

MacLeod Nine Productions Présente - Presents
Un film de G. Scott MacLeod / A film by G. Scott MacLeod

Dans l'Griff – *In Griffintown*

Un documentaire sur la vie
de la famille Mercier

A life history documentary
on the Mercier family

PRODUCTION
NOTES AND
EDUCATION
GUIDE



“Compared to how the young people live now, it is completely different. It is really another world. One can not even compare. It is like another planet. So it is a completely different life. We can see some bricks that date from a very long time ago, but still, it’s a new world, a world of condos in Griffintown. Imagine if the people from 40 or 50 years ago, if they came back to see this, they would be very surprised.”

Lise Jetté-Mercier

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Mercier Family The Thomas O'Connell Building 1165 Ottawa Street. Photo by G. Scott MacLeod.

In Griffintown

A life history documentary on the Mercier family

INTRODUCTION

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Welcome to the *In Griffintown* DVD Production Notes and Education Guide. This downloadable PDF is designed for educators and viewers interested in documentary films and life histories. My aim with the Production Notes and Education Guide is to share technical insights into the documentary, animation and production processes and to provide a database of historical and cultural information on Griffintown. The Learning Guide is a series of questions designed to help educators explore ideas of home, community, oral history and memory and raise awareness of a range of issues that affect communities everywhere, including urban renewal and the preservation of historic buildings. I hope you will find this package useful and that it will enable and encourage further study and understanding of documentaries, animation and life history.



Chez Willie, Mercier photo archive.

SYNOPSIS

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As the urban landscape of some of Montreal's former industrial sectors disintegrates, urban renewal is imminent. In Griffintown, just to the south of the city's downtown, it is already well underway.

With only a handful of original civic, residential and industrial sites remaining, the once-thriving community of predominantly working class Irish and French Canadians has all but disappeared.

But communities endure in memory. And for retired couple Claude and Lise Mercier and their son Stefan, who were born and raised in the neighbourhood, the colourful world of Griffintown is very much alive.

Mixing the Merciers' family photographs and frank firsthand recollections with his own evocative pencil animations, with *In Griffintown*, director G. Scott MacLeod opens a window onto this once flourishing community and provides a moving portrait of life "in the Griff."

G. SCOTT MACLEOD

DIRECTOR AND ANIMATOR



Photo by Alyson MacLeod

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 Arsenal 2 Institut für Film und Videokunst and One World Berlin Film Festival.

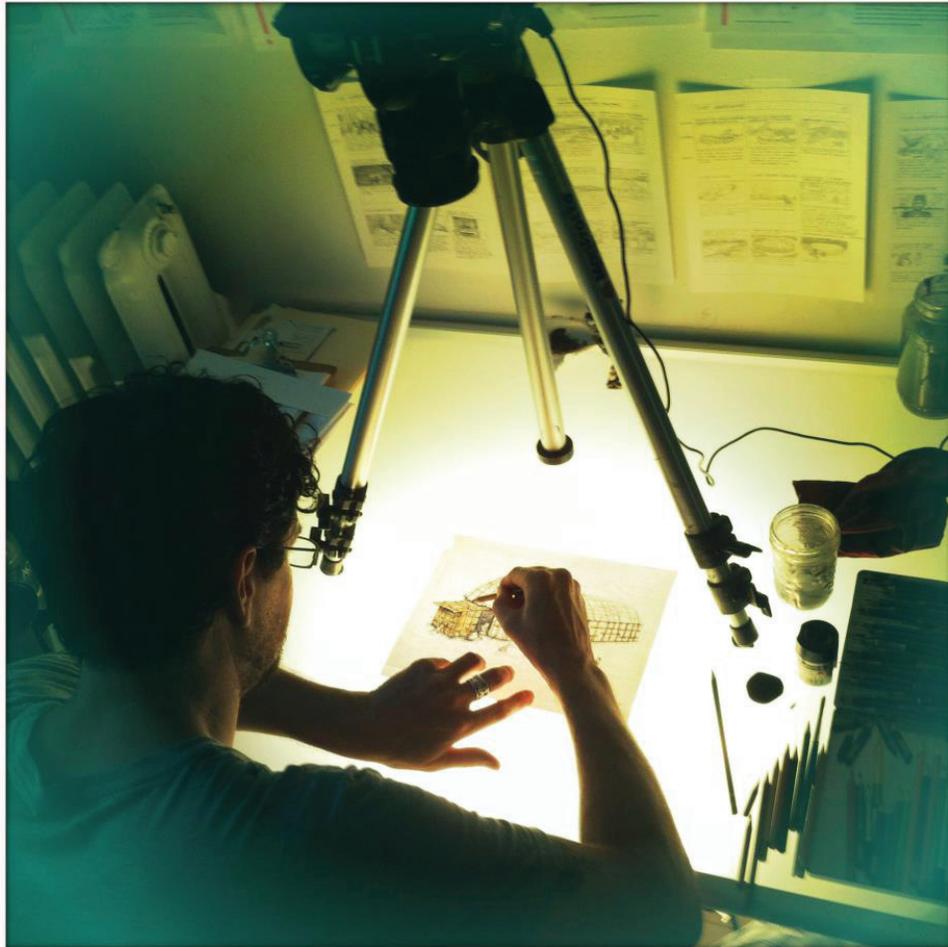
The Saga of Murdo MacLeod and His First Contact with the Abenaki (2012) and *The Abenaki – People of the Dawn* (2013) are two of six planned collaborations on Canadian history with celebrated Montreal storyteller Mike Burns.

