PRODUCTION NOTES AND RESEARCH GUIDE

Le Canadien
The French Canadian
“Fellow citizens! Brothers of a common affliction! All of you, whatever origin language or religion you (may) be... To whom equitable laws and the rights of man are dear...”

Louis-Joseph Papineau
Saint-Charles, Quebec, 1837
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *The French Canadian* Production Notes and Research Guide. This downloadable PDF is designed for educators, students and film lovers who are interested in animated films, storytelling and history. My aim with this educational tool is to share technical insights into the animation and production processes and to provide a database of historical and cultural information on French Canadians in Canada. I hope you will find this package useful and that it will enable and encourage further study and understanding of the animation process and of French Canadian culture and history in Canada.
SYNOPSIS

In *The French Canadian*, our narrator Jean-Pierre, recounts the tale of his ancestors’ arrival in New France in the 1640s. Chronicling their years as farmers on the seigneuries, builders of the Trans-Canada Railroad and fighters in the Patriotes Rebellion, the film provides a moving portrayal of a quintessential Canadian immigrant experience.

Marrying filmmaker G. Scott MacLeod’s painterly animations with Mike Burns’ masterful storytelling, *The French Canadian* is the compelling fourth installment in *The Water of Life*, MacLeod’s animated series on Canadian history.
G. SCOTT MACLEOD
DIRECTOR AND ANIMATOR

G. Scott MacLeod is a multimedia artist in the truest sense of the term. A critically acclaimed painter and photographer whose work is in many permanent collections, including that of the National Gallery of Canada, he is also a performing songwriter and recording artist.

Engaging his lifelong interest in history, with support from the National Film Board of Canada’s Filmmaker Assistance Program and a Main Film Grant, in 2009 MacLeod added filmmaker to his list of endeavors with the release of *After the war with Hannelore - A Berliner War Child’s Testimony from 1945 to 1989*. The 22-minute documentary had several high-profile screenings, including at Les Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois and Berlin’s Arnsenal 2 Institut für Film und Videokunst and One World Berlin Film Festival.

*The French Canadian* is the fourth film in MacLeod’s The Water of Life series, a collaboration with celebrated Montreal storyteller Mike Burns. It is MacLeod’s sixth film.

Based in Montreal, MacLeod holds a BFA and a Masters in Art Education from Concordia University. His thesis project was the documentary film *Dans l’Griff-In Griffintown*, about the French community in Montreal’s Griffintown neighborhood.
ARTIST’S PATH

“I have tried to define myself in my work through my personal ‘myth’ or what Joseph Campbell refers to as ‘following one’s bliss’ (Campbell, 1990 p. 211). This is a metaphor for pursuing one’s life path through the labyrinth, which for me has been a journey via my learning, art and teaching practices. This journey has given me courage to live, it has made me humble, it has fed and sheltered me, given me a voice and enabled me to do the same for others, through teaching, outreach and fund-raisers. As a result of this work, I have better understood humanity’s place on this planet and have tried to be a positive influence for political and social change.”
Irish-born, Montreal-based storyteller Mike Burns is a true keeper of the oral tradition. Known across Canada and Europe for his spellbinding performances, his hundreds of stories include tales and legends of his native Ireland and original history-based stories about his adopted home in Canada.

Fluent in Gaelic, English and French, Burns is regarded as pioneer in the revival of storytelling in Quebec. His works have been collected in numerous publications including, most recently, *The Water of Life/L’Eau de la vie* (Chemin des Cantons, 2009), which contains the story *The French Canadian*.

**ARTIST’S PATH**

“Born into a storytelling family in the South-West of Ireland, I am one of the few tellers in North America that continues the pure oral tradition. I tell hundreds of traditional stories in Gaelic, French and English. I have been telling for nigh 50 years and I have the feeling I may yet come good at it. I got a lazy start, not having to leave the fireplace in my father’s house to hear stories and ‘Seanchas.’ A pioneer in the revival of storytelling in Quebec, I have recently begun the creation of original history-based stories, following my experience of telling the story of the first Scottish colonists of the Eastern Townships in Gould in 2003. My experience as member of the Loups Garous collective creation in 2005-2006 was a further step in my exploration of new forms of storytelling.”
PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE

The positive response from festivals and other screenings of The Saga of Murdo Macleod and his first contact with the Abenaki (2012), The Abenaki – People of the Dawn (2013) and The Irishman – Child of the Gael (2014) convinced me that I should complete The Water of Life series by animating another story from Mike Burns’ book of the same title. The French Canadian is the fourth—and for now final—film in the series. It was produced over an 11-month period with support from my community through a crowdfunding platform called Indiegogo (https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-water-of-life-feature-animated-film) and with assistance from The National Film Board’s ACIC (Aide au cinéma indépendant, Canada) program.

