

YORKTON FILM FESTIVAL



GOLDEN
SHEAF
AWARDS



65 YEARS OF FILM

Table of Contents

1937 – 1947: Beginnings – The Yorkton Film Council	2
1947 – 1960: The Yorkton Film Council Goes to Work	4
The Projectionist – Then and Now	6
The 1950s: Yorkton Film Council Screenings – Indoors and Out	7
1955: Good on You, Yorkton	9
1947: The Formation of the International Film Festival	10
1950s: The First International Festival	11
1952: The Ongoing Story	13
1954: Why Not Yorkton?	14
1950 – 1954: The People’s Choice	15
1956: The Russians Are Coming	16
1957: Fire!	18
1957: National Recognition	20
1960s: An End and a Beginning	20
1969 – 1979: Change	21
1969 – 1979: Change – Film, Food, and Fun	26
1969 – 1979: Change – “An Eyeball Blistering Task”	26
1969 – 1979: Change – The Cool Cats	28
1969 – 1979: Change – Money was a Good Thing! It Still Is...	29
1969 – 1979: Change – Learning the Trade	31
1971: A Message to Venice	32
1958 and 1977: The Golden Sheaf	33
1977: The Office	34
The Gala: Before and After	35
Better Entries	36
1981: Video Introduced – Why Not?	37
1983: Festival Receives National Award	38
Saskatchewan Showcase	39
1985: SMPFA Formed at the Festival	39
1987: Festival Outreach	41
The Way Ahead	42
Yorkton At the Oscars	44
Boards and Staff since 1950	45

1939 – 1947: Yorkton Film Council – The Beginnings

Dave Sharples, projectionist with the National Film Board (NFB), pulled up to the railway station for his monthly trip along the film circuit east of Regina. He dragged his projector and cans of films from the back seat of the car and loaded them onto a baggage wagon. Then he headed back to the trunk, shoved the key in the lock and looked despairingly at the 300 pound gas generator. “The beast” was a necessity to run a projector in rural Saskatchewan where there was no electrical grid. Sharples edged the generator over the rim of the trunk and onto the wagon. He sighed, his breath a stream of vapour in the cold January air. He pushed the gear to the loading dock and waited for the station agent. The two men loaded the generator and films into the freight car. Sharples said his thank yous and made his way to the passenger car carrying the projector in his arms. He had learned from experience to keep the machine warm. If the projector was turned on while cold, the motor would spark furiously, run at half-speed and burn out an assortment of parts.



Pictured: Dave Sharples, 1977 Festival

At his first destination along the film circuit, Sharples was met by a group of volunteers, willing and enthusiastic. The town was looking forward to the “shows”, anything to relieve the anxieties of a country at war. The men unloaded the gear into the back of a half ton and made the short trip down the icy road to the school. There, the men manhandled the generator off the truck and placed it 100 – 200 feet from the “temporary theatre”. (The distance was needed so the noisy machine did not interfere with the film audio.) Sharples and his volunteer crew then plodded to the school house. The men entered to the excited whispers of the children and placed the cans of film, the projector, and an extra long extension cord close to the pot bellied stove to warm. No more lessons than day. Despite winter, the showman was here.

In 1940, the National Film Board under the direction of organizational genius, John Grierson, implemented a film distribution network. The aim of the program was to bolster the spirit of Canadians during World War Two. People from small town and rural Canada flocked to the screenings held in schools, church basements and town halls. The circuits, primarily rural, were showing films to a monthly audience of over 250,000.

After the war the NFB, faced with draconian cuts to its budget, was in crisis. How was it to fund the creation of Canadian films? How was it to manage their distribution once those films were made? Theatres, owned by U.S. companies, were loath to offer anything but American feature-length movies. The problems looked overwhelming. Grierson's solution was to continue the rural circuit network devised for the war effort. He hired field representatives whose job it was to establish local film councils, groups that would take over the role of film distribution on a volunteer basis. A daunting task you might say, and yes, it was difficult, but the idea worked. Indeed, you might say that in Yorkton, Saskatchewan it worked very well.

In 1947, Dave Sharples explained the new system to a reporter from *The Yorkton Enterprise*. "The National Film Board would provide the council...with a rotating library of films, and the community would have access to the vast number of pictures made by the film board... the cost of upkeep, repairs, operating, insurance and films, would be borne by the NFB, provided organizations in the city set up a council, provided a projector and kept it operating on an active community basis."

Representatives from sixteen Yorkton organizations attended a meeting, its goal to establish the Yorkton Film Council. Otto Thorliefson of the Kinsmen Club agreed to be president. The volunteer council would train projectionists, set up a film depot, and organize workshops on documentary film. The NFB would loan the council a block of a minimum of 25 films for a period of two months. At the end of that time that block would be replaced by another group of 25 films.

The headline in *The Yorkton Enterprise* read "Organizations Agree on Temporary Film Council." Ironically, the work of that council carries on 65 years later.



John Grierson (left), Chairman of the Wartime Information Board, meeting with Ralph Foster, Head of Graphics, National Film Board of Canada, to examine a series of posters produced by the NFB. Photo: Library and Archives Canada RG-45, volume 135, Field No

1947 – 1960: The Yorkton Film Council Goes to Work

The Yorkton Film Council had its premier showing in 1947 at the old City Hall auditorium. In his opening address, Mayor Charles A. Peaker recognized that film was an important medium in public education, particularly for youth. "Documentaries," he said "would bring home facts to young people that they otherwise might find hard to credit." (*The Yorkton Enterprise*)

Film topics for the evening were varied and informative:

Folk music

Niagara Falls and the provision of cheap power

The plight of children left in desperate situations after the war

The world series of 1946 between the Boston Red Sox and the St. Louis Cardinals

"Life on the Western Marshes", a Ducks Unlimited picture in colour, no less

The evening was a solid start for the council's film distribution service.



Pictured: James Lysyshyn

That same year, James Lysyshyn, a veteran with the Royal Canadian Air Force, was hired as a field man to oversee the work of the councils in Northeast Saskatchewan. He was stationed at Canora. He worked in collaboration with Nettie Kryski, council secretary, who handled most of the correspondence. Paul Welgan, president, organized workshops to train projectionists. Stan Stakiw saw to the detail of film distribution. His business called Stan's Avalon Studios acted as rental agency for the films. In 1949, the Council had a dual fee system. For NFB films, it charged five cents per hundred feet of film, while for its own films the fee was three per cent of the purchase price plus a service charge of 35 cents. (The bookkeeping boggles the mind!) At first, Nettie Kryski, the secretary-treasurer, thought the fees a little high, but then she reassured herself and friend Jim Lysyshyn that the rates were not too exorbitant. After all, the money would be set aside in a separate account for the purchase of new films. The group owned 11 films with the expectation of buying 14 more over the coming season.

There was a huge demand for the documentaries from local organization and schools. Requests for films came from the Yorkton Temperance Association, the Ministerial Association, the locals of two unions, and the numerous Yorkton groups that had supported the Council financially. Principals of schools at Jasmin, Abernethy, and Castle Avery, Manitoba asked for information about borrowing films. The schools had heard about the film service on Yorkton's radio station, CJGX. James Lysyshyn hosted a monthly radio show, Films and People. Nettie Kryski wrote most of the scripts.



Pictured: Recording “Films and People”; James Lysyshyn, nearest microphone, and Nettie Kryski, centre in white.

In a letter to a Yorkton Chapter of the Independent Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), Kryski explained that “each year since the formation of the Film Council the use of films has increased, and during the past year approximately 600 films were shown to 14,156 persons in the district.”

In 1953, the Yorkton Film Council joined a new association, the Federation of Film Councils of Northern Saskatchewan, a group formed under the auspices of the NFB. Officers of the new organization included two film stalwarts from Yorkton: Nettie Kryski and Paul Welgan. The Federation took on a new role in film distribution. Each month the Saskatoon office of the NFB would send Yorkton two boxes or blocks of its films for distribution to the two very large rural circuits under the Council’s responsibility. The first block went to Lestock, Muscowequan, Jasmin, Hubbard, Ituna, Goodeve, and Punnichy, towns along Highway #15 north and west of Melville. The second block traveled west to Dysart and Southey, then on to Grayson, a village south of Yorkton, before ending the circuit at Bredenbury and Ebenezer. The two blocks were then sent out in reverse order – the second to the towns long Highway #15; the first the route from Dysart to Ebenezer. The films were due back in Saskatoon shortly after completion of the two-month schedule, so they could be sent out to other Film Councils in Northern Saskatchewan for distribution to rural communities.

There were on-going issues in the new system. Blocks of film would arrive late. Someone would forget to include all the films in the block when they were shipped into the next district. Prints of the same film were sometimes mixed up. Districts would neglect to send on the statistics card showing the number of showings and the number in the audience. The following, an excerpt from a Kryski letter, is typical.

“Now for more grief: I have checked every film in our library and cannot find *Down in the Forest*. I have checked through our record book and apparently it was never booked by anyone (at least there is no record of it). You also mention that we should have received *Fisheries of the Great Slaves* and *Tempest in Town* from the NFB. I have no knowledge of this...Somewhere, somehow I cannot locate Print 12S of *Birds of Canada #6* which is supposed to be on long term loan to us. I have print #117 which I think perhaps belongs to Block 18. But perhaps it doesn't. Do you happen to have the numbers of the prints given to us by NFB?...”

A flurry of letters would follow, sometimes even a telegram. If worst came to worst, Nettie Kryski might phone, but the expense had to be clearly justified. Nettie was treasurer and money was always short. The detail, the complications, would have caused a lesser spirit than Nettie Kryski to abandon the whole enterprise in frustration.

The Projectionist Then and Now

This then and now comparison illustrates how much easier it is to show a DVD than a film. How things have changed!

Then:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take projectionist's course 2. Take care not to damage the film. It is not easily replaced. 3. Open the speaker case. 4. Take out the spare reels, extension cords and spare lamps. 5. Plug in the projector. 6. Move the reel arms into the correct positions. 7. Put the empty take-up reel on the rear arm. 8. Place the film reel on the forward arm. 9. Thread the film under the top black roller labelled #4 in the manual. 10. Then place the film under the roller labelled A. 11. Engage the sprocket holes of the film on the sprocket teeth. 12. Push down the sprocket guard. 13. Position the film in the centre space between the film guides and against the aperture plate between the edge guide rails. 14. Place the film under the roller labelled E. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Engage the film sprocket holes on the sprocket teeth. 16. Place the film under the roller labelled G. 17. Place the film between the next two film guides and then under the tension roller. 18. Continue threading the film around the sound drum and over roller labelled J. 19. Pull on the loose end of the film to separate rollers H and I. 20. Push the film in over the sprocket flange. 21. Engage the sprocket holes. Push up to close the sprocket guard. 22. Turn the projector on and run the film forward. 23. Focus. 24. Check the sound volume. 25. To rewind, turn the projector to off. 26. Move the rear reel arm upward. 27. Then consult the operator's manual for rewind instructions. 28. Take the film reel off the projector and store it safely in the film case. |
|---|--|

29. Pack up your projector and gear.
30. Pack up the generator (if required).
31. If on the road, haul the projector and films into your hotel room to keep them warm.



