Integrating Distinctively Canadian Elements into Television Drama: 
A Formula for Success or Failure? 
The Due South Experience 
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Abstract: The production of indigenous Canadian television drama, despite cultural importance ascribed to the genre, has been continually beset by funding and other problems. This situation prompted Canadian producers to concentrate upon the production of so-called industrial dramas that attempt to minimize or completely mask their Canadian origins and are designed primarily for the export market. There have been exceptions—North of 60, Black Harbour, Due South. These identifiably Canadian dramas garnered significant numbers of viewers at home as well as foreign audiences. Based upon a case study of Due South, the authors suggest that distinctive Canadian elements need not be viewed as detriments to a show’s success but rather be regarded as potential assets that can help a program distinguish itself from its competitors.

Résumé : La production de drames clairement canadiens, malgré l’importance culturelle qu’on lui accorde, a sans cesse encouru des problèmes de financement entre autres. Cette situation a motivé les producteurs canadiens à se concentrer sur des drames dits industriels qui minimisent ou dissimulent complètement leurs origines canadiennes afin d’être plus exportables. Il existe cependant des exceptions telles que North of 60, Black Harbour et Due South. Ces drames immanquablement canadiens ont attiré un public considérable au Canada ainsi que des publics à l’étranger. Les auteurs se fondent sur une étude de cas de Due South (Direction : Sud) pour suggérer que la présence d’éléments canadiens n’entrave pas forcément le succès d’une émission. Au fait, on devrait plutôt envisager ces éléments comme aidant une émission à se différencier de la concurrence.

Keywords: Content; Film/video policy; Production/co-production; Television/cable television

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Introduction

For Canada, broadcasting, and television in particular, historically held the promise of creating “common symbols, shared fictions, and celebrated performances that reflected the Canadian imagination” (Rutherford, 1998, p. 187). Canada’s leaders envisioned broadcasting as “an engine of Canadian culture,” a “strategic industry,” central to Canada’s continuing process of nation-building and self-assertion. This view remains at the forefront of Canada’s domestic policies to the present day (see CRTC, 1999).

Despite the importance ascribed to broadcasting, the production of indigenous Canadian programming—especially drama—has been continually beset by funding and other problems largely attributable to Canada’s relatively small market size and the availability of programming from the United States. This situation, compounded by and in part fostering a long-standing bias of anglophone Canadian viewers against indigenous drama, prompted Canadian producers to concentrate upon the production of so-called industrial dramas, which attempt to minimize or completely mask their Canadian origins and are designed primarily for the export market. As a consequence, there are very few Canadian dramas explicitly showcasing Canada and/or Canadian characters. There have been exceptions—North of 60, Black Harbour, Due South—identifiably Canadian dramas that garnered significant numbers of viewers at home as well as attracting foreign audiences.

This article examines one of these exceptions, Due South, a Canadian produced drama that aired on CTV between 1994 and 1999. Despite being ostensibly set in Chicago (albeit filmed almost entirely in Toronto), Due South incorporated a variety of “distinctively Canadian elements” into each episode. These elements included, among other things, a diverse array of activities, attitudes, historical events, issues, symbols, and styles as well as notable individuals or places identified with Canada.

This examination of Due South is intended to offer some insights into the broader economic, political, and social implications associated with the production of a Canadian drama series, especially one imbued with distinctively Canadian elements. Specifically, it attempts to answer the following questions: 1) What distinctively Canadian elements were integrated into the series? 2) Were the elements popular with Canadian audiences? with foreign audiences? 3) Was the series economically viable? and finally, 4) What impact did the show have upon Canadian culture and upon Canada’s image abroad?

The article’s first section provides a brief overview of Canadian cultural policies associated with television programming, specifically drama. In addition, it outlines some of the major economic, structural, and viewership issues that have traditionally prompted private broadcasters in Canada to air a relatively small amount of distinctively Canadian drama. The article then presents a broadcast history and analysis of Due South and its fans using articles from newspapers and trade publications, interviews conducted with individuals associated with the show’s production as well as a 1999 Internet-based fan survey. Based upon this
information, the authors argue that the inclusion of distinctively Canadian elements in drama programs need not be considered detrimental to a show’s popularity at home and may even make Canadian dramas more attractive to foreign audiences.