Directing and animating for my recent projects has helped me realize the range of my interests as a multimedia artist. I believe that fusing my multiple interests, which include animating as well as the various components of filmmaking, has contributed to this new phase of my artistic development from visual artist to filmmaker-animator. As I have with my other productions, I have distributed, exhibited and sold this work to schools, libraries and museums, primarily for use as a teaching tool, as well as to the general public.

I feel fortunate to be producing animations at a time when new forms of technology and media are providing artists with unlimited possibilities to innovate and create interesting work. I have found that the fields of film and animation have enabled me to expose my work to a broader audience than my 2D fine art mediums which have been limited to the gallery and museum settings. This is an exciting change for me, to be without the bulk
of material work that comes with large painting exhibitions, including framing, shipping, studio and storage costs. Due to new affordable technologies now available to artists and smaller production houses, I feel I can do world-class projects, with less of this material burden and am also able to disseminate my work on web-based platforms more cost effectively.

During the creation of *The French Canadian*, my animation skills and techniques have improved considerably. With the aid of my team and the technical resources of the National Film Board of Canada, I have developed my individual style, an expressive single-cell approach accomplished using watercolour pencil on Mylar. This technique was inspired by South African animator William Kentridge. To see more on his process, visit http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/william-kentridge.

Completing *The French Canadian* has contributed to the evolution of my work in this medium. This is one of many reasons for my wanting to continue to work in this format. My production team is another. I have enjoyed a great working relationship with them during the creation of the films in this series.
FILM INFLUENCES


*The French Canadian* is just one of many untold European immigrant stories in Canada. I believe there is still more room for Canadian animators and filmmakers to explore this unique area of our history, as these stories are unknown to many Canadians and the world at large. I am interested in these cross-cultural stories from our history as a result of growing up in the culturally diverse city of Montreal, coming from Scottish lineage, and from my work with members of the Mohawk, Squamish and Cree Nations over my twenty-eight year career as an artist.
RESEARCH

Before writing *The Water of Life*, the author and narrator Mike Burns researched and read the work of University of Sherbrooke professor, Jean-Pierre Kesteman. Kesteman has written extensively on Quebec and Canadian history. Mike explored the history of the First Nations and immigrant peoples of Quebec and Canada and was able to craft a compelling story through his six characters. The men, one of Abenaki descent, the others Irish, Scottish, French, English and American, were united for the purposes of smuggling. Having fled a border patrol they are safely ensconced in a remote cabin. One by one, they tell the tales of their respective peoples long into the night.

Kesteman’s profile and research can be found at http://www.usherbrooke.ca/histoire/recherche/prof-emerites/kesteman-jean-pierre/#c41386.

For my part as animator, I referenced period illustrations of New France, Lower Canada and the Dominion of Canada from the 1600s to the 1930s in an effort to maintain continuity with the clothing, tools, ships, trains, weapons, shelter, buildings and other elements of daily life in Mike’s story. These collected images were printed and collated as a preliminary storyboard. When I was stuck for a reference for a particular scene, I hired models and photographed them in specific settings.
THE ORAL TRADITION

In the mid 1990s I was introduced to Mike Burns at Hurley’s Irish Pub in Montreal by musician and mutual friend, the late Toby Kinsella. It was through Toby that I discovered the Seanchai (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seancha%C3%AD), a traditional Irish storyteller/historian. From that experience I realized the value of going beyond the literary side of my research and began to explore the oral traditions of cultures, which led me to Joseph Campbell’s works on the great myths. Campbell’s work can be studied at http://www.jcf.org/new/index.php. Campbell points out that many of our histories are in fact connected to the archetypes in our great myths. This deepened my interest in working with the oral tradition and storytellers.

Mike Burns has maintained this tradition through the rigor of consistently performing over the years. As a result of his work, he has committed hundreds of stories to memory. Incredibly, Mike was able to give us The French Canadian in one take in both English and French. He flawlessly gave us the story with all of the appropriate verbal and emotional inflections, truly a remarkable achievement.

