

CREATE. ENGAGE.

2019-2022
STRATEGIC PLAN



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True North
Ryan Sidhoo

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

CREATE. ENGAGE.

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA (NFB) REPRESENTS ALL THE VOICES THAT MAKE CANADA WHAT IT IS.

Our mission is to tell stories that reflect original perspectives, through daring and engaging works—made by artists of talent and conviction—that serve large audiences across Canada and around the world.

The specific strategies in this strategic plan reflect the continuity of our work as a public service. That responsibility anchors our core mandate.

Nevertheless, our role as a public producer must always be a work in progress. We need to constantly redefine how we achieve our public-service mission, especially now in a world that has become hyper-commercialized and borderless.

Public producers of audiovisual works are playing an increasingly crucial role around the world. Our organization is one competitor on a vast playing field. But we have the ability, through what we create and distribute—indeed, through what we are—to offer perspectives that really matter in the lives of Canadians. Through our works, we have an essential role to play in that regard. That is what we have sought to emphasize in mapping out our 2019-2022 Strategic Plan.

Our new roadmap describes how the NFB seeks to position creation and innovation as part of an artistic process, but also to view it from the perspective of engaging with our audience. An audience that embodies today's Canada. An audience that's younger, more diverse, and more connected with the world. A further priority in this vision of the future is the commitment of our employees, artists, creators and other collaborators, who are the driving forces of today's NFB.

OUR NEW PLAN AIMS TO STRENGTHEN THE NFB'S LEADERSHIP ROLE AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE, AT A TIME WHEN OUR COMMUNITIES ARE DEMANDING MORE CONSISTENCY, AUTHENTICITY, RESPECT, ATTENTIVENESS, AND TRANSPARENCY.

The plan is grounded in our desire to fully play a leading role in the filmmaking and audiovisual world. It details how we want to work, learn from our industry partners, and share our experts' savoir-faire. It discusses how we will strengthen our presence in the digital ecosystem to reach larger numbers of Canadians. It explains how we intend to support creators as well as reach and engage audiences by changing how we produce and distribute our works. It reaffirms the roles of Canada's linguistic duality and bilingualism as foundations of the social contract that binds us. It reflects our commitment to supporting the vitality of minority communities and all groups who contribute to the richness and diversity of our country.

Fundamentally, our plan emphasizes how we intend to remain a public organization that serves the public, while prioritizing creation and innovation—the key components of our institution's DNA.

CLAUDE JOLI-COEUR

Government Film Commissioner
and Chairperson of the NFB

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THE PROCESS



The *Megaphone* installation

THE NFB'S 2019-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN IS THE OUTCOME OF AN INTENSIVE PROCESS OF REFLECTION AND EXCHANGE OF IDEAS CONDUCTED THROUGHOUT 2018.

IT HAS COME TO BE AS THE RESULT OF:

- > diligent, attentive work by the senior management committee, which bears the primary responsibility for creating the plan;
- > many meetings, led directly by the Commissioner, with Canadian and international representatives— all experts in the audiovisual field in both the public and private sectors;
- > significant input from the NFB Board of Trustees, whose members fleshed out the strategy framework proposed by the senior management committee;
- > contributions by several employees; and
- > research conducted in-house and externally by the Creation and Innovation Division and the Distribution, Communications and Marketing Division.

The strategic plan has been designed to cover a four-year period, while keeping in mind the institutional feasibility of the plan's objectives above all else. This timeframe was deemed optimal given the fast-changing social paradigms and innovation that characterize both the national and international audiovisual industries.

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BACKGROUND

THE ROAD WE'VE TRAVELLED FROM 2013 TO 2018 HAS BEEN MARKED BY SOME UNDENIABLE SUCCESS STORIES, WHICH HAVE INSPIRED US IN ESTABLISHING OUR FUTURE PRIORITIES.

