

## Accents

Not all Black and People of Colour in Canada have accents. However, accents are common and should be normalized and not used to signal character traits. If you are going to have a character with an accent, get it right.

*"I worked with a company looking for voiceover actors and they wanted to ensure they had diversity in casting so it had to be obvious, they wanted people with accents. But I'm brown and I don't have an accent."*



*"There's this weird expectation from casting and from directors that we're all interchangeable East Asians, same for South Asians. You want a South Asian accent? Which one?"*



**21.4%** of Canadians have a language other than English or French as their first language.



**26.0%** of Canadians were not born here.

If a specific cultural or ethnic heritage is required for a role, research the range of what that means and particularly pay attention to the range of skin tones, eye colour and hair types and the kinds or lack of accent (i.e., are they a recent immigrant? Do they need to be?)

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## Who Can Tell A Story?

There is no one answer to this question. Some answers are:

- There should be no limitations on creativity.
- Only people from within a community should be allowed to tell a story from that community.
- Whether you are from the community or outside, you can tell the story if you have done the work to ensure authenticity. The work required is different for every project.

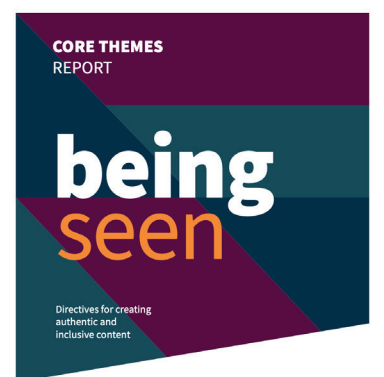


*"Surround yourself with not one but multiple people from every sector of wherever it is that you're also setting these stories. Once you hire them then listen and consider and empower them and do the right thing."*

*"I definitely don't think that as creatives we should be limited to the type of stories that we want to tell, because that's what makes us creative. However, I do believe that in some capacity, we need to involve the culture that we're trying to represent in our stories, to be part of developing that story."*



*"I think the problem that we're seeing today is that there is this assumption that comes with privilege that it's acceptable to take stories that belong to other people, to be writing from perspectives that aren't one's own. There has to be a shift in the mindset in which the industry, which is predominantly white-run, understands that not every story is theirs to tell."*

