

NEW WAYS OF STORYTELLING FOR NEW WAYS OF SEEING

2020–2023
STRATEGIC PLAN

PRODUCTION STILL FROM
THE MAGNITUDE OF ALL THINGS
JENNIFER ABBOTT





PRODUCTION STILL FROM
TO WAKE UP THE NAKOTA LANGUAGE
LOUISE BIGEAGLE

MANDATE

Created in 1939, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) is a federal agency under the Department of Canadian Heritage. Its mandate is to create, produce, and distribute distinctive and original audiovisual works that reflect the diverse realities and perspectives of Canadians, and to share these works with the people of Canada and the rest of the world.

GOAL

We are living through a time of sweeping change that will transform Canada and the rest of the world. Over the next three years, the NFB aims to be a focal point for the expression of all aspects of these transformations, to help Canadians better understand each other and better shape our shared future.

PROCESS

The NFB's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan is the product of an intensive process of reflection and an exchange of ideas. It has come to be as the result of:

- > diligent work by the senior management committee, which bears the primary responsibility for creating the plan;
- > a significant contribution from the NFB Board of Trustees at several stages of the process;
- > many discussions resulting from the Commissioner's cross-Canada tour between January and March 2020, during which he met with creators and members of the audiovisual industry;
- > several meetings, led directly by the Commissioner, with Canadian and international representatives—all experts in the audiovisual field, from both the public and private sectors;

- > contributions by several employees;
- > research conducted in-house and externally by the Creation and Innovation Division and the Distribution, Communications and Marketing Division.

This strategic plan has been designed to cover a three-year period, which we consider to be the optimal length of time given the rapid changes in social and media paradigms at the national and international level.

The NFB Board of Trustees adopted this plan in October 2020.



PRODUCTION STILL FROM
NOW IS THE TIME
CHRISTOPHER AUCHTER

VALUES

In the course of putting together its strategic plan, the NFB held an exercise in formulating the organization's values. The goal was to capture our daily reality and inspire us to grow. In this spirit, the NFB hopes that these values will not simply invoke principles, but rather that they will be embodied by our day-to-day activities and guiding decisions, and drive the evolution of an organization for whom creativity is a central and transformative force.

RESPECT (FOR COLLEAGUES, CREATORS, ARTISTS, AUDIENCES, AND OURSELVES)

Respect is the recognition of people's dignity and their value. Respect is not static; it involves movement from one's self to others. Respect is a commitment everyone in the NFB family makes to continuously improve interpersonal relationships.

DIVERSITY

Diversity brings together memories of the past and visions for the future, and expands horizons. Since its earliest days, the NFB has embodied diversity. Through our productions and within our organization, we want to ensure equity for Indigenous people and underrepresented linguistic, racialized and cultural communities, and people of all sexual identities and gender expressions, as well as those with disabilities—reflecting the full richness of humanity.

GENEROSITY

The NFB is a public service. This is not just a question of its status; it is, above all, a responsibility. It is in the NFB's DNA to give to the community, to share experiences and learning. The generosity that puts us in a position to give back also allows us to embrace others and to welcome differences.

INTEGRITY

Integrity is characterized by consistency in action, speech, and thought. It is the mark of people and teams who are unwavering in embracing their truth while recognizing their role and their distinctive identities. It leads to confidence, transparency and justice. Integrity underpins all ethical action.

COURAGE AND EMPOWERMENT

Art is courageous, because it defies norms and questions customs. As a producer and distributor of film and audiovisual art, the NFB shares in the courage of creators. It dares to take risks in its approaches as well as its productions. Being courageous means being bold enough to take action that challenges, persuades, and moves. Courage allows individuals, organizations, and communities to grow. Courage is also about making choices and embracing their consequences.





MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

AN URGENT NEED TO TELL OUR STORIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has derailed the economy and shaken our confidence. A powerful movement for justice has mobilized Indigenous, racialized and underrepresented groups in Canada, in the United States, and around the world. Successive environmental catastrophes have stunned Australia and the West Coast of North America. 2020 has been a year of trauma and reflection for our country and the planet. How can we imagine the world of tomorrow?

