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Solicitor General
Canada

Solliciteur général
Canada

STUDY GUIDE FOR THE FILM

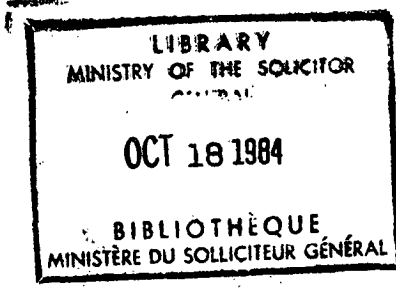
" GUNS FOR LIFE "

A film produced by and for Native Peoples,
with the assistance of the Sponsored
Film Division of the National Film
Board of Canada

Produced by the Communication Division,
Ministry of the Solicitor General, for
the Working Group on Gun Control, 1979

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STUDY GUIDE
GUNS FOR LIFE

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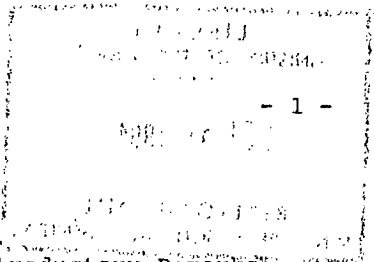
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NOTE:

Guns for Life is not complete in its description of the new gun laws or of safe gun handling. However, since the teacher may wish to use this film as an introduction to one or both of these topics, more complete information is supplied in this Study Guide.

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Introductory Remarks

It is important to realize that this film was produced by native people primarily for a native audience. The original intent of the producers was that the film be accompanied by a social animator when it was screened. This is important for two reasons.

First, the film does not attempt to cover every aspect of the new legislation - only those aspects particularly relevant to a native audience. The film makes no attempt to discuss any of the issues more pertinent to an urban audience. Second, the film was produced within the cultural reality of the Canadian Indian. Guns are, in many cases, an important tool of their survival and the film is predicated on the understanding that guns are an integral part of life on most reserves. For this reason it also concentrates on many of the tenets of gun safety inherent in the new gun laws.

In some ways this is an advantage for the classroom; in others it can make the film a difficult teaching tool.

For the above reasons we urge that you peruse this Guide carefully and, if possible, screen the film yourself before determining how you might most beneficially employ it for your particular class.

Brief Program Description

Guns for Life portrays the experiences of an eleven year old Indian boy whose father has taken him out onto the reserve to learn the ways of nature from his grandfather.

During the film these three are repeatedly affected by some 'sportsmen' who are in the same area. These 'sportsmen' demonstrate many of the how-not-to's in their handling of their guns. An RCMP Special Constable is on their trail and explains the new gun control legislation and how it is designed to stop such careless use of firearms to Edward, Martin and Osakdo.

These talks remind Martin of some stories relatives have told him which further demonstrate unsafe gun handling and we are shown several of these experiences re-enacted.

In the final scenes of the film the grandfather, Osakdo is wounded by the 'sportsmen' in a final demonstration of the possible consequences of unsafe gun handling and we see a helicopter assisted police chase in which the wrongdoers are overpowered and taken into custody.

Most of the information about the new legislation is delivered by the Special Constable in speeches to the three central characters. These sections tend to drag in relation to the faster paced re-enactments and the teacher may want to review these sections carefully when using the film to teach students about the new laws. For this reason a section on the key aspects of the new legislation is included in this study guide.

Guns for Life may also be useful as an aid in teaching gun safety and for this reason a section on the safe handling of unrestricted guns and rifles is also included.

In order to assist the teacher in an evaluation of Guns for Life a detailed description of the film, complete with timings, follows this brief outline.

GUNS FOR LIFE

Program Description

- 00:00 - 00:28 Opening titles
- 00:28 - 01:00 An eleven year old boy, Edward, and his father are out in a wilderness area of the reserve to learn about hunting and life in the outdoors from Edward's grandfather. We are introduced to some 'sportsmen' who are drunkenly shooting beer bottles at an abandoned cabin. Edward is learning how to use a rifle.
- 01:00 - 03:03 Edward is startled by the shots fired by the 'sportsmen' and accidentally pulls the trigger of his rifle. The muzzle is pointed in the general direction of his grandfather, Osakdo. Edward and his father, Martin, fear that Oskado may have been hit and run to his assistance. He is unhurt but Martin is sure that his lying motionless until he and Edward reached him is only the beginning of a lesson. Sure that all the firing will have frightened away any game that may have been in the area, they decide to make camp for the night. (Note: As they leave the site of the near accident, Martin is carrying the rifle. Notice if he is handling it properly.)
- 03:03 - 09:05 Sitting around the campfire Osakdo asks Edward about life in the city. Edward replies that he doesn't like it much - there are too many rules, especially at school. He says that he prefers to be in a wilderness area where there aren't any rules. Osakdo tells him that there are rules here, important survival rules. Using the analogy of small animals and their behavioural characteristics Osakdo explains that in nature the young learn from the old. If they do not learn, they usually do not survive. Only human beings forget the rules. They turn in for the night and Martin and Osakdo laugh about Martin thinking he had been shot.