Film workshop at the festival circa 1955.

Now:

1. Handle disc at its edges.
2. Plug in the laptop computer and projector.
3. Attach USB A/V cable between computer and projector.
4. Turn on both pieces of equipment.
5. Place the disc in the DVD ROM drive and wait for it to start.
6. Enjoy the video

The 1950s: Yorkton Film Council Screenings – Indoors and Out

The excitement and fireworks of Dominion Day July 1, 1955 had passed into memory. The Yorkton Exhibition was still a week away. The doldrums in between presented the perfect opportunity for the Yorkton Film Council to show off the most recent documentary films – not in a theatre, not even indoors, but in the park adjacent to the Yorkton Public Library located in the city’s old, old City Hall.

At the outdoor screenings, the people of Yorkton arrived anticipating a pleasant evening. They spread their blankets on the lawn. The women poured the tea from thermos jugs into old chipped cups, the ones considered “not for company”. They added the sugar and farm cream and handed the steaming brew with a cookie to the men folk. Everyone visited with neighbours and speculated about the films. Would they see another documentary about the birds of Canada? Maybe, it would be in colour and wouldn’t that be exciting? Would they see a safety film from the Canadian Good Roads Association or a movie from Shell Canada about oil extraction in Alberta? Speculation and gossip filled the park with a happy buzz.

As dusk turned to dark and the mosquitos came out, the audience settled into silence and the movies rolled on a white sheet draped against the wall of City Hall. It was good times in Yorkton.

Just days later, John Popoff would haul an assortment of other films and the 16-mm. projector from Stan’s Avalon Studios to the exhibition grounds and set up his “theatre” in the space under the grandstand. Some of the films came from the NFB, some from Canadian companies. In 1957, Kramer Tractor sent the council five films for showing at the exhibition. Three films came from its Regina office. Nestor Ortynski shipped two others on to Yorkton after their screening at the Canora fair. The

arrangements for the films were handled through the company's sales promotions department. Documentaries were produced as an advertising venture.

Through the winter, the council held screenings indoors at various Yorkton locations, often the Knights of Pythias Castle Hall. The festival of today can well marvel at the quality of films provided to a small town not so small in its appreciation of good film:

- November 13, 1955 – *Kind Hearts and Coronets*: Britain, 1949. "Alec Guinness plays eight parts with intelligence and restraint showing his power as a character actor. This is an exceedingly funny film scintillating with rapid witty dialogue and directed with excellent taste."
- December 11, 1955 – *Salt of the Earth*: USA "A beautiful and passionate movie ranking with the great Italian and French films. Woven into the strike story with skill and tenderness of great artistry, it is a story of a man and his wife...the script is lean and accurate, jolting in its honesty and warm in its compassion. A rugged and starkly poignant story, raw emotion and power." *New York Times*
- January 8, 1956 – *Open City*: Italy, 1945: The height of Rossellini's achievements in film. Produced by members of the Italian underground shortly after the liberation of Rome. A drama of courage, love and beauty, of blood and lust and cruelty, its impassioned realism and unswerving sincerity have won it an outstanding place among the great screen classics of all time.
- February 12, 1956 – *Stratford Adventure*: Canada: A timely documentary showing the development and success of the Stratford Festival.
- February 12, 1956 – *The Sea Around Us*: USA, 1952: A Disney Academy Award winner (best documentary feature of 1952) based on a best seller of the same title.
- March 11, 1956 – *Seven Deadly Sins*: France: An amusing series of anecdotes inclined to be aimed at the female sex. Typical French comedy promising a good night's entertainment.
- April 8, 1956 – *Rashomon*: Japan: Grand prize Venice Festival winner, director by Akira Kurosawa, this film is of extraordinary fascination. Its four conflicting version of a murder lead to reflections on the nature of truth. "Exciting, powerful, unusually impressive work. A stunning work of art." *Newsweek*

This program shows the quality of films Yorkton people enjoyed that winter. As Nettie Kryski said to a snooty reporter from the big city, "There isn't any reason why ordinary people who aren't glamorous or well-known can't enjoy the same things they enjoy in the big capitals of the world."

1955: Good On You, Yorkton

The story of the Yorkton Film Council and *The Salt of the Earth* was truly extraordinary.

The plot of the movie involved a mining strike in New Mexico. Except for five professionals, the cast was made up of the actual mine workers, Mexican Americans who took job actions because they worked under safety conditions worse than their Anglo counterparts. It was a clear case of discrimination. But just as important as that issues was the theme of sexual equality. The women wanted the right to express their views about the strike, to walk the picket line when an injunction stopped their husbands from doing so. The result was a major conflict between men and women, particularly between the two main characters, Ramon and Esperanza. The plot and the theme made for a riveting movie.

In 1954, *The Salt of the Earth* opened in New York to favourable reviews. It was warmly received in Mexico and Europe. In France, it won the grand prize from the Paris Academy of Film. In 1955, however, the House on Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) extinguished the movie's starburst of glory. It denounced the film as subversive. The Committee had already blacklisted the five professionals involved in the making of the film. In addition, HUAC had investigated the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers and found that the leadership of the union had ties to communism. The union was a financial sponsor of the movie. Fear of the "Red Menace" led to the denunciation of the film. Only twelve American theatres agreed to show it.

Lest Canadians think they were immune from these civil rights violations, let them think again. In the 1950s, the government set up a program known as PROFUNC (Prominent Functionaries of the Communist Party). The program provided that, in time of insurrection, some 15,000 members of the Community Part of Canada and 55,000 sympathizers could be arrested without warrant and thrown in jail.

Lest Canadians think that everyone bent to this fear of the "Red Menace", let them think again. December 11, 1955, a Yorkton audience settled into Castle Hall. The lights dimmed. The projector whirred into actions. The film – *The Salt of the Earth*. The movie, banned across most of the United States, was screened in a little prairie town ready to ignore the perils of the Red Menace.

Good on you, Yorkton.

[New York Times movie review](#) of *The Salt of the Earth* (1954)

1947: The Formation of the International Film Festival

In 1947, at the same time as the Yorkton Film Council was beginning its distribution service, James Lysyshyn, field man with the NFB, faced the group with another project.



Jim Lysyshyn, Nettie Kryski, and Paul Welgan are the second, third, and fourth individuals in this photo. "This was the era of great film stars," he wrote, "who won Oscars and filled Canadian movie houses. I searched for an idea which would restore the prestige of documentary films, as a way of convincing people that serious films could be important, glamorous in their own right."

The project was, of course, a documentary film festival, a plan to "steal some of the glitter from the Hollywood Oscar." Lysyshyn had heard that the Edinburgh Festival of the Arts was to add a film sections, a totally new offering in its festival line-up. In his mind, the Yorkton Film Council would be perfect to take on a similar venture. The members of the Council were descendants of pioneers, Lysyshyn thought "who would be likely to try something new."

At first, this "perfect" group from Yorkton was not so willing to take on the task. The council told Lysyshyn that most of the films for such a venture would come from the NFB or Crawley Films and people in the area had already seen them. In addition, film festival were unheard of at the time in North America. The Cannes Festival had been founded only one year earlier; the Toronto Film Festival was not to be established for another thirty years. Never one to hear no, however, Lysyshyn returned one month later with another proposal, an international film festival. Ruth Shaw, long time volunteer and board member, said it took a year before the council became convinced.

“The idea of foreign films coming here (to Yorkton) to compete was the clincher.” Lysyshyn said. The festival would offer films other than the Canadian documentaries a Yorkton audience had already seen. Besides, the international aspect of the festival was prestigious and innovative.

The descendants of Saskatchewan pioneers, that group ready to try something new, said “yes” and Yorkton’s International Film Festival was born.

1950s: The First International Festival

Like the pioneers of the area, the members of the Yorkton Film Council had determination, courage and audacity. No one was going to tell them that Yorkton, population 8,000, was a most unlikely site for a festival of any kind, let alone North America’s first international film festival.



Paul Welgan, James Lysyshyn, Nettie Kryski

And so the work began. The festival was scheduled for 1950, giving the council two years for the complex organization involved. The members devised rules and regulations, set categories for film entries, established the dates of the festival (October 11 and 12), organized a two-day workshop on the use of film in the community, booked venues for screenings, contacted the United Church Women at St. Andrew’s to cater the lunch, and booked City Council Chambers for the workshop and York Theatre and the City Hall

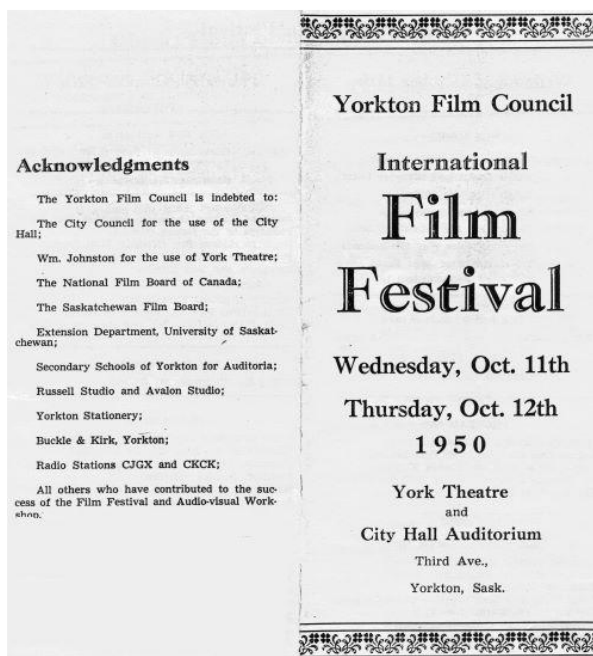
Auditorium for the screenings. They contacted the Yorkton Enterprise and CJGX Radio and arranged for advertising. They sold programs at 25 cents each to cover costs. In order to avoid duty on the films, the festival didn’t charge admission.

And there was more. It fell to Nettie Kryski to write the embassies in Ottawa. Her first task was to explain what a film festival was because, of course, the venture was almost unknown at the time. The second part was to invite the submission of films. Just think about the receipt of that letter. Quite likely, the third undersecretary of the Netherlands or the clerk the New Zealand High Commission would shake his head and then go off to consult an atlas of Canada to determine the location of the place called Yorkton.

Following the receipt of the letters, there were phone calls. There were more letters. It helped that the National Film Board in Ottawa contacted film makers from around the world and lobbied with the embassies.