Based in Montreal, MacLeod holds a BFA from Concordia University where he is currently a candidate for a Masters in Art Education.

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.”

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G. Scott MacLeod animating on Mylar. Photo by Alyson MacLeod.



Lise Jetté, elementary school. Mercier photo archive.



Claude Mercier, 12 Notre Dame. Mercier photo archive.



Stefan Mercier and Georges Jetté. Mercier photo archive.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PRE-PRODUCTION

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TREATMENT

My mission as a director was to help Claude, Lise and Stefan Mercier develop their life chronologies through their own personal research via their family archives, photos, letters and souvenirs of Griffintown.

I felt that it was important for the Merciers to elicit their own personal stories, via their photos and memories of Griffintown. From this collected material and my research data, I have tried to translate their life stories into a documentary.

Researching and filming the Mercier's personal histories on site in Griffintown was vital as it helped me understand and contextualize their life histories and showed me this area of the city from a distinctly French Canadian perspective. This life history documentary project gave Claude, Lise and Stefan Mercier the opportunity to go through a process of self-reflection and in due course they have gifted their story to the viewing public. Our collective goal was to give the public tangible insights into the lives of everyday working people who lived in the once-thriving industrial community of Griffintown.

Directing, animating and composing music for my film projects has helped me realize the range of my interests as a multimedia artist. I believe that fusing these multiple interests, which include animating as well as the various components of filmmaking, will contribute to this new phase of my artistic development from visual artist to filmmaker- animator. As I have with my other productions, I will seek to distribute, exhibit, broadcast and sell this work for educational purposes.



Lise Mercier primary school, Mercier photo archive.

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Fete Dieu, Peel and Ottawa Streets, Mercier photo archive.



Jetté house, 1165 Ottawa, Mercier photo archive.

I feel fortunate to be producing documentaries and animations at a time when new forms of technology and media can provide artists with unlimited possibilities to innovate and create interesting work. I have found the film and animation field has enabled me to expose my work to a broader audience, contrary to my 2D fine art mediums, which have been limited to 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, e.g. 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 I will be able to disseminate my work on web-based platforms more cost effectively.

FILM INFLUENCES

Over the years I have studied feature works from countries like Australia [*The Chant of Jimmy Black Smith* (1978) by Fred Schepisi]; Ireland [*The Secret of Roan Inish* (1994) by John Sayles]; and New Zealand [*Whale Rider* (2002) by Niki Caro]. I've also studied animated works from Israel including *Valse with Bashir* (2008) by Ari Folman, and works from Canada including *The Man Who Planted Trees* (1987) by Frédéric Back, and *The Danish Poet* (2006) by Toril Kove.