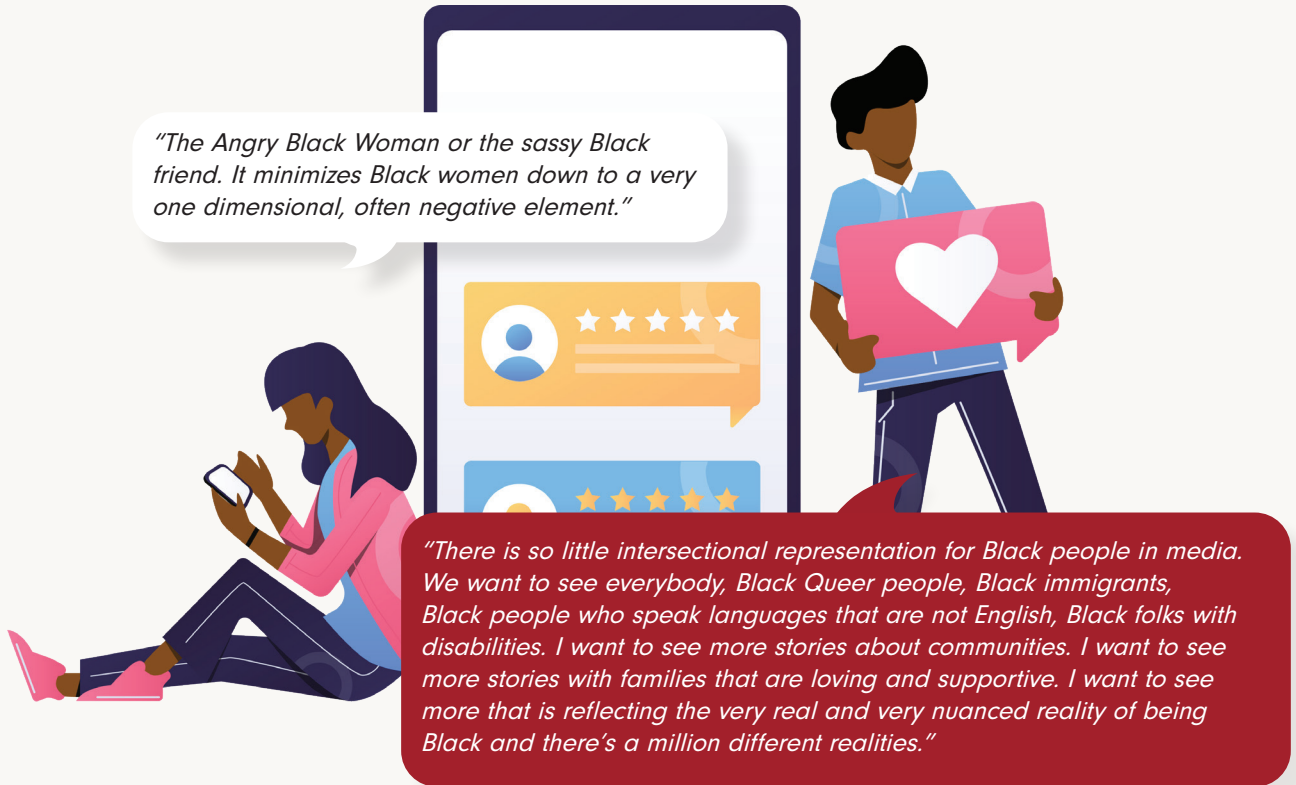


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## Black Stereotypes

Avoid stereotypes unless you're subverting them or adding complexity to the character or story. Review content with an eye to unconsciously promoting stereotypes. Understand the complexity of the Black communities including ethnic or cultural origin, intersectional identities, socio-economic status and location within Canada.



**4.3% of Canadians are Black.** Ottawa-Gatineau (Quebec part), Lethbridge and Moncton had the fastest growing Black population in the country between 1996 and 2016.

Nearly one-third (**32.6%**) of the Black population was born in Africa, including Nigeria (**7.1%**), Ethiopia (**2.8%**) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (**2.4%**), while **21.0%** were born in the Caribbean and Bermuda, mostly in Jamaica (**8.8%**) and Haiti (**7.2%**). The ancestral diversity of the Black population is a reflection of the different waves of immigration to Canada. In fact, the Black population reported over **300** different ethnic or cultural origins in the census.



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[www.bso-ben.ca](http://www.bso-ben.ca)  
[www.beingseen.ca](http://www.beingseen.ca)

## Asian Stereotypes

Avoid stereotypes unless you're subverting them or adding complexity to the character or story. Review content with an eye to unconsciously promoting stereotypes. Be sensitive to the stereotypes that reinforce the hypersexualization of Asian women and desexualization of Asian men. Understand the complexity of the Asian communities including ethnic or cultural origin, intersectional identities, socio-economic status and location within Canada.

*"Portrayals of the model minority myth directly leads to people erasing and negating our experiences of racism."*



*"There's still a prominent stereotype of Asian women being fetishized and sexualized. With Asian males it's gotten a lot better, they aren't being as emasculated to the extent that we were five years ago. But it still happens. We still play the nerd, the studious type, the quiet type, the submissive type. Just not as frequently."*

South Asians are **7.1%** of Canadians  
 Chinese are **4.7%** of Canadians  
 Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Koreans and Japanese are collectively another **4.6%**

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## 2SLGBTQIA+ Stereotypes

Avoid stereotypes unless you're subverting them or adding complexity to the character or story. Review content with an eye to unconsciously promoting stereotypes. Don't sideline 2SLGBTQIA+ characters. Understand the complexity of the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities including sexual orientation and gender identity as well as intersectional identities. Remember that someone's orientation or identity may be fluid.

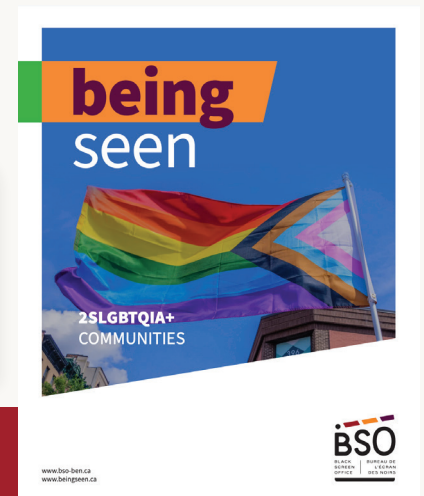
*"I see the same thing over and over. I don't see bisexual stories. I don't get to see nonbinary characters. Movies about [gay] white boys are the ones that make it through, those are the ones that find the money and can put it together."*



