

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA  
*Presents*



# MY PRAIRIE HOME

A DOCUMENTARY-MUSICAL FEATURING

*Rae Spoon*

A FILM BY CHELSEA MCMULLAN

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABOUT THE FILM</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT RAE SPOON</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT THIS GUIDE</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT PRIDE EDUCATION NETWORK</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ABOUT OUT IN SCHOOLS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED AGE LEVEL</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS AND THEMES</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>KEY THEMES IN THE FILM</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCING THE FILM TO YOUR STUDENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PRE-VIEWING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE VIEWING THE FILM</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>THE GENDER SPECTRUM:</b>	<b>5-7</b>
GENDER 101	5
COMMON ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT GENDER	6
INCLUSIVE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT GENDER	6
MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY	7
LANGUAGE DOS AND DON'TS	7
<b>CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:</b>	<b>8-10</b>
SCHOOL CLIMATE MAP	8
GENDER MANIFESTO	8
GENDER SELF-PORTRAIT	9
GENDER DIVERSITY JIGSAW	9
A SAFE SPACE – POETRY ACTIVITY	10
<b>MEDIA LITERACY</b>	<b>11-12</b>
<b>RESOURCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS</b>	<b>12-15</b>
<b>CREDITS</b>	<b>15</b>

### ABOUT THIS FILM

In *My Prairie Home*, director Chelsea McMullan follows Montreal-based transgender musician and performer Rae Spoon on a musical road trip across the Canadian Prairies. All along the way—in a Greyhound bus, the Tyrrell Dinosaur Museum in Drumheller, a theatre in Regina, and at a performance in Winnipeg—McMullan's camera is a constant companion. As the flat, straight Prairie highway unfolds, McMullan guides audiences along the long and winding road of Spoon's life. This playful, meditative and at times melancholic tale of Spoon's queer and musical coming of age unfolds in interviews and songs, in live performance and fanciful music sequences. Spoon takes us through their childhood (Spoon prefers the use of the gender-neutral pronouns they, them and their) growing up in an ultra-religious family, discovering their sexuality, their gender identity, and the crucial and inspiring leaps towards building a life of their own, as a musician and as a trans person.

The trailer: [nfb.ca/film/my\\_prairie\\_home](http://nfb.ca/film/my_prairie_home)

To access the film, activate your [NFB CAMPUS](#) subscription, purchase the film on [DVD](#) or download the film on [NFB.ca](#) or [iTunes.com](#).

### ABOUT RAE SPOON



Transgender musician and author Rae Spoon has a voice as big as the prairie sky, and a story like no other. As a young person, Spoon used music both as an escape and as a means of building a world in which they could safely live. *My Prairie Home*, Spoon's latest album, explores the meaning of home when it is no longer a place one can return to. The album spans Spoon's early musical influences, from folk and gospel to indie rock and grunge. Songs about death, coming out as queer during high school, and surviving abuse, are all sung by a voice that can break a heart and fill it with hope at the same time.

A country music artist whose more recent work has incorporated experimental and electronic elements, Spoon has released seven solo albums and three collaborative albums over the past 10 years, touring extensively in Canada and internationally (Europe, the USA and Australia). Spoon has been nominated for the Polaris Music Prize, the CBC Radio 3 Bucky Awards, and the Galaxy Rising Star Award. Spoon's first book, *First Spring Grass Fire*, was published by Arsenal Pulp Press in September 2012. The book was a finalist for a Lambda Award in the transgender fiction category and was short-listed for an Expozine Alternative Press Award.

### ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This educator's guide was written to facilitate an open conversation and meaningful discussion in the classroom about various topics surrounding social constructions of gender, gender identity and gender expression presented in the film *My Prairie Home*. The classroom activities were designed to further explore topics about gender and investigate larger themes of personal identity, isolation, transition, and belonging.

The study guide was written in partnership with Pride Education Network and Out in Schools.

### ABOUT PRIDE EDUCATION NETWORK

Pride Education Network is a group of educators and advocates who value the importance of a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment for all, regardless of sexual orientation/expression. Pride Education Network advocates for an inclusive, respectful environment for all students, staff and families, irrespective of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, within all educational institutions in British Columbia, through the development of concrete supports, policies, resources and actions.

[pridenet.ca](http://pridenet.ca)

### ABOUT OUT IN SCHOOLS

Out in Schools is an anti-bullying program based in Vancouver, BC. Through facilitated workshops, Out in Schools brings LGBT films into classrooms to outreach to students on the issues of homophobia and discrimination.

[outinschools.com](http://outinschools.com)

### RECOMMENDED AGE LEVEL

*My Prairie Home* is suitable for students aged 13 and up. It is recommended that educators preview the film and become familiar with the related vocabulary found in the glossary prior to teaching the film, as it deals with subject matter that should be handled with sensitivity.

## RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS AND THEMES

This film can be integrated into the curriculum in the following subject areas at the secondary and post-secondary levels:

- Health/Personal Development
- Family Studies
- Diversity/Pluralism
- Media Education

The film can be integrated into the following subject themes at the secondary and post-secondary levels:

- Identity and Society
- Gender and Identity
- Diversity in Communities
- Sexual Minorities
- Human Rights
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Safety and Fair Play

## KEY THEMES IN THE FILM

- Gender expression
- Coming of age as an outcast
- The isolating effects of gender-based discrimination
- Coping through music and artistic expression

## INTRODUCING THE FILM TO YOUR STUDENTS

- Give the synopsis of the film to the students and watch the trailer.
- Establish a safe space for viewing and discussion, highlighting respect, courtesy and confidentiality.
- Let students know that you will be discussing the themes of the film after the screening.
- Ask students to take notes on the themes they identify.