RESEARCH

This 17-minute film was created as part of the thesis requirement for my Masters in Art Education at Concordia University. The purpose of the film was to answer the question: "What do the personal narratives of three French Canadian residents of Griffintown reveal about the importance of public spaces, buildings and communities?" This study focused on a two-generation French Canadian family: Claude Mercier (father) and Lise Jetté-Mercier (mother) [1940s to 1960s] and Stefan Mercier (son) [1970s-1990s]. I conducted a series of interviews that were initiated while viewing a selection of their personal photographs from the 1940s to the 2000s, in order to gain an understanding of their Griffintown community experience. As I am most familiar with ways in which knowledge is constructed through visual means, I used an arts-informed research methodology for my interviews. Specifically, I used a photo elicitation process to trigger their memories and stories about their homes and community life, enabling them to articulate their French Canadian experience in Griffintown. My goal for this research was to create a short documentary film that displayed my data and answered my initial question on the life of Claude, Lise and Stefan. I was interested in acquiring my data through their personal narratives and memories that centered around their family homes and community living in order to reveal the importance of public spaces, buildings and communities. I collected my data in the form of interviews and video records at their current home on Jean D'Estrées and in front of their previous homes on Ottawa and de la Montagne streets and other locations of personal importance to them in Griffintown. I was also interested in their view of the current condo projects that are changing the face of Griffintown. I believe this research will provide a useful tool in the field of art education, an arts-informed template and framework others will be able to use in similar studies. The final goal of this research project was to create a life history documentary, website and exhibition for educational use.



Jourdenais family, 12 Notre Dame. Mercier photo archive.



1242 Notre Dame, Griffintown. Mercier photo archive.



Sewing Machine Shop, 1242 Notre Dame, Griffintown. Mercier photo archive.

GRIFFINTOWN

Griffintown is an historic Montreal neighbourhood that birthed the Industrial Revolution in Canada and was once home to a large immigrant community. As such, there is value in recording personal narrative histories both as a documentary film and as an educational website, www.ingriffintown.com. Both of these works help to contextualize Griffintown as a thriving neighbourhood before disintegration and subsequent redevelopment began. I am interested in the Merciers' past and curious about their current views of the urban renewal projects (condos etc.) unfolding in Griffintown.



Vuk Stojanovic (D.O.P.), Julia Innes (Sound) and G. Scott MacLeod (Director) with Stefan Mercier.

PRODUCTION

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FILM CREW

My film crew consisted of three people: a director, a director of photography and a sound person. The small crew facilitated easy movement from site to site in Griffintown and drew less attention than a large crew would have. I chose to film the Merciers on the weekend because of the many construction projects in progress in Griffintown during the week so as to minimize external noise while filming. We shot the film in HD video and used both lapel and boom microphones to have these two sound options.

FILMING VIA PHOTO ELICITATION

I filmed the Merciers on location in Griffintown and used photo elicitation methodology with their family photographs because I believed it would successfully elicit their personal memories of Griffintown. During filming, I was struck by how effective this process is as it connected them to their memories of home and to the places and events they referenced in their life history research. It was a great tool and entry point into their collective past.



Stefan Mercier, Wellington Tunnel, Lachine Canal. Photo by G. Scott MacLeod



Claude Mercier, Notre Dame Street. Photo by G. Scott MacLeod



Claude Mercier at the site "Chez Willie", Ottawa and Murray, Griffintown. Photo by G. Scott MacLeod



Animation sequence for "Chez Willie" by G. Scott MacLeod.

POST-PRODUCTION

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PRE EDITING - ANIMATIONS

For this project, I have broken with conventional animation and explored new directions, similar to those featured in the work of South African artist William Kentridge. Like Kentridge, I use the same surface for each animation. So rather than a series of drawings to illustrate one of the Griffintown buildings in the film, I simply shot the illustration at many stages in its creation. Rather than using charcoal on paper like Kentridge, however, I have used water-based graphite and colour pencils on Mylar (a material once used by architects) as my primary medium, adding water to bring the drawings to life.

The Mylar sheets were taped to my glass animation table underneath my tripod and digital camera. The drawings were photographed in stages while being backlit from underneath a frosted glass table with a series of four angled lamps. The series of jpegs from each drawing were later assembled in QuickTime sequences to be assembled and edited into the storyline.

OFFLINE AND ONLINE EDITING

My director of photography, Vuk Stojanovic, edited *In Griffintown*. Our raw footage was transferred into Final Cut Pro (editing software), which enabled Vuk to create a timeline and estimate the length of the documentary. Jo Meuris stabilized the jpegs for each animation and then made QuickTimes of each sequence. Vuk then placed the QuickTimes in the timeline. Once I felt that the edit served the story, we showed it to the Merciers for their feed back and approval. Ethically, I believe this was an important step as my main goal was to serve the Mercier's story. Once we had made some minor changes to our final edit, Vuk locked the picture and we began the online phase of the production, which included the special effects and sound editing and design.