Finally, the entries came in – some of course from the National Film Board and Canada’s Crawley Films and even one each in the amateur category from Yorkton’s own filmmakers: Stan Stakiw, H. Ferman, R. Adamson and Rev. P.O. Olson. Foreign entries arrived from the Netherlands, India, Sweden, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Norway, France and the United States. In all, the newly minted festival received entries from nine different countries, 40 films in all! Quite a coup for a fledgling organization with no particular expertise in film making!

The screenings scheduled for October 11 and 12 were packed to capacity. Audience members judged the films by indicating their preferences and comments on a ballot provided for the purpose. Certificates of Merit were awarded to the winner in each category. The audience participation guaranteed buy-in from the community. On the completion of the two-day event, the Canadian Film News reported that “Canada’s first International Film Festival happened in Yorkton, Sask. In Ottawa, film producers and distributors marveled at the enterprise, if not the audacity of the prairie city that dared to organize a traditionally European event. Until the entry of Yorkton, all International Film Festivals had been held in London, Edinburgh, Brussels, Paris, Locarno or Venice.”



From the 1950 Program

But more important than the opinion of the Canadian film industry was the judgement of the people of Yorkton and that judgement was very positive. The Yorkton Film Council made the unanimous decision to carry on. The International Festival would be held every two years to give volunteers a chance to rest, a time to find that spirit of determination, courage, and audacity, for if it was audacity that started the festival, it was surely determination and courage that kept it going.

1952: The Ongoing Story

In the fall of 1952, Yorkton was agog with the success of its first International Film Festival held two years earlier and enthusiastic in its anticipation of the second. Ethel Castleden of *The Yorkton Enterprise* wrote in her column, Chitter Chatter: “When we realized that...no other group in Canada has undertaken to sponsor a festival of this sort, we are all the more appreciative of the efforts of our local group of film enthusiasts.”

In the two year interval between the festivals, Nettie Kryski had received numerous requests for information about the Yorkton festival from film societies and producers world wide and from cities in Canada hoping to mount a similar venture. In his history of the Yorkton Film Festival, James Lysyshyn, field man for the National Film Board reported: “The success of Yorkton’s first festival unleashed a torrent of film festivals across Canada and in many parts of the world. The festival craze spread like wildfire...”

Before the 1952 festival, Council members made a number of significant decisions. The event, originally two days, was now extended to three. The Council abandoned City Hall for three larger venues: York Theatre and the auditoriums at St. Joseph’s College and the Yorkton Collegiate Institute. The first banquet, now a mainstay of the festival, was hosted at Castle Hall in the facilities of the Knights of Pythias. Submissions were limited to those films produced in the two year interval since the first festival. Promotion for the 1952 event highlighted the submission of films in colour, a new and emerging technology.



Crowd at the 1952 festival.

In all, the festival received 47 entries from foreign embassies, the National Film Board, Crawley Films, P.G.A. Films and a number of amateur film makers. Castleden reported that the list of foreign countries submitting films read like roll call at the United Nations.

But there were things that hadn't changed, too. Once again, Yorkton people jammed the screening venues to see the film and vote by ballot for the winners. The event was deemed a huge success not only at home but in the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, the *Regina Leader-Post*, and the *Winnipeg Free Press*. And of course, the Yorkton Film Council had the audacity to plan a third festival just two years into the future.

1954: Why Not Yorkton?

In 1954, the third Yorkton International Film Festival (October 22-24) opened to general amazement. The *Leader-Post* stated: "Yorkton this week is taking an international flutter. It is holding its biennial 'International Film Festival', a venture the Saskatchewan city began with some courage and considerable daring in 1950...Today, Yorkton is holding the only such festival on this continent and only now are some metropolitan American cities toying with the idea of following suit."

In the *Winnipeg Tribune*, drama critic Ann Henry reported that film producers and distributors marveled at the audacity of the Yorkton Film Council and this prairie community. In contrast, the people of Yorkton, unfazed, answered the question "Why Yorkton?" with a shrug and the inevitable reply, "Why not?"

The townspeople reacted just as expected to the three days of screenings – near capacity crowds, a discerning eye for good film, and enthusiastic response from children, families and oldsters alike. As in the past, the festival received film entries from a variety of European countries, but not from Russia as Ann Henry was quick to point out. In the era of Cold War politics, it was assumed that the Soviets would boycott a festival in a western democracy, an assumption that would prove false just two years later in 1956. The major excitement at the third Yorkton International Film Festival was the arrival of Maritana Heinrich from the Ottawa Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany.

"Her purpose in visiting the festival was twofold: Germany wanted to produce documentary films on a larger scale and to improve film technique." (*The*



James Lysyshyn, Nettie Kryski, Maritana Heinrich

Yorkton Enterprise) The Embassy thought the festival would provide just such an opportunity. In an interview with Ann Henry, John Popoff, president of the Yorkton Film Council, focused on film as education. The documentary “brings to the attention of the people here to the way people in other countries live. We learn to be sympathetic instead of indifferent or even hostile to their people and their problems.”

Mrs. A. L. Caldwell, member of the NFB Board of Governors and Canadian delegate to the United Nations, reinforced that message as guest speaker at the banquet held at St. Andrew’s Friday, October 22. She indicated that the festival and the United Nations “were part of a large plan to bring better understanding to the world at large, to remove the dangers of war, to learn to live together with the people in other lands and to work out those humanitarian plans already launched by the United Nations.”

Heady stuff.

1950 – 1954: The People’s Choice

For the Yorkton public, one of the most important changes occurred in 1956 at the fourth International Film Festival. At the first three festivals, the audience had voted to determine the winning film. The ballot slips with their comments were passed on to the film makers as a form of adjudication. In 1956, film experts were selected to judge the quality of the films and to award the winning certificates. The International Film Festival had moved from a People’s Choice format to one adjudicated by professionals for professionals.

Good or bad? There was certainly a downside to the change. In the 1950s, the buy-in from local people was huge. The town was a-buzz with festival talk. People attended the screenings in droves. School children told Ann Henry, drama critics with the *Winnipeg Tribune*, that they’d rather attend festival films than those at the local theatre. The upside to the change was that the festival would attract more entries. Film makers would simply trust the opinion of those in the industry more than they would an audience from a small prairie town.



Certificate of Merit awarded to winners when the festival was adjudicated directly by the audience.

1956: The Russians are Coming

The Trans-Canada airplane circled over the landing strip left over from the Second World War Commonwealth Air Training Base. It flew north east of the airport, turned and then began its descent towards the tarmac. Next to the hangar stood three members of the Yorkton Film Council: D. O. Forsyth, William Korb, and President John Popoff. Stairs were pushed forward to the plane exit and locked in place. The door opened and two men descended the steps to the welcoming festival delegation.



Yorkton Film Council members welcome USSR Ambassadors to the 1956 Festival.

The two were P.F. Strounnikov and S.D. Romanovtsev from the Ottawa Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Upon their arrival in Yorkton, two RCMP officers began following the two Russians to festival events. After all, two Soviet officials might be recruiting undercover agents or spying on some aspect of life in Saskatchewan. The Red Menace, was everywhere even at the luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club

where P.F. Strounnikov, speaking through an interpreter, said the festival was “a brilliant way for improving mutual understanding between nations and countries.”

In that spirit of good will, someone decided to place a trick on the RCMP. Someone – and who knows who – spirited Mr. Strounnikov and Mr. Romanovtsev down the back stairs of the Balmoral Hotel where they were staying. The RCMP members were left to cool their heels in the hotel lobby.

Clearly the citizens of Yorkton saw the Red Menace as less than menacing.

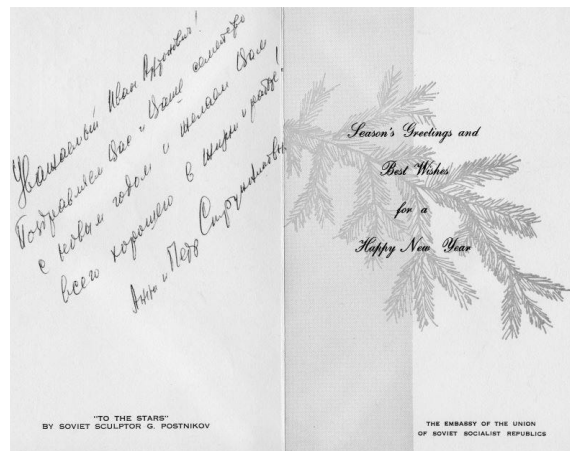
As a postscript to the visit, John Popoff noted in a speech presented in 1958 that the Russian Soviet was hosting its first film festival in Moscow. His message was clear. The Soviet delegation had come not to spy on “sensitive installations” in the City of Yorkton, but to learn what they could about the organization of a film festival. So much for the threat of espionage on the Canadian prairies.

Background: The Cold War

This was the era of the Cold War. Igor Gouzenko, cipher clerk at the Canadian Embassy of the USSR, had defected in 1945 bringing with him documentary proof of Soviet espionage against Canada and more importantly, against the United States.

Gouzenko’s information fueled fear of the Red Menace – fear that had begun in the 1930s with FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover and his hunt for spies hidden in the bureaucracy, the entertainment industry, and other segments of American life. The House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities took up the cause and the media spread the fear. Screenwriters, directors, actors and producers were called before the committee. Some refused to testify and were sent to jail. Friends betrayed friends. One man even testified against his wife. Many in the entertainment industry were blacklisted and as a result, forced abroad to find work. One of the most well known was Charlie Chaplin. In 1952, Chaplin left the US for what was intended as a brief trip home to the United Kingdom only to find out that on his return, his re-entry permit had been revoked. He was forced to take up residence in Europe.

In Canada as in the United States, fear of communism, though perhaps not as virulent, was still pervasive. In the 1930s, radicals, sometimes communist, sometimes not, were deported. After a secret immigration in 1931, Arvo Vaara, an editor of a Sudbury newspaper, was sent back to Finland, a country he hadn’t seen in twenty-three years. Near the end of January, 1933 Peter P. Verigin, Doukhobour leader, was whisked from the Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert and onto a train for Halifax. He survived the purge of deportation to the USSR only through the intervention of Joseph Shoukin and Simeon Reiben, two of the sect’s leaders, and Peter Makaroff, his lawyer.



Christmas card received by the festival in 1960 from the Soviet Embassy.

In 1937, the government of Quebec under Premier Maurice Duplessis passed the Padlock Law. It gave police the extraordinary power to seal off any property where communist literature of activity was suspected. The members of one Montreal family were forced to move constantly as their homes were padlocked, closed against their entry. In 1948, Gordon Martin, a World War Two veteran and graduate of the College of Law, found his application to the British Columbia bar was refused when he would not answer questions about his membership in the Communist Party. He said that the questions violated his rights to freedom of thought and association. As a result, Martin was turned from a promising law career to employment in the lumber industry. Clearly, the practice of the blacklist was not limited only to the United States.