## PRE-VIEWING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What assumptions do you make about someone based on their gender?
- Do you feel that men and women should act and present themselves in a particular way? Explain.
- What are some of the ways in which our society applies gender divisions? When does this process start? How do these gender divisions carry on throughout our lives?
- What makes you feel different, or like you don't belong because of your identity? The way you look, feel or express yourself?

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE VIEWING THE FILM

- What is the term "gender system" referring to?
- How does the film depict isolation and loneliness and what role does the landscape play in this?
- How does Rae cope with being an outcast, and what lifts them out of isolation?
- Identify images throughout the film that depict traditional notions of masculinity and femininity.
- Who challenges Rae in this film?
- What is an ally? Who is an ally to Rae in this film and what makes that person an ally?
- What are safe spaces for Rae to be in, and what are unsafe spaces? Why?
- How do Rae's song lyrics work to describe their identity?

### POST-VIEWING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What pronoun do you identify yourself with? Why might someone identify with a pronoun that is different from the one assigned to them at birth? Explain why Rae identifies with the pronoun *they*.
- What traditional male and female roles does Rae challenge in this film? In your opinion, is it more important that Rae feel comfortable, or that they conform to traditional notions of gender? Why?
- Can you explain the difference between sex and gender?
- We witness Rae's prolific singing and songwriting throughout this film. Explain what you feel is meant by the lyric "My prairie home, feels like a Sunday dress."
- How does the film define the terms "queer," and "trans\*" (transgender)? What is genderqueer?
- How did Rae's religious-extremist upbringing contribute to their self-shame as a teenager? As LGBT rights become more established globally, many religious institutions have also become more accepting and inclusive of LGBTQ followers. What faith-based organizations are you aware of that support the LGBTQ community?
- What does Rae mean when they say that they belong to an "in-between space," and how is this translated visually throughout the film?
- The film includes several scenes that take place outside public washrooms. Which gendered washroom does Rae choose to use? What external factors might affect this decision?
- Would Rae's experience be any different if they were born assigned male and identified as female or as trans\*? Why?
- What are some key messages about gender in this film? Did you learn anything new today about gender?
- What can you do to prevent gender-based discrimination in your school or community?

*"Well, it's kind of like being a ghost. You're like, well, I'm sittin' right here and I'm here to tell ya, I exist."* – Rae Spoon

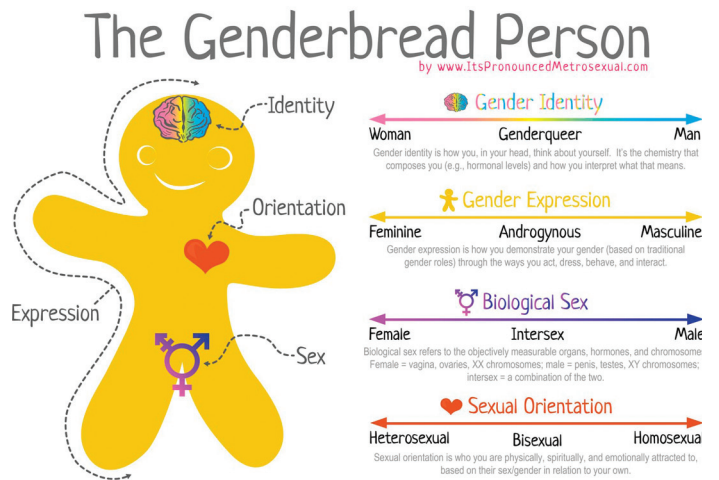
### THE GENDER SPECTRUM

The following text is from Pride Education Network's educational resource [The Gender Spectrum](#); it has been edited and updated for this guide.

**The Gender Spectrum** refers to the idea that there are many **gender identities** (female, male, transgender, two-spirit, etc.). It also acknowledges that there is a range of **gender expressions**, or ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behaviour, clothing, haircut, voice, and other forms of presentation. Gender expression may or may not conform to common expectations around one's gender identity.

#### GENDER 101

A person's identity is made up of many parts, including their gender identity, gender expression, sex, and sexual orientation. Sam Killermann's "The Genderbread Person"<sup>1</sup> can be a helpful tool for exploring each part. (When you're ready for more advanced explorations of gender, check [ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com](#) for Version 2!)



Take a moment to reflect on your gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation.

- What are the traditional expectations in your culture(s) for each aspect of your identity?
- In what ways do you conform to these gender expectations? In what ways are you different?
- When you, or people you've known, look or act in ways that do not conform to gender expectations, what have the consequences been?

### COMMON ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT GENDER

Gender can have an enormous impact on how we relate to other people. Outdated views of gender continue to circulate in our everyday understandings of what it means to be human. In order to resist and to stop reinforcing these harmful assumptions, it is important to be conscious of the assumptions and values that we have about gender.

#### COMMON ASSUMPTIONS

- 1 There are only two genders: male and female.
- 2 Gender is the same as sex. It's determined by anatomy.
- 3 Some gender identities and expressions are better than others. For example, men should be masculine and women should be feminine.

These assumptions about gender limit everyone, but they are particularly harmful to trans\* people. Trans\* is an umbrella term used to refer to the wide range of people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from traditional expectations based on their biological sex. The asterisk is meant to signal inclusion of a wide range of gender identities and expressions.