The most recent strategic plan, covering a six-year period (2013–2018), pursued several objectives, primarily:

- > furthering the NFB's global leadership by exploiting its potential for creativity and innovation in all its various activities;
- > increasing the presence, awareness, and impact of the NFB through meaningful relationships with Canadians and world audiences;
- > strengthening and growing the NFB's financial capacity over the long term by developing new economic models and new business opportunities;
- > transforming the NFB's organizational structure into a fluid, dynamic, evolving organism with enhanced ability to work and create differently; and
- > redefining the nature and purpose of the public sphere for the 21st century.

These objectives drove a number of initiatives, projects, and works.

In collaboration with creators, creative crews, and producers, and supported by its expert teams, the NFB produced more than 400 original works, a quarter of which are by emerging talents, nearly half of which are by women, and a large proportion of which were produced by filmmakers from cultural and Indigenous communities.

These auteur-driven works have garnered a host of awards and recognition both at home and abroad, and many of them have advanced the art of storytelling through immersive experiences that harness the power of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR).

While the 2013–2018 Strategic Plan was being implemented, the online Screening Room at NFB.ca was already reaching Canadian and international audiences who enjoy original, daring content. In 2017–2018, the number of online views reached a record 68 million. Community screenings were also more plentiful—increasing to 1.2 million in 2017–2018—which speaks to the importance of communities and their networks of interaction. Reaching audiences has remained a constant test in a world in which globalization of supply means significant discoverability challenges.

In the area of funding, the NFB, like all other players in the Canadian film and audiovisual industry, continues to be affected by the fragmentation of traditional distribution models. The emerging models, meanwhile, have failed to cover the revenue shortfall. The partnerships formed by the institution have certainly proven to be hugely beneficial in terms of both the production and distribution of high-profile works and in terms of developing our technology plan. They have enabled us to combine our skills with those of national and international organizations in digitizing, preserving, and revitalizing our vast collection, which constitutes a priceless heritage for all Canadians.

In recent years, the NFB has laid the foundations for new approaches and made firm commitments to foregrounding this country's remarkable diversity, fostering gender equality, and encouraging a broader variety of perspectives. The institution fully assumed its leadership responsibilities with respect to gender parity, pledging that at least 50 percent of NFB productions would be directed by women and at least 50 percent of all NFB production spending would be allocated to films by women. In 2017, we broadened that commitment by pledging to achieve parity in key creative positions as well. That same year, we started to redefine our relationship with Canada's Indigenous peoples, unveiling a plan containing 33 commitments inspired by best practices in production, distribution, and organizational change. Our commitments to working toward an audiovisual industry that better represents Canadian society and is conducive to the flourishing of all talents continued with the recent announcement of our Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

In the area of organizational change, the NFB undertook In It Together, a wide-ranging initiative with input from all of our employees, whose purpose was to map out a shared vision of the future rooted in our everyday realities. That exercise gradually resulted in 15 statements that seek to foster agility within the organization and promote creation in an environment that's even more focussed on collaboration.

Between 2013 and 2018, the NFB fared well in the public-sector arts and culture arena. A solid foundation is in place for us to continue the work we have begun, and indeed give new impetus to this institution which, now more than ever, is at the public's service.



North American premiere of Tasha Hubbard's *Birth of a Family*

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PERSPECTIVES

IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGIC PLAN MEANS CONTINUOUSLY TRACKING TRENDS AND CHANGES IN OUR FIELD. BASED ON RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY OUR TEAMS OVER THE PAST YEAR IN COLLABORATION WITH CONSULTANTS, WE TOOK THE FOLLOWING FACTORS INTO ACCOUNT IN CREATING THIS STRATEGIC PLAN.