In 1950, the Government of Canada established PROFUNC, an acronym for PROminenet FUNCTIONaries of the Communist Party, a secret plan to identify and jail Canadian communists should a threat to national security arise. The list was thought to contain the names of 15,000 suspected Communists and 50,000 sympathizers. It has been surmised that several prominent Canadians, including Tommy Douglas and Roland Penner, were on that list. Douglas, CCF Premier of Saskatchewan and leader of the Canadian NDP, is well known. Penner less so. Roland Penner was a veteran of World War Two, a dean of the College of Law at the University of Manitoba, and a Manitoba politician and cabinet minister.

Fire!

Stan Stakiw turned the key in the lock of his business, Avalon Studies, and swung the door open. It was 10:00pm February 4, 1957, a cold winter night. Stan was on his way to a dance at the St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church Hall. He had stopped on the way to collect the cash from the till – nearly \$700, the take from the business over the last few days. He glanced over the camera shop at the front of the store and then headed down the basement that contained the dark room. Everything was in good order. He climbed the stairs once more and looked towards the till. The money could wait, he decided. He and Ann wanted to go to the dance, the last social event before Lent. He locked the door and left for St. Mary's.

Two hours later fire began in the basement of the old Smith Block. Newspaper reports indicated it had started in the basement of Avalon Studios. Rumour indicated it may have started in the basement of the Broadway Café next door. The reality was that no one knew for sure and the origin of the fire was termed unknown.



Aftermath of the 1957 fire.

The seven members of the Yorkton Fire Department, 12 volunteers and six “helpers at large”, fought the blaze until noon the next day. Deputy Mayor Rudy Schick praised

the assistance of the RCMP. Bobby Yaholnitsky opened Wings Restaurant to serve free coffee to the exhausted firefighters through the night. Freddy Preston remained in his pharmacy just in case one of the men needed a respirator.

A great many Yorkton establishments were affected by the fire: Fletcher’s Drug Store, Singer Sewing Machine Company, the Broadway Café, Thomas Jewelry, the committee rooms of the Liberal Party, the radio studios of CJGX, the premises of doctors Houston, Houston, Houston and Crossely and the law offices of Stewart, Brown and Edgar. People in the second floor apartments of the Smith Block were evacuated.

For Stan Stakiw, the fire was devastating. He had only \$17,000 in insurance to cover a loss of \$40,000. The only consolation was that the Monday morning after the fire the till was found intact. The bills inside were scorched but still negotiable.

Avalon Studios was the film depot and rental agency for the Yorkton Film Council. The council lost everything in the fire – two projectors and cases, one screen, a filmstrip and slide projector with 24 filmstrips, splicer, rewind, and the films – some belonging to the council, others on loan from the NFB and various corporations. It was a devastating blow.

While the city cleaned up the gutted remains of the building, Nettie and friends began rebuilding the Yorkton Film Council. Once again, Nettie wrote local organizations asking for donations, begging for the \$1800 to replace their equipment. Everyone came to the council’s assistance. The NFB lent the organization a projector, one in need of repair as President John Popoff soon found, but still the council had a projector. Shell Oil said they were prepared to absorb the loss of their film, *Screw Drivers and Screw Jays*. The Canadian Cancer Society assured Nettie that their films were insured and not to worry about their loss. Local groups and organizations donated enough money that the council had funds to

replace its equipment. The major problem, however, was the loss of Avalon Studios as film depot and rental agency. The solution – the Yorkton Public Library took over responsibility for storage and distribution of the films.

The YFC could now concentrate on the film festival for which it had gained truly a national reputation.

1957: National Recognition for the Festival

In 1957, the Association of Motion Picture Producers and Laboratories of Canada presented the Yorkton Film Council with a Certificate of Merit. The citation read:

“The Yorkton Film Council in its International Film Festival offers for public viewing a selection of films of high quality from many countries and recognizes and encourages high standard of film production. This special Award is given to the Yorkton Film Council in recognition of its outstanding International Film Festival which demonstrates the contribution of the film council movement in Canada.”

Canadian Film Institute Bulletin Vol. 3, No. 6, June, 1957

Notification of the Toronto event was sent to Avalon Studios and the letter was misplaced in all the confusion associated with the fire that destroyed the business and the film depot for the Yorkton Film Council.

Sadly, no one from the Yorkton Film Council was present to accept the award.

1960s: An End and a Beginning

With the advent of television, interest in documentary film plummeted. It was estimated that two and a half million Canadian homes had a television by 1957. Canadians and Yorktonites simply considered that the Ed Sullivan Show and Hockey Night in Canada were more interesting than an evening of documentary film. Attendance declined at festival screenings from 4000 in 1956 to 1000 in 1964. The Yorkton Film Council decided to postpone the festival scheduled for 1966 to 1967 with the hope that the exuberance of Centennial Year would boost attendance.

Donald G. Axford, NFB Film Office for South-Eastern Saskatchewan, spent ten days in Yorkton trying to bolster local support. In his five-page analysis of the problems, he emphasised that there was significant interest in the film festival. However, he was clearly frustrated by the council’s outreach to the local community. “I understand that His Worship the Mayor (William E. Fichtner) at the last Centennial Committee Meeting asked the delegate from the Film Festival Committee if there was a particular job that any service club could do. The reply was that everything was under control.” Axford went on to ask if the festival couldn’t assign some festival task to the Rotary, Kinsmen or Lion’s Club. “It is rather fruitless,” Axford continued, “for someone to stir up support and then have a meeting (and be) told that support is not wanted.”

Attendance at the 1967 festival declined further to 750. The Yorkton Film Council had run out of steam and out of money, too. Nettie wrote James Milliken, chairman of the Yorkton Arts Board and a partner

in the law firm where she worked. The festival needed a \$200 loan. There was only \$32 in the bank account. One can only imagine Nettie Kryski's embarrassment.

The very careful treasurer had to ask her boss for money to bail out her beloved festival. In the spring of 1968, the few remaining members of the Yorkton Film Council met to organize the 1969 festival. The following spring, Dave Sharples, NFB representative from Regina, reported that the committee had informally decided it was "too late" and they were "too little" to carry on. The Yorkton Film Council decided to disband.

A disappointed Nettie, for twenty years YFC secretary, made an appointment with the mayor, Allan Bailey. She wanted to leave the valued guest book with the City. She thought the book was important. It contained the signatures of all the visiting dignitaries from foreign embassies and from the Canadian film industry. She wanted to let Yorkton's most influential citizen know the festival was about to close. Allan talked over the situation with his wife, Colleen, a dynamo in the local arts community and a future woman of influence on the Saskatchewan and Canadian Arts scene. Colleen and Allan Bailey would not see the festival die.

A new festival committee was formed. The first task was to seek funding from the NFB, the Canada Council and the Saskatchewan Arts Board. According to Dave Sharples, the NFB and Canada Council refused the festival's grant applications, but the Saskatchewan Arts Board came through handsomely. Margaret El Deiry asked local businesses and individuals to sponsor the event. Colleen Bailey took on the challenge of publicity. Before her marriage, she had been a journalist with the Winnipeg Tribune. Thanks largely to her contacts, the festival received coverage in the Montreal Star, the Globe and Mail and film industry journals. It was a new beginning. The determination and commitment of the festival committee would see the festival through the transformative change of the 1970s.

1969 – 1979: Change

In the fifties and sixties, the festival was a local event meant to educate and entertain the people of Yorkton. With the advent of television, more and more people preferred their entertainment in the comfort of the sofa rather than the hard folding chairs at the collegiate auditorium. Things at the festival needed to change.

The first step to transformation was the appointment of committed creative leaders to the board of directors: Colleen Bailey, Laurence Pearson, Elwyn Vermette, and Brian Woodward. Their work as individuals with a committed executive and group of volunteers took the event from near death in 1969 to an explosive growth by the end of the decade. The first of these individuals was Colleen Bailey.

Colleen Bailey

In 1969, Colleen brought her considerable skills to the role of festival publicity coordinator. She encouraged coverage of the festival through her network of colleagues and friends in newspapers outside of Saskatchewan, namely the Montreal Star, the Globe and Mail, and film industry journals. A former journalist with the Winnipeg Tribune, Colleen had contacts across the country.



Colleen Bailey

But more than this network in the journalist fraternity, Colleen had that ability to motivate and involve others. It is reported that one local described her as “the dynamo behind all the inertia” associated with the festival.

“That Colleen Bailey,” Eileen Dellow said. “She could talk you into anything. There I was tears streaming down my face chopping onions and with a baby sitter at home looking after the kids, too.” The onions were for one of the very popular after theatre parties.

In 1971, Colleen became chairperson of the board. Under her leadership, the festival found qualified film industry people to adjudicate the films and widened the contact list to include more independent filmmakers. The strategy was successful. In 1973, the number of entries tripled. In 1975, the flood of films to the competition rose to an all time high of 304.

It seemed that Colleen’s work with the Yorkton International Film Festival was the springboard to a lifetime of involvement in the arts and the wider community. Colleen was:

- A founding shareholder and Vice-President and CEO of NorthEastern CableVision in Yorkton
- President of Saskcable and Vice-President of the Canadian Cable Television Association
- Member of the Board of Directors of SaskPower
- Member of the Yorkton Arts Council
- Founding member and first president of the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC)
- Member of the Saskatchewan Arts Board (1970-1975) and president (2000-2006)
- Founding board member of the Saskatchewan Foundation of the Arts
- Member of the Canadian Society of Decorative Arts
- Regional Director of Encounters with Canada, the Terry Fox Foundation
- Board member of any number of other organizations, local, provincial and national

Colleen Bailey contributed enormously to the city, the province and the nation. Her life modeled the qualities most needed in a leader – energy, enthusiasm, commitment and determination, qualities the Yorkton Film Festival recognized as key to the preservation of the event in 1969 and to its transformation during the 1970s.

Laurence Pearson

Laurence Pearson became President of the Yorkton International Film Festival in 1973. He was a teacher and the father of a young family who still managed to devote tons of volunteer time to the festival.

Picture one scene in which he was involved. On tables in a basement room of the Yorkton Regional High School were stacks of films, big round circular cans for the longer films, smaller tins for those shorter in length. There were the splicing tools and cement, for invariably a film would break during screening. Previewing was a long process, a daunting task for folks with families who held full time jobs.

“We really were a bunch of amateurs,” said Laurence Pearson. “We wondered if we were really the people for the job.”



Laurence Pearson

During the 1970s, the board changed the system of previewing films. In 1979, Gary Deane, audio-visual coordinator with the Regina Public Library, previewed the films. One year later, Roger Trottier, a liaison officer with SaskMedia, joined him. In 1981, four people with theatre and film backgrounds previewed the films. The increase reflected the daunting nature of the task.