Some of the people who may identify as trans\* include:

- People who were assigned male gender (i.e. designated as male) at birth but who identify or express their gender as female all or part of the time (some use the term **Male-to-Female** or **MTF** or Trans Woman)
- People who were assigned female gender (i.e. designated as female) at birth but identify or express their gender as male all or part of the time (some use the term **Female-to-Male** or **FTM** or Trans Man)
- People who identify their gender outside the construct of male/female: having no gender, being androgynous, having parts of multiple genders, etc. (some use the term **Genderqueer**)
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people who have dual-gender identities, gender expressions or gender roles (some use the term **Two-Spirit**)
- People who explore gender for pleasure or performance (some use the term **Drag King** or **Drag Queen**)
- People who wear clothing traditionally associated with a gender they do not identify with (some use the term **Gender Play**)

### INCLUSIVE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT GENDER

Notice how trans\* people might be erased or dehumanized by the common assumptions about gender. How can we expand our understanding of gender to be more inclusive? Here are some proposed alternatives.

#### INCLUSIVE ASSUMPTIONS

- 1 There are a variety of gender identities outside the male and female boxes.
- 2 Gender identity is different from sex. Sex can be understood as a way of assigning living beings labels such as male, female, or intersex based on their anatomy, including genitalia and genetics. Gender identity can be understood as a person's deeply felt sense of themselves as male, female, both, or neither. A person's sex can be different from their gender identity.
- 3 There is no right or wrong way to have a gender identity or gender expression. We should respect and affirm each person's gender identity and gender expression.

#### YOUR TURN:

Which of these assumptions do you hold to be true?

Which assumptions do you have difficulty with? Spend some time reflecting on what the root of this difficulty might be.

What might you personally stand to lose and gain by holding these assumptions?

What might others stand to lose or gain if you held these assumptions?

How would you need to act differently if you held these assumptions?

### **MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY**

**Myth:** Children and teens are too young to know their gender identity.

**Fact:** Most people become aware of their gender identity between the ages of 18 months and three years.<sup>2</sup> Many youths whose gender identities do not conform to the expectations of their families, peers, and schools are invisible out of fear for their safety.<sup>3</sup>

**Myth:** Being transgender is just a phase.

**Fact:** Some children go through phases of gender non-conformity. The longer a child has identified as cross-gender, the easier it becomes to predict whether it is a phase. Regardless of the outcome, the self-esteem, mental well-being, and overall health of the child depends heavily on receiving love, support, and compassion from family and school.

**Myth:** Being transgender is a sexual orientation.

**Fact:** Sexual orientation and gender identity are different. A person's sexual orientation is related to whether the person is romantically attracted to men, women, both, neither, genderqueer people, etc. Gender identity, on the other hand, is about the person's own internal identification as male, female, or a gender in between or beyond. Just like non-transgender people, transgender people can be of any sexual orientation.

**Myth:** All transgender people will eventually take hormones and get sex reassignment surgery.

**Fact:** Some transgender people take hormones and/or have surgery. However, for a number of reasons, many transgender people do not take either of these steps. Some feel comfortable with their bodies the way they are. For others, hormones and surgery are inaccessible because they may be too expensive and/or require parental permission.

### **LANGUAGE DOS AND DON'TS**

A crucial part of modelling respect for all gender identities and expressions is using respectful language. The following tips are intended to assist educators with that ongoing task as you engage with students.

**Recognize that not everyone identifies as either male or female.**

**Don't** refer to students as "boys and girls" or "ladies and gentlemen," as not everyone fits into this binary view of gender.

**Do** address your class in gender-neutral ways. You might say Division 6, folks, gang, friends, class, everyone, people, etc.

**Don't** force people to declare their gender on forms, unless legally required.

**Do** provide a blank line for people to fill in—and make answering the question optional.

**Use sex and gender-related terminology accurately.**

**Don't** reinforce the wall of silence that hides the reality of gender diversity.

**Do** use "gender identity" to refer to a person's internal sense of themselves as female, male, both, neither, two-spirit, or possibly some other terms.

**Don't** say "transvestite" or "tranny." These are offensive terms.

**Do** use the same language the person you are speaking about uses to describe themselves. (Some people who are transgender have reclaimed the word "tranny." Because of the sensitive nature of this term, it is still advisable for non-transgender people to use "transgender" instead.)

**Don't** use the word "hermaphrodite" for a person born with genitals that do not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. This is an offensive term.

**Do** say "an intersex person" and model respect and sensitivity.

**Honour the expressed gender identity of others.**

**Don't** put quotation marks on another person's name or gender identity, as doing so implies that it lacks validity.

**Do** recognize that a transgender person's name and gender identity are just as real as anyone else's.

**Don't** guess which pronoun to use for another person when you aren't sure.

**Do** ask them (in a manner that is respectful of their privacy).

**Use gender-neutral language when gender is irrelevant.**

**Don't** use terms such as businessman, housewife, male nurse, woman pilot, woman doctor, postman, fireman, etc. Gender is irrelevant when discussing careers.

**Do** use terms like businessperson, homemaker, nurse, pilot, doctor, mail carrier, firefighter.

For the full version of Pride Education Network's educator's guide *The Gender Spectrum*, please go here:

[pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf](http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf)

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### SCHOOL CLIMATE MAP

High school was not a safe and welcoming space for Rae. How does your school measure up? In this activity, students will create a map of their high school that evaluates how safe and welcoming its spaces are for queer and trans\* students.



