society; and makes appropriate decisions (that are in her best interest) for herself.



Intellectual - ability to say what was wrong with the decedent. Confident - she's very sure of herself. She even called out the detective for his line of questioning. Straight forward - told that man that she didn't like his father as a matter of fact.

I chose these words to describe her because of how she kept her composure and spoke with conviction, seeming completely sure of herself and confidently turning down Carmichael, seeing through his playboy ways.

Violet is somebody who has ambition and isn't afraid to say what she wants and wants to get out of life. This is what I picked up from what I remember being in the first season.

However, there were many who felt that the character was stereotyped:

- **Showcasing historic discrimination** and how racialized women were treated during this time period – and continue to be treated today.
- Having had a difficult life in the past, leading to a **cold, independent, and, to some extent, an “unapproachable”** disposition.
- A Black woman being pursued romantically by a wealthy white man and the **woman giving in to get ahead in life.**



This is really tough because I think it is important to educate people about the past, but I also believe by showing it in a TV show like this almost in a joking way is making fun of it. There is a very fine line between how to educate people and following along with stereotypes. I feel as though this show may be highlighting the stereotypes that racialized women faced back then and continue to face today.

She seemed a bit cold and almost distant. She seems like the lone wolf type as when someone tried to shake her hand, she didn't even go for it. She is very intelligent and didn't seem to stick around to find out more about the investigation which was interesting as I noticed in the shows I've seen the coroner plays more of a role in giving advice on how to aid in the investigation. I probably wouldn't be friends with her. She seems like she wouldn't want to be friends with me (very independent, lone wolf vibes) and I think any of my attempts to befriend her wouldn't go anywhere as evidenced by her interaction with that man.

Character Associations



CHARACTER 2
Nomi Johnston

Socially Assertive
Self Sufficient
Uninhibited Perfectionist
Independent
Shy
Intelligent
Conscientious
Warm

Nomi Johnston was seen in a positive light. She was seen to be a warm yet highly intellectual, aware and independent character. She was thought to stand for what is right; to clearly call attention to what she doesn't believe in; to accomplish her goals self-sufficiently; and not be dependent on others for their acceptance and approval.



Nomi called out her dad for leaving her to join his men, which showed she is aware of the time they were living in but did not stand for it which is a good thing because it wasn't questioned as much back then.

Intellectual - She seems very self-aware and aware in general and mindful of what is going on around her. whether people see her differently or what the situation is in general.

Self-sufficient - even though her father didn't want to claim her in public I believe she's self-sufficient enough to provide herself with the care she deserves. It isn't right and it seems as though she will be able to cope with it (also a sign of independence).

Many also felt the character was “relatable” to a higher degree owing to:

- Her strong-willed and determined nature.
- Being someone who can voice her opinion to claim her right, a characteristic that was thought to be aspirational for women of this time period.
- Being warm, kind, and approachable.
- Standing against racial inequality, not shying away from difficult situations and being blunt enough to call out her fathers’ wrongdoings.



She seems very strong-willed and persistent. I would be friends with this person, she seems like a girl who is very sure of herself and I like that. She seems as if does not have a big impact on others, the man who is her father wasn't treating her very well I would say her father hiding the fact that he is her father.

I relate to this character. And feel many other women can and would relate with her as well. She is warm and kind. Approachable and seemingly has good intentions for herself and those around her. Barriers may include her being able to be taken seriously in the world of the academy as she is a woman.

I understand that at the time, people of colour were probably seen as less than but at the end of the day, nobody deserves to be treated worse due to the colour of their skin (which is what I am assuming. I do not see any other reason as to why the father couldn't claim her. perhaps it is due to another reason. Regardless, people deserve to be treated with decency and respect).

The fact that she articulated herself in such a calm manner wherein she says she understands that he can't claim her and was still civil was impressive to see. She also seems very sure of herself in a way that wasn't show off but I'd like to see her be a bit more assertive. Whatever the reason why her father can't claim her is probably a reason stopping her from progressing in life.

SHOW #1 (FR)

Fugueuse, Season 01 Episode 01 (first aired 01/08/2018)

"Fanny falls deeply in love with a hip-hop producer. This dangerous love turns out to be the beginning of a bigger human trafficking network."³

Overall Reactions

The show was received **positively for its acting and characters**, in particular the inclusion of a Black character who plays as Fanny's boyfriend. The show resonated with participants for **depicting the issues teenagers and families** face in a realistic way.



It's pretty realistic; The dilemmas that the girl (princely character) undergoes are shared by several teenagers or young adults. The acting is also very good and the cinematography too. I had the impression of being in the skin of each character.

This show will clearly be one that will make many think. It is a series that will touch a lot of teenagers, but also and especially parents.