**Culture, economics, and broadcasting in Canada**

Television production and its sister cultural industries not only help to define and develop Canadian culture, they also play an important role in the Canadian economy (Macmillan, 1999). Canada’s film and television production industries are among the fastest growing and strongest sectors of the Canadian economy, continuing a trend that began in the mid-1990s. Employing 119,000 Canadians in 1999/2000,¹ the country’s three largest production centres—British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec—generated revenues of $1.1 billion, $1.01 billion, and $850 million, respectively, during the period (“Production still booming,” 2001).² However, Canada’s two official languages and a television market size of approximately 10% of that of the United States (where most production costs can be recovered domestically), combined with easy transborder reception of U.S. stations by much of the populace, have traditionally been impediments to the growth of indigenous programming in Canada. Unlike Canada, in the United States most companies enjoy “synergies with the Hollywood movie industry,” which offers an infrastructure of skilled technicians, a worldwide distribution system, and the Hollywood star system (Hoskins, McFadyen, & Finn, 1996; Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996; McDowell & Maitland, 1998). Robert Lantos, assessing the situation from a Canadian producer’s perspective, stated, “By virtue of not operating within the Hollywood system, one has much less access to money, much less access to the major creative talent—whether stars, directors or writers” (as quoted in “Southern exposure,” 1994, p. C7).

**Government intervention in Canadian broadcasting and film/television production**

Due to the above challenges, attainment of Canada’s cultural goals has always required significant government intervention. Over the years, this intervention has taken various forms including: (a) restriction (e.g., tariffs, censorship bureaus, foreign ownership limitations); (b) promotion (e.g., subsidies, tax incentives, and exemptions from postal charges); (c) ownership (e.g., CBC, National Film Board); and (d) direction (e.g., establishment of the Board of Broadcast Governors—later the CRTC, licence control) (Rutherford, 1998, p. 189).

**Telefilm Canada**

One major form of government intervention in Canada’s television and film industries is financial assistance via various federal and provincial agencies and investment programs. One such agency, Telefilm Canada, administers numerous funds and programs that contribute to the development and production of a wide array of feature films, television programs, and other multimedia products. Financial support is offered in various forms including investments, advances, loans, loan guarantees, and grants.³ In addition to financing, Telefilm is involved in “dis-
distribution, export, versioning, marketing and promotion at Canadian and foreign festivals and markets” (Telefilm Canada, 2000).

**Canadian content (CanCon) quotas and simulcasting**

Two of the most controversial yet enduring cultural policies implemented over the years by the CRTC have been Canadian content (CanCon) quotas and simulcasting. Introduced by the Board of Broadcast Governors in 1959, Canadian content quotas stipulate that overall, all private and public Canadian stations are required to devote 60% of their air time to “Canadian programming,” with quotas based upon whether the station is public or private. Private broadcasters must devote 60% of their daily schedule and 50% of prime time to Canadian programming4 (Jeffery & McAninch, 1996; Stanbury, 1999b).

Under current CRTC regulations, in order to be “certified” as a Canadian television program, the following general criteria must be met:

(a) the producer and certain key creative personnel must be Canadian, (b) the production must earn a minimum number of points based on the key creative functions performed by Canadians, and (c) a minimum percentage of the expenses incurred to produce the program must be for services provided in Canada by Canadians or Canadian companies. (CRTC, 2001)

CanCon quotas have been challenged on a number of points over the years, among them the CRTC’s definition of prime time and allowing news, sports, and game shows to qualify as certified Canadian programs (Fraser, 1999, p. C7). Critics of the quotas also cite the problematic nature of “branding a product as Canadian or not Canadian,” and further contend that “Measuring content by the nationality of inputs does not assure that Canadian stories get told, merely that stories get told by Canadians and Canadians get the jobs” (Acheson & Maule, 1997). Simulcasting (also referred to as simultaneous program substitution) is a second oft-disputed CRTC policy.6 It serves as the key component of a “cross-subsidization” process whereby the CRTC allows Canadian broadcasters to import foreign programming while requiring them to use a portion of the income derived from airing the programs to carry, produce, or purchase domestic programming. In a 1996 CRTC-sponsored study, the estimated production cost of one hour of Canadian drama was $750,000, whereas an hour of “high quality U.S. television drama was $1 million.” However, the U.S. product could be acquired by Canadian broadcasters for $50,000.