Invite students to work in small groups to create a map of their school. It is not important for the map to be architecturally accurate—ask them to choose which spaces will be important to represent, such as the library, hallways, cafeteria, washrooms, guidance office, gym, locker rooms, and sports fields. Perhaps they could label one classroom to represent all classrooms in the school.

Ask the students to create a code to mark each space as:

- Safe and welcoming of queer and trans\* students
- Queer and trans\* students should use caution
- Unsafe and hostile to queer and trans\* students

The group should come to a consensus about how to categorize each space. Encourage them to be thoughtful about how they categorize each space by giving detailed reasons and examples for their decisions. If students are having trouble, prompt them to consider forms of bullying they have witnessed or experienced in these spaces and whether gender non-conformity was a factor.

Students present their maps to the class, explaining their logic for their decisions.

Once all of the groups have presented, ask students to identify patterns across all of the maps. What do they notice? Does anything stand out or surprise them?

Challenge the groups to create an action plan for improving the school climate for queer and trans\* students. What concrete steps can students take to make a difference? Facilitate a class discussion based on the groups' ideas.

Let students know that they will not be evaluated based on whether or not they act upon what they have identified. The purpose of taking action isn't to get a good grade or earn acknowledgement from people in positions of authority, like teachers. Taking action has to come from a place of genuinely wanting to make our communities better places to live. The choice of whether or not to do something is in the students' hands.

### GENDER MANIFESTO

Suggest to students that we are all taught to accept certain beliefs about gender and perform certain customs based on our gender. These beliefs and customs will be different depending on what culture we belong to and what time period we are in.

Rae Spoon challenges many mainstream assumptions about gender. On the board, write this prompt: "Rae Spoon challenges the belief that..." Then elicit examples of some common beliefs about gender that Rae challenges, and write them on the board.

Examples might include:

- There are only two genders: male and female.
- Gender is determined by anatomy.
- Boys should be masculine and girls should be feminine.
- Boys should be romantically interested in girls and vice versa.

Ask students to participate in this Think/Pair/Share activity: First have students think silently about ways they experience the understandings of gender written on the board to be limiting. Next, invite them to pair up with the person sitting next to them to discuss their thoughts. Then ask pairs to share their ideas with the class.

Ask students to define, or guess at defining, the word "manifesto." Then pass around some examples of manifestos to help clarify (many examples can be found online, such as the [Idle No More Manifesto](#), the [Greenster Manifesto](#), the [Holstee Manifesto](#), and the [Expert Enough Manifesto](#)).

Tell students that they will be working in groups to draft a manifesto about gender. First they will brainstorm ideas about gender that are more inclusive of transgender and gender non-conforming people than the ones on the board. Then they will draft the text of their manifesto. Once the text is complete, they can create a visually appealing poster copy.

Invite the groups to present their manifesto to the class. Encourage feedback from the class, including thoughts about what the practical consequences of such a manifesto might be in creating (or undermining) safe and welcoming spaces.



### GENDER SELF-PORTRAIT

*When I was a little girl  
I thought I had to hold up the world.  
Singing "Hallelujah" in the choir  
To keep my feet out of the fire.*

*My prairie home  
My prairie home  
My prairie home  
My prairie home  
Fits like a Sunday dress.*

– Rae Spoon, lyrics from the song "Sunday Dress"

Rae Spoon sings the words "My prairie home fits like a Sunday dress." Discuss with students what Rae means by this lyric. Answers will vary but may speak to how Rae's sense of self doesn't match up with the expectations of the culture they grew up in.

Tell the students they will be creating a collage that illustrates what gender expectations they have encountered in their life, and how their own identity may fit with and/or challenge these expectations.

Provide an assortment of magazines and newspapers, as well as a legal-sized piece of paper for each student. Ask students to fold the paper so that two front flaps of equal size cover the middle of the sheet. On the front (Figure 2), ask the students to create a collage of who they are supposed to be, based on their gender. On the inside (Figure 1), ask the students to create a collage representing who they really are. Give the students about an hour to complete their collage.

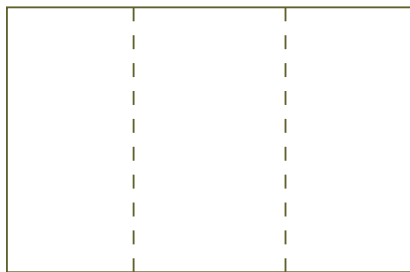


Figure 1. Flaps open.

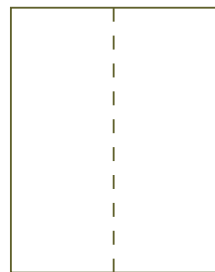


Figure 2. Flaps closed.

Afterwards, ask students to form a circle with their chairs and invite volunteers to share their collage, to the extent that they feel comfortable. (This activity was adapted from an activity in the *Straightlaced* curriculum guide by GroundSpark, 2009.)

### GENDER DIVERSITY JIGSAW

Rae understands their gender as belonging to a space outside the boundaries of male and female. How have cultures around the world understood genders that exist beyond these two categories?

Explain that on nearly every continent, throughout history, cultures have recognized and revered more than two genders. Many of these traditions were suppressed when European countries colonized much of the world. The Europeans believed there were only two genders and people who did not conform to their expectations were immoral. Despite this, gender-diverse people have shown a great deal of resilience.

