

**STUDY CONCERNING THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF CANADA  
IN 2017**

**PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON CANADIAN HERITAGE  
BY THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA**

**DECEMBER 6, 2011**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Standing Committee.

My name is Claude Joli-Cœur, and I am the Assistant Commissioner of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). I am here today with Mr. James Roberts, Assistant Director General of the Accessibility and Digital Enterprises division.

We are very glad to have this opportunity to offer our input for your study on the celebrations being planned for Canada's 150th anniversary. But first, I'll outline the role of the NFB as an institution, our digital shift and our involvement in commemorating events of significance to Canadians.

## **NFB's MANDATE**

To begin with, I'd like to offer a brief reminder of what the NFB is. It is a federal cultural agency, established in 1939 to produce and distribute original and innovative audiovisual works that add to our understanding of the issues facing Canadians. These works also raise awareness of Canadian values and viewpoints around the world. We are recognized in particular as a leading producer of documentaries, animated films and interactive works.

The NFB retains its unique status in an audiovisual world teeming with delivery choices, and we continue to be a creative laboratory and a leader in exploring topics not easily accessible to the private sector. The NFB also gives a voice to those Canadians who are often not part of the mainstream and is an integral tool for maintaining the vitality of francophone culture across the country. Above all, the NFB is a leading-edge Canadian innovator in the digital media world.

Our audiovisual content is 100% Canadian and reflects the diversity of our country. It is available in French and English and crosses all geographical borders. The NFB is the custodian of one of the most important audiovisual collections in the world—a priceless heritage for all Canadians and the rest of the world.

## **DIGITAL SHIFT**

The ongoing transition from analog to digital formats has created an enormous transformation in the media environment. Now in the fourth year of our five-year strategic plan, we have become the leading Canadian institution in the creative and innovative use of digital media. The shift to digital technology has helped us fulfil our commitment to our audience and once again win over the hearts and minds of Canadians through renewed access to our productions.

The NFB's online screening room <NFB.ca> was launched in January 2009. It is the cornerstone of the NFB's digital strategy, which aims to enable the majority of Canadians to enjoy greater access to our film collection, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our website currently offers more than 2,100 free films, excerpts and trailers that Canadians can watch at home. To date, we have registered almost 27 million screenings of NFB works on different digital platforms in Canada and abroad. This online Screening Room can also be accessed through apps for mobile phones on platforms such as the iPhone, iPad, Android and BlackBerry PlayBook.

## **PRESENCE AT MAJOR EVENTS**

The NFB also plays a key role by marking events that are of significance to Canadian society and presenting them dynamically to Canadians. Here are a few concrete examples of NFB projects that have commemorated major events.

I would like to describe these projects because they will give you a good idea of how the NFB is associated with major events that contribute to strengthening Canadians' sense of pride and identity.

- For the **400th anniversary of the founding of Quebec City, in 2008**, the NFB produced an innovative 3D stereoscopic film ***Champlain retracé, une œuvre en 3 dimensions/Facing Champlain: A Work in 3 Dimensions***, by Jean-François Pouliot. Thanks to a partnership with the Musée de la civilisation de Québec, this film has been screened since 2008 and will be shown for many years to come. Another example is our collaboration with the National Battlefields Commission (NBC). We highlighted the 100th anniversary of the creation of the first Canadian Battlefields National Park on the Plains of Abraham with the film ***Mon parc, mes plaines/My Park, My Plains***, by Carole Laganière.
- Also in 2008, the NFB joined Veterans Affairs Canada, the Department of National Defence, Rideau Hall, the Canadian War Museum and the Royal Canadian Legion in commemorating the **90th anniversary of the Armistice**. This multi-platform initiative was a resounding success. Claude Guilmain's film ***Front Lines/Entre les lignes***, a tribute to the Canadians who fought in the First World War, was screened in schools across the country, in theatres, on television and on the Web.

- In 2010, Canada took part in **Expo 2010 Shanghai**. In collaboration with the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Cirque du Soleil, the NFB presented Canada to the rest of the world through its film ***Impressions/Glimpses***, by Jean-François Pouliot. This immersive experience was one of the most popular attractions of the Canadian pavilion, attracting close to 6,400,000 visitors.
- The NFB also explored new ways of celebrating sports and Canada in the context of the **2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Vancouver**. In partnership with VANOC, we contributed to Canada's first Cultural Olympiad Digital Edition (CODE). Canada CODE was a national open-source website that let Canadians, wherever they were, help create a collective online portrait or mosaic of the country. This online souvenir album was accessible to everyone and was displayed on sites celebrating the Vancouver games. To ensure maximum participation, and especially to introduce young people to new media, the NFB organized over 60 online storytelling workshops in schools and community centres across the country, including official language minority communities. An educational guide was also produced to help teachers incorporate Canada CODE into the curriculum.

Over the next few years, we intend to continue this development by preparing numerous projects that will highlight moments in our

history, leading up to the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

- Next year we will be celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. In preparation for the occasion, the NFB is currently working on a souvenir DVD that will include two well-known films from its collection, **Royal Journey** (1951) and **Canada at the Coronation** (1953), as well as a new production, **The Portrait**, now being filmed.
- The NFB also has several projects connected to the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812. We are looking at a co-production of an interactive project based on the Battle of York, a DVD box set grouping together the works in our collection that deal with this war, and an educational project.
- The Royal 22e Régiment (Van Doos) was created in 1914 and was the most important factor in the integration of French-speaking Canadian servicemen and women into the Canadian Armed Forces. 2014 marks its 100th anniversary, and we are currently preparing a documentary about the regiment to highlight this important anniversary.
- In 2014, we will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Second World War and the 100th anniversary of the First World War. The NFB's vast, priceless collection of films about these

two global conflicts could be distributed on multiple platforms to mark these anniversaries and help increase public awareness.

- In 2014, the NFB will celebrate its own 75th anniversary with a number of special projects.
- We are considering an association with the Pan American Games which will be held in Toronto in 2015.
- We would also like to note that 2015 marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Canadian flag. In fact, our collection includes a unique film about the first flag-raising ceremony in 1965.
- In 2017, Montreal will celebrate the 375th anniversary of its founding. The NFB has been an active presence in Montreal since 1956 and will naturally mark the occasion of this special anniversary.
- For the 150th anniversary of Confederation, we are looking to develop a concept similar to Canada CODE, which was such a resounding success during the Vancouver Olympics—a mosaic made up of self-generated audio and visual components uploaded by Canadians who want to share their region and their vision for Canada. This living work will be created by and for the country's population, will grow during the months prior to

the festivities and be shaped into its final form for the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

## **CONCLUSION**

As you can see, the NFB has many commemorative projects that will take us up to the 150th anniversary in 2017. For all these large-scale projects highlighting major events in Canadian history, we prefer to build partnerships with institutions that fall under the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage. We also count on associating with the greatest number of partners to create maximum impact for our actions.

The NFB can join projects already underway and in development. We can bring our artistic and technological know-how to the table with new works and by highlighting films from our collection, grouping them and distributing them to coincide with these anniversaries.

For each important anniversary from 2012 through 2017, the NFB is brimming with treasures that truly reflect our history. It is important that these be made available to Canadians today.

That concludes our presentation. Thank you very much for your kind attention. I will be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.