

QUEBEC MY COUNTRY MON PAYS ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT (EPK)
MEDIA RELEASE



New documentary explores the exodus of English speakers from their homeland of Quebec



Quebec My Country Mon Pays screens at the Vancouver Film Festival

(Halifax, NS) September 22, 2016 – This new feature documentary asks why almost 600,000 English-speaking Quebecers have left and why others are on the verge of leaving a province which has been their home for generations.

Montreal-born filmmaker John Walker explores the history, half-truths and myths of Quebec's dramatic transformation from a deeply conservative province of Catholic domination, through the cultural and political changes of the Quiet Revolution, the bombs and kidnappings of the FLQ crisis, the two referendums, through to the modern Quebec of the 21st-century.

The exodus of English speakers is a story which, until now, has remained largely untold. It is both a history of Quebec and a fundamental chapter in the story of Canada.

Quebec My Country Mon Pays has two screenings at the Vancouver Film Festival October 1 at 10:30 am and October 3 at 6 pm.

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The film had three sold-out screenings at Hot Docs International Documentary Festival in Toronto in the spring and recently aired at the Atlantic Film Festival in Halifax, where Walker now makes his home.

In the documentary, Walker tells the story of the exodus of English Quebecers through the lens of his own personal story and that of his family which has been in Quebec for 250 years.

“My entire adult life, I have continually asked myself ‘Why did I leave Quebec?’ It’s a question that haunts me,” says Walker. “I feel so connected to the place, but never at home there, and I wanted to explore that in a very personal way.”

Walker explores Anglophone alienation through conversations with other bilingual English Quebecers who feel they are outsiders, unwelcome and in the case of English-speaking farmers, second-class citizens.

He discovers that young Quebec anglophones of today are struggling with same difficult questions and feelings that haunted him at the same age.

He hears from francophone Quebecers such as legendary filmmaker Denys Arcand who bluntly characterizes the fierce and fear-driven will of French Quebecers to survive in the sea of English North American language and culture.

Walker and his counterparts yearn for home, but discover they are no longer part of the Quebec family that is their ancestry. So many left to become part of the great Quebec anglophone diaspora: men and women without a country who find themselves on the other side of the “two solitudes.”

Walker is forthright and brutally honest about his complicated relationship with Quebec, his feelings of loss and the deep sadness he and fellow English-speakers have never been able to shake.

The result is **Quebec My Country Mon Pays**, a letter to a beloved homeland that has forsaken Walker and his fellow English Quebecers.

For more information, visit:

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SYNOPSIS

Quebec My Country Mon Pays charts the aftermath of Quebec's Quiet Revolution in the 1960s. This social justice movement unleashed dramatic cultural and political changes that led to the separatist movement, the FLQ crisis and, ultimately, the exodus of more than a half million English-speaking Quebecers.

Montreal-born filmmaker John Walker reveals his own complicated relationship with the province in a film brimming with love and longing.

Walker's Quebec roots go back 250 years. Yet he's struggled his entire life to find his place and to feel he truly belongs. In Quebec My Country Mon Pays, he explores a very personal story through the lens of a cast of characters including three generations of his family, childhood friends and contemporaries – Denys Arcand, Jacques Godbout and Louise Pelletier – as well as Christina Clark, a young person whose experience today mirrors Walker's own.

In a quest to make sense of a divisive and transformative moment in Quebec's evolution, they each wrestle with memories, decisions and the continuing reverberations.

REVIEWS

"Many provocative questions are raised in the documentary Quebec My Country Mon Pays ... (charting the English exodus is) exactly what he does in this feature-length doc, with the help of many people who lived through it, including poets, politicians and filmmakers on both sides of the linguistic and cultural divide" - Martin Knelman, Toronto Star.

"Walker talks to family members and colleagues, but what's most intriguing about Quebec My Country Mon Pays is that most of the time he's talking to Franco-Quebecois—including fellow filmmakers Jacques Godbout and Oscar-winner Denys Arcand – about Quebec nationalism and language tension ... here's the best part about Quebec My Country Mon Pays: unlike so many discussions about Quebec nationalism and independence that come from an Anglo perspective, Walker doesn't really come from a position of bitterness or blame. He never comes across as an "angryphone"—the term given to Anglos who won't let go of the past and who assume a victim posture" - Ma hew Hays, Point of View magazine.