Assign each student a continent: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, or Australia. Challenge the students to use the Web to find as much information as they can in 20 minutes about the existence of gender identities other than male or female on the continent they have been assigned. The Map of Gender Diverse Cultures on the PBS website ([pbs.org/independentlens/two-spirits/map.html](https://pbs.org/independentlens/two-spirits/map.html)) is a good starting point. Ask the students to take notes.

After about 20 minutes of research, have the students meet with the people who were assigned the same continent as them to compare notes and share information. Make sure they take notes about any information they learn from their peers.

To wrap up, facilitate a class discussion around these questions:

- How many genders are there?
- Who decides what gender a person is?
- In places with more than two genders, are gender-diverse people always accepted? If not, can you give examples of challenges gender-diverse people face in a particular place?
- What is a tradition? Do traditions always stay the same over time? How are traditions positive? When might a tradition be negative?

Also check in with the class as a whole about what the research process was like:

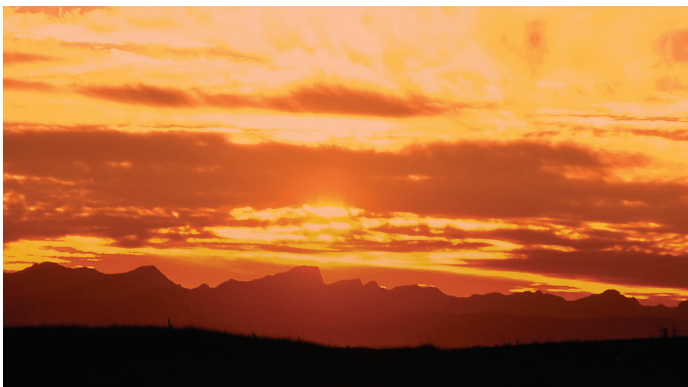
- Was it difficult to find information on diverse-gender traditions?
- Why might that be?

### A SAFE SPACE - POETRY ACTIVITY



Rae's home is at the edge of the Athabasca River, where the ice melts under the omnipresent glow of peaceful blue light. Can you think of any symbolic reasons why Rae chose this imagery?

Take some time to think about Rae's safe spaces. Where are Rae's safe spaces? Do you have a safe space where you feel you can be 100-percent yourself?



Many people find it calming to imagine a safe space they can escape to for a sense of peace and well-being. This kind of visualization can help us stay resilient in difficult times.

This poetry-based lesson will provide students with a safe, calming visualization they can draw on as a coping tool in difficult times.

Display a large nature-inspired painting, such as Emily Carr's *Cedar*, 1942. Ask students to comment on what they see.

Now invite students to imagine they are inside the painting. What sounds do they hear? Create a soundscape by having the students create their sounds at the same time as their peers. Next, elicit ideas of what students might smell, feel and taste in the painting.

Students can work independently or in pairs for the next exercise. Provide an array of nature-inspired paintings. Calendars and art magazines are two quick and affordable sources for prints. Ask students to choose a print and, on paper, brainstorm words associated with what they can see, hear, taste, smell and feel in the painting. Next, ask students to choose one spot in the painting that could be an imaginary escape or calming space, like Rae's glacier. Provide the students with this poetry frame:

*I come from...* (the spot they chose in the painting)  
*It sounds like...*  
*It smells like...*  
*It feels like...*  
*It tastes like...*  
*And I remember...*

Ask them to complete the stems, using words from their brainstorm as inspiration.

Encourage students to recite their completed poems for the class.

Invite students to return to the scene that they created during difficult times when they need to feel grounded and calm.

## MEDIA LITERACY

### READING THE IMAGE

It is important to consider the images in the film as text, and “read” a film as one would read a novel. Through this media literacy activity, show students that the director, Chelsea McMullan, has made conscious visual choices to present her story about Rae and to reinforce the themes present in the film. Below is a series of stills taken from the film, followed by a few discussion questions intended to help students analyze and understand the greater themes in the film and how they are communicated through the visual form.

### ISOLATION



The title of the film is *My Prairie Home*. Why do you think the film begins with the image of a Prairie landscape upside down?

What are your thoughts or perceptions of the Canadian Prairies? What images or words come to mind? Think about both the romantic ideas and myths of the Prairies and the realities of the Prairies. How does the imagery of the Prairies throughout the film reinforce Rae's feelings growing up as a transgendered person in Calgary, Alberta?

Have students consider the lyrics to the first song Rae sings in the diner:

*I wanted you to think I was a cowboy  
So I told you where I am from.  
But all I ever did was run from trucks  
And I never held a gun.*

*I wanted you to think I was strong  
So I showed you my restraint  
Far past when I lost control  
I never stopped the game.*

– Rae Spoon, lyrics from the song “Cowboy”

How do the lyrics relate to the opening image of the upside-down Prairies?

### TRANSITION / IN-BETWEEN SPACES

*“You can't be where you're going and can't be where you left. So you end up in kind of this in-between space.” – Rae Spoon*



Why do you think the director chose to shoot Rae in diners, motel rooms and the Greyhound station? Do these spaces have significance to Rae? If so, how and why? What do these spaces represent in the context of Rae's personal journey?