G. Scott MacLeod at his animating stand. Photo by Maria Ezcurrea.



Photo by Alyson MacLeod

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SPECIAL EFFECTS

At this phase of the production, we added the animation sequences that Jo Meuris reworked in After Effects. Once I cropped the images according to the 16 x 9 widescreen aspect ratio, we finalized all the camera moves and my online editor Rachele Hamilton did the colour correction and contrast adjustments.

Once the assembly and storyline were secured, we decided upon a series of camera moves, moving the focal point right or left on the image or pulling in or out. These movements were necessary to prevent the Merciers still photos and my one-cell animations from appearing too static, which they would if left full frame. In other words, once the photo was placed or the animation drawing unfolded we made the focal point change to maintain a visual flow in the image.

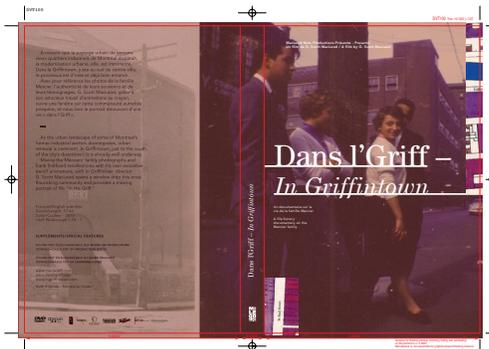
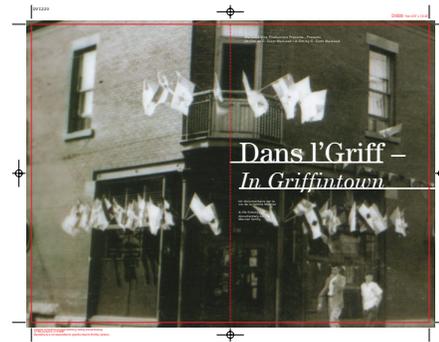
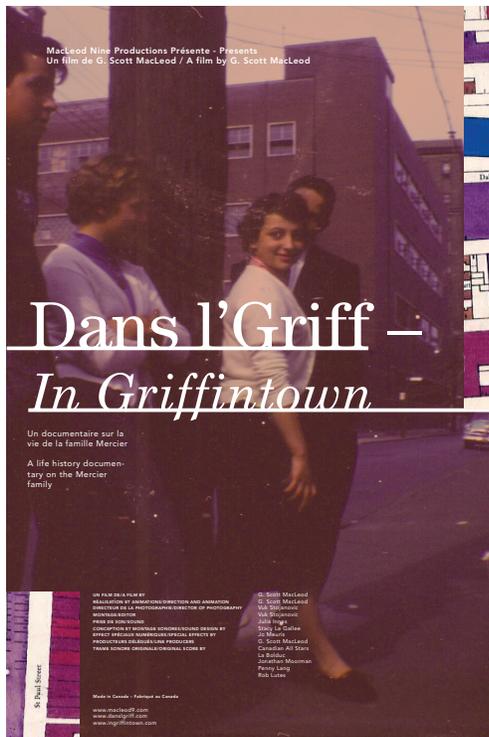
SOUND DESIGN AND FINAL MIX

Stacy Le Gallee edited the Merciers narration and then selected sound effects to contextualize my animations and add in any other sound elements that were missing from our footage. The final element was to select music that reflected special moments and historic periods mentioned in the documentary. The challenge when selecting these sound effects and music was to marry both sound effects and music together. Successful sound designs are ironically the ones that do not jump out but rather serve the story and the image behind the story.

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 TagTeamStudio.ca. They have done great work on my former projects. They designed all the elements of this DVD from the box layout to the education package and learning guide. What I have looked for in this type of design is a theme or message clearly conveyed, 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 be marketed to the educational sector.

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TagTeam graphic design package.

WEBSITES

www.quartierducanal.com/liens.html

www.imtl.org/montreal/montreal.php?vsearch=1&expo=GRIFFINTOWN&m=Griffintown%20village

www.griffintown.org/photos/index.htm

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MAPS

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PEOPLE

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SOUND PROJECT

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FILMS

Burman, Richard. (2003). *The Ghosts of Griffintown*, documentary film.