Critics maintain that although this cross-subsidization process works in theory, the benefits “have been marginal” (Fraser, 1999; Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996). English-language private broadcasters derived their profits, as Jeffrey & McAninch explain, “by selling audiences for imported U.S. shows to advertisers, not by producing or purchasing shows of comparable quality in Canada, nor by promoting homegrown stars” (1996, p. 207). CTV complained that broadcasting three hours of Canadian programming per week in prime time lost it more than $15 million a year (Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996, p. 24). The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (1998) argued likewise, stating, “Right now, broadcasters lose on average, 40 cents for every dollar spent on Canadian programming.”
Canadian television audiences and drama programming

Despite the government’s concerted policy efforts to promote Canadian drama over the years, “English Canada (but not French Canada) is the only known broadcast market in the world where local dramatic production is not necessarily preferred over foreign content of comparable quality” (Tracey & Redal, 1995, p. 361). According to Jeffrey & McAninch’s research on Canadian television viewing habits, “among Anglophones, three-quarters of all television viewing whether from U.S. or Canadian stations—is of foreign (i.e., overwhelmingly U.S.) programs” (1996, p. 227). Additionally, between 1993 and 1998, audiences for Canadian drama increased only slightly—from 3.7 to 3.9% (Canadian Association of Broadcasters, 1998), with news, public affairs, and sporting events being the only Canadian programming categories favoured over their foreign counterparts (Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996, p. 227; Collins, 1990, p. 29).

A number of explanations have been offered for the Canadian television viewing audience’s general aversion to their own drama programming. One explanation blames the lack of availability of Canadian dramatic programming due to the proliferation of American alternatives, although this determination is far from conclusive (see, for example, Audley, 1983). Another suggests that English Canada’s acceptance of American programming is due to the “deep similarity between English Canadian and American values and cultural preferences” (Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996, p. 212). Yet others maintain that Canadians simply do not like Canadian culture (e.g., Rutherford, 1993). Although an in-depth exploration of why Canadian audiences have traditionally shied away from Canadian drama is beyond the scope of this paper, this phenomenon has had a profound impact upon programming decisions through the years.

Given the financial disincentives associated with producing indigenous programming and audience preferences for American productions, broadcasters such as CTV continued to predominantly air U.S. programming during prime time (Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996, p. 229). This practice was only modified somewhat by the CRTC’s placement of additional CanCon requirements on CTV and other Canadian broadcasters in conjunction with their licensing renewals.7

Despite the inherent economic drawbacks facing Canadian broadcasters and producers since the 1980s, economic goals have come to the forefront of Canada’s cultural policies largely due to the increased reliance upon the private sector and subsidy rather than the public sector and regulation (Collins, 1990; Stanbury, 1999b). This transition is evident in the CRTC’s 1998 Canadian television policy review:

In particular, the Commission wishes to explore how all participants in the system can work effectively to strengthen the Canadian presence on our television screens, and to support a healthy broadcasting and production industry capable of competing successfully at home and abroad. At the same time, the Commission will wish to be assured that the public interest objectives of the Act are well served.
The Commission recognizes that a strong and competitive private sector is essential to fulfilling the goals of the Act, as is the public broadcasting sector and an effective regulatory framework. (CRTC, 1998)

**Industrial dramas**

To help recoup production costs for drama programming that the domestic market alone cannot compensate for, during the past 10 to 15 years, Canadian production companies have turned to producing shows primarily targeted for sale in foreign television markets (especially the United States). However, both Canadian broadcasters and producers have commonly regarded the inclusion of identifiably Canadian elements in programming intended for export as detrimental to economic and popular success. As a *Globe and Mail* article noted, “It is a truism that you don’t try to sell them [i.e., the United States] a TV show or film with a Canadian setting” (Conlogue, 1995). As a result, Canadian producers often attempt to minimize or completely eradicate identifiably Canadian elements. Instead, they strive to produce programs that are virtually indistinguishable from their American counterparts in the hopes that these so-called industrial dramas will gain favour in the international market.

**Due South: A case study**

In order to meet its 1993 licensing renewal obligations, CTV as a broadcaster needed to purchase its drama programming from an independent production company, since CRTC rules prohibited broadcasters from producing original programming for their own TV stations (Adilman, 1999). Given the high costs of funding drama production, CTV was also interested in co-production agreements with other countries to help defray the costs incurred, as long as the show produced could satisfactorily meet their needs. At the same time, Alliance Communications was actively seeking to gain a foothold in the lucrative U.S. television marketplace. Since the mid-1980s, Alliance had produced and sold telemovies and series such as *Night Heat* (aired in late-night slots) to CBS and other networks, although it had yet to sell a television series to a major American network for airing during the coveted prime-time period.8

At an Alliance-sponsored luncheon in Toronto in 1993, Jeff Saganasky, then CBS Entertainment president, delivered a speech where he urged Canadians to become “involved more convincingly in continental co-productions or drama series and TV movies.” Answering the challenge, Alliance head Robert Lantos began discussions with Saganasky about possibly producing a series for CBS’s prime-time schedule, with CTV also later joining in on the talks (Quill, April 22, 1994).