Students using the **Ocean School** educational website

CANADIANS ARE CHANGING

- > In 2027, 27 percent of Canadian adults will be in the 18 to 34 age range.
- > In 2011, among the G8 countries, Canada had the highest percentage of citizens born abroad: 20.6 percent. Over the next decade, Canada expects to welcome an average of 225,000 new immigrants every year. By 2031, approximately 30 percent of Canadians will be visible minorities.
- > Between 2006 and 2016, the number of Canadians self-identifying as Indigenous increased by 42.5 percent.
- > Canadians continue to stress the importance of humane values and social contact, and they care about environmental and social responsibility.
- > They are enthusiastic about change, and they support their local economies and consume local arts and culture.
- > However, the state of the world today is a source of anxiety for them. That translates into a need for escape, for fun, as well as for sensory-based or intense experiences.
- > They seek products and experiences that are authentic—that have a soul, a story. They want beacons, anchor points, inspiring sources of identity.

These observations speak to a Canada whose influences are more diverse than ever, made up of citizens attuned to deeply rooted values who are searching for meaning. There are significant sources of inspiration to be drawn from that well, which can contribute to developing a socially conscious, original, and daring creative vision.

VIEWING HABITS ARE CHANGING

- > Though viewers from different generations have different habits, in general, consumers of audiovisual content are spending far more time online.
- > Consumers want speedy access to content that interests them, at the right time and on the device of their choice.
- > Increasingly, people interested in the NFB's content offerings are video consumers who regularly indulge in binge watching.
- > They're turning primarily to increasingly popular platforms (e.g., Google/YouTube, Facebook, Netflix) and are overwhelmed by the profusion of content available.
- > Interest in virtual reality is increasing, but distribution methods and potential for growth remain uncertain.
- > There's a significant trend toward "social" and participatory experiences. Ironically, in a world of fragmenting audiences, individuals are looking for communal experiences. User-generated content by amateurs is improving in quality and continuing to gain public favour.
- > Content offerings with a local flavour appeal to the major platforms and their users.

When it comes to their audiovisual-consumption habits, Canadians are moving faster, searching further afield, and seeking stimulation as well as efficiency. The NFB's production, marketing and distribution, and technology-development teams will take this into account for their approach going forward.

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THE 2019–2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

THE NFB'S MANDATE

The National Film Board's mandate is to create relevant and innovative audiovisual content that interprets Canada and its diversity to Canadians and people around the world.

THE NFB WILL ALWAYS BE A UNIQUE SPACE FOR AUDIOVISUAL CREATION, INNOVATION, AND PRODUCTION, IN CANADA AND THE WORLD. NOTHING CAN MAKE US STRAY FROM THAT VITAL COURSE. ALONG THIS ROAD ALSO LIE OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS A RESPONSIBLE AND PIONEERING PUBLIC PRODUCER THAT PLAYS A USEFUL ROLE IN THE LIVES OF CANADIANS.

CLAUDE JOLI-COEUR,
COMMISSIONER

OUR PROMISE

Day in, day out, by virtue of original productions that resonate with audiences, initiatives that make an impact in the cultural sphere, and the contributions of teams at every level of the organization as well as its artists and creatives, the NFB will remain a dynamic, relevant cultural institution for the benefit of current and future generations. In 2022, the final year of this plan, the NFB will continue to be:

- > a meeting place for both emerging and seasoned creators and a focal point of creative excellence, recognized both within Canada and internationally;
- > a hub of innovation driven by its diverse creative approaches, innovative use of technology, and original marketing and distribution methods;
- > an agile institution that frequently appears in spaces where it is not expected;
- > a change agent for diversity, inclusion and parity, and an organization that has redefined its relationship with Indigenous peoples;
- > an irreplaceable, indispensable centre for talent development in Canada;
- > the keeper of an audiovisual heritage that will continue to be enriched for generations to come.



Production still from Louise BigEagle's *To Wake Up the Nakota Language*

ONE KEY FOCUS

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

The makeup, expectations, and habits of Canadian society are changing rapidly. To continue fulfilling 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.

REACH AND ENGAGE WITH A GREATER NUMBER OF CANADIANS THROUGH CREATION AND DISTRIBUTION

In the coming years, the NFB intends to make specific gains in the areas of finding, understanding, developing, and retaining audiences. We need to reach more of the Canadians who are still hungry for new perspectives, through innovative and meaningful works.