### COPING THROUGH MUSIC

"In the end, I used the very music that had saved my life to communicate how it had done so." – Rae Spoon

*This used to be  
The bottom of an ocean.  
Sometimes I would dream we were floatin'  
Driftin' on the waves  
Forget our weight.  
With the Prairies drowning below us.*

*Dinosaurs only live underground.  
That's where I watched them  
Lower you down.  
I picture you all running around  
In a place that's too good to be found.*

*But I wake up and you've been taken.  
But I wake up and you've been taken.  
But I wake up and you've been taken  
To the vacuum that no one is naming.  
But I wake up and you've been taken.*

– Rae Spoon, lyrics from the song "This Used to Be the Bottom of an Ocean"



In the film, Rae discusses the death of their baby brother shortly after the Calgary 1988 Olympics. The scene takes place in Drumheller, Alberta, where a significant number of dinosaur fossils have been found and are presented in the Royal Tyrrell Museum. What is the significance of the dinosaur fossils?



How does Rae cope with their challenges, pain and personal struggles? What are some activities you can engage in to help deal with personal challenges or pain? (Examples: writing poetry, drawing, playing sports, listening to music, watching movies, going for a walk, talking to a friend, or playing games.)

### HUNTED

"Everyone every day makes choices about what to reveal of themselves. There's an idea of like what's normal, and then anything that differs from that you're in the closet about." – Rae Spoon



There are recurring images of deer in the film, including one of Rae presented as a mounted deer head. What do the deer symbolize? Rae discusses feeling that they are hunted by their father. What role did Rae's dad play in their life? What other reasons could contribute to Rae's feelings of being a target and of being hunted throughout their life?

## RESOURCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

### ONLINE RESOURCES

**Pride Education Network** is a group of educators and advocates who value the importance of a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment for all, regardless of sexual orientation/expression. Pride Education Network advocates for an inclusive, respectful environment for all students, staff and families, regardless of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity, within all educational institutions in British Columbia, through the development of concrete supports, policies, resources, and actions.

[pridenet.ca](http://pridenet.ca)

Below are two resources written and published by Pride Education Network:

**The Gender Spectrum Guide:** A comprehensive resource for K–12 teachers, this handbook challenges the common misunderstanding that gender is distinct for girls and boys. Seeing gender as a spectrum creates inclusive learning spaces where all students feel safe to be themselves.

[pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf](http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf)

**Creating and Supporting a GSA:** Gay-Straight Alliances are student organizations that are intended to provide a safe and supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth and their straight allies (LGBTAs).

[pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/gsa-handbook.pdf](http://pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/gsa-handbook.pdf)

**Out in Schools** is an anti-bullying program based in Vancouver, BC. Through facilitated workshops, Out in Schools brings LGBT films into classrooms to outreach to students on homophobia and discrimination.

[outinschools.com](http://outinschools.com)

**QMUNITY** is BC's queer resource centre—the hub for lesbian, gay, trans\*, bi and queer community programs, training and advocacy. We envision a world where all queer people are included and free from discrimination.

[qmunity.ca](http://qmunity.ca)

**CPATH** is the largest national professional organization for transgender health in the world. Our members are diverse, representing and identifying within the trans\* community—from medical students to social workers to psychologists.

[cpath.ca/home/?lang=en](http://cpath.ca/home/?lang=en)

**EGALE** Canada is our national lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans\* (LGBT) human rights organization, advancing equality, diversity, education and justice.

[egale.ca](http://egale.ca)

**MyGSA.ca** is Canada's website for safer and more inclusive schools for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, queer and questioning (LGBTQ) community.

[mygsa.ca](http://mygsa.ca)

**GRIS**-Montreal (Groupe de Recherche et d'Intervention Sociale) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to ensure better awareness of the homosexual and bisexual reality and make it easier for gays, lesbians and bisexuals to integrate into society. As is the case for the fight against racism, the integration of any minority can only be achieved by trying to eliminate ignorance and prejudice.

[gris.ca/english](http://gris.ca/english)

**PFLAG** (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Every day, PFLAG Canada volunteers are contacted by frightened adolescents and by angry, fearful or ashamed parents. PFLAG Canada supports, educates and provides resources to anyone with questions or concerns. Just call us at 1-888-530-6777.

[pflagcanada.ca/en/index.html](http://pflagcanada.ca/en/index.html)

**Trans Alliance Society** (TAS) is a registered non-profit with the British Columbia government and is governed by the society act and its constitution. The aims, goals and mission statements associated with Trans Alliance Society (TAS) are enshrined in our Constitution and on our website. We broadly summarize these as transgender support, education, outreach and advocacy. In each of these areas, TAS can provide the resources and information needed by trans\* persons in Vancouver and throughout British Columbia, going out and speaking at schools and the workplace, enlisting the support and participation of allied individuals and groups, and pushing for reforms, wherever needed.

[transalliancesociety.org](http://transalliancesociety.org)

**The 519 Trans Access** is a team of trans women and men funded to deliver trans\* awareness workshops to a range of service providers who work for shelters, detox centres, settlement agencies, youth agencies, assaulted women's services and more. Our goal is to help these agencies become more accessible to trans\* people. Since 2001 we've trained more than 8,000 service providers and assisted 25 Toronto shelters to develop trans\* access policies.

[the519.org/programsservices/researcheducationandtraining/transaccess-workshops](http://the519.org/programsservices/researcheducationandtraining/transaccess-workshops)

**Trans Equality Society of Alberta (TESA)**. TESA's mission is to be a witness to and a voice for matters concerning trans-identified Albertans. TESA was formed in the hopes that building a traditional non-profit advocacy group would open opportunities for formal engagement with authorities who otherwise overlook the unique needs of the larger trans\* community.