The upside to the new system was that filmmakers could be assured that their work was being previewed by people with a film background. It was a major step forward.

In addition, Laurence and the other members of the festival board looked to enhance the credibility of the festival by engaging high profile quality adjudicators. The 1971 festival adjudication panel included:

- Frank Morriss, long time columnist and entertainment editor with the *Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Globe and Mail*, and the *Winnipeg Tribune*
- Jean Oser, film editor and lecturer at the University of Saskatchewan at Regina
- Graydon Gould, television actor

In a report following the 1971 festival, Laurence wrote: “The purpose of using the services of such men was to give an air of professionalism. By using them we could assure filmmakers that their films would receive fair treatment in selection. And by using professionals we hoped to be able to attract more film producers to show their best film.”

With assistance of the representatives of the National Film Board, including Ches Yetman, the festivals in the 1970s were able to attract professionals, the “cool cats” that would attract more filmmakers and more coverage for the festival nationally and internationally.

Elwyn Vermette

“Who is that fellow with the beard?” asked a Saskatchewan researcher and historian. “He seemed to be everywhere.”

Elwyn Vermette was everywhere when it came to the Yorkton International Film Festival. He played a huge role as organizer, projectionist, board member, and “fix-it guy”.

Elwyn first became involved in the festival as spectator in 1969, the first year he and his wife, Marie, moved to Yorkton. In 1971, he became a member of the board and in 1973, festival president.

“I’ve always been a film buff,” Elwyn explained. “In addition, I was doing my Master’s in Audio-Visual Communication. The festival was a fit.”

A teacher at the Composite Junior High, Elwyn organized a new approach to education in Industrial Arts by setting up activity stations: photography, graphic arts, electricity, and computers. The activity stations required students to work independently using A-V materials as instructional tools. In addition to his class work, Elwyn ran an Audio-Visual Club for students particularly interested in film and A-V equipment. When a technician was required to run projectors for the closed screenings for festival adjudicators, Elwyn called on his students, then moved onto the Yorkton Regional High School, to act as technicians. The adjudicators were impressed.



Elwyn Vermette

Nowhere was Elwyn’s dedication to the festival more evident than the decision of the board to employ an Executive Director. Money was short and so the Vermettes agreed to house Don Humphries, the new employee. He stayed with the family for three months before finding a run-down house in the Jedburgh area.

“There was always pressure to move the festival away from Yorkton, to Saskatoon or Regina,” Elwyn added. “But we had the system, the energy, and the volunteers. It was doubtful if Saskatoon or Regina could match any of the three. I was unwilling to see the festival slide away for even one year because then I knew it was done for in Yorkton. I dug in my heels. I knew as long as the granting organizations were willing to fund us, we’d be okay.”

“The festival is important,” he concluded. “If people know about Yorkton, quite often they’ll know about it for the festival. It gives the city a profile.”

Brian Woodward

“Brian believed in the SCCO.” Those words of Paul Fudge, managing director of the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations, summed up the role of Brian Woodward in the formation of the organization that was to become SaskCulture in the 1990s.

In 1974, the provincial government established the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund. The purpose of the fund was to provide money to eligible, non-profit volunteer organizations in the areas of sport, culture and recreation.

The system as it existed (and still exists) in Saskatchewan is unique to the province. It provided for an umbrella organization for each sport, culture and recreation. Of the fund available from the Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund, sport would receive 50%, culture 40%, and recreation 10%. Each of these three communities would elect a peer group to determine eligibility and to distribute the funds. It would operate at arms length from government.

SaskSport already existed as an umbrella organization as did the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association. There was no such group for the cultural organizations within the province, a frustrating situation for the government and SaskSport, who had been named the receiving agency for lottery funds. These cultural group, numbering 25 in total, were as diverse as the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association, the Saskatchewan Genealogy Society, the Saskatchewan Writers Guild and the Saskatchewan Arts Board. It was a mess – a mess with loud, diverse and competing voices at the table.



Brian Woodward

The Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations (SCCO) came out of that mess. SaskSport took the leadership role in pushing for the new umbrella organization, arguing that it was to the advantage of culture to have one voice at the table in talking to government.

The representatives of the various cultural organizations were called to a meeting to discuss the formation of the SCCO. The Yorkton International Film Festival Society was asked to represent film in the province. There were very few Saskatchewan filmmakers and in the late 1970s, there was really no movie industry either. The Yorkton Film Festival was a major player in film and it had a national reputation.

“That’s why it was chosen to represent film as a cultural entity,” Fudge said. Brian Woodward, president of the Yorkton International Film Festival, was the festival’s representative at a meeting of the province’s cultural organizations. From that meeting, he was appointed as board member and then president.

“The Yorkton International Film Festival played an important role in the formation of SCCO,” Fudge continued, “Brian Woodward especially. There were really strong voices at the table who felt that SaskSport was pushing them into something that they didn’t want, that lottery funds were being siphoned off to an unnecessary level of bureaucracy. In addition, some of the member organizations took a jaundiced view of other members at the table.” Brian faced dissension and antagonism. “In the end, Brian Woodward brought people together,” Fudge concluded. “Within the first year, even the doubters felt SCCO was useful.”

Brian Woodward was able to reduce dissension and bring in a spirit of conciliation and cooperation to the cultural community in the province. Job well done, Brian.

1969 – 1979: Change – Film, Food and Fun

Opening night for the 1969 festival was Wednesday October 22 at the Anne Portnuff Theatre. The new venue resolved the question asked at the 1964 festival when Grant Mclean of the NFB complained about the inadequacies of the gymnasium at the old Yorkton Collegiate Institute. The new theatre was a beautiful facility – good acoustics, comfortable seating, a large screen. The problem of a declining audience still remained however. The solution – one devised by Allan and Colleen Bailey – was the after-theatre social. The films were good, but more than that, the parties were fun.

Thursday evening, the Anne Portnuff was full to capacity. After the films 250 people flocked to the German beer garden. The hall was decorated with cuckoo clocks from the Black Forest, brightly coloured travel posters, and flower filled baskets. Roman Onufrijchuk wandered from table to table playing his accordion while waiter Steve Oucharek kept a steady supply of schnapps flowing. The late evening supper consisted of bierocks (meat filled pocket pastries), sausages, hot potato salad, wiener schnitzel, sauerkraut and black bread.

The food and the fun created the buzz around town that guaranteed a standing room only crowd at the Friday screening. The highlight of the evening was the appearance of the Chidori Kai Choir during intermission. The after-theatre party was even more exotic than the German beer garden. Japanese lanterns decorated the hall. Tomokiko Hayashi, the Japanese consul at Winnipeg, his wife and friends, prepared platters of “typical Japanese food.”

Did the plan work? It certainly did. “Attendance at the three-day event was believed to be the highest of any of the previous festivals as near-capacity audiences were present every night.”

Dave Sharples of the NFB reported:

During three days of the festival a most interesting phenomenon was observed: where the first day started out as “just another day”, the tempo increased the second day until, on the street, it was quite normal to observe conversations relating to the festival. On the final day, most conversations actually related to this festival and it was unusual to hear dialogues on any other subject which did not eventually veer to the festival. By the final night, the “in thing” to do was to attend the festival and to attend the social evening following. Festival Fever was really at a high pitch. I have never previously experienced anything like it in this field; one could smell “film festival” in the air as the locals savoured its aroma.

The Yorkton International Film Festival had taken a new and exciting direction. Film, food and fun – a winning combination.

1969 – 1979: Change – “An Eyeball Blistering Task”

Then there was what the *Western Producer* called the “eyeball blistering task” of prescreening. In 1969, a local committee previewed the entries in order to select those for presentation to the public and to

ensure that the film was placed in the correct category. The final judging by a panel of professional adjudicator took place during closed screenings. The problem was that those filmmakers whose films were rejected by a local volunteer committee before reaching the professional adjudication state were not pleased. Following the 1969 Festival, a recommendation was made that “the preliminary screening be done by qualified professional or semi-professional film critics rather than by volunteer amateurs.”

At the 1971 Festival, Frank Morriss, entertainment editor with the *Winnipeg Free Press* and Jean Oser, professor at the University of Saskatchewan at Regina, took on the task of prescreening as well as being members of the adjudication panel. The festival board note that “the purpose of using the services of such men was to give an air of professionalism.” Film makers would be assured their films would receive fair treatment in selection and so they would be more likely to submit their best films.

In 1973, the board predicted an increase in the number of entries and extended its three-day event to a week. Good thinking. The number of entries tripled. The reason why was difficult to determine. Perhaps, the 1971 prescreening by professionals was one reason. Perhaps, an all-out effort to reach beyond the embassy crowd was another, a necessity given that the embassies were submitting fewer entries. The festival sent out more than 1500 letters to independent film producers asking they consider the Yorkton International Film Festival. Perhaps, media promotion played a role as well. Perhaps, all three had significant impact. In any case, the entries rolled in.

In 1975, the festival received a stunning 304 entries. The task of prescreening and adjudication was overwhelming. Consensus was that the system had to change.

In 1979, Gary Deane, former festival board member and the audio-visual coordinator for the Regina Public Library, was asked to prescreen the films prior to the festival and select those adjudication.

“It was a great opportunity,” Gary said. “In 1979, I watched the films by myself. I felt the weight of responsibility, but still I felt honoured to be selected to do it.”

Gary had studied film at Sir George Williams University in Montreal. “I think I spent more time at university in movie theatres than I did in class,” Gary added.

In 1980 (when the festival moved from a biennial to an annual event) the task was divided between Gary Deane and Roger Trottier. They reduced the number of films for adjudication from 160 to 83. Still for everyone an “eyeball blistering” experience.



Gary Deane

Adjudication Today

The Yorkton Film Festival works with a jury committee chosen from the film industry people from across Canada. This group determines the rules and regulations for entries to the festival. In particular, it redefines categories, sets up new categories, and eliminates those that are no longer relevant. It is the filmmaker's responsibility to ensure their entry meets the requirement of the particular category they are entering.

The most important responsibility of the jury committee is film adjudication. In consultation with the Yorkton Film Festival office, the committee chooses jury heads, experts in the particular category of film they are adjudicating. It is the responsibility of the jury head to choose four or five other members to sit on their adjudication panel. That panel then gathers together to watch the films. The first time the panel members judge the films within the category and determine the winner within the category. They then watch the films a second time and make recommendations for:

- Craft Awards: Best Director – Fiction, Best Director – Non-Fiction, Best Research
- Special Awards: Emerging Filmmaker, Ruth Shaw Best of Saskatchewan
- Best of Festival

It is a careful process that seeks fairness for all entries. Adjudicators are no longer local people. They represent all regions of the country and various sectors of the film industry to ensure that the Golden Sheaf retains its status as an award worth winning. The adjudication process is a far cry from one adjudicator holed away in a cubby hole at the office of the Yorkton International Film Festival watching film after film after film...