The negotiations between Alliance, CBS, and CTV marked the first time an independent Canadian production company had collaborated with both a Canadian and a U.S. network to produce a television series intended to meet their diverse cultural and economic needs (Quill, April 22, 1994). *Due South*, the product of their collaborative efforts,9 became one of the most successful—and most expensive—TV series ever produced in Canada and the first Canadian television show to air on one of the big three American networks in prime time.
The program debuted as a telemovie simulcast on CTV in Canada and CBS in the United States in April 1994 and was subsequently developed into an hour-long weekly series for broadcast on those same two networks as part of their 1994-95 television season.

*Due South*’s fish-out-of-water premise featured Benton Fraser (played by Paul Gross), a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) constable from the Northwest Territories transferred along with Diefenbaker, his deaf, lip-reading wolf, to the Canadian Consultate in Chicago. While there, he meets Ray Vecchio (played by David Marciano), a Chicago police detective, and together they engaged in weekly exploits.

This deceptively simple premise belied a complex, multi-layered show that some critics likened to a Chinese puzzle box. Like its industrial drama counterparts, *Due South* was set in an American locale—Chicago. In actuality, however, beyond a few obligatory exterior shots of the real Chicago, the show was filmed entirely in Canada with an almost completely Canadian cast and crew, thereby satisfying the CRTC’s certification requirements for a Canadian program. Beyond conceding the use of an American setting, *Due South* shared few other characteristics with industrial dramas. Unlike the vast majority of other Canadian-produced television programming seeking foreign distribution, *Due South*’s production team opted to emphasize rather than hide the show’s Canadian origins. The writers interwove a diverse array of distinctive Canadian elements (including references to Canadian historical events, notable individuals, and political issues) into each episode via dialogue, music, and storylines. Consequently, the show was imbued with a uniquely Canadian character despite its American setting. Creator and executive producer Paul Haggis described his intentions thus:

> I live to lampoon the things I love, which includes the way we Canadians view ourselves as inferior and yet over-compensate by being more chauvinistic than the Americans. I love turning stereotypes on their heads. To do that, you first set up the stereotype, an archetypal Mountie who descends on Chicago, a fish out of water in big-city USA. Then you have this “typical” American, Ray Vecchio, … a Chicago cop who wisecracks to Fraser after they demolish the bad guys, “We just took out seven guys. One more and you qualify for American citizenship.” (quoted in Gefen, 1993, p. C1)

Citing *Due South*’s use of distinctively Canadian elements, one television critic wrote, “*Due South* … will make a career of showing Americans a little Canadian culture” (McCann, 1994, p. F4), while another noted it encouraged a “strong sense of northern Canadian nationalism” (Ostrow, 1994, p. E1). However, some Canadian television critics took issue with the heavy use of Canadian stereotypes in the program. Paul Gross responded to the show’s detractors in the following way: “It seems the Americans [as portrayed in *Due South*] are usually portrayed as being messy, sloppy, bumbling and ineffective, and we’re extraordinarily nice, heroic and capable and efficient … If we can spread that kind of dis-information about our country south of the border, I think it’s fantastic” (quoted in McKay, 1997, p. B7).
As shown in Table 1, the distinctively Canadian elements used in Due South ranged from references to Canadian historical and political figures and discussions about sports to more serious issues such as the disputed ownership of Inuit artifacts, the Quebec Question, and Canada's official bilingualism. A number of these elements appeared in the form of inside jokes designed specifically for Canadian viewers, and seemed to serve as a nod and a wink from one Canadian to another. Examples of Canadian in-jokes included naming Fraser's wolf after former Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker and naming a villain after hockey legend Hector “Toe” Blake.

