



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FOUR CANADIAN DIRECTORS CONFIRMED FOR CFC/NFB FEATURE DOCUMENTARY PROGRAM

Toronto, November 5, 2008 – Filmmakers Yung Chang, Sarah Polley, Shelley Saywell and John Walker will participate in the inaugural **CFC/NFB Feature Documentary Program**. Created by the Canadian Film Centre (CFC) and the National Film Board (NFB), the **CFC/ NFB Feature Documentary Program** will launch in January 2009 with the goal of developing successful original feature length documentaries for international cinema audiences.

This innovative six-month program was created for accomplished Canadian directors with a theatrical documentary concept. Designed to help directors develop cinematic documentaries that will advance the genre and achieve commercial and critical success, this immersive experience combines a residency at the CFC with project-specific mentorship from some of Canada's and the world's greatest documentary talents.

"I can't tell you how exciting it is to have four of the greatest filmmakers in the country involved in our program," said Slawko Klymkiw, CFC Executive Director. "It has been the dream of the CFC to engage in the area of documentary production and with the compelling themes and the remarkable talent working on these feature projects, we look forward to the day when Canadians will see them in theatres."

"At the NFB we push boundaries and act as a kind of creative laboratory for filmmakers and the industry," said Tom Perlmutter, NFB, Government Film Commissioner and Chairperson. "This initiative is a wonderful expression of that. It is the first time that Canada will have a program specifically dedicated to advancing the art of the cinematic feature documentary. The four filmmakers selected bring an extraordinary range of experience and creative vision --- from cinema verité work to drama, from intimate, personal storytelling to large-scale international subjects. Now we are offering these established artists the creative space to take their work to the next level. We couldn't do it with a better partner than the Canadian Film Centre. This follows on our highly successful collaboration creating North America's first interactive feature film, *Late Fragment*, which was launched last year at the Toronto International Film Festival. I fully expect we will be seeing some of these doc projects at TIFF and other major festivals in the future."

Director's projects and bios:

Yung Chang – "**The Fruit Hunters**", a feature-length documentary, which explores nature, obsession, commerce and adventure in the fruit underworld.

Montreal based writer/director Yung Chang earned a degree in film production from Concordia University and is also a graduate of the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre in New York City, where he studied the Meisner technique. His first documentary film, ***Earth to Mouth***

(2003), produced by the NFB, a beautifully crafted meditation on migrant farm labour, food production and Canada's Chinese community, circulated widely on the international festival circuit, winning awards at the International Film and Video Festival in Columbus, Ohio, and Montreal's Rencontres Internationales du documentaire. His first feature-length documentary, **Up the Yangtze** (2007), in which the highly contested Three Gorges Dam forms a dramatic and unsettling backdrop for a moving and richly detailed narrative of a peasant family negotiating unprecedented historic changes, received wide acclaim. Award highlights include: Best Canadian Documentary, 2007 Vancouver International Film Festival; Best Documentary Feature, 2008 San Francisco International Film Festival; 2008 Toronto International Film Festival Group Canada's Top 10 film; finalist for the IDFA Joris Ivens Award, 2007 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam; and Grand Jury nominee for best documentary in the World Cinema competition at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival. Yung Chang is also the recipient of the 2008 Yolande and Pierre Perrault award for most promising filmmaker at the 2008 Rendez-vous du cinema québécois; received the 2008 Don Haig Award at Hot Docs; and the Charles E. Guggenheim Emerging Artist Award at Full Frame Documentary Film Festival in North Carolina.

Sarah Polley - "The Stories We Tell", a documentary which explores the nature of memory and storytelling.

Sarah Polley has been writing and directing in Canada for the last six years. Her short films include **Don't Think Twice, I Shout Love** (which won the Genie Award for Best Live Action Short Film,) and **The Harp**. Her feature debut, **Away From Her**, played to rave reviews at the Toronto Film Festival, Sundance, and the Berlin Film Festival. Following its world wide theatrical release, she was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay and she won the Genie Award for Best Director. Polley has also acted in over 40 feature films. Her extensive acting credits include **The Sweet Hereafter, My Life Without Me, Don't Come Knocking, and The Secret Life of Words**. She is also a political activist, having worked with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, and fundraising with the Canadian Centre For Victims of Torture.

Shelley Saywell - "Ghost Dance", a spiritual and musical cinematic quest to find the meaning of an ancient aboriginal prophecy about restoring the ecological balance of the earth. This is a rock and roll film that takes us from auditions to rehearsals to the concert stage of a completely different kind of musical event. And to the places in between.