Diversity! Fannie's boyfriend who is already black! The character of Fannie looks like a wisdom to his business, very good choice of characters! the scenario and the choice of scenes in the first episode is also very interesting, because it captivates us from the first seconds with the "escape" of Fannie.

The cinematography was praised for its usage of color and capturing scenes from different angles that made viewers feel like they were a part of the experience:



A realistic scenario with a raw and authentic script. I also like the type of light they used to film (blue).

I think what makes the scenario interesting is that it is made to [show unique perspective]. In addition to showing us the scenes from different angles through different looks and roles... Indeed, the viewer, whoever he is, can recognize himself in a certain way... This one may be grandparents, father, mother, brother and where sister friends etc. ... And it makes it possible to reach more people at home.

On the subject of diversity, one participant felt that more could have been done in this regard:



I think there should have been a few more main characters who come from cultural diversity or sexual orientation (a homosexual couple for example).



³ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7960258/>

Character Associations



CHARACTER 1
Fanny

Organized
Reserved
Worried
Bold Creative
Sensitive
Perfectionist

Fanny was characterized as a sensitive person who seeks the approval from others to build up her self-esteem due to her fear of rejection. She constantly worries about future in terms of finances and her parent's reaction to her choice of educational institution. Further, she was described as bold person who aspires in life, and as a creative person who enjoys music and dancing.



Fanny is a teenager in search of herself who relies heavily on the approval of others to esteem herself and recognize her potential. I think I referred more on the excerpt for certain words, for example I will say "worried" in connection with his future, his planned trip with his friends, the reaction of his parents, his autonomy due to the management of his money etc.

She is sensitive to her family's comments and is worried about her family's reactions to her choice of CEGEP (education institute).

In addition, **many felt Fanny's young age** was highlighted in her behaviour:

- She is a bit naïve.
- She is sometimes inconsiderate others as she is unaware of how her actions may impact others. For example, she sleeps with her boyfriend in her friend's cabin without her friend knowing.
- Lack of confidence prevents her from trusting others.



He is a person who when he wants something finds all the easy ways to accomplish it. I think his Naivety will be something that could harm him.

For the moment, her lack of confidence prevents her from evolving and also her lack of mistrust towards strangers.

It is a young girl who does not want to do any harm, but who is afterwards invaded by shame by the fear of rejection.

Character Associations



CHARACTER 2
Ariane

Open minded
Extroverted

Playful Worried Dark
Spontaneous Direct

Ariane was seen as an extroverted and free spirit who uses her clothes and makeup as a form of self-expression that shows off her bubbly personality. She was described as direct with her family and friends. Like Fanny, she is a teenager trying to search for who she is in life and trying to find her identity. Few perceived her dominant personality as a defense mechanism against her parent's divorce.



She chooses dark clothing; she is direct with her mother and father and dominant with her friends.

Ariane is an extroverted person with quite a character. She says what she thinks.

Character Associations



CHARACTER 3
Mylene

Controlling
Anxious

Warm Worried
Close-minded Conscientious
Open

Mylene was described as a controlling and anxious person. Mylene was described as open-minded by a few, yet close-minded by others who claim she does not try to evolve but rather sticks to tradition. Some felt that she does not have to power to impact other characters.

However, there were some who saw her in a positive light:

- She feels a disconnect with her daughter Fanny and wants to build a stronger relationship.
- She is seen as a warm person who wants to support her family.
- Mylene is seen as a person who consults others.



She is a conscientious mother who seems strict in Fanny's eyes. Yes, I would be friends with this lady I feel that all she wants is to support and help her children which is an integral part of my values. If I talk about my experience being very close to my mother I feel it as such there are ups and downs of mistakes made by a misunderstanding at times, but we remain imperfect humans and obviously what happens in Fanny's life has a big impact on her mother's mental health and well-being... As I said before, nothing prevents anything, but if better equipped the turn of things could have been different.

Mylène is a simple and warm mother she tries to be open-minded but relies a lot on the opinion of her spouse. I don't think I could be friends with Mylène, because we don't have the same lifestyle. Mylène seems a character with little impact on others she seems rather be the one who consults her peers.

It is a mother who wants the good of her children she is for them both a figure of authority but who would like to be closer to her daughter feel that she opens up to her in front of her relationship etc ... She feels a distance and finds that adolescence quietly distances her from her daughter.



SHOW #2 (FR)

District 31, Season 06
Episode 01
(first aired 09/13/2021)

"Family dramas, domestic violence, the fight against drug traffickers and organized crime... Difficult issues arise on a day-to-day basis and the District 31 team must be present regardless of the troubling circumstances in which they operate."

