

This Land Study Guide

About the film

In March 2007, seven Canadian and Inuit rangers and one documentary filmmaker set out to cover more than 2000 km of the harshest terrain on the planet. They confront blizzards, labyrinths of crushed sea ice and near-impassable glaciers, with temperatures hovering around -50°C, to raise a flag on the northernmost tip of Canadian soil. With a mesmerizing soundtrack by Nunavut-born singer and narrator Tanya Tagaq, and spectacular footage of the Arctic landscape, Dianne Whelan's documentary captures the epic adventure with raw immediacy.

Recommended Grade Level: 12 years and up

Recommended Subject Areas:

Language Arts, Fine Arts, Media Arts, Geography, Social Studies, Civics and Citizenship Studies, Aboriginal Studies and Science

Curricular Connections and Learning Strategies

This film serves as a discussion starter in various subject areas including, but not limited to, the subject areas listed above. Based on your specific subject area and your curriculum, you may choose to use it in several different ways. This guide provides several discussion questions to assist you in using the film in your classroom.

For a comprehensive approach to using environmentally themed films in the classroom, please visit nfb.ca/playlist/films-change and download the ***Films for Change Pedagogical Template***. This comprehensive guide presents educators with a holistic approach to sustainability education through film screenings, discussion and classroom and community activities. The ***Films for Change Pedagogical Template*** can be used alongside the discussion questions outlined below.

Questions for discussion or research – before screening.

- Who is the filmmaker? What can you learn about how and why she made this film?
- The title of the film is ***This Land***. Why do you think the filmmaker chose this title? Locate Resolute Bay and Ward Hunt Island on a map. Reflect on various stories that we know about from this unique part of the world. If no stories come to mind, why do you think that is?
- The concept of sovereignty has been discussed, debated and questioned throughout history. Discuss concepts and examples of sovereignty in Canada with regards to recent developments toward safeguarding Arctic waters from pollution and the establishment of Nunavut as a model for the movement.

Questions for discussion or research – during screening.

Note to teachers: This film contains dialogue and narration. Stop periodically and ask questions to ensure comprehension and establish links to curriculum.

- Why is there a patrol in this far-reaching area of the world? What is the patrol on a mission to do? Do you think they'll accomplish their mission? What are the storytelling elements used in the film to build tension, to help us to care about these people's mission (music, dialogue, silence)?
- What are the biggest challenges to making a movie in the High Arctic? What is the filmmaker learning along the way about this landscape?
- The narrator, Tanya Tagaq <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tagaq>, an Inuit throat singer, provides an important link to telling this story. Research Tanya Tagaq and her heritage and discuss her integral role in the telling of this story.
- It is remarkable how the crew travels on snowmobiles and lives in tents in such hostile conditions. Discuss how important good communication skills would be to ensure harmony on this trip.

Discussion and Research questions – after the screening.

- Discuss themes of exploration, tying this film to historical stories of exploration that address issues including cultural differences, environmental protection, the protection of culture and changing landscapes.
- Dianne Whelan makes a statement about the Arctic landscape being under threat, expressing that she wants to capture it on film before it disappears. Discuss the various threats that face this landscape and discuss suggestions to alleviate them.
- The Inuit artist interviewed in Grise Fiord says that he has noticed environmental change, reinforcing that he is not that old. Research the Inuit way of life and how these changes to the environment will affect the Inuit people. How will the Inuit people adapt? How will the rangers continue to patrol this changing landscape?
- Research Grise Fiord, the most northern community. How do the residents of this community obtain their supplies? How do they communicate with outside communities? Discuss issues of safety and global warming and the impacts of these concerns on people living in remote communities and extreme conditions.
- What are some policies and treaties that are in process or have been finalized with regards to Nunavut and self-governance in Canada? Why are these issues controversial? Why is Canada taking its claim on this land? What value does this land represent economically? Is this a

potential place of war? Is Canada in a position to defend itself? Craft a story map about your findings.

- Discuss the flag as a signifier. Will people respect the flag? Trace the history of flags, asking: How did flags come to be a symbol of ownership, or sovereignty? Compare, contrast and challenge these ideas, with attention to the Aboriginal voice and settlement in Canada.
- In the film, the scout is able to navigate in a whiteout without a GPS. “This is nothing,” he says. In small groups, give a multimedia presentation on concepts of modern vs. traditional uses of technology and cultural knowledge, drawing on samples from the film, such as use of a GPS vs. traditional ways of navigation, or the technology of sleds/comteks then and now.

Online Content

Official film website and trailer: nfb.ca/film/this_land_trailer

Filmmaker’s website: diannewhelan.com

Canada’s sovereignty in the High Arctic: pm.gc.ca/eng/media.asp?id=1275

Impacts of Global Warming in Arctic:

dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/publications/article/2009/09-22-09-eng.html

Map games and Canadian Geography learning software:

sheppardsoftware.com/Canadian_Geography.htm

Canada’s geographic regions: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Canada