History is often written by historians who have relied on secondary sources. With his breakthrough book, A People’s History of the United States (1999), Howard Zinn did something very different by giving people their own voice with which to tell their history. Zinn’s approach in this book was to find firsthand written accounts of historic events and when possible, living people to give their eyewitness account of history. Zinn’s epic book enabled the American people to tell their own history of the United States. This approach sounds novel today but it is what the storyteller/historian has been doing for millennia. Joseph Campbell understood the connection between storytelling and mythology and gave us a legacy of books and research on the topic. What is unique about Mike Burns’ six published stories in The Water of Life is that the approach somewhat parallels Zinn’s but in a unique context. Mike has given his six fictionalized characters a voice to tell six very real but largely untold cultural histories.

Mike’s storytelling method and my films are designed to give the educator, listener and viewer access to another point of view and medium through which to research and understand our untold Canadian history. These stories are entry points into the greater First Nations and Canadian narrative, which are further explored in the learning guides provided with each film in The Water of Life series.
After collecting my reference material, the next step was to break the script down into a storyboard. First I outlined key events in the story and selected the narrative passages below the windows on the storyboard. I then illustrated these narrative sequences as I imagined them unfolding from Mike’s story in the windows on the storyboard. My preference has been to use six-horizontal or nine-vertical windowed storyboards. The final phase of the storyboard was to make notes on the camera moves, sound design and music in the boxes above or below the storyboard illustrations.
PRODUCTION

RECORDING NARRATION

Mike Burns is a third generation storyteller or what is known in Irish as a Seanchai. Mike has maintained his traditional practice by performing locally at Hurley’s Irish Pub the last Sunday of every month and by touring extensively in Canada, the U.S. and Europe for over 30 years. We recorded Mike telling The French Canadian, one of the six stories from his 2009 book The Water of Life/L’Eau de la vie (Chemin des Cantons) and one he has been telling over the past few years, in both French and English as he is fluent in both languages. We did the recording with a vintage Neumann microphone in a comfortable home setting that was ideal for capturing the authentic emotions of his art form. He gave us a tremendous performance while we all drank Earl Grey tea and watched.

PRE-EDITING – ANIMATIONS

My aim in this project was to explore and experiment with various drawing, photo and collage media, essentially fusing my prior skill as a painter with new animation techniques. The animations were drawn in stages on the same sheet of Mylar to capture the phases of the drawing. The Mylar sheets were taped to my frosted glass animation table underneath my tripod and digital camera. The image was then backlit from underneath the table with four angled lamps. The jpegs from each drawing were later assembled in QuickTime sequences and then dragged into Adobe Premier (a digital editing program) to be edited and assembled into the storyline.
For this project I have broken with conventional animation and explored new directions, such as those used by South African artist William Kentridge. Like Kentridge, I use the same surface for each animation. Rather than using charcoal on paper like Kentridge, however, I have used water-based graphite and coloured pencils on Mylar (a material once used by architects) as my primary medium, using the same technique as was used to create my previous animations *After the War with Hannelore* (2009), *Empress Blue* (2010), *The Saga of Murdo MacLeod* (2012), *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn* (2013) and *The Irishman – Child of the Gael* (2014).

In *The French Canadian* as in the other films in *The Water of Life* series, I added water and collage to the drawings to create more washes and layers, and to emulate such things as fire, smoke and water. I also used découpage to give the impression of moving elements such as trains going down the tracks and ships moving into the distance on water. These animations were later reworked by animator Jo Meuris in a program called After Effects. I provided Jo with high-resolution scans of the individual elements or she reworked the drawings in the jpegs. She then cropped and integrated the smoke and boats in an effort to activate the animation, making the découpage move smoothly across the surface of the drawing.
OFFLINE EDITING

Rachelle Hamilton edited The French Canadian. Rachelle first established a chronology with the recording of Mike’s story before transferring the animation into Adobe Premier (digital editing software). This enabled Rachelle to create a timeline and estimate the length of the animation. Jo Meuris stabilized the jpegs for each animation and then made QuickTimes of each sequence. Rachelle then placed the QuickTimes in the timeline. Once the assembly and storyline were secured, we decided upon a series of camera moves. This involved moving the focal point right or left, up or down or pulling in and or out. These movements were necessary as most of the images are single-cell animations and often appear very static if left full frame. In other words, it was important to have the focal point change to maintain a visual flow in the static images. Once I felt that the edit served the story, Rachelle locked the picture for the online phase of the editing.