Program Description Cont'd

- 09:05 - 13:46 A Hydro worker is repairing a damaged line as the three arrive at a new hunting location. A native RCMP Special Constable, a friend of Osakdo's, is there and explains to them that some hunters have been shooting off the insulators for the high tension wires. This is extremely dangerous because a line could easily come down and start a fire. He also begins telling them about the new Gun Laws that are designed to prevent people who behave foolishly with guns from having them. If a person is caught misusing a firearm it will be confiscated and the person prevented from obtaining another. (Note: This section may be a bit dry for younger students and they may miss some of the information. If you are planning to use the film to teach students about gun control legislation, this is one of the sections you may want to review in detail after viewing the film. Key aspects of the new laws can be found on page 10 of this study guide.) The Special Constable goes off to search for the hunters and Osakdo. Martin and Edward remain to search for deer.
- 13:46 - 17:20 Martin and Edward find the tracks of a wounded deer and decide to follow them. Osakdo remains in camp. The Special Constable, Bill, returns and they talk. Soon Martin and Edward return. They have found the wounded deer fallen into a ravine where they couldn't get to it. They talk about the stupid waste of life and meat. They all want to stop this. Bill explains more about the new gun laws and then is reminded of a story that graphically demonstrates how accidents can happen if people are not extremely careful with firearms.

Program Description Cont'd

- 17:20 - 19:03 Here we see the re-enactment of Bill's story. A man and his wife have taken some of their grandchildren into the bush to teach them something about life in the outdoors. The man has been upriver for several days hunting and returns tired and very ill. Because of his condition he is anxious to lie down and rest as soon as possible and he forgets to unload his rifle. Some of the children have been playing cowboys and one of them see the rifle. While playing with it he accidentally shoots his grandmother in the leg. She is not seriously wounded but she is hurt. This was the hard way to learn about proper gun storage. Bill goes on to explain that under the new laws it is an offence not to store weapons and ammunition separately and safely.
- 19:03 - 21:13 Bill tells them more about the new laws. Edward will not be able to buy his own weapon until he is sixteen, though he can have a permit to use a gun when he is twelve. (Note: This is an area where the new laws are different. For a more detailed account check with the Key Aspects section in this Guide.) Martin asks about prohibited weapons and Bill tells them that all rifles and shotguns with barrels cut down to less than eighteen inches or an overall length of under twenty-six inches are prohibited. This reminds Martin of a story his Uncle Arthur told him.
- 21:13 - 22:51 In Northern Quebec, we see the re-enactment of Uncle Arthur's story. He comes across some young men who are firing sawed-off shotguns. They are missing many of the birds they are shooting at and only wounding others. They are unable to retrieve many of these wounded birds. Arthur shows them how a real hunter goes after birds. The youths appear to have learned their lesson.

Program Description Cont'd

- 22:51 - 23:40 Back at the campsite Bill tells them that owners of gun like that can have them confiscated and will be refused new permits. He leaves to find the hunters and Osakdo, Martin and Edward decide to move on also, again reasoning that the 'sportsmen' will have frightened off whatever game may have been in the area.
- 23:40 - 27:16 The 'sportsmen' are driving down the road in a camper shooting at road-signs as they go. As Martin pulls his truck onto the road, they are nearly hit by the 'sportsmen' and Osakdo is shot in the shoulder. Bill arrives and radios in what has happened and then leaves with Martin and Edward to get Osakdo to the hospital. A helicopter assisted chase begins and the 'sportsmen' are overpowered and taken into custody.
- 27:16 - 28:30 In the final scene, Martin comes out of the hospital to tell Edward that Osakdo will be all right and has given his new boots to Edward. He is thrilled and is sure that he can immediately 'fill his grandfather's shoes'. When he tries them on we see that they are far too big for him. He still has a lot to learn.

