

## Press release

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### *Le son des Français d'Amérique* INSCRIBED IN THE UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

Montreal, 27 October 2017 – The **Cinémathèque québécoise** and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO take pride in announcing that the documentary series *Le son des Français d'Amérique* is now listed on **UNESCO's international Memory of the World Register**. This honour underscores the international interest and outstanding universal value of documentary heritage.

The series of films made by **Michel Brault and André Gladu** has been added to the list of Canadian inscriptions in the register, which already includes the Fonds Séminaire de Québec 1623-1800, the Archives of the Hudson Bay Company, the discovery of insulin and Norman McLaren's film *Neighbours*.

The Cinémathèque québécoise, which is preserving the *Le son des Français d'Amérique* series, produced by Nanouk Films, would like to take advantage of its inscription in the register to speed up the digitization of the series in order to make it more accessible. According to Marcel Jean, the Executive Director of the Cinémathèque, "This wonderful news underscores the importance of documentaries like these for our collective memory. It is also yet another affirmation of the outstanding quality of the archives preserved at the Cinémathèque québécoise, and their heritage status."

According to Christina Cameron, the President of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, "This documentary series vividly demonstrates the importance of the role played by the arts, language and traditions in the shaping of our societies, and starkly illustrates the need to preserve them for the researchers of today and future generations."

Between 1974 and 1980, Michel Brault and André Gladu directed the major series *Le son des Français d'Amérique*, 27 30-minute films documenting the traditional music practices of American Francophone communities. The style, generally known as direct cinema, is based on a close relationship between the filmmakers and the people being filmed in action in their own environment. In an enlightening article about the series, André Gladu explained it as follows: "We also believed that it was more important to allow people to express themselves about how and why they make music. They themselves explained how they learned and passed on this music rather than get caught up in theories put forward by

specialists about the origins of any particular song or dance. When we called upon experts in the field, we were very careful to choose people who were rooted in their communities and who had actually lived through the experience rather than simply studied it. Our goal in making these films was to emphasize real life!”

The register we are referring to was introduced by UNESCO in 1992. The Memory of the World Programme begins on the basis of the principle that world documentary heritage belongs to all of humanity, and that it should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance. The Canadian Commission for UNESCO coordinates the Memory of the World Programme in Canada.

#### **About the Cinémathèque québécoise**

The Cinémathèque québécoise is Montreal’s museum of moving images. Its mission is to acquire, document and preserve the world’s audiovisual heritage, with an emphasis on Quebec and Canadian works as well as international animation, and to make it available for cultural and educational purposes.

#### **About the Canadian Commission for UNESCO**

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO serves as a bridge between Canadians and the vital work of UNESCO – the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. By promoting UNESCO values, priorities and programs in Canada and by bringing the voices of Canadian experts to the international stage, the Commission contributes to a peaceful, equitable and sustainable future that leaves no one behind.

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#### **Source**

Sol Millán, Head of Communications and Marketing  
Cinémathèque québécoise  
514 842-9768 ext. 255 | [smillan@cinematheque.qc.ca](mailto:smillan@cinematheque.qc.ca)