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INITIATIVES FOR 2019–2022

Seven major initiatives targeting creation, distribution, technology development, and human resources will be given greater priority or launched over the next four years. Some are already underway, and we are laying the groundwork for others.

These major initiatives, which will be (and in some cases already are) accompanied by multiple action plans, were decided on following a realistic appraisal of prevailing conditions in the field of audiovisual

creation and production in Canada and internationally. They've been prioritized objectively, based on the organization's current and future capacities. They've been designed so that they are interlocking and conducive to consistent action within our organization. Lastly, they've been chosen with a view to ensuring their long-term sustainability.

INITIATIVE 1

EMBRACE A NEW VISION OF CREATION BASED ON THE NEEDS OF CANADIAN SOCIETY AND EMBODIED BY A NEW PROGRAMMING APPROACH IN WHICH THE DISCOVERABILITY OF OUR WORKS IS A KEY CONCERN.

WE WORK TO ENSURE THAT CANADIANS HAVE ACCESS TO A WEALTH OF PERSPECTIVES THAT NURTURE THEIR IMAGINATIONS AS WELL AS THEIR DAY-TO-DAY REALITIES.

Works created at the NFB must reflect original perspectives and tell engaging stories that foster understanding between Canadians of all backgrounds.

That vision rests on four pillars that will support our actions:

A STRONG BOND OF ENGAGEMENT WITH CANADIAN AUDIENCES

- > Developing and producing works for the platforms that our target audiences prefer;
- > Paying attention to the pulse of the nation;
- > Emphasizing respect and inclusion for the creators who work within our walls.

A CONSTANT DESIRE FOR INNOVATION

- > Experimenting with forms and formats that are in sync with audiences;
- > Opening our creative laboratories to the public;
- > Leveraging the shift to mobile technology embraced by consumers of audiovisual products and services;
- > Improving the visibility of our experimental projects.

BETTER REPRESENTATION OF THE DIVERSITY OF VOICES (REFLECTING COMMUNITIES ACROSS CANADA)

- > Producing works and experiences representing all backgrounds;
 - Presenting works by Métis, Inuit, and First Nations artists;
 - Presenting works by artists from official-language minority communities;
 - Presenting works that promote gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATION'S STUDIOS AND DEPARTMENTS

- > Simplifying decision-making and management processes from start to finish of projects.

We're building more and more bridges between our teams. We must make it possible for our studios across the country to exchange ideas on best practices. Our staff have amazing talent and expertise. They need to be able to continually share their knowledge, whether it be technical know-how or creative skills. We must build on what we learn, as well as the mistakes we make, to better create and produce—by nurturing an organic give-and-take process that's rooted in respect for our differences.





The *McLarena* installation

INITIATIVE 2

REINVENT HOW WE MARKET, PRESENT, AND DISTRIBUTE SO THAT WE REACH MORE CANADIANS AND BROADEN ACCESS TO NFB PRODUCTIONS.

OUR INTENT IS TO FOSTER PROXIMITY WITH OUR AUDIENCES AND HELP BETTER CONNECT THEM TO THE NFB BASED ON THEIR INTERESTS.

NEW PARADIGMS FOR REACHING AND ENGAGING WITH AUDIENCES

The proliferation of screens and of information-distribution and content-sharing platforms has made the environment for the creation and distribution of media and culture a very complex one.

We need a new strategy for the dissemination of our works so that more Canadians can access the NFB's creations more easily. In the years to come, we will follow new paradigms for the marketing and distribution of those works, grouping them together as follows:

- > Outreach works, with potential for impact on wide audiences;
- > Works that spark dialogue, allowing Canadians from all walks of life to build relationships and have conversations with each other;
- > Community works, which will reflect stories that are important to certain groups of Canadians who are sometimes under-represented;
- > Innovative and experimental works, which will allow diverse audiences to stay connected with the NFB's avant-garde audiovisual content.

ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO THE DISCOVERABILITY OF OUR CONTENT ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

To stay close to its audiences, the NFB needs to get to know them better and, by extension, reach them wherever they may be. We will have to ensure enhanced presence, visibility, and distribution on our various online-distribution platforms, as well as via social media.

Our content marketing and distribution strategies must take into account the potential of new digital platforms and new technologies, all while considering audiences' changing consumption habits.

This means rethinking the working methods we have relied on in recent years and adopting the means to enhance our ability to reach our audiences and make our works available online more easily and rapidly.

DEVELOPING AUDIENCE-RELATION INTELLIGENCE

If the NFB is to meet the challenge of remaining relevant and drive audience engagement, it must decode the workings of today's modes of consumption, the evolution of uses, the changes in habits, and the new culture that has taken root in the fertile ground of the digital realm.

We will shift from accessibility-of-works mode to audience-engagement mode. To do that, we need to know Canadians better. We need information about their media-consumption habits. We will improve our understanding of what interests them. By developing our own smart reading of the data out there, we will create the roadmap we need to carry out our crucial audience-engagement plan. Starting from there, we must equip ourselves with tools and technologies to help improve our relationship with the individuals, groups, and communities who have access to and are interested in our works.

INITIATIVE 3

CONTINUE TO ROLL OUT THE TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN, WHICH WILL SERVE TO ENHANCE OUR CREATIVE PROCESS, PROVIDE BETTER ACCESS TO OUR WORKS, AND IMPROVE OUR OPERATIONAL SYNERGY.

WE SEEK TO PRESERVE A WINNING TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM THAT PROVIDES STIMULATING, INNOVATIVE WORKSPACES FOR CREATIVE PERSONNEL.

COMPLETING THE DIGITAL TRANSITION

We will give the NFB the means to more effectively produce, integrate, and present its high-quality works, by continuously leveraging technological advances and implementing a technology infrastructure that's able to make use of the new formats available for emerging works. We will diligently pursue our ongoing digital transition and continue to play a central role in finding and developing Canadian talent, while experimenting with new technologies and the accessibility of digital-format works.

DEVELOPING OUR ECOSYSTEM

Our technology infrastructure is part of the NFB's proprietary creation and distribution ecosystem. We will improve the tools for collaboration available to our partners, creative staff, and experts in order to strengthen synergy and collaborative connections at all project stages, across the country and around the world.

INITIATIVE 4

ROLL OUT THE NEW EDUCATIONAL OFFER, TO TURN THE NFB INTO A LEARNING DESTINATION THAT'S DESIGNED TO NURTURE INSPIRATION, BUILD ENGAGEMENT, AND STIMULATE CREATIVITY.

We will develop innovative thematic-learning programs based on a new educational approach that highlights our productions and creative expertise. We'll achieve this by building engagement from teachers acting as ambassadors for NFB content. We'll also promote accessibility and content-sharing by developing a new digital platform dedicated to education communities.

INITIATIVE 5

MAXIMIZE THE VALUE OF OUR VARIOUS AUDIOVISUAL COLLECTIONS AND ENHANCE THEIR ACCESSIBILITY, BY CONTINUING THE WORK OF DIGITIZING, RESTORING, AND ARCHIVING THE NFB'S AUDIOVISUAL COLLECTION—ESSENTIALLY A FAMILY ALBUM THAT BELONGS TO ALL CANADIANS—AND MAKING GOOD USE OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES.

The NFB works that are already available in the audiovisual world must be made even more accessible to larger numbers of Canadians. In addition to the digitization process, which remains key to ensuring access to our works, and for which we're world-renowned, we'll use emerging technologies to index and enrich our content and allow individuals and organizations to use the works in our collection, in whole or in part, more often and for more customized purposes. We will also tackle the challenge of preserving our interactive digital works, continuing to exercise world leadership in this area.