Canadianness was also actively encouraged by CBS, according to Robert Lantos. In a 1994 interview, he related that actors shooting the Due South pilot “initially attempted to tone down their accents for the American audience.” Upon viewing the footage, CBS's Jeff Sagansky “called Lantos with one suggestion: ‘Get those actors to start speaking Canadian’ ” (Zoglin, 1994, p. 76). Unfortunately, CBS's zeal for maximizing Due South's Canadianness did not initially extend to the casting for the show. For the Due South pilot, CBS wanted to get American actor John Schneider to play Fraser and find a Canadian actor to play the American cop. CBS also wanted “a recognizable” name to play Fraser's father, such as James Coburn instead of Gordon Pinsent. Ultimately, CBS's choices were successfully resisted by Toronto casting directors, and Canadian actors were eventually chosen for the roles (Mazurkewich, 1994, p. 17). Although CBS would concede use of Canadian actors, the network reportedly sent “copious notes about each script demanding more action and love interest” and other creative “suggestions” throughout their association with the series (Bawden, 1997, p. B8).

Due South performed well in the United States during its initial Thursday 8:00 to 9:00 p.m. time slot despite competition with NBC comedies including Mad About You and Seinfeld (Dalglish, 1995). It would prove to be the highest-rated new CBS program during the fall 1994-95 season and eventually finished tied for 58th (with Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman) out of 142 series in Nielsen's 1994-95 prime-time rankings (Grahnke, 1995, p. 57). With Canadian audiences of as high as 2.1 million viewers, Due South became “the highest-rated television series ever made in Canada,” consistently ranking among the top 10 shows in Canada's Nielsen ratings (Dalglish, 1995; McKay, 1997).

The financing of Due South

Due South's success came at a considerable cost for a Canadian production. The budget for the pilot movie alone was approximately $5 million, with a $1.5-million production cost for each subsequent episode (Gefen, 1993). According to Robert Lantos, Due South's first season production costs were “covered in advance by North American sales and a tax-shelter deal,” with an “additional $500,000 per episode in international sales—before the show was a hit” (“Southern exposure,” 1994, p. C7). The show also received funding from Telefilm Canada (Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996).

Despite critical acclaim and respectable ratings, Due South's fortunes were short-lived on U.S. network prime-time television. Soon after its debut, Jeff
Table 1: Selected Canadian References Integrated into Due South Episodes

**Artists/Entertainers**
- Group of Seven (Canadian painters)
- Wayne and Shuster (Canadian comics)

**Bilingualism** (e.g., scene featuring a Canadian government receptionist who claimed she "couldn’t speak French" although she answered each incoming phone call with an English and French greeting)

**Currency** (e.g., references made in numerous episodes to the “colour” and valuation of Canadian currency)

**Canadian Cultural Industries**
- Filmmaking (scene in episode “Perfect Strangers” featured commentary on the lack of opportunities for Canadian filmmakers that the characters attributed to the massive flow of American films into Canada)
- *Maclean’s magazine*

**Historical Events**
- War of 1812 (from the English Canada perspective, i.e., the war ended without a decisive victory on either side. “Fraser” points out that most Americans assume the United States did win decisively)

**Historical Figures/Politicians (names used for characters)**
- Brock
- Diefenbaker (i.e., John G. Diefenbaker)
- Frobisher
- Mackenzie King
- Esther Pearson
- Louise St. Laurant

**Inuit Artifacts/Culture**
- Inukshuk (e.g., one was featured in the episode “Seeing Is Believing”)  
  - Masks (e.g., the plot of one episode revolves around the theft of Tsimshian masks from a museum. The episode also dealt with aboriginal versus government rights to the ownership of these types of artifacts.)

**Laws and Statutes** (e.g., Canadian gun laws)

**Music/Musicians** (e.g., Stan Rogers. Also, lyrics of various songs used referred to Canadian historical events/figures, etc.)

**North American Free Trade Agreement** (e.g., a NAFTA meeting provided the backdrop for the episode “The Edge”)

**Place Names**
- Beaufort Sea
- Inuvik
- Moose Jaw
- Northwest Territories
- Tuktoyaktuk
- Ottawa
- Yellowknife
- Toronto
- Yukon

*Note: The Canadian elements included in this table were compiled while viewing various episodes of Due South aired throughout the show’s history. The table is intended to demonstrate the variety of Canadian elements used in the show but should not be considered a detailed content analysis of the program.*
Sagansky, the show’s primary supporter at CBS, departed the network. The loss of the show’s patron saint at CBS led to frequent pre-emptions, schedule shuffles, and episodes aired out of sequence (Phillips, 1997). Due South’s cancellation by CBS following the 1994-95 season, described in Maclean’s as a “near death experience” (Wickens, 1995), would mark only the first of several to come.