1969 – 1979: Change – The Cool Cats

In 1968, the board decided the festival needed adjudicators of national and international stature, the "cool cats" whose presence would say to film makers – "Hey, I'm here. Why aren't you?" In addition to the naming of very credible people to the panel, the board sought to find a balance among the three adjudicators by finding people to represent three sectors from the film community: a technician, a critic and a director or actor.

Members of the 1969 adjudication panel fit the profile. They were people seen as credible within the Canadian industry and they represented a cross section of roles in the filmmaking process. Eva Langbord was Talent Development and Liaison Officer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) while Guy Beaulne was the Director General of Theatre and Drama Conservatories, Province of Quebec. Satindar Kumar, former film columnist with the Indian Express, Dehli, was drafted as film critic. Kumar worked for the local television station.



Roger Trottier

Some of the “cool cats” of the 1969 – 1979 period included:

- Frank Morriss, arts editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, (1971)
- Micheline Lanctot, actor, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravetz* (1975)
- John Hofsess, film critic, *Maclean's*, (1975)
- Don Owen, film maker for the National Film Board (1977)
- George Anthony, editor and film critic of the *Toronto Sun* (1977)
- Barry Morse, actor and star of the television series *The Fugitive*, (1979)



Elwyn Vermette and actor Barry Morse, 1979

Most importantly, there was money. The Saskatchewan Arts Board, realizing the importance of this festival and its objectives, assisted with the selection of the adjudicators and provided funds for their travel and fees.

Finding the cool cats was not always so easy. Those wishing to be “helpful” suggested the festival “try to obtain the adjudicators early!” Good luck. An actor or director could not guarantee a year in advance that they would be available and even if they signed a contract, that contract would mean nothing if a better offer appeared. For example, Gerald Prately, founder of the Ontario Film Institute and a director with the Stratford International Film Festival, backed out in August 1971 leaving the festival only two months to find his replacement. The Saskatchewan Deputy Minister of Culture and Youth suggested Donald Sutherland in his place! Lord Snowden, Gordon Pinsent, and Norman Jewison were unavailable as well. Finding adjudicators remained forever a project in chasing the “cool cats”.

For more information on the cool cats:

[Frank Morris](#)

[Micheline Lanctot](#)

John Hofsess; in 1991, John Hofsess formed the controversial Right to Die Society of Canada.

[Don Owen](#)

[George Anthony](#)

[Barry Morse](#)

1969 – 1979: Change – Money Was a Good Thing! It Still Is...

By 1975, the need for an increased revenue stream was pressing. The ever expanding demands of the festival had pushed the event beyond the time and energy of a volunteer group. The Yorkton International Film Festival Society needed an employee – preferably more than one, but at least one.

Around the board table in that little office above the bowling alley sat the local people who had dedicated their all to the festival, but given the demands of the festival their all could not be enough. They needed staff. They needed money. The only way to get it was to change their beloved festival. It was a case of do or die. With Elwyn Vermette as chair and the ever-faithful Nettie Kryski as secretary, the board made the momentous decision, the transformative change that would dictate the direction of the festival for the next 37 years. The board rejected its thirty year concentration on international film in favour of a competition limited to Canadian productions. With the change, the festival would qualify for government grants. Money was a good thing.

At the same time, the executive decided to apply for a charitable tax number so that those giving donations could receive a receipt for income tax purposes. Jim Milliken, president of the Yorkton Arts Council when the organization loaned the group \$200 to keep them afloat, stepped up once again and helped with the legal work.

In early 1977, Don Humphries was employed as the festival's first Executive Secretary. By April 1, the festival had run out of money and the board was forced to take out a loan. Later that month and probably in sync with the new fiscal year, grant cheques began to arrive:

- Canada Council (\$5000)
- Sask. Sport Trust Fund (\$3,150) to cover adjudication costs
- Sask. Sport Trust Fund (\$2,625) to cover half the salary and expenses of the Executive Secretary
- City of Yorkton (\$500)

The festival was saved, at least temporarily. And so began the never-ending pursuit of grants and funding to keep the festival afloat.

Ironically, even though they had moved to a Canadian format, the board members decided to retain the international aspect of the festival by screening foreign films – film not permitted to be a part of the competition. The board members thought the public might not accept the move to a Canadian format. Quite likely, the board, too, was leery of the change.

In 1977, the festival received funding for its first cash prize. The Queen City Junior Film Festival in Regina was disbanding – not for lack of interest, their members said, but because of a lack of good children's film. They decided to take some of their cash (\$2000) and create a fund for the encouragement of films about children for children.

In 2012, after 35 years, that \$2000 is long gone, but the initiative begun in 1977 continues. There are now three cash awards available:

- The Founder's Award - \$500 – a production showing historical Canadian characters or events
- Kathleen Shannon Award (National Film Board) - \$1000 – an independent filmmaker whose production focus is a minority community
- Ruth Shaw Best of Saskatchewan Award - \$500 – awarded to a Saskatchewan production

In the 1970s, money was a good thing. It still is.

1969 – 1979: Change – Learning the Trade

In the 1970s, the board began to offer workshops. In 1971 and 1973, this effort was limited, but by the end of the decade, the festival had succeeded in attracting well known facilitators from the Canadian film industry. A quick look at the list below proves the point. The workshops attracted filmmakers to the festival and also enhanced the reputation of the festival as a competition of some stature.

1969: Wayne Morgan, resident artist from Weyburn, led a seminar on film making for high school students.

1971: Thirty-two local high school students attended a workshop given by Lee Coxama of Moose Jaw and Roger Paradise and Jim Hill of Regina.



Students registering for the 1971 workshop.

1973: The Western Producer reported that young independent filmmakers had come to the festival to see film, talk shop and join the regular contingent of embassy representatives and film executives in the social festivities which Yorkton did so well. The interaction was an education of sorts, but there were no formalized workshops.

1975: First biennial Western Canadian Film

Makers Workshop. The panel for discussion of the Future of Film in Canada were:

- Larry Hertzog, CTV's Program Director, producer – *Why Shoot the Teacher?*
- Allan King, independent film maker, a pioneer of the Cinema Verite technique and director- *Who Has Seen the Wind*
- Ken Black, CBC's assistant director of TV information programs
- Ted Rouse, Canadian Film Development Corporation
- Fil Fraser of Fraser Communications Ltd. of Edmonton, Executive Producer – *Why Shoot the Teacher?*

1977: Second biennial Western Canadian Film Makers workshop. The panel for discussion of Making a Living in Canada as a Filmmaker were:

- Jerry McNabb, president of the Canadian Film Makers Distribution Centre, Toronto
- Allan Palmer, chief of the Media Research Division of the NFB
- Hector Ross, president of Rokemay Theatres of Calgary
- Larry Hertzog, CTV Network Director of film and drama
- James Henry, North American representative for the Australian Film Commission
- Connie Tadros, editor of "Cinema Canada"



Attending the 1977 Western Canadian Film Makers Workshop panel

A workshop about the creative side of film making was conducted by Tom Radford, winner of many Golden Sheaf Awards including *Ernest Brown*, *Pioneer Photographer* (Best of Festival 1973), *The Man who Chooses Bush* (Best Film, Best Documentary, Best Cinematography, Best Direction, 1975), *Tommy Douglas: Keeper of the Flame* (Antoinette Kryski Canadian Heritage Award of \$500, 1987).

A Trade Day was held as a marketing initiative for Canadian filmmakers, distributors, and writers. 1979: Lothar Wolff, international filmmaker from New York, held a workshop on the Total Picture of Making a Film. Wolff was famous for *Wild, Wild World of Animals*, a 26 episode series for television, and *Other People, Other Places*, a 52 episode series for television. He was joined by Beverly Shaffer, who was famous for *I'll Find a Way*, which won an Oscar in 1978.

The workshops attracted more and more filmmakers to the festival, clearly a new direction for an event about to fail only one decade earlier.

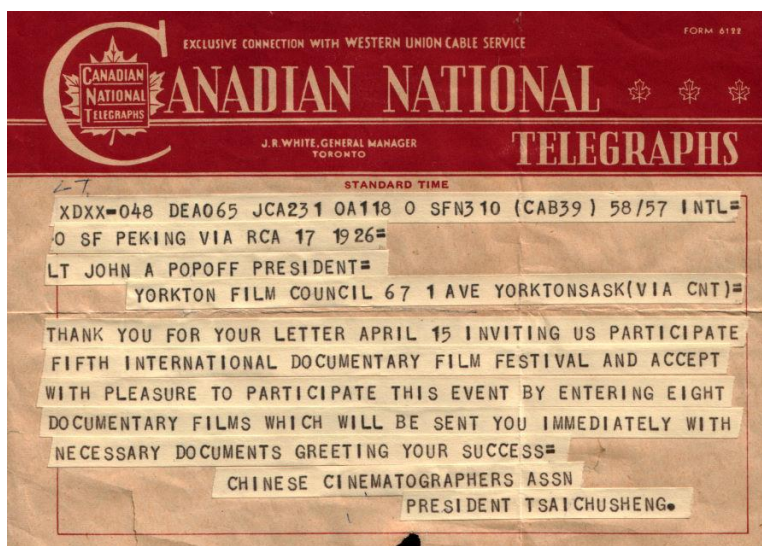
1971 – A Message to Venice

In 1971, the Venice Film Festival mistakenly proclaimed that it was the first to receive film entries from Red China. The following message was sent from Yorkton Festival organizers to the Venice Film Festival.

*"So you're three years older than we are. So what.
So you have the Golden Lion. We have the Golden Sheaf.
So you're international and we aren't. We used to be and we decided not to be. Like the beer, we're Canadian. We're here to celebration the best of our own country.
So you have Al Pacino a Career Golden Lion. Despite his name, he's American, not Italian. We celebrate the best in our own industry. Gordon Pinsent is just one of them. He came and drank our scotch not once but twice.
So China submitted a film to your glorious festival in 1971. You crowed that for the first time the People's Republic had participated in an international motion picture event. It's time to eat that crow, Venice. In our archives we have a telegram received from the Chinese Cinematographers Association, a telegram*

that entered not one but eight films in our 1956 competition. In 1962 and 1964, we saw three films from the People's Republic of China: *Landscape Painting*, *Great Hall of People* and *On Night Duty*. Clearly, Venice, you...were...wrong.

To all the film festivals of the world, we're Canadian and we're here and we're here to stay. And our message to Venice: take your impertinence and stick it up your nose."