"John Walker looks at the history of Quebec's distinct society in this quietly personal documentary ... With context and commentary from fellow directors Denys Arcand and Jacques Godbout, screenwriter Louise Pelletier and critic Paul Warren – speaking in French and English – Walker finds a province (and a nation) struggling to transcend its deeply conservative wiring and find a better future. I hope we get there." Rating NNNN - Norman Wilner, NOW magazine.

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“At last we hear the voice and see the vision of a Montreal expatriate! Filmmaker John Walker, who earned well-deserved kudos with his docudrama *Passage*, has worked magic again with *Quebec My Country Mon Pays* ... While telling a personal story, and a political one, Walker moves between French and English. He moves across classes and from city to country. He takes us across generations and highlights recurring challenges. He evokes the past through wonderful old photos and clips. In the present, he rides us into Montreal on the train, and visits the historic church at St. Eustache. He even goes to Scotland for the recent referendum. Walker’s ambitious film may prove controversial. This much is certain: it will resonate with ex-Montrealers, and yes, we are legion” - Ken McGoogan, journalist, author, blogger.

“Walker’s trip back home and back in time touches on many areas of a conflict that has gone from cerebral to violent back to something akin to a benign cold ... His journey also has some very personal moments and that helps drive the feeling that the loss of one’s territorial foundations can ripple across the years and leave a potentially malignant disquiet. There is for some the awful truth that you can’t go home again” - Ralph Lucas, NorthernStars

**JOHN WALKER: WRITER / DIRECTOR / CINEMATOGRAPHER /
PRODUCER**

**John Walker is one of Canada’s most prolific and respected
documentary filmmakers.**

His films have been widely broadcast and have appeared at major international film festivals in Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, London and Tokyo. From the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television, he has received 19 nominations and awards, including the coveted Donald Brittain Award for best social/political documentary, for **Utshimassits: Place of the Boss**.

Walker also received a Gemini for best documentary director (**The Hand of Stalin**) and a Genie for best feature documentary (**Strand – Under the Dark Cloth**), a personal portrait of his mentor, the photographer and filmmaker Paul Strand. His film on the Cape Breton coal miners’ choir, **Men of the Deeps**, won three Gemini Awards, including best performing arts, best documentary photography and best sound, as well as a best director nomination. The film garnered three million viewers during its CTV broadcast.

Born in Montreal, Walker made several films for British television, including two films in the BBC October Films trilogy **The Hand of Stalin**, which addressed the extreme human suffering under Stalin’s regime. “Oral history at its most devastating,” London’s Daily Mail said, while the Observer noted “words fail the enormity of what these films reveal.” The British Press Guild, Royal Television Society, and the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television all nominated the trilogy for best series.

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Walker's directorial credits on Great Britain's Channel 4 include **Hidden Children**, a film about children who concealed their Jewish identity to survive the Holocaust; **Orphans of Manchuria**, also nominated for the Donald Brittain Award; and the ground-breaking **Distress Signals**, based on the communication on theories of Canadian scholar Harold Innis, which also received a nomination for a Donald Brittain Award.

With **Utshimassits: Place of the Boss**, he turned his attention to a tragedy on Canadian soil – juxtaposing the powerful testimony of the Mushuau Innu of Davis Inlet with the vast Labrador landscape.

Walker's feature-length films include the Genie-nominated **The Fairy Faith, Tough Assignment, Strand – Under the Dark Cloth**, and the critically acclaimed feature drama **A Winter Tan**, starring Jackie Burroughs, which received seven Genie nominations including best motion picture and best director, and won best actress.

Walker also co-produced, wrote and directed the provocative feature film **Passage**, a fiction/documentary for BBC and History Television about the search for the fabled Northwest Passage. The Toronto Star called it "One of the great triumphs in Canadian documentary film history."

His feature documentary **A Drummer's Dream** was described by the Globe and Mail as "Beautifully shot and recorded with a lovely sound ... (it) isn't really about drumming, but about joy and self-expression."

His passionate commitment to the documentary form led him to co-found DOC, Documentary Organization of Canada (formerly Canadian Independent Film Caucus).

Now based in Halifax, Walker conducts master classes across the country and mentors numerous emerging filmmakers. He served as guest programmer for Hot Docs, the Canadian International Documentary Festival, and has been a board member since 2011.