Since CBS’s investment in Due South was critical for defraying the production costs of the program, CTV was unable by itself to cover the financial shortfall caused by the American network’s pullout. However, Due South’s respectable audience ratings in Canada and the United States, coupled with similar successes in Britain and Germany, prompted CTV, Telefilm Canada, and broadcasters in Britain and Germany (Wickens, 1995) to partially make up the funding shortfall—and enabled Alliance to keep Due South in production for a second season. As Paul Gross observed at the time, “I had thought we couldn’t afford to continue without CBS … We had to figure how we could do another season with a reduced budget.” He also pointed out: “[A] tighter budget has forced us to resolve crunch situations through resourcefulness and imagination. Last year, when in doubt, we would blow up a car” (quoted in Grahnke, 1995, p. 57).

Meanwhile, in the United States, a fan group called the Friends of Due South organized an Internet-based campaign in spring 1995 to protest CBS’s decision to cancel the show and “lobby the network to put the series back on television” (Shales, 1995, p. C5). In November 1995, following “a deluge of fan mail and a change in management,” CBS reversed its cancellation decision to once again pick up the show beginning in December 1995 and air it during the 8:00 p.m. Friday (ET) time slot (Grahnke, 1995, p. 57; Wickens, 1995). Commenting on the CBS reprieve, Robert Lantos noted that “there’s always a price that one pays for doing business with the United States.” He added, “They would like it to be bigger in terms of action and scope.” Paul Gross agreed that although the American partners would always have suggestions, the show wouldn’t change much, “unless
they give us a whole lot of money—in which case we can blow some stuff up” (Wickens, 1995). Besides a reduction in explosions, *Due South* appeared to survive its first “neardeath experience” with little discernible change in terms of quality.

Following the 1995-96 season, CBS decided to cancel the series a second time. Although CTV and foreign broadcasters remained supportive of the show, serious doubts were again raised whether the series could remain alive without U.S. financing (Wickens, 1996). In what Arthur Weinthal, CTV’s programming vice-president, termed a “convergence of initiatives” involving CTV, Alliance, the BBC, TF1 in France, and Pro Sieben in Germany, the company came up with sufficient production funding for a further 26 episodes of *Due South*. In Weinthal’s words, “We have sort of taken life in our own hands and not waited for other people to tell us we can do things.” Regarding the lack of American involvement, Paul Gross commented: “We have no CBS involvement, which is both good and bad, I suppose. Good in the sense that there will be no meddling from American underwriters in the show’s design. Bad in that Yankee dollars had to be replaced with a complex round of financing from European broadcasters who have found *Due South* to be a major hit in their countries, too” (both quoted in McKay, 1997, p. B7).

During seasons three and four, the look and feel of *Due South* changed significantly, with many of the changes directly or indirectly linked to forced cutbacks in the production budget. David Marciano was replaced with Callum Keith Rennie, who joined the cast as Detective Stanley Kowalski. In addition to starring in *Due South*, Paul Gross took on the responsibility of executive producer and also worked on the show’s writing team. *Due South* once again reached American audiences via first-run syndication in the United States during the 1997-98 season, although the show was largely relegated to late-night time slots and received little promotion.

Despite the changes made in casting and other aspects of the production, for the most part *Due South* retained its global popularity. According to *Variety*, as of January 1999, *Due South* had been syndicated in 149 territories worldwide (“World travelers,” 1999). In early 1998, following the completion of 67 episodes, *Due South* permanently ceased production (McLeod, 1999).

**Due South fans**

A 1999 Internet-based survey of *Due South* fans from 17 countries worldwide (Tate & Allen, 2000) indicated that respondents not only enjoyed the way American and Canadian stereotypes were lampooned but also liked other distinctly Canadian elements in the show. Among other things, Canadian respondents cited Canadian in-jokes, use of music from Canadian artists, references to Inuit folklore, and simply the fact that the show was Canadian. Several Canadian respondents also mentioned that they were surprised to find themselves liking a Canadian production. As one Canadian respondent explained: “Canadians do this thing, which I hate but am sometimes guilty of, where we think that if something is produced in Canada, it can’t be any good. I think that this show rose above that
idea and showed people that it wasn’t true” (Anonymous survey respondent, personal communication, 1999).