*"The gay character will get killed off, often in a very tragic way and often right after they achieve happiness. It makes it so hard, especially as a young person, to watch that and to believe that you can be happy and that you can have a life, that you can live beyond a certain age and that you can find love and joy and acceptance."*

**1,000,000** Canadians are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or another sexual orientation other than heterosexual.  
**100,000** Canadians are transgender or non-binary.  
 Statistics Canada has no data on the intersectional identities within the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

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## Disability Stereotypes

Avoid stereotypes unless you're subverting them or adding complexity to the character or story. Review content with an eye to unconsciously promoting stereotypes, particularly a skinny white man standing in for all people with disabilities. Understand that there are visible and invisible disabilities and a wide range of experience and characteristics within each disability. Remember that there are intersectional identities within the disability communities. Anyone can join the community at some point due to injury or the development of a disability.



*"When we think of autistic, we think of this skinny, nerdy, awkward white dude. We think of Sheldon from Big Bang Theory. I'm at the point where I just don't watch anything that's made by anyone who's not autistic and saying it's autistic. I won't watch Atypical. They have brought in autistic consultants but it's another story of a white autistic dude."*

*"I'd like to see Intersectional disabled characters, BIPOC, Indigenous, immigrant, LGBTQ2S+, refugee, old, young, not pretty, poor, chronically ill and immunocompromised characters that are not tragedy- or suffering-driven. Combating ableism as plot is good but is not the only option. It would be good to see thriving disabled folks."*



22.0% of Canadians have disabilities.



71.0% of those with disabilities have more than one disability.



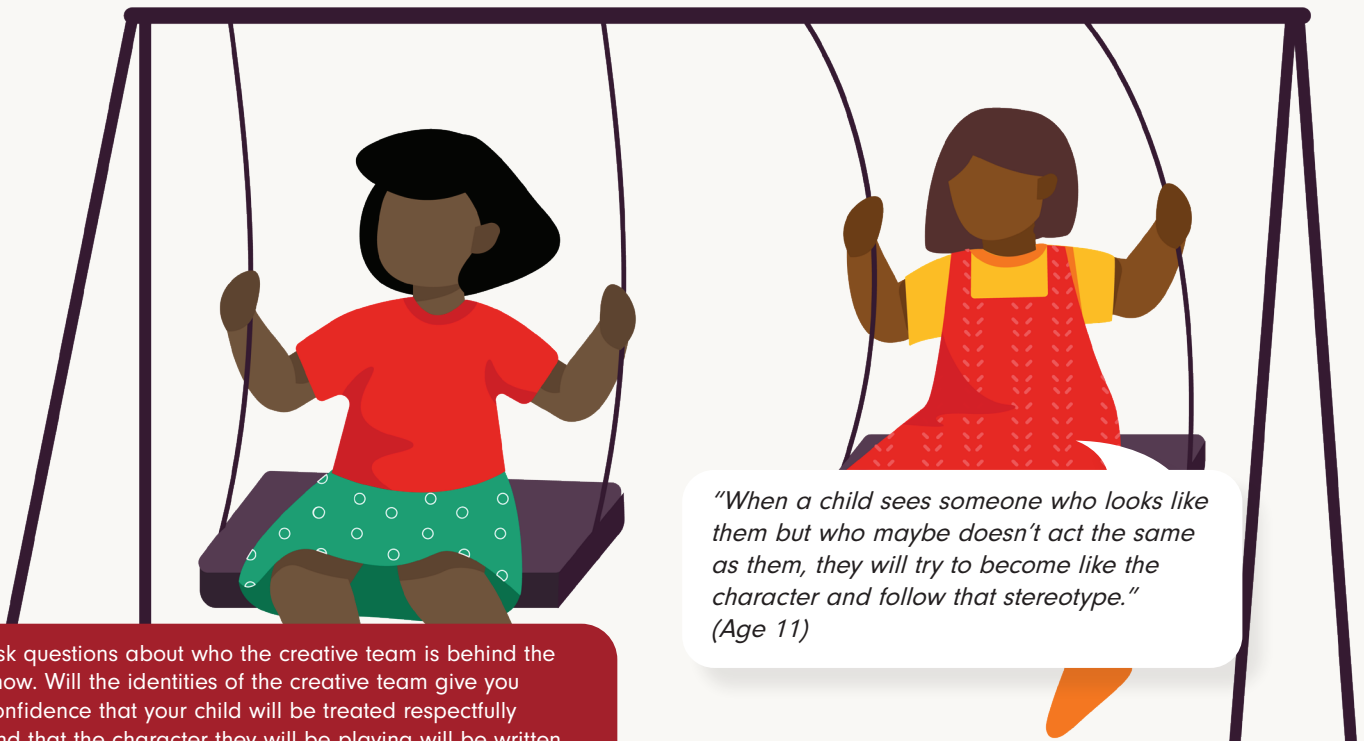
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## Tips for Parents & Child Performers