Overall Reactions

The show garnered positive reactions owing to its genre (crime). Moreover, the actors and storylines kept viewers captivated. In addition, the quality of the cinematography was praised:

It's an interesting and unique episode, it's the first time I've watched a Quebec crime-style TV series. The quality of the image is also good, we feel that there is a good budget behind the series. In addition, the actors play their roles very well.

This episode was one that all those who have been listening to District 31 since Day 1 have been waiting for. We wanted to have answers to the thousand and one question we asked ourselves to follow the end of the last episode. This show makes me feel like I'm one that will clearly make me go through 1001 ranges of emotions at the same time!

I love this kind of crime series. Indeed, the plot, the investigations are themes of series, films and novels that capture my attention. So, it is certain that after watching the clip I even wanted to continue my viewing to understand what was going to happen.

Many appreciated the twists and turns of the storyline that kept them engaged. Further, the actors' portrayals were consistently praised for being intriguing and relatable.



The police station itself, the actors (characters) I like the fact that they all have a unique personality that complements each other... I like the intrigue and exchanges between colleagues when they are in the middle of an investigation.

The scenarios that have a common thread that follows, but while having different twists in each episode. The acting is completely mind-blowing! We really cling to the personality of the characters ex: we hate the villains (nail, dubeault, etc).

The scenario is interesting because these are crimes. Also, each episode has a new plot. The characters are quite curious and are easy to identify with. In addition, the image quality is excellent.

⁴ <https://ici.tou.tv/district-31/S06E06>

Although the show featured twists and turns, some felt the plot dragged for a long time before it unraveled. The customers were considered traditional and not modern. Also, some jokes were considered irrelevant to the plot and the show just focused on the investigation.



In my opinion, it is more the jokes or individual attacks that come out of the investigation such as the massage story and the commander who tells his colleague about it. In short, I did not find it relevant and even perhaps useless to the story. What really interests me is the investigation itself.

I find that some plots are long before unravelling despite the twists and turns in each episode. It can hurt if the viewer likes to see something new every day.

Character Associations



CHARACTER 1
Mélanie Drouin

Disorganized
Suspicious
Aggressive

Anxious
Moody
Stressed

Melanie was viewed mostly in a negative light. She is seen as an **aggressive** person in terms of how she interacts with her children's father. Her actions make her appear **suspicious**, for example her behaviour during the interrogation. Her actions have been described as irresponsible with her involvement in drug sales. She is shown to have a negative impact on others.



The mother appears to be involved in her daughter's disappearance. I chose "aggressive" because the first time we saw her she confronts her father about the incident and then reacts strongly and attacks him before the police and investigators intervene. "Messy": She talks about just moving and has a history of drug sales. In addition, she says she does not have enough room for her children and mentions that she is not placed and that she had to push back to take her children back with her. After her release from prison she has no money no cell phone etc. "Suspicious": Because investigators suspect the mother of the death and disappearance of her children.

Melanie Drouin is a person who is unreliable, disorganized in her actions and who can change her mood at every moment. The presentation of the character in the extract clearly shows us that at times she is carefree. She mentions mourning the death of her son and the disappearance of her daughter, but she does not seem to have any sadness.

During the interrogation, she explains her features, she moves her fingers she exasperates and her eyes look everywhere.



CHARACTER 2
Noémie St-Hilaire

Confident Independent

Intellectual
Sensitive Honest
Analytical
Dominant

Noémie was seen in a **positive** light. She is seen as an **independent** person yet can collaborate well with her peers. She comes across as **confident** not only with herself, but the decisions she makes in the investigations. Noémie is seen to positively impact others with her intellect and kind personality. Her interaction with the victims displays her sensitive side as she can empathize with them.



Noelie is simply a character who is sensitive to the victims she meets. She constantly uses her analytical mind in order to evaluate the situation and especially the possible assumptions in order to arrive at the conclusion she wants. She exudes confidence and gentleness both during her interventions and with her peers.

I perceive in this character traits of strength and sharing tasks. I think I could be friends with this lady, because she seems sympathetic; from what I could see. The impacts I can see is that she supports her work team and collaborates well with them. Finally, I do not see an impediment to evolution of his character.

She's an investigator too. She is a strong character with a good head on her shoulders. In day-to-day life, she will be my friend for the reasons mentioned above. What prevents him from evolving is being closer to her emotions.

Character Associations



CHARACTER 3
Florence Guindon

Demanding
Perfectionist
Caring Confident
Warm
Stable
Assertive
Conscientious

Florence is characterized as **warm, stable, and caring**, as well as **perfectionist**, demanding, and confident. Many noted her ability to use her assertiveness to seek the answers to questions that will help propel the investigation forward. Participants felt that she would positively impact others.