Telegram from 1956 Competition from Chinese Cinematographers Association

1958 and 1977: The Golden Sheaf

From 1950 through 1956, there was no Golden Sheaf award. The Yorkton International Film Festival was truly a People's Choice event. The viewers saw all the entries and determined by ballot the best film in each category. Certificates of Merit were issued based on the judgement of a Yorkton audience, main street Canada if you will.

In 1956, the Yorkton Film Council moved from a People's Choice format to a team of three adjudicators. It was their role to view the films and determine the winners. Frank Morriss, entertainment editor with the *Winnipeg Free Press*, was one of the members of that first team. At the end of the three-day event, he concluded that Yorkton should have a grand prize, something that would represent the area, something would become a respected image of the festival. What better symbol, he thought, than the golden wheat he had seen on his travels from Winnipeg to Yorkton?

He suggested the Film Council adopt a wheat motif and that the award be called the Golden Sheaf. His idea met with unanimous approval. The Winnipeg Brass Company was commissioned to design and produce the first Golden Sheaf. In 1958, the first trophy was awarded to a Czech film, *Inspiration*.

In the 1960s, probably the brass award was expensive, the Council moved to a new design opting for the traditional engraved metal plaque and then for an acrylic stand-alone trophy.

In the mid-1970s, the board decided that the festival needed a truly unique award. Saskatchewan Government Insurance agreed to provide a grant of \$1,250, the moneys to be awarded to the artist of the winning design. The artists selected for the closed competition included Joe Fafard, Jerry Didur, Rick Gomes, Ruth Welsh and Russell Yuristy, all Saskatchewan residents.

Didur won the competition. He described his design as “an abstraction of the top half of a strike of wheat using an artesco-type of design.” Symbolic wheat heads would be etched onto the top shafts. The sheaf would sit on a stylized film reel, also cast in bronze. Both components would be cast separately and anchored to a walnut base. The new trophy would stand 18 inches high.

The board decided that the concept was too difficult to reproduce in quantity and called on Jim Trinder of Yorkton to come up with another idea. His design has become the icon of the festival, the stylized Golden Sheaf of today.

In 1977, *High Grass Circus*, an NFB production, won the first redesigned Golden Sheaf. However, because of production problems, it was not available for presentation at the festival. Dave Sharples of the NFB Regina office accepted the trophy for the film in November.

In 1979, the unthinkable happened. Barry Morse, film adjudicator and star of *The Fugitive*, rose to announce the best of festival. He shuffled his papers and then to the dismay of all, he said that the three adjudicators would not be handing out that newly designed thirty pound Golden Sheaf. He said that the three adjudicators felt that “it would be somewhat ‘grotesque’ to pick out one top film in the festival; a festival which had seen the best Canadian short films ever entered. It would be almost impossible to pick out the almighty from the almighty...the films are all terrific. This year, there are no losers. Everyone who has entered or participated in this event is a winner. All have won just by being here.”

The Golden Sheaf went back to the office. It could be used the following year when the festival moved from a biennial to an annual event.

The Office

Glory be! In 1977, the Yorkton International Film Festival moved into its own digs, an office above the Yorkton Public Library on Broadway between Third and Fourth Avenues. The City of Yorkton was willing to rent the space for a nominal fee, something the organization could afford. The festival shared the space with Brown’s Survey Limited.

That year Don Humphries was hired in February as the first and only festival employee. His first priority was the organization of a crew to paint the new premises. A photo in the March 23 edition of the *Yorkton This Week* showed Jim Huziak, Ernie Styba and the newly appointed executive secretary hard at work. A few days later, Humphries waxed the floor and the festival had an office...of sorts. Shelia Harris described the premises as small and the bathroom as grungy.

In 1979, the festival along with its neighbour, Brown’s Survey, moved next door to space above the Yorkton Bowl Arena. The area was bigger with two windows that fronted on Broadway. Another photo



The office in 1977.

in the *Yorkton This Week* showed two volunteers hanging banners from those windows, a banner announcing the good news of another Yorkton International Film Festival.

The festival came to benefit just one year later from the vision of Janette Dean. According to *Windows on our History*, she “made the dream of a permanent facility for the cultural activities of Yorkton a reality” with the donation of \$500,000 towards the construction of a building to be named in memory of her late husband, Godfrey. Four

community cultural groups, including the Yorkton International Film Festival, mounted a campaign to raise additional funds.

In 1981, the Godfrey Dean Cultural Centre opened its doors and the festival had a permanent home.

The Gala: Before and After



Inside the Anne Portnuff Theatre

Before

In the 1970s, the Anne Portnuff Theatre was the venue for the Golden Sheaf Awards. The auditorium, seating capacity 750, was nearly empty. Around town, there was no excitement, no buzz, no prestige.

“Look,” said Morris Stakiw pointing at the picture. “No hoopla. It was unbelievable, so I talked to the guys in the Kinsmen and we decided the festival needed a banquet.” Morris, long time festival supporter, is the son of Stan Stakiw, one of the founding members of the Yorkton Film Council.

In 1980, the Kinsmen initiated the first gala in fine Yorkton style: a dinner with the requisite perogies and cabbage rolls, the Golden Sheaf presentations, film clips from the winning entries and a foot-stompin’ old time dance. There was a scramble for tickets.

After

For the last number of galas, winners have come from across Canada to accept their awards. There were clips from the nominated films. In 2011, Shelia Coles, popular show host at CBC, emceed the event. Outside there were the paparazzi (played by the actors of Yorkton’s community theatre group, Paper Bag Players). There was excitement.

A far cry from the nearly-empty Ann Portnuff Theatre of the 1970s.



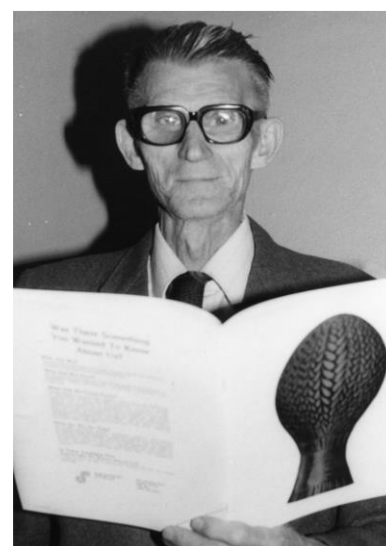
Gala Night, 2007 festival

Better Entries at the Film Festival

Adam Tokaruk said in an interview with the *Yorkton Enterprise* that over the years he has seen improvement in the films entered in the festival. He explained that the improvements were based on better photography and colour.

Adam should know. From 1972 to 1980, he attended nearly all the screenings of films at the Yorkton International Film Festival. In addition, Tokaruk, a festival committee member, participated in the prescreening process that was used to sort the entries into categories.

That meant he watched all the films not once but twice – a big advantage, he said, because that we he retained more detail from the films.



1981: Video Introduced – Why Not?

It took some discussion. It took some persuasion. There were those around the executive table who thought that film, the celluloid tradition, was the real thing, that video was an upstart destined to hit the scrap heap of failed technologies. Besides, some argued – it was too expensive – new equipment, new training. Better to stick with the tried and true. There were others more open to change, who saw video technology as the wave of the future.

November 10, 1981, Katherine Lawrence of *The Globe and Mail* reported that Yorkton had just completed its annual film festival. There was no hoopla to announce the introduction of video into the competition. The change simply recognized that the new technology had come into its own. The distinct advantage to video was that it was much more accessible to people seeking an economical way to tell a story visually.



“We saw very good drama this week produced out of Moose Jaw

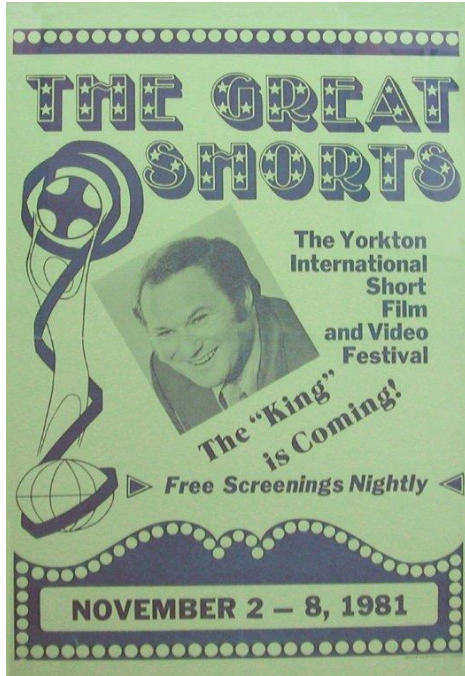
Joseph Dahonick and Diane Labreche unload boxes of film reels

(Saskatchewan) that could never have happened without video,” said adjudicator Bill Nemtin, president of Pacific Cinematheque. *Melanie* was a sensitive documentary about a young woman 4’2 in height, and he struggles to deal with the frustration that comes from being seen as different.

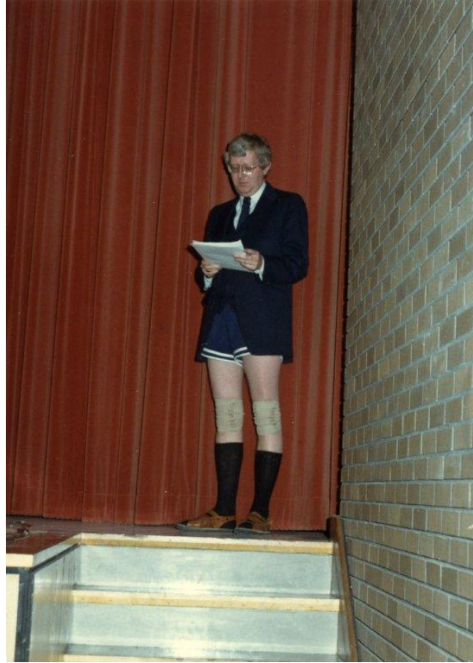
Director Robin Osemiak began the production with a team of volunteers. As word of the project spread through Moose Jaw, people appeared as if by magic – 15 actors, 200 extras, a hairdresser, a make-up artists, a sound technician and actor Faye Sopick as Melanie. The capital for the project was \$57. The video won the \$500 cash award for the depiction of a person with a handicap.

The Person’s Case by ACCESS Alberta was named the outstanding video production of the festival. It told the story of the Famous Five, the struggle of five prairie women for recognition as person in law. It won top awards for actress Frances Hyland and director John Wright.

That same year, the festival introduced the notion of The Great Shorts, the title of the festival program. If video crept on silent cat paws into the festival, the “shorts” pranced in as rollicking comedy. Bill Johnston, the master of ceremonies for the gala, stepped to the podium in tails, a formal white shirt, and shorts, attire normally worn by members of the local basketball team. He and Al Waxman in a conservative suit, paraded through the crowd arm in arm. The move from feature length to short documentaries entered the festival with “style” and panache.