The Directives were written to help creators, producers, broadcasters and funders to create or commission more authentic content. Being familiar with the Directives can help parents and guardians become better advocates for child performers.

Ask questions about who the creative team is behind the show.

Will the identities of the creative team give you confidence that your child will be treated respectfully and that the character they will be playing will be written authentically? If not, ask for assurances which could be provided through consultants hired or the director of the episode or the team talking to you and your child about any concerns. **Example:** Are they asking your child to perform using an accent that is either poorly defined (e.g. 'Asian accent') or disrespectful (e.g. 'Black accent')?



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*"When a child sees someone who looks like them but who maybe doesn't act the same as them, they will try to become like the character and follow that stereotype."*  
(Age 11)

The time of casting may be too late to change the story or the dialogue but if there are glaring problems that are inauthentic or reinforce stereotypes, raise it with the creative team to see if change is possible.

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## Working with Consultants

In some situations authenticity can be ensured by engaging a cultural consultant. However, sometimes that is not enough and the production should hire a screenwriter or story editor who has the authority or responsibility to ensure authenticity and see it through to the end of production.

### Cultural Consultant

A Cultural Consultant can be a good solution for gaps in authenticity work in these types of situations:

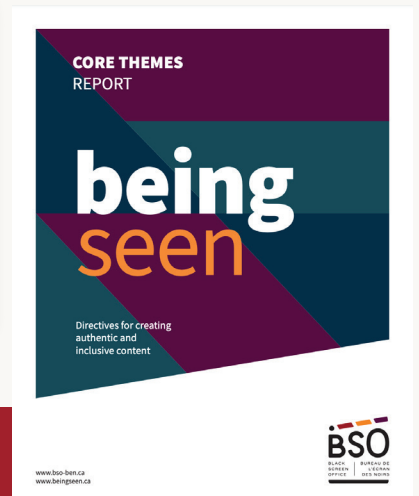
- An ongoing series that introduces for one episode a storyline or character that is not represented in the writers room
- During early stages of development to provide background insights into a community or identity based on expertise that engaged screenwriters might not have, for example based on professional or research experience.

Cultural consultants should not be used in these types of situations:

- To 'fix' problems or do a 'sensitivity pass' just before going to camera. This is too late in the process and is likely to result in only superficial adjustments. If the cultural consultant is an expert in the community or identity but not in screen-based media, there is an added risk that late consultation could result in recommendations that are not practical, such as changes in casting.
- As a rubber stamp to be able to point to the act of consultation, rather than actually listening and adjusting the creative as recommended to improve the creative.
- Without vetting the consultant for their expertise. Lived experience alone could lead to a situation where the cultural consultant could be communicating only the perspective of one person rather than a community.



*“Usually I’m not into the whole diversity consultant culture, because it feels like a cop out, but I’m in when there’s an opportunity to help create the character and be a more holistic part of the character development, even if I don’t have more agency on the rest of the show. And when I was in the writers room, when I said this doesn’t resonate or this would seem very colonial, people in the room and the producer were very respectful and acknowledged that perspective and changed accordingly.”*