American respondents cited a variety of reasons for liking the show: Benton Fraser; Ray Vecchio; the relationship between Fraser and Vecchio; the interplay of American and Canadian stereotypes; that the main character was a Mountie; the theme of friendship; the American and Canadian in-jokes; the use of Inuit folklore; the music used; the dog; Ray Vecchio’s car; and other things. Many respondents also indicated that their initial attraction to Due South was because it was Canadian (Tate & Allen, 2000).

A number of respondents noted that they did not get all of the in-jokes, although some of them were interested enough to pursue their meaning by either on-line interaction with fans from Canada and throughout the world or through independent research (Tate & Allen, 2000). One 13-year-old respondent was so impressed with Benton Fraser that he intended “to become Canadian, a Mountie, and live in the Northwest Territories when I grow up” (Anonymous survey respondent, personal communication, 1999).

Discussion
Is Canadian culture any better or worse off today than before Due South aired? Arguably, there are a sizable number of people throughout the world who learned a bit of Canadian history and Inuit folklore, not to mention the names of several Canadian prime ministers, as a result of the show. On the other hand, a number of Canadians have voiced their concern that Due South perpetuated unwanted stereotypes of Canada and its population (for example, “the frozen North,” lack of sophistication, Mounties in red uniforms sitting on a horse on every street corner). Regardless of individual opinions about Due South’s impact on Canada’s overall cultural image, for the first time, a Canadian drama successfully competed with its American counterparts on a major network in prime time. These accomplishments are even more notable considering that Due South was later able to survive without U.S. financial support.

Due South enjoyed critical and popular success both at home and abroad but its achievement came at a price. Although the financial benefits derived via the co-production agreement with CBS were substantial, Due South’s dependence upon this funding source left the show very vulnerable to the network’s whims. Due South’s experience also demonstrates that despite domestic popularity, the production costs associated with Canadian drama programming remain unlikely to be recoverable from the Canadian market alone, despite considerable government financial support. It also remains to be seen whether other Canadian television series can capitalize on their Canadian origins in foreign markets. Power Play, a series about a struggling hockey team, lasted two seasons in Canada but only two weeks on the UPN network in the United States. It is the authors’ opinion that this is not nearly enough time to attract and retain an audience, and therefore no conclusions can be drawn about its success or failure in the United States. However, on a more positive note, Due South illustrates that identifiably Canadian dramas and their creators, such as Alliance Atlantis, can compete internationally
provided they have the financial support and cooperation of like-minded counterparts in other countries.

**Canadian drama after Due South**

In January-February 2000, Canadian drama programming sustained a substantial setback when Canadian networks cancelled four prime-time Canadian-made series. These included CBC’s *Riverdale* (cancelled after three seasons); two CTV series, *Power Play* and *The City* (both cancelled after two seasons); and Global’s *Traders*. Most if not all of the cancelled series were “identifiably Canadian,” although their failure arguably may not have been so much attributable to their Canadianness as to the current Canadian production process.

In September 2000, new broadcasting regulations were enacted that, among other things, featured an effort to help build a Canadian star system that mirrors the one in Hollywood in order to promote indigenous Canadian programming. In addition, “entertainment magazine” and other formats were designated as “priority programming” alongside drama and children’s programming. As a result, Canadian networks may now use any qualifying entertainment magazine and/or reality programs—which are far less expensive to produce than drama—to meet their CanCon quotas even in prime time (CRTC, 1999). The current dearth of identifiably Canadian dramas has led the Alliance of Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) and other groups in the Canadian television acting and production community to demand changes in the CRTC’s current guidelines in order to once again encourage indigenous drama production (MacDonald, 2002). However, it is uncertain what, if any, impact these efforts will have upon broadcasting’s regulatory environment and the television production sector as a whole.

**Conclusion**

As *Due South* demonstrated, substantial inherent demographic, economic, and even psychological obstacles must be overcome in order for a distinctly Canadian drama to achieve any measure of success either at home or abroad. Nonetheless, *Due South’s* success challenges several popularly held views regarding Canadian drama programming. First, it suggests that distinctive Canadian elements should not necessarily be viewed as detriments to a show’s success at home or abroad. Instead, the elements should be regarded as potential assets that can be tapped to help a program distinguish itself from the competition. Secondly, *Due South* proved that a Canadian-produced drama can successfully compete in the international marketplace provided it secures adequate and consistent funding.