Accomplished documentary filmmaker Shelley Saywell directed her first documentary **Shahira** in 1987. It is the story of a woman braving the odds in a male dominated society, fighting for the recognition and survival of a "lost" tribe of nomads called the Bishari. She named her company "Bishari Films" and for the past 20 years she and a small team of colleagues have continued to work on stories with similar themes: focusing primarily on human rights issues, particularly those affecting women and children. Saywell researches, writes and directs her own films. She is currently in post production on a feature length documentary called **Devil's Bargain: a journey into the small arms trade**, which was filmed in the Horn of Africa, the United States, France, Bosnia and Moldova. Her other films are: **Martyr Street** (2006). **Hamas, Behind the Mask** (2005). **Angry Girls** (2004). **Generation of Hate and Generation X-Saddam** (2003). **Streetnurse**. (2002). **A Child's Century of War** (2001). **Out of the Fire** (2000). **Crimes of Honour** (1999). **Legacy of Terror: the bombing of Air India** (1998). **Kim's Story: The Road from Vietnam** (1997). **Rape: A Crime of War** (1995). **Fire and Water** (1994). **No Man's Land: Women Frontline Journalists** (1993). **Shahira** (1988). Shelley Saywell is author of **Women in War** (Penguin Books, 1986), and contributing author to **Ourselves Among Others** (St. Martins Press, 1988) and numerous articles.

John Walker - "Seven Wonders", a feature documentary on seven of the world's master drummers and teachers who gather on a nature reserve in Canada to pass on their secrets to forty students from around the world.

John Walker is one of Canada's finest director/cinematographers working in the documentary genre, and his films have won international acclaim. From his fiction film collaboration, *A Winter Tan*, to his personal exploration of myth and imagination in *The Fairy Faith*, Walker defies conventional subjects and approaches. His most recent production *Passage*, challenges the form with a complex mix of fiction and documentary that has been described as "a post post-modern" exploration of fraudulent imperialist history. Released at Hot Docs in April, Martin Knelman of The Toronto Star wrote "One of the great triumphs in Canadian documentary film history." Walker's films have been widely broadcast and have appeared at major international film festivals in Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Los Angeles, Berlin and London. From the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television he has received seventeen nominations and awards including the coveted Donald Brittain Award for best social/political documentary - *Utshimassits: Place Of The Boss*; best documentary director - *The Hand Of Stalin*; and best feature documentary - *Strand - Under The Dark Cloth*, a personal portrait of his mentor, the photographer/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, best sound and a best director nomination. His passionate commitment to the documentary form led him to co-found the Canadian Independent Film Caucus (now the Documentary Organization of Canada). Walker has conducted master classes across the country and has mentored numerous emerging filmmakers. He has also served as guest programmer for the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival.

The **CFC NFB Feature Documentary Program** is an immersive experience specifically tailored to the precise needs of the participants who will collaborate with industry experts in a professional environment. Unique to the program is the supported inquiry which gives participants the time and resources to experiment with elements like shooting, editing, sound and image treatment as they refine the proposed approach to their projects. Participants' projects will be considered for production at the conclusion of the Feature Documentary Program.

The **CFC NFB Feature Documentary Program** is led by Program Manager Jerry McIntosh, who brings more than 20 years of expertise in the documentary field as a Director and Executive Producer for CBC Television and CBC Newsworld. Multi-award winning and Oscar-nominated documentary director, Larry Weinstein serves as Senior Creative Counselor for the program. NFB's Senior Producer Gerry Flahive is actively involved in all aspects of the program.

About CFC

CFC celebrates 20 years of launching Canada's most creative ideas and voices in film, television and new media to the world. As Canada's largest institution for advanced training in film, television and new media, CFC proudly has more than 1000 alumni working in Canada and abroad. A leader in the rapidly changing entertainment landscape, CFC is committed to promoting and investing in Canada's diverse talent and during this anniversary year will launch new programs that will continue to bring inspiring storytellers to the world. For more information please visit cfccreates.com

About the National Film Board of Canada

Canada's public producer and distributor, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) produces and distributes bold and distinctive social issue documentaries, auteur animation, alternative

drama and innovative digital content that provide the world with a unique Canadian perspective. From the early days of cinema direct to outstanding contemporary theatrical documentaries the National Film Board of Canada has been a global leader in documentary cinema for seven decades. Founded in 1939 by pioneer John Grierson, the man who coined the very term "documentary", the NFB has produced more than 13,000 films and videos and won over 5,000 awards, including 12 Oscars and more than 90 Genies. www.nfb.ca

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