INITIATIVE 6

INTENSIFY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BY CREATING NEW SYNERGIES AND INNOVATIVE BUSINESS MODELS AIMED AT SUPPORTING CREATIVE PRODUCTION AND BUILDING AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT.

In addition to the financial partnerships required to assist in creation and production, we plan to forge other alliances that will be beneficial to the organization's development.

We'll develop partnerships to boost the international visibility of our works and forge multiple exchanges of expertise with other public- and private-sector institutions in the audiovisual arena.

Lastly, we'll continue to grow our regional and community partnerships through our eight offices across Canada.

INITIATIVE 7

ENHANCE OUR COLLABORATIVE STRENGTHS TO THE BENEFIT OF OUR CREATIVE WORK, OUR ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH AUDIENCES, AND THE NFB AS A WHOLE.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CULTURE OF COLLABORATION ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

We intend to create an agile work environment and promote decompartmentalization and collaboration between our work teams.

We'll ensure a healthy, safe work environment in which all are welcome, cultivating plurality and diversity.

We'll build on the engagement of our employees, notably by encouraging new initiatives and approaches to connecting the NFB with its audiences, while making sure staff have the means to achieve that objective.

THE PURSUIT OF AGILITY

We'll make real, sustained efforts to reduce administrative barriers and build on the talent of our managers and employees.

We plan to continue implementing and to ramp up the In It Together project, which resulted in 15 wide-ranging, all-encompassing statements that make changing our organizational culture an essential component of our evolution.

Remaining mindful of the government framework in which we operate, we will have to innovate and devise new methods to deliver our services and expertise. To succeed in this, we must eliminate duplication and the creation of silos in departments across the organization. This work is essential for us to be able to develop and grow with limited resources. It must be expanded upon, remain an ever-present goal, and deliver measurable results.

OUR HUMAN, CREATIVE, AND INVENTIVE POTENTIAL IS ENORMOUS, AND IT'S FOUND ALL ACROSS THE NFB. THIS IS ONE OF OUR GREATEST ASSETS.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY GENERATE INCOMMENSURABLE WEALTH. LIVING UP TO THESE VALUES WITHIN OUR ORGANIZATION GUARANTEES THAT WE HARNESS THE TALENTS AND STRENGTHS OF EACH AND EVERY EMPLOYEE FOR THE BENEFIT OF AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.

Immersive *Expo 67 Live* installation at the Place des Arts Esplanade, Montreal





The *Biidaaban: First Light* installation

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CONCLUSION

Worldwide, the audiovisual industry—along with the media industry in general—is facing a series of upheavals. Those significant changes mean a number of challenges for the NFB. More importantly, though, they also herald new opportunities to further advance our mandate to innovate, excel, and share Canadian realities and the vision and imagination of the country’s creators, in all their diversity.

The NFB’s reputation extends far beyond our country’s borders and constitutes a powerful lever in an age marked by global communication and the emergence of so many new content-delivery platforms.

The pursuit of audiovisual production excellence therefore remains at the heart of our priorities. It will be achieved through the implementation of this new integrated strategic plan in all of our studios, as they continue to produce increasingly vital, high-quality works calling on the creative talents of women and men from every region of the country.

At the NFB, we also believe we can act as a catalyst for change in our society, because the role of public-service organizations has an essential, distinguishing quality: it’s not merely focused on the pursuit of profits or productivity but instead dedicated to seeking the “common good,” the betterment of an area or a segment of society. We have chosen to take a very clear leadership position on this need for change.

This integral part of our identity is evident in, among other areas, our positions on important social issues such as gender equity, representation of minorities, promotion of diversity and inclusion, and the presence of Indigenous people. That great richness and diversity is built into our programming, as well as our institution.

The NFB must sustain the invaluable legacy of generations of artists and artisans who believe in the power of cinema. Our enduring challenge is to safeguard that legacy by remaining at the vanguard of progress in Canadian society.



Immersive **Expo 67 Live** installation
at the Place des Arts Esplanade, Montreal