Régnier, Michel. (1972). *Griffintown*, National Film Board of Canada documentary 26 min 55s.



Mercier photo archive.

CREDITS

Réalisation et animations / Direction and Animation

G. Scott MacLeod

Directeur de la photographie et montage / Director of Photography and Editor

Vuk Stojanovic

Prise de son / Sound

Julia Innes

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Stacy Le Gallee

G. Scott MacLeod

Producteur délégué / Line Producer

G. Scott MacLeod

Clichés / Still Photography

Lise, Claude et Stéfan Mercier et G. Scott MacLeod

Effets spéciaux des animations / Special Effects Animations

Jo Meuris

Stabilisation d'image/ Image Stabilization

Jo Meuris

Mixage / Sound Mix

Stacy Le Gallee

Montage en ligne / Online Editor

Rachelle Hamilton

Titres et générique / Titles and Credits

G. Scott MacLeod

Conception trame sonore / Soundtrack Producers

Stacy Le Gallee et G. Scott MacLeod

Ingénieur du son, mixage et mastering / Soundtrack Engineering, Mixing and Mastering

Stacy Le Gallee

Consultant musical / Music Consultant

Heidi Fleming/FAMGroup famgroup.ca

Photos d'archives/Archival Photos

www.griffintown.org/photos/index.htm

Cartes / Maps

Chloé Trudeau

Traduction française / French Translation

Laure Péré et Jean Bruyère

Traduction anglaise / English Translation

G. Scott MacLeod

Sous-tires anglais / Subtitles

Rachelle Hamilton

Dossier de presse et guide éducatif / Press Kit and Learning Guide

Rob Lutes

Conception graphique / Graphic Design

TagTeam Studio

Webmaster / Web Design

Thornapple Productions

Comptabilité / Accounting

Ted Christeas

Chansons / Songs

Billy Boy (trad.)

Interprétée par/Performed by the **Canadian All Stars**

1955 Discovery Records

Musiciens/Performed by Al Baculis - Clarinette/clarinet,
Gordie Fleming - accordéon/accordion, Yvan Landry – piano,
Hal Gaylor – basse/bass, Billy Graham –batterie/drums

Ça va venir découragez-vous pas

Composition par/by **La Bolduc**

Interprétée par/Performed by **La Bolduc**, septembre/September 1930

Source: Library and Archives Canada/Ça va venir découragez-vous pas by La Bolduc
[sound recording]/AMICUS 31394001.

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Del Mar Sounds Fine

Composition par/by **Stacy Le Gallee** 1999

Musiciens / Performed by Stacy Le Gallee – guitar and B3 organ,
Erik West - bass, Serge Dion - drums

Église Ste-Anne / St. Ann's Church

Composition par/by **Jonathan Moorman**

Interprétée par/Performed by **Jonathan Moorman**

Twelve Gates to the City

Trad. arr. **Penny Lang** Enregistré/Recorded, 30 mai/May 1998, Café Campus, Montréal

De/From the album *Penny Lang & Friends Live*

SheWolf Records

Musiciens/Performed by Penny Lang – voix principale, guitare, Michael Browne - guitare,
voix, Jason Lang - guitare, voix, Bill Gossage - contrebasse, Martin Boodman – harmonica,
Jody Golick - saxophone, voix, Linda Morrison - voix, hand claps, Kim Richardson - voix, hand
claps, Michael Lessard - voix, hand claps, Bob Stagg - hand claps Réalisé par/Produced by
Heidi Fleming, Penny Lang et Simon Pressey

Turning Point

Composition par/by **Rob Lutes**

De/From the album *The Bravest Birds*,

Lucky Bear Records

Musiciens / Performed by Rob Lutes – acoustic guitar/guitare acoustique, Rob MacDonald –
guitare résophonique/resophonic guitar, Josh Zubot – violin/violon, Rob Fahie – basse/bass

Réalisé grâce au soutien financier des personnes suivantes / Produced with the financial participation of the following people

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Productrice / Producer

Hanelore Devigne.

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Université Concordia, Centre d'histoire orale & de récits numérisés/Concordia University's
Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS)
THEN/HIER
Koptik
Thornapple Productions
TagTeam Studio



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