There is an urgency to our task of crafting new ways of storytelling for new ways of seeing. The NFB's mission has never been more strikingly relevant.

The questions currently being raised by these turbulent changes are civilizational and existential. The future will be what we decide to make it. There are voices that need to be given free rein, to be shared. The gaze of the artist will be essential. These guardians of our conscience will help us imagine the future, taking into account all of its aspects and ensuring that nobody is left by the wayside.

Our role in the years ahead will be, above all, to ensure that as many voices as possible can express themselves, and that the greatest number of points of view are seen. We will pursue this goal without faltering in our responsibilities toward Indigenous, linguistic, racialized and underrepresented groups, as well as in our commitments to gender parity, racial equity, and diversity and inclusion. To this end, we reiterate the importance of improved funding for the NFB so that it can dedicate more money to production.

This objective comes with a new challenge, now unavoidable because of the striking transformations at work in Canadian society

today: how to reach and engage with a greater number of Canadians through the creation and distribution of relevant and innovative works.

The NFB's reputation extends far beyond our country's borders, constituting a powerful lever in an age of global communication and the emergence of so many new content-delivery platforms. We have the ability to strengthen our presence and leadership in today's digital ecosystem. Together with our industry partners, we can make Canada's uniqueness seen and heard at a time when our societies are demanding more respect, transparency, and institutions that listen.

In the years ahead, more than ever before the NFB will be a hub where creators and the public meet, to understand and learn about each other. As a key player in the Canadian film and audiovisual ecosystem, we will continue to be a laboratory for experimentation and a crossroads for innovation that relies on the collective strength and expertise of our staff.

I would like to acknowledge the creators and artists who are the soul of the NFB, the producers who make these original works possible, and the NFB staff without whom these transformative encounters between creators and audiences could not take place.

It is thanks to you, thanks to all of us, that it will be possible to create new ways of storytelling for new ways of seeing—and to imagine a shared future together.

CLAUDE JOLI-COEUR

Government Film Commissioner
and Chairperson of the NFB



2020–2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

Creating new ways of storytelling for new ways of seeing: this is how the NFB contributes to this country. We give creators the opportunity to cast their unique gazes on unexpected truths. We give audiences the opportunity to be touched, moved, and enlightened by original creative works. Through the NFB, Canada sees and discovers itself, in all its places and moods, in all its diversity and complexity. The NFB serves to further a human ideal, creating new ways of storytelling for new ways of seeing so that we can peacefully address the changes that are transforming the nation.

This strategic planning document aims to be of service to both artists and audiences as we look to build what comes next.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 1

RENEW OUR PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK AND ENHANCE THE EXPERIENCE OF CREATION

It's been five years since the launch of the Creation and Innovation Division, which brings together 10 production studios located across Canada. The division comprises English Program and French Program, which are anchored in the country's linguistic duality; thus we've reaffirmed the existence, relevance, and vitality of this duality. This major production entity combines and highlights the value of each program's unique cultural and linguistic identity, while taking full advantage of the richness and strength of their shared resources.

Our approach to creation over the next three years is rooted in a sense of renewal and openness to the world. The context of the pandemic has set the stage and accelerated

certain trends, whether in terms of advances in technology or the transformation of work practices. Thanks to the spirit of innovation that has always driven us, we were ready to face the challenge, quickly refining our remote production and post-production processes. This is a trend that's here to stay, and is proving to be very promising for an institution like ours, whose studios are spread across the country and work with co-producers and partners from around the world.

By building on the strength and diversity of our talent, nurturing collaboration and valuing differences, we will be able to achieve our vision for creation and innovation, which is based on three key actions.



FRANCHIR LA LIGNE (STANDING ON THE LINE)
PAUL ÉMILE D'ENTREMONT

ACTION 1

OFFER PROGRAMMING THAT IS COHESIVE, INTEGRATED, AND RESPONSIVE

Cohesive, in that it stems from a shared vision. Integrated, because it draws together all key actors, both within the NFB and beyond its walls, in a holistic approach to production. And responsive, because we believe we can create better programming by reacting nimbly to changing contexts. The shock of the pandemic reinforced the importance of agility as a motivator for action and as a creative stimulus.