Suggested Questions for the Classroom

1. In the opening scenes Edward is startled into accidentally firing his rifle. In what ways is he mishandling his weapon that allow this accident to take place?
2. In the beginning of the film we seen some 'sportsmen' firing at beer bottles. What are they doing wrong in this scene? Is there anything that they are doing correctly? Do you think they are the kind of people who should be trusted with guns?
3. What is the lesson Osakdo is trying to teach Edward as they sit around the campfire? Do you think Edward understands what his grandfather is trying to teach him?
4. What is the danger talked about in the film concerning firing at the insulators on hydro high tension wires? Can you think of any others?
5. What is a Firearms Acquisition Certificate?
6. When do you need one?
7. Why do you need one?
8. How old do you have to be to receive a Firearms Acquisition Certificate?
9. Are those under the age of sixteen allowed to use a firearm? If yes, under what conditions are they allowed to use a firearm?
10. What is a prohibited weapon?
11. Why do you think such weapons are prohibited?
12. In the story the Special Constable tells, what does the grandfather do incorrectly that results in an accident? What should he have done?

13. Under what conditions can a person receive a Firearms Acquisition Certificate for free?
14. Under what circumstances can police take weapons away from people?
15. In Uncle Arthur's story, what are the boys doing wrong? List as many things as you can.
16. Under the new gun laws, what can happen if the police find you with a prohibited weapon?
17. In the scene where the 'sportsmen' are driving in their van, what are they doing that is dangerous? What happens as a result?
18. What have you learned about gun safety in this film?
19. What have you learned about the new gun control laws?
20. What do you think Edward learned in the two days he was with his grandfather? Do you think he has more to learn?

Suggested Topics for Classroom Discussion

Guns for Life is obviously incomplete in its attempt to describe the new gun laws or deal with gun safety. Both areas are complex and it would be extremely difficult to cover either one completely in a single film. However, several issues are raised by the film and you may wish to involve your class in a discussion. Some possible discussion topics are listed below:

1. Why do you think the government enacted the new gun control legislation?
2. Do you think the laws go far enough, or too far? In what ways would you change the laws?
3. Are there differences in the problems posed by weapons in cities and the problems posed in rural or wilderness areas? What do you think these differences are?
4. What are the positive uses of weapons? What do you think would happen if there were no guns at all?
5. Did you learn anything about Indian culture in the film?
6. Individual provinces can require a person to pass a government approved course in gun safety before they can obtain a Firearms Acquisitions Certificate. What do you think about this idea? What do you think should be covered in such a course?
7. Have your ideas about guns changed because of this film? In what ways?

The Key Aspects of the New Gun Control Laws

Basically, the new legislation requires people who wish to use firearms for any reason to do two things:

1. After January 1, 1979, to obtain a Firearms Acquisition Certificate before purchasing or borrowing a firearm.
2. Handle, transport and store firearms in a safe and responsible manner.

Other parts of the legislation primarily affect those people who misuse guns, causing needless death or injury. These measures include prohibition orders, stiffer penalties for criminal misuse and increased police powers to search for and seize weapons in dangerous situations. The intent of the legislation is to curb irresponsible and criminal misuse of firearms without interfering with their legitimate users, including those hunters and trappers who use guns to sustain their livelihoods.

A number of significant changes were incorporated into the legislation to reflect the concerns of people who hunt and trap for a living. These changes are:

1. A person who hunts or traps to sustain their livelihood will not be required to pay the ten dollar Firearms Acquisition Certificate fee.
2. A minor (under sixteen years of age) who hunts or traps to sustain himself or his family will be able to obtain a permit for the use of a firearm with the consent of a parent or guardian.
3. A person will be able to borrow a firearm without a Firearms Acquisition Certificate if he needs it to hunt or trap.

The Firearms Acquisition Certificate

The FAC is the new document which is absolutely required for ANY person to obtain a firearm after January 1, 1979. Only persons who are sixteen years of age and over, and who have no history of violence, are eligible for an FAC. (Note: In some provinces the Attorney General requires that to be eligible for an FAC a person must also pass an approved course in gun safety.) The FAC is issued by local firearms officers (police officers) at a cost of ten dollars. (Note: An FAC is free for those who need the weapon to support themselves or their families.) An FAC is valid throughout Canada for a period of five years.

Minor's Permit

Youth between the ages of twelve and sixteen may use long guns, under supervision, for target practice, game hunting or instruction in the safe use of firearms if they first obtain a permit with the consent of a parent or guardian. The permit is free of charge and spells out specific conditions.

A minor (no minimum age) may also obtain a permit to use a long gun without supervision if the firearm is needed to hunt or trap to sustain the minor or his family.

New Powers to Prohibit Ownership and Use of Firearms

People convicted of an indictable offence involving violence will be prohibited from owning or using firearms. A police officer may also apply to a judge for a prohibition order if he determines that a person is exhibiting dangerous or threatening behaviour.

