

## NEW REPORT ON CHILDREN'S ANIMATED TELEVISION IN CANADA MAKES KEY FINDINGS ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Industry moves towards greater representation of people of colour in children's animated television content, but a lack of characters with disabilities and neurodiversity remains.



**January 7, 2021 (Toronto, ON)** – New report released today on representation in Canadian children's and youth animated television content reveals an increase in portrayals of people of colour (POC) — a more accurate reflection of Canada's cultural make-up. Indigenous characters, however, remain largely underrepresented along with other ethnic minority groups. The report also reveals a persistent gap in equal representation of gender as well as depictions of neuro-diversity and disability. The research outlines the implications for young audiences and offers suggested practices for industry and content creators who want to positively enrich and advance children's media content. The new report entitled [\*Examining Children's Animated Television in Canada\*](#) published by the [Children's Media Lab](#) at [FCAD](#), the faculty of communication and design at Ryerson University, is a follow up to the popular [Landscape of Children's Television in the US and Canada](#), a collaboration between Ryerson University and Rutgers University, distributed by the Center for Scholars and Storytellers at UCLA in Spring 2019.

"I'm excited to report that we've seen tremendous shifts in racial diversity in human animated characters with people of color representing half of all main characters. But I'm disappointed to

say that we still have a long way to go in our gender representation, with males outnumbering females nearly 2:1. And characters with disabilities virtually absent," says Colleen Russo Johnson, Ph.D, co-director of the [Children's Media Lab](#), adjunct professor at the school of creative industries at FCAD (Ryerson University) and co-founder and Chief Scientist of the OK Play app.

The increase in Black and Latin American representation is welcome news in a time of growing calls for equity and intentional inclusion. The [Examining Children's Animated Television in Canada](#) report, inspired by think tank events hosted with Canadian broadcasters, offers important recommendations for greater diversity and inclusion in Canadian children's media content. These include diversifying writers' rooms, creating complex characters, and improving gender representation in animated characters as well as the visibility of neuro-diversity and characters with disabilities.

"Canadian children's content producers are already recognized as major players globally. Research like this allows them to continue to think about equity and to challenge themselves to create content that addresses disparities like gender bias, even in non-human characters like animals and monsters. This is something that content creators can easily act on," says Kim Wilson, co-director of the [Children's Media Lab](#), Director, OneFish TwoFish Consulting and kids' media veteran who has led children's content at both the CBC and TVO.

Recognizing that children's early experiences shape what they imagine to be possible, the report contends that addressing disparities in representation should be a priority for the industry and a top consideration for broadcasters and producers in developing and creating content.

"TVO is proud to have participated in this innovative research project," says Marney Malabar, Director of TVOkids. "As producers of animated shows for kids, we know how important it is to create multi-dimensional characters that reflect the diversity of our young viewers and make them feel heard and empowered."

"Children's television has the incredible opportunity to influence children's views of themselves and others. We often focus on what we are portraying, but equal attention must be paid to what we are not showing. Lack of diversity on screen, be it race, gender, or disability, is damaging. It's imperative that children see themselves accurately and positively reflected in the shows they watch. Children are our best hope for a more inclusive future, and we can help nudge them in the right direction through the content they consume," says Colleen.

With the support of FCAD, Ryerson University's home of creativity, the new study advances a commitment to the evolution of the cultural industries in ways that accurately reflect real world diversity and create meaningful progress. By drawing attention to BIPOC and other minority group representation in youth-targeted storytelling, the Children's Media Lab's report hopes to bridge the gap between academic research and industry to meet the needs of young audiences.

The Children's Media Lab will follow up on the report with a 'Virtual Think Tank Event' on March 10, 2021. Email [childrensmedialab@ryerson.ca](mailto:childrensmedialab@ryerson.ca) to attend.

Examining Children's Animated Television in Canada [report available here](#).

Press Materials available [here](#).

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**About the Children's Media Lab**

Operating within the **Transmedia Zone at FCAD**, a community-focused incubator for innovation in storytelling across entertainment media platforms, [The Children's Media Lab](#) supports compelling research into children's content creation, bridging the gap between academic inquiry and the kids media content industry to positively shape the future of children's content.

**About FCAD - the faculty of communication and design at Ryerson University**

Entering its eighth decade, FCAD is a global centre of media and creative invention. As a disrupter in innovative education, FCAD is dedicated to developing creators with authentic voices who engage directly with creative industries around the world. With 26 undergraduate and graduate programs that are shaping the future of their fields and tight-knit partnerships around the world, FCAD offers more opportunities to educate the next generation of creative leaders than anywhere else.

*Available for interview:*

[Kim Wilson](#), Co-Director of the [Children's Media Lab](#)

[Colleen Russo-Johnson](#), Ph.D., Co-Director of the Children's Media Lab

[Charles Falzon](#), Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Design (FCAD)

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