[tesaonline.org](http://tesaonline.org)

**Public Health Agency of Canada Q&A Booklet on Gender Identity in Schools:**

[cfsh.ca/files/PDF/WEB-Engl.Gender\\_Identity.pdf](http://cfsh.ca/files/PDF/WEB-Engl.Gender_Identity.pdf)

**It's Pronounced Metrosexual** is a site where advocates of social justice can find helpful articles, fun graphics, and other resources designed to be shared in an effort to advance social equity. It's a site that helps people help people be better people.

[tspronouncedmetrosexual.com/about-the-blog](http://tspronouncedmetrosexual.com/about-the-blog)

## ARTICLES

University of British Columbia News. *Gay-straight alliances in schools reduce suicide risk for all students.*

[news.ubc.ca/2014/01/20/gay-straight-alliances-in-schools-reduce-suicide-risk-for-all-students](http://news.ubc.ca/2014/01/20/gay-straight-alliances-in-schools-reduce-suicide-risk-for-all-students)

The Huffington Post Blog. "I Grew Up Trans on the Prairies, Now My Story's at Sundance," by Rae Spoon.

[huffingtonpost.ca/rae-spoon/rae-spoon-my-prairie-home\\_b\\_4612126.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=tw](http://huffingtonpost.ca/rae-spoon/rae-spoon-my-prairie-home_b_4612126.html?utm_hp_ref=tw)

## ONLINE VIDEO RESOURCES

The two online video resources posted here are recommended for educators, who can decide at their discretion if they are suitable for their students.

The following video is by Sam Killermann, from the website **It's Pronounced Metrosexual**. In it he discusses the complexities of gender at a TEDx event in Chicago.

[youtube.com/watch?v=NRcPXtdKjE](http://youtube.com/watch?v=NRcPXtdKjE)

The following video is by GenderVision, from the website **Gendervision.org**. In a series of videos they discuss topics ranging from sex and gender to masculinity, femininity, transgender, intersex, GLBT, feminist and men's and women's issues, as well as stereotypes of women and men. This is an introductory video on being transgender.

[youtube.com/watch?v=lasY\\_wq28pl](http://youtube.com/watch?v=lasY_wq28pl)

## RELATED NFB FILMS

**Last Chance** (Directed by Paul Émile d'Entremont, 2012, 85 min)

**Men for Sale** (Directed by Rodrigue Jean, 2009, 144 min)

**Cure for Love** (Directed by Francine Pelletier and Christina Willings, 2008, 59 min)

**First Stories – Two Spirited** (Directed by Sharon A. Desjarlais, 2007, 7 min)

**Zero Degrees of Separation** (Directed by Elle Flanders, 2005, 90 min)

**John and Michael** (Directed by Shira Avni, 2004, 10 min)

**Apples and Oranges** (Directed by Lynne Fernie, 2003, 17 min)

**Open Secrets** (Directed by José Torrealba, 2003, 52 min)

**In Other Words** (Directed by Jan Padgett, 2001, 27 min)

**One of Them** (Directed by Elise Swerhone, 2000, 26 min)

**When Love Is Gay** (Directed by Laurent Gagliardi, 1995, 49 min)

**The Company of Strangers** (Directed by Cynthia Scott, 1990, 101 min)

### GLOSSARY

**Ally** refers to a person who supports and celebrates diversity, interrupts oppressive remarks and actions, and willingly explores these biases within themselves.

**Cisgender** refers to someone who identifies with the same gender they were assigned at birth and is used to call attention to the privilege of people who are not trans\*.

**Coming out** is the process of becoming aware of one's queer sexual orientation or trans\* gender identity, accepting it, and telling others about it.

**Gender binary:** The view that there are only two, distinct, opposite genders.

**Gender expression** refers to how someone outwardly manifests gender, for example, through clothing, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.

**Gender identity** refers to a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being either male, female, something other, or in between. Everyone has a gender identity.

**Gender non-conforming** refers to a person who does not conform to society's expectations of their gender role or gender expression.

**Genderqueer:** A term under the trans\* umbrella that refers to people who identify outside of the male-female binary.

**Gender roles:** The socially constructed and culturally specific behaviours such as communication styles, careers, family roles, and more, imposed on people based on their biological sex assigned at birth. It is important to note that gender interpretations and expectations vary widely among cultures and often change over time.

**Heteronormative:** Refers to social roles and social structures that reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is the presumed norm and is superior to other sexual orientations.

**Heterosexism:** A system of attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favour of opposite-sex sexuality and relationships. This includes the assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior to homosexuality and bisexuality.

**Homophobia:** Fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against homosexuals or homosexual behaviour. There are many levels and forms of homophobia, including cultural/institutional homophobia, interpersonal homophobia, and internalized homophobia.

**Homosexual:** A person who is mostly attracted to people of their own gender. Because this term has been widely used negatively and/or in a cold and clinical way, most homosexuals prefer the terms "lesbian," "gay" or "queer."

**Inclusive language:** The use of gender non-specific language (e.g. "partner" instead of "husband," or "they" instead of "she") to avoid assumptions around gender identity and sexual orientation, and to enhance the accessibility of information and services. Educational, social service, and health professionals are especially encouraged to use inclusive language until advised otherwise by the person they are talking to or about.