The symbiosis between programming and production is one of the NFB's trademarks as a cultural institution. We are constantly thinking of production and programming in relation to each other, and this has forged the culture of production at the NFB.

It is a culture founded on the importance of creators and artists who enrich our vision and understanding of the world through their gaze. A culture that considers the needs of communities throughout the country. A culture that is thoughtful in its approach to each of its works, the impact we seek to have, and the ways in which these works reach audiences, who are taken into account from the outset of a project by all of the NFB's cross-functional teams. And it is a culture based on close personal support for creators at each stage of their artistic journey, from development, production and post-production through to distribution, communications, marketing, etc.

Our role as a public producer underpins our drive to communicate and interact with openness, transparency, and consistency with communities, industry, and the public, in all of our programming considerations and production choices.

To create this cohesive, integrated, and responsive programming, the NFB will:

- develop a new programming framework;
- articulate its shared values in relation to production;
- hold strategic programming forums; and
- launch a national programming group.



PRODUCER TERI SNELGROVE AND DIRECTOR SANDRA IGNAGNI
AT A COMMUNITY SCREENING OF
HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

ACTION 2

OFFER A CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT'S DYNAMIC AND INCLUSIVE

The NFB model is unique in the world. We offer a creative space that allows tremendous freedom of artistic expression, with first-rate professionals and a structure in place to support creators. Our reputation rests on this demanding model. It requires us to ensure our practices continuously evolve so that we have access to an ever-larger and more diverse and inclusive pool of creators and collaborators. The NFB places creation and audience engagement at the heart of its decisions and actions.

Over the next few years, we will be developing a unifying initiative rooted in the distinctive character of our organization, and offering creators, collaborators, partners and participants a true "NFB experience." This initiative will aim to consolidate a "place for creators" by developing an optimal relationship with them, so that they feel welcomed and

involved, and are seen as vital constituents of the NFB and its ecosystem. Regardless of the physical production location, this experience will aim to be equitable for all, and will be part of a broader approach anchored in the culture of creation at the NFB.

We will also roll out a strategy of interaction and engagement, making us more present to creators, communities, and key industry members.

ACTION 3

VALUE DIVERSE VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES

With passion, the NFB will make diversity of expression one of its top priorities. It will also be a catalyst for change as a leading organization in its field, setting some of the highest targets for diversity, racial equity and inclusion.

We also acknowledge the great diversity that characterizes the richness of this country, and are committed to fighting systemic racism at the NFB and within Canada’s cultural institutions.

Through our productions and within all levels of our organization, we will ensure equitable access and representation for Indigenous, linguistic, and racialized communities. The NFB will develop an anti-racism framework with mechanisms to address systemic barriers and denounce discrimination. The NFB will closely engage and consult with Black, Indigenous, and people of colour (BIPOC) staff internally and external BIPOC stakeholder communities, and respect their lived experiences.

We will relaunch our collaboration with the Indigenous Advisory Committee, undertaken in 2017, and work with them on a new three-year plan. We remain committed to achieving our gender-parity goals. We continue to support the co-existence of anglophone and francophone cultures, each of which has their own lived realities, and to highlight the voices of official-language minority communities. And we will proudly continue our role as champion of Canada’s linguistic duality, a cornerstone of our national identity.

Our programming already reflects the strength of our relationships with artists from BIPOC communities and our engagement with diversity on a broad scale. We can be justifiably proud of the works we produce in which creators from diverse communities express their points of view. But we can do more: working on clearly defined mechanisms, developing and maintaining clear commitments, ensuring greater visibility for racialized groups in front of and behind the camera. We must respectfully embody the rallying cry: “Nothing about us without us.”

Fulfilling these goals will mean being proactive in the search for new talent by reaching beyond our existing circles. We will seek out artists who see the NFB as inaccessible. We will also be more proactive in recruitment, develop equity-based hiring practices for our internal staffing and external production teams, and dedicate particular attention to retention. In terms of production, we will evolve our creative practices and approaches in accordance with the culturally specific needs of creators and creative communities. And we will work to ensure greater education and increased awareness for all NFB staff, to better grasp racial and cultural differences in all their aspects and implications, and to create safe spaces. The NFB can lead the way in this regard.