ONLINE EDITING

I submitted the offline version of the film to the National Film Board of Canada’s ACIC (Aide au cinéma indépendant, Canada) program in order to get access to high-quality post-production facilities and experienced technicians. This was extremely helpful to me in the online edit and sound mix phases of the animation. The online edit was done by editor Yannick Carrier over the period of one week. Yannick worked in HD (high definition) using an AVID editing system. At this phase we added the animation sequences that were reworked in After Effects by special effects animator Jo Meuris. Once Yannick cropped the images according to the 16 x 9 widescreen aspect ratio, we finalized all the camera moves and did the colour correction and contrast adjustments.
MUSIC

For the music in *The French Canadian*, I had the pleasure of working with Québécois singer, songwriter and storyteller Michel Faubert (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Faubert). I went over the storyboard and script with Michel and we discussed the song selection and history behind each song in an effort to have the songs tie into the main themes of the film. It was important too that we chose songs that would have historical and cultural relevance to each scene in the film and that would fit musically with the Mike’s narration and Stacy Le Gallee’s sound design. Michel performed a number of the chosen songs a cappella for use in the film.

For the end credits, I chose the beautiful song “Un Canadien Errant” which was written in 1842 by Antoine Gérin-Lajoie after the Lower Canada Rebellion of 1837–38. For detailed information on the film visit http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Un_Canadien_errant.

UN CANADIEN ERRANT

(Folklore québécois)

1. G (Bm) Em C D7
   Un Canadien errant, banni de ses foyers
G (Bm) Em C D7
   Un Canadien errant, banni de ses foyers
D Bm C B7 Em
   Parcourait en pleurant, des pays étrangers
D Bm C B7 Em
   Parcourait en pleurant, des pays étrangers

2. Un jour, triste et pensif, assis au bord des flots (2X)
   Au courant fugitif, il adressa ces mots : (2X)

3. « Si tu vois mon pays, mon pays malheureux,
   Va, dis à mes amis que je me souviens d’eux.

4. O jours si pleins d’appâts, vous êtes disparus,
   Et ma patrie, hélas! Je ne la verrai plus!

5. Non, mais en expirant, O mon cher Canada
   Mon regard languissant vers toi se portera. »

NOTE : I’ve seen several attempts to translate this song into English. None of them capture the literal essence of the original, but here’s one version by renowned Canadian folklorist Edith Fowke. It drops the repetitions of the French version, thus reducing the song to three verses.

1. Once a Canadian lad, exiled from hearth and home
   Wandered, alone and sad, through alien lands unknown
   Down by a rushing stream, thoughtful and sad one day
   He watched the water pass, and to it he did say:

2. “If you should reach my land, my most unhappy land
   Please speak to all my friends, so they will understand
   Tell them how much I wish that I could be once more
   In that beloved land that I will see no more

3. My own beloved land I’ll not forget ’til death
   And I will speak of her with my last dying breath
   My own beloved land I’ll not forget ’til death
   And I will speak of her with my last dying breath.”
SOUND DESIGN

The sound design process begins with placing the locked QuickTime (final picture) into a sound editing software called Pro Tools. During the sound design process sound engineer and designer Stacy Le Gallee selected sound effects from online sound banks to contextualize my animations and the film. We selected environmental sounds such as water, boats, wind, birds, ports, trains and so forth. The challenge when selecting these sound effects was to marry the narration, music soundtrack and sound effects together. Successful sound designs are ironically the ones that do not jump out but rather serve the story and the images that make up the film.

FINAL MIX

Stacy and I worked with sound engineer Jean Paul Vialard at the National Film Board of Canada to do our final stereo and 5.1 surround sound mixes. This was done in Theatre 3, which is a full-size cinema with a mixing console in front of the film screen. During the four-day session we adjusted the levels of the music tracks and sound effect tracks and added some light reverb to some of the music passages to create a sense of space in the soundtrack. Jean Paul also created a wide 5.1 stereo mix to suggest the vast open space of the sea at the coast of France as well as the inland rivers and farms. He played with the positioning of individual tracks in the five speakers to reflect what was happening in the film.
GRAPHIC DESIGN

The final stage of this project was to create the DVD box graphics and a promotional poster for our screenings. I once again worked with Jess and Elisabeth Charbonneau at TagTeam Studio (studiotagteam.com). They have done great work on my previous projects. They designed all the elements of this DVD, from the packaging to the educational materials. What I have looked for in this type of design is a theme or message clearly conveyed with content that is easy to read and a key image that reflects the story. After all the work we put into a production, I believe it’s crucial to make a well-designed and aesthetically pleasing package, especially if it is going to marketed to the educational sector.
EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

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FRENCH CANADIAN RELATED WEBSITES

PEOPLE

Shanachie
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seancha%C3%AD

Joseph Campbell

Louis-Joseph Papineau
http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPCONTENTSE1EP7CH3PA1LE.html