**Intersex:** Intersex people may have: external genitalia which do not closely resemble the medical definition of male or female genitalia, or which have the appearance of both male and female genitalia; the genitalia of one sex and the secondary sex characteristics of another sex; or a chromosomal makeup that is neither XX nor XY but may be a combination of both. "Intersex" has replaced the term "hermaphrodite," which is widely considered to be outdated, inaccurate and offensive. An intersex person may or may not identify as part of the trans\* community.

**LGBT:** Acronym used to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people, interchangeable with GLBT, LGTB, etc. Additional letters are sometimes added to this acronym, such as LGBTIQ2S to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Questioning and 2-Spirit folk.

**Outing someone:** Accidentally or intentionally publicly revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without their permission. This can cause social, physical, emotional, or economic danger for the person being "outed." Outing someone can sometimes be done as an act of hate.

**Patriarchy:** A social system in which the bulk of power, authority, and control in society is held by men. This assigns greater importance to male identities and issues than to people of other gender identities.

**Privilege:** Refers to the social, economic, and political advantages or rights held by people from dominant groups on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, etc. For example, men often experience privilege that people of other genders do not have.

**QPOC:** An acronym for Queer People of Colour. Another term used is QTIPOC (Queer, Transgender, and Intersex People of Colour). Queer people of colour often experience intersecting oppressions on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation and other factors.

**Queer:** A term becoming more widely used among LGBT communities because of its inclusiveness. "Queer" can be used to refer to the range of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender people and provides a convenient shorthand for "LGBT." It is important to note that this is a reclaimed term that was once and is still used as a hate term, and thus some people feel uncomfortable with it.

**Questioning:** A term sometimes used by those in the process of exploring personal issues of sexual orientation and gender identity as well as choosing not to identify with any other label.

**Rainbow flag/colours:** A symbol of queer presence, welcome, and pride which represents the diversity of queer communities.

**Sex:** Refers to the biological characteristics chosen to assign humans as male, female or intersex. It is determined by characteristics such as sexual and reproductive anatomy and genetic makeup.

**Sexual orientation:** Refers to a person's deep-seated feelings of sexual and romantic attraction. These attractions may be mostly towards people of the same gender (lesbian, gay), another gender (heterosexual), men and women (bisexual), or people of all genders (pansexual).

**Sexism:** The belief that male gender identities and masculine gender expressions are superior to female and/or feminine ones.

**Transgender (Trans, Trans\*):** Transgender, frequently abbreviated to “trans” or “trans\*” (the asterisk is intended to actively include non-binary and/or non-static gender identities such as genderqueer), is an umbrella term that describes a wide range of people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned biological birth sex. Identifying as transgender, trans, or trans\* is something that can only be decided by an individual for themselves and does not depend on criteria such as surgery or hormone treatment status.

**Transition:** Refers to the process during which trans\* people may change their gender expression and/or bodies to reflect their gender identity or sexual identity. Transition may involve a change in physical appearance (hairstyle, clothing), behaviour (mannerisms, voice, gender roles), and/or identification (name, pronoun, legal details). It may be accompanied by changes to the body such as the use of hormones to change secondary sex characteristics (e.g., breasts, facial hair).

**Trans man:** This term describes someone who identifies as trans\* and whose gender identity is male.

**Transphobia:** The fear and dislike of, and discrimination against, trans\* people. Transphobia can take the form of disparaging jokes, rejection, exclusion, denial of services, employment discrimination, name-calling and violence.

**Trans woman:** This term may describe someone who identifies as trans\* and whose gender identity is female.

**Two-Spirit (2-Spirit):** A term used by some North American Aboriginal societies to describe people with diverse gender identities, gender expressions, gender roles, and sexual orientations. Dual-gendered, or “two-spirited,” people have been and are viewed differently in different First Nations communities. Sometimes they have been seen without stigma and have been considered seers, child-carers, warriors, mediators, or emissaries from the creator and treated with deference and respect, or even considered sacred, but at other times this has not been the case. As one of the devastating effects of colonization and profound changes in North American Aboriginal societies, many Two-Spirit folk have lost these community roles, and this has had far-reaching impacts on their well-being.

This is an abridged form of a glossary called *Queer Terminology – from A to Q*, written by Qmunity, BC's Queer Resource Centre. For the full version, please visit [qmunity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Queer-Terminology-Web-Version-Sept-2013.pdf](http://qmunity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Queer-Terminology-Web-Version-Sept-2013.pdf).

**QMUNITY**  
BC'S QUEER RESOURCE CENTRE

## CREDITS

This guide was produced by NFB Education. It was written by Shantel Ivits, Educator and Community Organizer, Ross Johnstone, Director of Programs for Out in Schools, David Butler, MEd and Educator, Jair Matrim, MA, and Anne Koizumi, NFB Education Specialist.

Special thanks to Rae Spoon, Noble Kelly, Pride Education Network Facilitator, Sam Killermann, Qmunity, Moira Keigher, NFB Marketing Manager, Sophie Quevillon, NFB Coordinator of Educational Materials, and Kristine Collins, Director of NFB Institutional and Educational Markets.



## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Sam Killermann. It's Pronounced Metrosexual website. Image and text used with permission: [itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/11/uncopyright/](http://itspronouncedmetrosexual.com/2013/11/uncopyright/).
- 2 Stephanie Brill & Rachel Pepper (2008). *The Transgender Child: A Handbook for Families and Professionals*. San Francisco: Cleis.
- 3 Stephanie Brill & Rachel Pepper (2008).