Careless Handling and Use of Firearms

The new legislation provides penalties for those found to be using, handling or storing weapons or ammunition in a careless manner. What constitutes carelessness will be determined on a per-occasion basis by the courts.

Restricted Weapons

All handguns - pistols and revolvers - as well as all semi-automatic carbines with barrel lengths under 18½ inches or overall lengths under 26 inches, which use centre fire ammunition must be registered with police.

Prohibited Weapons

All fully automatic weapons; all operable rifles and shotguns with a barrel length cut down to under 18 inches or an overall length of under 26 inches; silencers; switchblade knives; various martial arts weapons; and any device which uses chemicals or electricity to incapacitate or to immobilize are Prohibited Weapons and must be turned over to police for disposal.

New Penalties for Criminal Misuse

Persons using firearms while committing, or attempting to commit, an indictable offence, or while fleeing after such an offence, whether or not bodily harm is caused or meant to be caused, are guilty of an additional indictable offence and are subject to a mandatory prison term of at least one year, and up to fourteen years. This sentence is to be served consecutively to any term imposed for the original indictable offence.

If you wish a more detailed account of the new laws, covering all exemptions and rights of appeal, you may obtain it by writing to the Ministry of the Solicitor General in Ottawa.

Sample Firearm Acquisition Certificates and some additional information are available through your nearest police station.

Gun Safety

This section is not designed to be a complete course on the safe handling of firearms; however, it does cover the key elements of gun safety and provides the necessary background for a class discussion of the film.

If you wish more documentation on this vital area, such as labelled diagrams of rifles and shotguns or material more relevant to hunting in your area, please contact the following:

List by province of who to contact:

Mr. George E.A. Reid
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Department of the Solicitor General
7th Floor, Melton Building
10310 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5Y 1Y8

Mr. Lorne M. Newson
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Criminal Law Division
Department of the Attorney General
1016 Langley Street
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 1X4

Mr. Roy W. Cooper
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Department of the Attorney General
5th Floor, Woodsworth Building
405 Broadway Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 3L6

Mr. W.G. Logan
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Department of the Attorney General
New City Hall
P.O.Box 7129
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4P 3S6

Mr. Harold Steeves
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Department of Justice
York County Courthouse
P.O.Box 6000
Fredericton, New Brunswick
E3B 5H1

Mr. Luke F. Flinn
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Suite 524, Roy Building
1657 Barrington Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2A1

Mr. S.E. Green
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Regent Court
P.O.Box 248
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
C1A 1V4

M. Alain Gagnon
Le Chef provincial des préposés aux armes à feu
La Sûreté du Québec
1701, rue Partenais, pièce 780
Montréal, Québec
H2K 3S7

A/Superintendent J.C. Villemaire
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Ontario Provincial Police
125 Lakeshore Boulevard East
Toronto, Ontario
M6A 2A1

Mr. Herbert A. Vivian
Chief Provincial Firearms Officer
Department of Justice
Confederation Building
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1C 5T7

Mr. R.L. James
Chief Territorial Firearms Officer
Government of the Northwest Territories
Yellowknife, N.W.T.
XOE LH0

Sheriff Al Adams
Chief Territorial Firearms Officer
Government of the Yukon Territory
Room 235, Federal Building
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory
Y1A 2C6

The most important point to realize about any firearm is that it is dangerous. It is designed for only one purpose - to cause death. Any careless handling of any gun can result in serious injury.

The Ten Commandments of Gun Safety

1. Treat every gun as if it were loaded. This is the primary and perhaps the most important rule for all gun handlers to follow
2. Be sure of your target before you squeeze the trigger. A hunter should positively identify his target as legal game before he pulls the trigger. He should also know the killing and danger ranges of the rifle or shotgun he is using. A good .22 target rifle, equipped with target sights, is one of the most accurate rifles up to 100 yards. Shots at game are effective up to 75 yards, if well placed. A hunter should never fire at any target beyond the killing range of the weapon he is using. A .22 can be dangerous up to one mile. A 30.30 is reasonably accurate up to 150 yards and dangerous up to one and a half miles. A 30.06, .308 or .270 etc. are accurate up to 500 yards in a good hunting rifle and are dangerous up to three miles. A shotgun, using light shot, has an effective range of 40 yards, but can be dangerous up to 300 yards. The effective range of the same gun, using BB or SSG shot, is not more than 50 yards, but the heavier shot can be dangerous

up to 400 yards. It is therefore extremely important to be sure of your backstop. Once your brain tells your finger to touch the trigger you cannot stop the succeeding action. Even the best shots can sometimes miss the target, but the bullet continues to be dangerous for a very great distance. Never fire a gun into the air.