MUSIC

Traditional French Canadian music

http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_des_musiciens_et_ensembles_de_musique_traditionnelle_qu%C3%A9b%C3%A9coise

Jean Carignan
Un Canadien Errant

Michel Faubert
http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Faubert

Les Charbonniers de l’enfer
http://www.lescharbonniersdelenfer.com/

HISTORY

First French colonists in New France

French seigneurie system

Canadian Railway, Sherbrooke, Quebec
true&tableid=11&contentlong

Les Patriotes

Lower Canada Rebellion

Van Diemends Land, Tasmania, Australia prison colonies 1930s,
http://www.canadiainternational.gc.ca/australia-australie/bilateral_relations_bilaterales/can_
australia_shared-australie_commune.aspx?lang=eng

The Great Depression

Prohibition

Immigration

Canadian Online Railway is an interactive website, video library and archive dedicated to
bringing the history of communities along Canada’s railways.
http://www.canadianonlinerailway.com/index.html
BOOKS

Canadian and Quebec history
http://www.ubishops.ca/library/subject-research-guides/history-canadian.html
http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/biblio/articles/index.htm

Jean Pierre Kesteman
http://www.usherbrooke.ca/histoire/recherche/prof-emerites/kesteman-jean-pierre/#c41386
(French only)

NFB FILMS

Louis-Joseph Papineau: The Demi-God, 1961, 26 min 56 s, Directed by Louis-Georges Carrier

Jean Carignan, violoneux, 1975, 87 min 30 s, Directed by Bernard Gosselin

The Immigration Experience - Part 1, 1985, 46 min 52 s, Executive Producer Floyd Elliott

The Immigration Experience - Part 2 1985, 42 min 17 s, Executive Producer Floyd Elliott
CREDITS

Produced by
MacLeod Nine Productions

Story
Mike Burns
From The Water of Life
Chemin des Cantons 2009

Storyteller
Mike Burns

Direction and Animation
G. Scott MacLeod

Editor
Rachelle Hamilton

Sound Design
Stacy Le Gallee

Line Producer
G. Scott MacLeod

Special Effects Animations
Jo Meuris
Image Stabilization
Jo Meuris
Sound Mix (NFB)
Jean Paul Vialard

Producer Studio Animation et Jeunesse (NFB)
Julie Roy

Administrative Assistant Animation et Jeunesse (NFB)
Karine Desmeules

Technical Coordinators (NFB)
Daniel Lord and Jean-François Laprise

Online Editor (NFB)
Yannick Carrier

Titles and Credits (NFB)
Mélanie Bouchard

Soundtrack Producers
Stacy Le Gallee and G. Scott MacLeod

Soundtrack Engineering, Mixing and Mastering
Stacy Le Gallee

Soundtrack Research
Michel Faubert

Music

Belle étoile du nord
Traditional
Vocals Michel Faubert
Sound Engineer Stacy Le Gallee

Turlute des 33 voleurs
Written by Michel Faubert
Vocals Michel Faubert
Sound Engineer Stacy Le Gallee
La Rachoudine
Traditional
Violin Jonathan Moorman
Sound Engineer Jonathan Moorman

Ma charmante Sylvie
Traditional
Vocals Michel Faubert
Sound Engineer Stacy Le Gallee

Nous sommes trois frères
Traditional
Vocals Michel Faubert
Sound Engineer Stacy Le Gallee

Un voyageur se détermine
Traditional
Vocals Michel Faubert
Sound Engineer Stacy Le Gallee

Un Canadien errant
Written by Antoine Gérin-Lajoie
Vocals Rob Lutes and Josephine Von Soukonov
Guitar Rob Lutes
Produced, Mixed and Mastered by KINZAZA

French Translation
Laure Péré
Copy Editor and Learning Guide
Rob Lutes
Production Notes and Research Guide
G. Scott MacLeod
Graphic Design
TagTeam Studio
Accounting
Ted Christeas

Thank you credit
Deena Dlusy-Apel, Jayme Schomann, Donna Gold, Rob Lutes, Tom Bonavia, Samantha Rideout, Stacey Engels, Alvin de Viller, Nancy Bleck, Yvonne Chamberlin, David Astrof, Gaël Dulude, Erin K Gallagher, Tarah Schwartz, Alyson J. MacLeod, Ezra Soiferman, Jamie Hebert, Hallie Gyles, Mieke Cullen, Jean Elliott Manning

Special friend end credit

Thank You
Jean-Pierre Kesteman, Stéphanie Pascal