STRATEGIC PILLAR 2

REINVENT HOW WE MARKET, PRESENT AND DISTRIBUTE

Our goal is to reach more Canadians, foster proximity with our audiences and better connect them to the NFB based on their interests.

In the coming years, the NFB intends to make specific gains in the areas of finding, understanding, developing, and retaining audiences.

To maintain its unique public-service role, the NFB will continue to strategically align its teams and resources to ensure that its documentary, animation, and interactive works resonate and find a place with ever-growing numbers of people in Canada and around the world.

This is particularly important, as these works embody a range of unique perspectives and creative approaches, provoke discussion, and lead to debate and dialogue within Canada and abroad.

As a public distributor, the NFB must stand out in the way it reaches audiences. It has to be present in ways that some private players simply cannot be—but it must also adapt to and participate in areas with which it is unfamiliar. The NFB will excel on two levels: it will continue to offer viewing experiences of its works in person, at public screenings across Canada, and it will continue to increase access to its productions by improving discoverability on digital platforms, where more and more Canadians are consuming their audiovisual content.

In order to remain close to its audience, the NFB will use all distribution channels, including festivals, theatres, social media, and schools, as well as community screenings and other public screenings, working in Canadian communities and with a variety of interest groups.





FAR AWAY FROM FAR AWAY INSTALLATION
BRUCE ALCOCK AND JEREMY MENDES

ACTION 1

ESTABLISH NEW PARADIGMS FOR REACHING AND ENGAGING WITH CANADIAN AUDIENCES

The exponential growth in available screens and in platforms for distributing content and sharing information has led to an exceedingly complex ecosystem for media and cultural creation and distribution.

While an increasing number of Canadians can now easily access NFB works, we need a new strategy for reaching audiences.

In the coming years, we will act in accordance with new marketing and distribution paradigms, organizing our works in the following ways:

- > works for the general public that have the potential to make an impact on the largest possible audience;
- > works that spark conversation, allowing Canadians of all backgrounds to come together and share their points of view;
- > community works that tell important Canadian stories from underrepresented groups;
- > innovative and experimental works that speak to diverse audiences and reflect the avant-garde spirit of NFB creation.

ACTION 2

IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND DISCOVERABILITY OF OUR CONTENT ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

The accessibility and discoverability of our content is a central concern, both for us and for the public, and it drives our actions. We will review our practices over the last few years and equip ourselves with the necessary tools to increase our capacity for reaching audiences and ensuring they can find our works online easier and faster. To get closer to the public, the NFB needs to better understand its various audiences and, in turn, meet them where they are. This will require ensuring that the NFB is present and visible, and has increased distribution on various online platforms, including social media.

The marketing and distribution strategies we employ for our content must consider the potential inherent in new digital platforms and new technologies, in accordance with audiences' changing consumption habits. In order for the NFB to rise to the challenge of being relevant while having an impact on its audiences, it must first have a clear

understanding of the characteristics of today's modes of consumption, the evolution of the uses of content, and changes in behaviour and culture, particularly in the digital world.

To succeed, we must first get to know Canadians better. We need more information on their consumption habits. We must understand their areas of interest better. By developing our own smart data analysis, we can create a roadmap that will be essential to this important audience engagement initiative. To that end, we will be making use of tools and technologies that will help us improve our relationships with individuals, groups, and communities who have access to our works and are interested in them.

ACTION 3

**ROLL OUT OUR NEW EDUCATION OFFER,
TO MAKE THE NFB AN ESSENTIAL DESTINATION
FOR LEARNING AND FOR FUELLING INSPIRATION,
NURTURING REFLECTION, AND SPARKING
CREATIVITY**

For more than 40 years, the NFB has been an indispensable Canadian educational resource. Recognized for its authentic and innovative approach, it has forged long-lasting relationships with Canadian teachers throughout the educational sector. The extraordinary increase in visits to [NFB.ca/Education](https://nfb.ca/Education) during the pandemic demonstrated that our educational offering is a reliable and accessible resource not only for teachers, but also for parents, especially in these uncertain times.

