Michael G. Jeffrey is advisor/producer about ten years ago with the Sony “CV” formats. Half-inch video then was about as wild with formats as half-inch cassettes are today, but all that changed with the introduction of EIAJ standard format half-inch open-reel VTRs. Soon, video-cassettes arrived and, in spite of a few renegades, a U-Matic format emerged across brand names: with some degree of success, tapes copied on one brand could be played back on another brand of videotape recorder. More recently, the manufacturers of the “new” one-inch VTRs agreed upon the “type-C” format, after much prodding from Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers.

Again, reason came to video. However, like Mount St. Helen’s which lay idle for several years, the video volcano was about to erupt all over. This time, perhaps, we could cope with only two more choices. Then (and I am not really sure which event came first) VHS subdivide into standard play and long-play formats which are not interchangeable with each other. Sony fused the fire with Beta-II and Beta-III, and a half-speed, something I call Beta-IV and Beta VI. At AMTEC ’81, we were shown a quarter-inch VCR, and soon to follow are the self-contained camera/VTRs. Some will argue that there are only “consumer” formats, but low price and availability make consumer formats very attractive to schools and training institutions. Incidentally, the original “CV” series VTR stood for consumer video.

Perhaps there would be hope with that new creation, videodisc. Quite the contrary, the new creation, videodisc, is at least as bad as tape: there are two attractive to schools and training institutions. As all standards. The manufacturers could meet their overhead by concentrating on more limited product lines and we benefit from simplified distribution networks. There is a creative, imaginative response to tenders. Surely, both sides win.

My first glimpse of the range of formats was at a conference in Toronto, August 1972. At AMTEC ’81 at Truro, Pierre Peruse challenged Canadian media agencies to get together, pool their equipment, through AMTEC, to share equipment, programs and other essential equipment needed for the development of independent motion picture and television in Canada. How about it? Are you content with what “they” offer to us? Surely, we have sufficient foresight to define certain basic standards. The manufacturers could then meet their overhead by concentrating on the more limited product lines and we benefit from simplified distribution networks. There is a creative, imaginative response to tenders. Surely, both sides win.

The story is truly from the heart, but this presents problems in translation onto film. Much of the film is blatantly contrived; there isn’t the verisimilitude of events that one has come to expect in films. All White men are insensitive boors still flaunting the rape-and-plunder-everything-within-reach mentality. However, this is rather a proper stereotype reversal after years of viewing monocular Indians in blankets and feathers.

Perhaps the plight of this film is universal, the specifics of the story are not, and the film’s biggest problem is its lack of background information necessary for everyone to fully comprehend the story. For example, understanding all aspects of what is implied in the differentiation between status and non-status Indians is paramount, but it is not given the slightest service in the film. Knowledge of Indian spirituality is also important for appreciating the otherwise flat and meaningless ending.

If the viewers are sensitive to the culture, the film is meaningful and wonderful. If they aren’t, it doesn’t make much sense. There is in it, the potential for expanding the horizons of non-Natives if they are willing to expand some energy in looking beyond their cultural identities. And, in doing so, they will be richer for this film offers an insight into Native life — complete with its inimitable humor — that is rarely accessible by non-Natives. If “The Red Dress” is to be used in the classroom, it would be most suitable for the sophisticated grade nine or older students in English or social studies. The film works particularly well if used in conjunction with the accompanying educational kit. It would be helpful if the educators were aware of the situation from which the film evolved. “The Great Spirit,” another National Film Board film is helpful in understanding the spiritual aspects of “The Red Dress.”

Public Education Media Services in the Nova Scotia Department of Education. In addition to audiovisual production, he has taught in adult education for five years.
While this is not a very recent film, its importance transcends its date. In Saskatchewan settings of great religious importance for Indians, Roy Ionized talks with Ernest Tootoosis, spiritual leader of the Crees.

Tootoosis describes the basic beliefs of the Cree and explains some of the rituals. He compares Manitou, the god of the Cree to the Christian god and elaborates upon the reverence of the elements — sun, wind, water and fire. While there are similarities between the beliefs of the Christians and Cree, the Cree did not have an Adam and Eve. So, in 1492 when the Whiteman arrived, the Cree were still living in peace. Man was humble and recognized he was merely a part of the environment, no greater or more important than the smallest animal. There was no need to conquer nature. Manitou provided everything the Cree needed. Since that time, the Cree have adopted the Whiteman’s ways and no longer live in harmony with nature. Nature is responding to this disrespect by such phenomena as polluted streams. Tootoosis feels that the hope for Indians today is to get back in touch with their spirituality and re-establish the harmony with nature.

The information in this film is cogently presented and offers a rare insight important for understanding Natives. In this respect, it surpasses most other films on the same theme which are available now.