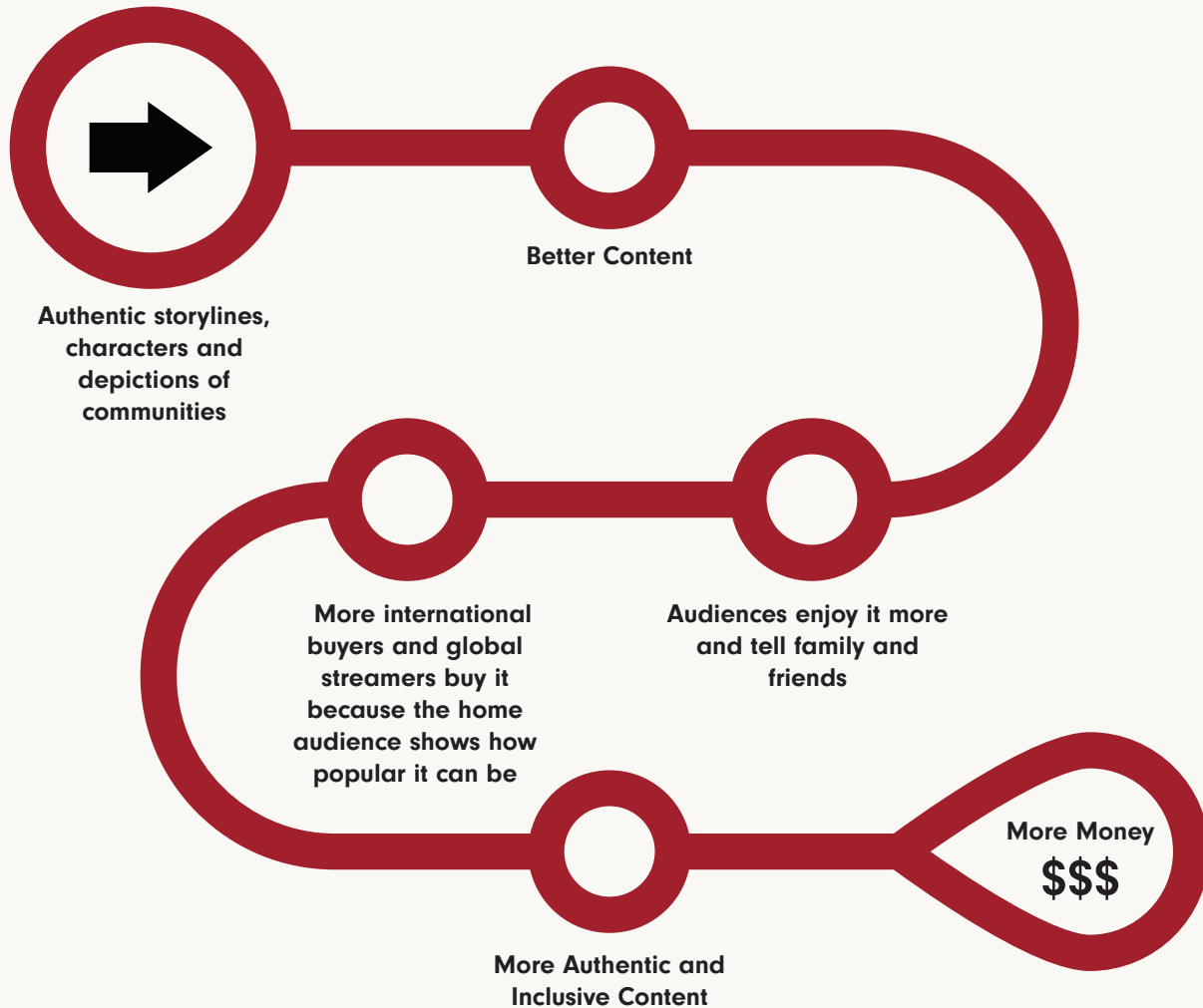


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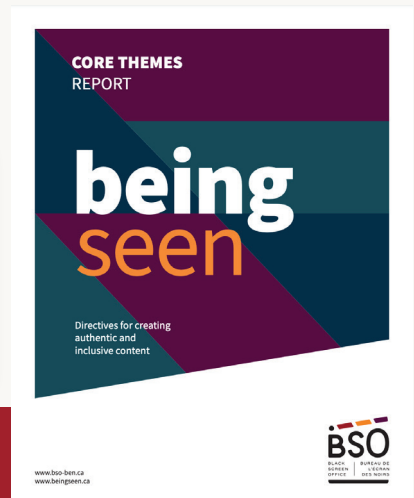


## Why Authenticity?

Authenticity isn't just a feel good thing we should do because we are good citizens who care about our communities. There is an economic imperative behind authenticity.



*"If there are more shows then more of us would watch, and would feel part of the overall community. And that would help us in the long run in our everyday lives and the people we interact with."*



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