3. Never point a gun at anything you do not wish to hit. Avoid all horseplay while handling a gun. Guns are not toys and should never be pointed at others even if they are not loaded.
4. Always carry your gun so that the muzzle is under control. By safe gun carriers, the hunter controls the muzzle even if he stumbles or falls. The trigger is sometime released by a sudden jar. Unless the hunter knows where the muzzle is pointed he or a companion may be a casualty. Never walk with your finger on the trigger. Running with a loaded gun is always dangerous.
5. Guns must always be unloaded when not in use. Guns should be carried in cases to the shooting area and checked before leaving. Actions should be opened, or the guns taken down, before leaving the shooting area. Re-check them before entering the hunting camp or storing them for the night. It is illegal to carry a loaded gun in a moving vehicle.
6. Make sure that the barrel and action are clear of obstructions. If the muzzle accidentally touches the ground or snow always unload and check it immediately. Any obstruction can be extremely dangerous. Remove oil and grease from the bore before firing. Only carry ammunition for the gun you are using. Some calibres of rifle ammunition are so similar in size that they can actually be placed in the chamber of a rifle designed for another calibre and fired. This can be extremely dangerous due to the excessive pressure created in the cartridge case when it is not fully supported by the chamber. The result can be a fatal injury to the shooter. Most 12 gauge shotguns are chambered for a 2 3/4 inch shell. However, a 3 inch magnum shell will fit in most 2 3/4 inch chambers. If it is fired, the mouth of the case is not permitted to open up sufficiently to allow free passage of the charge of shot past the forcing cone, which lies just ahead of the chamber. This acts in the same manner as any other obstruction in a gun barrel,

usually bursting the barrel with consequent injury to the shooter.

7. Unattended guns should be unloaded. Guns and ammunition should be stored separately beyond the reach of children or careless adults. When crushed, or when struck with a hammer or stone, ammunition can burst when it goes off, as the cartridge is not strong enough to contain the pressure generated except when it is supported within the chamber made for it. Bits of metal from the primer case can cause serious injury in this situation. Never strike ammunition with a rock and never drop it into a fire.
8. Never climb a fence or jump across a ditch with a loaded gun. Place the gun on the other side of the fence, if alone, and climb the fence at another place. Never pull a gun towards you with the muzzle. The safety, being a mechanical device and subject to failure, must never be trusted. It is therefore essential that weapons be unloaded when crossing a stream or climbing a steep bank in order to prevent a potential accident should the hunter stumble or fall. When loading or unloading a firearm, the muzzle must always be pointed in a safe direction. When handing a firearm to another person, be sure that it is unloaded and the action open.
9. Never shoot at flat or hard objects or the surface of water. No one can control the direction of a ricochet.
10. Avoid alcohol while handling firearms. Drinking dulls the vision, distorts the aim and impairs judgement. Never drink before, or while you handle a firearm.

Gun Safety in the Home

The hunter's responsibility starts the instant he touches a gun, whether at home or in the field. He is responsible not only for his own safety but also for that of anyone who might be endangered by the way in which he handles a firearm. The following rules apply particularly to firearms in the home:

- Never permit a loaded gun to be taken into any building.
- Immediately on picking up any firearm point the muzzle in a safe direction, open the action and check both the chamber and the magazine to be sure that they are empty.
- Treat every gun as if it were loaded.
- Never point a firearm at anything you do not wish to shoot.
- Do not allow any firearm, including an air gun, to be used as a toy.
- Teach your children that firearms are potentially dangerous, but also keep them out of reach and, if possible, locked up. Do not leave the keys to your gun cabinet where they may be easily accessible to children or irresponsible adults.
- Ammunition should be locked up in a cool, dry place and separate from firearms.
- If you are shown a gun with an action or design with which you are not familiar, ask the owner to demonstrate how to open the action and prove that it is unloaded.
- Guns should be stored in a horizontal position. If they are stored butt down oil may drain from the barrel into the chamber and/or action. This could cause undue pressure in the chamber or a malfunction of the action when the gun is next fired.
- Any antique or souvenir firearms, cartridges, etc. should be checked by a competent gunsmith to be certain they are in proper working condition and safe.
- Never pull the trigger to check if a gun is loaded or to release the action lock.

A final Note

Gun control and the safe handling of firearms are rapidly become critical areas of concern in Canadian society. It is our hope that you will find Guns for Life a suitable introduction to a discussion of these topics with your class. If you would like any further information not already covered in this Guide or in the film, or if you would like a list of other films available on the subject of gun safety or the new gun laws, please contact:

The Ministry of the Solicitor General
Working Group on Gun Control
340 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0P8