In many respects, *Due South* was a precedent-setting series for Canada’s television production sector. It remains to be seen whether *Due South* should be considered as an anomaly or a model for success, since the experiment has never been attempted again. This is due to shifts in the focus of broadcast networks in Canada and the United States from expensive drama programming to less costly reality programming, among other factors. It is the opinion of the authors that *Due South* could offer a model for success should a similar set of circumstances present itself.
Notes
1. Statistical information about Canada's cultural industries must be approached with caution since methodologies for compiling the data differ across and even within government agencies and industry sources. Additionally, statistics prior to the 1980s on items such as television exports are even more sporadic and unreliable than present-day data.

2. All amounts are Canadian funds, as quoted in the original source material. A significant portion of these revenues are derived from so-called runaway productions made for the U.S. film and television industry.

3. The guidelines for Telefilm funding require an independent producer to secure a commitment from a conventional broadcaster to pay a licence fee for a show that must be scheduled during prime time (Jeffrey & McAninch, 1996, p. 209).

4. Film and radio are covered by separate sets of CanCon guidelines.

5. Local programs are automatically considered “Canadian.” In addition, the definition for sports programming differs somewhat from the one provided.

6. As McDowell & Maitland (1998, n.p.) explain, simulcasting “directs cable companies to replace the program feeds carried on U.S. networks and distributed in Canada with the program feeds of the Canadian networks that have purchased broadcasting rights for those programs. While the programming is the same, Canadian advertisements will then be shown.” Over the past 20 years this policy has increased advertising revenues available to Canadian broadcasters and indirectly for Canadian program production.

7. For example, CTV's 1993 licence renewal was conditioned upon meeting the following Canadian drama programming requirements: 3 hours per week of drama between 8:00 and 11:00 p.m., with 3.5 hours in the last two years of its licence, and 48 hours per year of Canadian dramatic features, miniseries, or limited series between 8:00 and 11:00 p.m., averaged over the licence term (Canadian Association of Broadcasters quoted in Stanbury, 1999a, p. 228).

8. Alliance Atlantis Communications—Canada's largest production company—is a major producer, distributor, and broadcaster of television programming including drama, children's live-action and animated series, miniseries, and movies of the week for the domestic Canadian and international marketplace. Following the U.S. model of conglomeration and vertical integration, Alliance Atlantis was established in 1998 by the merger of former rivals Alliance Communications and Atlantis Communications. Alliance Atlantis is well known for working with foreign counterparts in co-production agreements. Foreign sources represent a significant portion of the company's total revenues, while its Canadian revenues are largely derived from government grants and refundable tax credits (Acheson & Maule, 1997; Alliance Atlantis Communications, 2001; “Southern exposure,” 1994, p. C7). Although Night Heat did air in primetime on a trial basis during the summer of 1987, it was not originally produced for that time slot (Alliance Announces Productions, 1987).

9. Due South’s origins have been in dispute almost since it began airing. In December 1994, a $35-million lawsuit was filed by three Toronto writers against Alliance (now Alliance Atlantis). The writers allege that the original idea for the show was contained in a movie script they submitted to Alliance in 1991. In late 1995, Alliance filed a $20-million counterclaim against the writers for “intentional interference with the Alliance Companies’ and Robert Lantos' economic and business relations” (quoted in Shecter, 1997, p. 7).

10. Paul Haggis served as executive producer of Due South during the show’s first season. Jeff King and Kathy Slevin replaced Haggis during season two, while Paul Gross and R.B. Carney shared the duties during seasons three and four.

11. Ironically, many of the stations that picked up Due South in syndication were CBS affiliates.

12. The number of countries that Due South has reportedly aired in and/or has been sold to has varied widely depending on the date the information was published and the source. For the purposes of this paper, we have used the number quoted by Variety in January 1999. An attempt was made to verify the number with Alliance Atlantis, but no response was received.
13. The survey consisted of 203 responses from 17 countries across five continents. These countries included: the United States (147), Canada (22), the United Kingdom (11), the Netherlands (6), Germany (3), Australia (2), Brazil (2), Belgium (1), Ecuador (1), France (1), Ireland (1), Israel (1), Italy (1), New Zealand (1), Portugal (1), South Korea (1), and Switzerland (1). For further details on the survey results, see Tate & Allen, 2000.

References
Acheson, K., & Maule, C. (1997). Canada’s cultural policies: You can’t have it both ways. Canadian Foreign Policy. URL: http://www.carleton.ca/npsia/cfpj/culture.html [July 1, 2000].