This success can be explained by the fact that we've rethought the way we offer educational content, placing the learner at the centre of the process and producing relevant tools in consultation with educators. For students, NFB Education provides practical learning experiences anchored in reality, while promoting critical thinking and global citizenship.

We aim to make our new education platform an essential destination for teaching staff, designed to cultivate student engagement and inspire creativity, and driven by innovation, digital literacy, and the media arts.

To this end, we will be developing innovative thematic educational programs based on a new approach that will showcase the NFB's works and its production expertise.

Priority themes include the following:

- > Indigenous people;
- > media education;
- > the richness of Canadian diversity;
- > sustainable development and the environment.





PRODUCTION STILL FROM
JOHN WARE RECLAIMED
CHERYL FOGGO

COMMITMENTS IN SUPPORT OF OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

The following commitments are the foundation of the actions outlined in our strategic plan and will create the conditions necessary for us to succeed in fulfilling our mandate.

COMMITMENT 1

INCREASE THE NFB'S FUNDING TO BE ABLE TO DEVOTE MORE MONEY TO PRODUCTION

HOW:

By approaching the federal government for an increase in NFB funding, which has been steadily reduced since the late 1990s; by asserting the ways in which the current extraordinary context requires hearing a diversity of strong voices, notably those of creators and artists; by looking for sources of additional funding; by expanding strategic partnerships and beginning a process of reflection on a new supplementary financing strategy.

COMMITMENT 2

EXPAND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BY CREATING NEW SYNERGIES AND COLLABORATIONS, WITH THE GOAL OF PRODUCING AND DISTRIBUTING DARING WORKS

HOW:

By developing public and private partnerships (beyond those we enter into for the purposes of creation, production and distribution) that allow us to extend the reach of our works, find new audiences, and promote a mutually beneficial exchange of expertise.



THIS IS NOT A CEREMONY
AHNAKTSIPIITAA

COMMITMENT 3

BE A VECTOR FOR CHANGE IN THE AREAS OF RACIAL EQUITY AND DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, A LEADER ON THE ISSUE OF PARITY, AND AN ORGANIZATION THAT REDEFINES ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

HOW:

GENDER PARITY

By pursuing the objectives set in 2016 and 2017 to achieve parity in the number of productions, in production budgets, and in key creative positions.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

By implementing firm diversity and inclusion commitments, with a special focus on racialized and underrepresented groups. These commitments will apply to the NFB as employer, producer, distributor, and public institution.

RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

By continuing to pursue commitments laid out in 2017 in the three-year action plan that sought to transform the NFB's institutional culture and redefine the NFB's relationship with Indigenous people, in terms of both creation and distribution, including the accessibility of works in Indigenous languages.

COMMITMENT 4

SUPPORT OFFICIAL-LANGUAGE MINORITY COMMUNITIES SO THEY CAN FURTHER DEVELOP AND THRIVE

HOW:

By collaborating with anglophone and francophone artists in Canadian official-language minority communities and promoting their works to Canadian audiences at large; by offering all of our productions in both official languages, and by continuing to maintain close relationships with regional and national anglophone and francophone organizations to address shared concerns on both the domestic and international stage.

COMMITMENT 5
ENRICH OUR RELATIONSHIPS
WITH KEY ACTORS

HOW:
By improving our communication and consultation mechanisms to ensure regular and constructive dialogue with industry partners and creator communities.

COMMITMENT 6
PURSUE OUR TECHNOLOGY
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

HOW:
By implementing technical processes and solutions that enrich creation and ensure greater access to our works in a way that is environmentally friendly.

- > **In the area of creation:** By bringing together studios from across Canada and the creator community in one virtual work environment.
- > **In the area of engaging audiences:** By indexing and enriching our content and improving discoverability.

COMMITMENT 7
UPDATE THE NFB'S GOVERNANCE

HOW:
By recommending that the role of Commissioner be redefined so that the Board of Trustees is chaired by a member of the Board other than the Commissioner.