Florence is also seen as **relatable** because:

- Tries to seek the answers to find what she is looking for.
- Being warm, kind, and empathetic.
- Her strong-willed and determined nature.



Florence is a character who is strong, but also has a certain sensitivity for these victims. She doesn't let anything pass and wants answers to her questions. I could be friends with Florence, because we have similar personalities. By her personality Florence is like a mother who ensures the well-being of each and every one around her from the victims to her colleagues. She therefore has a very good influence over the other characters. I do not believe that anything prevents her from advancing in her personal life as much as professionally the proof she became a commander!

The first character traits I observe in Florence are empathy, insight and understanding that asks the right questions. Yes I can be friends with this lady why not? Then I realized that she is a mother and part of a team of investigators. That said, I see its impact as an important support. Finally, I think she has all the potential to progress in the series.

She is an investigator; she is assertive and honest. She will be my friend in real life for those reasons. She has a positive impact of people around her and it helps the investigation. What prevents her from evolving is her lack of open-mindedness.

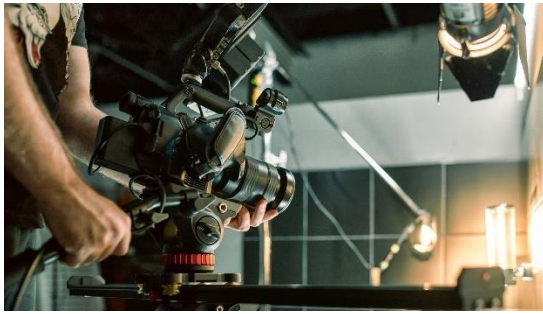
Concluding Thoughts & The Way Forward

When discussing the best steps toward better representation of women of colour in Canadian screen media, the most prominent suggestion was **to involve more women of colour (or people of colour in general) in the production of content at all phases.**

- *I would want to have a team of people from a specific community sit down with cast and crew and talk about what's going to be covered in each episode, hear their stories, in order to do it in a culturally sensitive way.*
- *Take direct feedback from actresses that are part of that community, let them give perspective to make sure it's accurate and call out any issues.*
- *The thing that has to be done is to hire women. And also, hiring women of colour to ensure that intersectional components are addressed.*
- *There needs to be more women of colour, they need to be given more opportunities, and shows need to be written for them, around them, with their opinions within them as well. We can't have these shows if they're not casting women of colour.*
- *It has to come from women themselves, the cultures. We need directors, actresses, trans actresses playing these roles.*
- *I think really important instruction to crew would be aspects related to hair and makeup. The hair and makeup, and hair products, that works on white person are not going to work the same on person of colour. They need to cater it to what would work for each person. Lighting as well.*
- *Allowing women of colour in positions of power where they can say what they want and not be questioned for it. [Usually] it's not considered a good idea unless man says it.*
- *I feel like a lot of film crews are predominantly white males, so bringing in any type of other cultures for production would also be great*

In alignment with earlier appraisals, **tokenism** was seen as an issue to be addressed when it comes to creating more authentic, nuanced, and/or positive depictions of women of colour in the Canadian TV industry, and that the industry should strive for greater authenticity and for casting women of colour in “roles that are respected.”

Many also urged Canadian television producers to **do something “new” or “original,” and to “step it up,”** as they felt the Canadian industry had fallen behind in relevance and content. This was thought to be especially true compared to the industry in the United States, which they felt does a better job of pushing the envelope and pursuing more creative projects with greater or more accurate representation.



It feels like there's lack of creativity or lack of willingness [within Canadian TV] to try something different.

Finally, producers could improve current circumstances by having “cultural safety people onsite and even having those people be trained psychologists or focus in psychology [...] How is [the content] going to impact [children or teens] emotionally?”

Participants shared that although there is much work to be done, there is a path forward with regard to the best way to improve portrayals. In doing so, Canadian media will become more relevant, more unique, and serve as a better, more accurate reflection of the lived experiences of women of colour and of Canadian society today.



As Canadians we pride ourselves on 'being better than Americans' because we 'have all of this diversity' which we do, but how often is it that we see people of colour and these diverse cultures we are referring to be in a position of power or in a position that is able to make decisions?

I would definitely appreciate more diversity and new stories that maybe haven't been done by other shows before. Also, more storylines about how one being Canadian and their ethnicity would intersect, with people of the culture on the team making most of the decisions to ensure accurate representation.

Not all representation is good representation. You can't just praise people for having people of colour on their TV shows, you need to think critically.

Broadcasting plays a critical role in helping build and support our Canadian identity. It would continue to be relevant if Canadian culture continues to be shown.