1981 Festival Poster



Bill Johnston and his shorts, 1981

Over the next thirty years, the festival would continue to adapt to changing film technologies. Celluloid film has disappeared. The film projectors are now artifacts to decorate the festival office. Three-quarter inch video tape has given way to half-inch only to be replaced today by the DVD.

No more does a trip to the bus depot mean a trunk load of film reels. Videos arrive in padded envelopes. The staff records the pertinent information before they are reshipped for adjudication teams across the country.

With the increasing use of the internet, the waves of change will continue to lap against the shores of the festival, eroding the old, carving a new landscape. It is sure that the Yorkton Film Festival will be there to adapt to the seas of change.

1983: Festival Receives National Award

In May 1983, the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival won the Dorothy and Oscar Burritt Memorial Award.

The award was a \$1,500 prize given to a volunteer group or individual by the Canadian Federation of Film Societies to honour the work of the Burritts in the Canadian Film Society movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

Saskatchewan Showcase

When the festival inaugurated a prize in 1980 for the best entry from a Saskatchewan filmmaker, the award was not given simply because there were no entries. Festival organizers called the lack a major disappointment.

One year later, things seemed to turn around with the introduction of video into the completion. The new technology was much more accessible to the emerging filmmaker. It required less in the way of capital and more in the way of collaboration with the local television community.



Doug McDougall, 1984

Just three years later there had been a significant change. At the festival's annual meeting Doug McDougall, festival chairman, announced a new competition, Saskatchewan Showcase. The competition was meant to encourage the film industry in the province. The festival was chosen to organize the new event because it had the staff and the expertise.

The first annual Saskatchewan Showcase was held in Yorkton. Ches Yetman of the National Film Board and Peter Haynes of Cintel Productions acted as adjudicators. The event included:

- A workshop on "How you can make a feature movie for \$35,000"
- Screenings
- Awards and cash prizes of \$3,000

Included at the showcase was a panel discussion of Saskatchewan government policy in regards to the motion picture industry in the province.

As the organization began for the event, Shelia Harris, executive director, reported that she expected 25 films, videos, and slide presentations in the competition. In fact, the event attracted 50 entries. Charles Konowal of Regina won best overall production for his NFB Film, *Grain Elevator*.

From zero to fifty in just four years – a sure sign of film industry growth in the province, an encouraging promise for the future.

1985: SMPIA Formed at Festival

In the 1980s, there was tension among film makers within the province, a tension based on too many seeking too little work. Paul Fudge, executive secretary of the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations, was called on to facilitate the formation of a new organization to resolve the problem, to

foster growth of the film as an industry. Fudge began by setting up a committee to draft bylaws for the group.

"I was nervous going into that meeting held during the 1985 Yorkton festival," he said. "Thank goodness I didn't know about the animosities among some of the filmmakers." In the end, all went well; the day ended with the formation of the Saskatchewan Motion Picture Industry Association (SMPIA) with Don List as its first president.

List stated that the objectives for the new organization were extensive:

- To provide a forum for discussion and decision-making for its members
- To provide leadership
- To foster cooperation
- To gather and disseminate information
- To promote the values and benefits of the industry

In other words, to foster the growth of a fledgling film industry in the province.

List stated that increasing the association membership would be the group's greatest challenge. In Alberta, a similar organization comprised more than a hundred members, while in Saskatchewan the group only had forty on the roll.

"The industry in Saskatchewan is developing," List said. "It's growing. It's just a matter of tapping some of the resources of the people and making this thing grow."

Just one year later, the differences between the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival and SMPIA were apparent. An article in the *Yorkton This Week* explained that SMPIA sought to be recognized as the film community's umbrella organization in the province. As such, it would become the dispenser of provincial lottery money.

The SMPIA proposal was first broached at the festival's AGM in January 1986. Don List, festival board member and SMPIA chairman, requested that the two organizations work more closely together. Film maker Stephen Onda's position seemed more definite.

Onda called the proposal a marriage undertaken with the hope of obtaining more funding. Festival President Laurence Pearson refused to be drawn into a position explaining he was disappointed the festival had not been involved in discussions about "merger" ideas prior to the meeting. The idea was seen by some as a take-over bid by the executive of SMPIA. Several members of SMPIA complained they had not had the opportunity to look at the proposal and questioned why.

Shelia Harris, festival executive director, said the festival's role was to be supportive of filmmakers but at arm's length from



Executive Director Shelia Harris, 1986

them in order to preserve a non-biased approach to the competitive aspect of the festival.

A motion was made to table the motion until the festival in the fall.

At the 1986 festival, Paul Fudge, executive director of the Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations, pooh-poohed the idea that SMPPIA be named the umbrella organization for dispensing of lottery funds. Formed just one year earlier, SMPPIA did not qualify for the designation because it had not been incorporated for the required two years.

Elwyn Vermette, vice-president of the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival board, said there was a feeling that “the tail was trying to wag the dog.” He didn’t see the SMPPIA proposal as a threat to the future of the Yorkton festival.

In 1987, SMPPIA was named the umbrella organization for film in the province and thereby responsible for the administration of moneys received from lottery funding. By 1992, the funding from the Saskatchewan Trust Fund to the festival had decreased by more than 40%.

Money – a good thing from the 1970s – continued to be a good thing in the 1980s and 1990s. Its lack created the need for more and more local fund raising and a wider search for grants and sponsorships.

1987: Festival Outreach

“This year, the festival will go all out to involve people in Yorkton and district.”

--Ian Reid, Executive Director

To create enthusiasm and to raise the profile of the annual event, the board and staff organized the Celebrity Slow Pitch Game and Family Party for the Friday night of the festival. It was an invitation for everyone to come and mingle with Canadian filmmakers.

The front page of the *Yorkton This Week* showed slugger Mayor Brian Fromm in fine form as he hit a home run.

The Four-Town Journal, with its offices in Langenburg, reported on a film workshop for grade six to nine students at Saltcoats School.

Alan Pakarnk, an independent filmmaker from Winnipeg was hired through the NFB to work with the students on their own animated films. A premiere of the films was shown the opening night of the festival.

Jerry Krepekevich, former Yorkton resident and filmmaker with the National Film Board, offered a



Community involvement in the 1987 festival; baseball to Babas.

workshop for high school students at North Eastern Cablevision offices.

Brown Bag Lunch Screenings were offered as well as a popular Children's Festival Saturday morning.

The festival hosted a street fair downtown called Cinerama. When the weather was good, the event was a huge success. With wind and rain – well, not so much.

The outreach tradition continues – pancake breakfasts, barbeques, lobster fest. It all makes for a good time at the festival.

The Way Ahead

The history of the festival has been like a stream with its rocky rapids and smooth flow of deep shimmering waters. The 1960s saw the rocky times when attendance at screenings fell and the festival faced closure. In the 1970s, leadership diverted the festival around the danger of collapse to a more productive journey. By the late 1980s, however, the event was once more in troubled waters. The festival, like many arts organizations, struggled to stay afloat. Government, faced with mounting deficits, cut budgets to all its departments and grants to cultural groups. The festival lost 40% of its lottery funding by 1993. The executive director spent more than four months each year on grand applications, the work sometimes to no avail.

For a while, the festival held parallel events to attract local people into the wider world of film, but it didn't seem to work. People flocked to see the gun fight or jousting on 2nd Avenue, but neither had little to do with film. The festival hosted feature length films at the Tower Theatre, but the audience proved sparse.

Then the festival encountered the stream of new media. Filmmakers looked to YouTube for their audience. Netflix and Pay-Per View offered films at any time, any where. It all made a difference. The festival's response was to organize the Golden Sheaf Awards Tours, a program where films were distributed to various organizations across the province. The philosophy was "get the films to the audience rather than the audience to the films." It was a positive re-launch of festival fortunes.

In 2008, Richard Gustin, an SCN executive, came to the festival board at the invitation of then board chairperson, Dean Sauer of the CBC.

"I told Dean I was coming on the board with the idea that we fix it or fold it," said Gustin, now co-chairperson of the board of the Yorkton Film Festival. "I didn't want to see it fold. It was the only Saskatchewan event of its type, but we needed a new map, a new direction."

The waters were definitely choppy.

Given the frustrations, the board struggled with many things, but the discussion came back to the central question – what was the function of the festival in the present. In the past when the festival was

founded, there was no television, no internet and so people flocked to the films hosted by the Yorkton Film Council.

“Today, we are in a universe of 150 television channels and a gazillion things on the internet,” Gustin said. “Film and video are everywhere.”

This is the reality of the film industry today. Yet despite the changes in technology, the filmmaker still returns to the fundamental goal, the desire to communicate, to tell a story. Their role is important.

To meet the challenges, Yorkton is becoming a media or screen festival. “We are establishing competition categories for the new media. We want to attract younger filmmakers and students. We want to bring in our fellow travelers, writers, and musicians. We need to build and strengthen the

community through a collaborative process with like-minded and not-so-like minded people.” Gustin said.

“The festival fosters the building of community,” Gustin continued. “The Golden Sheaf Award allow us to celebrate our successes. The workshops provide the formal learning experience. The events of the festival allow for fellowship, to make the contacts and friendships that foster growth.”

The 65th gives us the chance to look forward, to decide what’s next for the festival. The river downstream promises an exciting journey.

Yorkton Goes to the Oscars

These films were shown at the Yorkton Film Festival and then went on to be nominated for or to win an Oscar.

Year	Title	Filmmaker	Oscar Category	Outcome	YFF Category
1953	Neighbours	Norman McLaren (NFB)	Documentary	Won	3 rd – Sociological 1954
1953	Herring Hunt	Julian Biggs (NFB)	Short Subject	Nomination	2 nd – Agriculture and Industry 1954
1958	City of Gold	Wolf Koenig & Colin Law (NFB)	Live Action	Nomination	1 st – General Category 1958
1960	Universe	Roman Kroitor & Colin Law (NFB)	Doc. Live Action	Nomination	Golden Sheaf (GS) Best of Festival 1967
1967	Paddle to the Sea	Bill Mason (NFB)	Live Action	Nomination	GS – Creative and Experimental 1967
1968	Pas de Deux	Norman McLaren (NFB)	Live Action	Nomination	GS – Best of Festival 1969
1974	La Faim, Hunger	Peter Foldes & Rene Jodoin (NFB)	Animation	Nomination	GS – Animation 1975
1976	Blackwood	Tony Ianzelo & Andy Thompson (NFB)	Short Subject	Nomination	GS – Arts 1977
1977	High Grass Circus	Tony Ianzelo & Torben Schioler (NFB)	Feature Documentary	Nomination	GS – Best of Festival 1977
1981	Crac!	Frederic Back (Radio-Canada)	Animation	Won	GS – Best of Festival 1981
1983	After the Axe	Sturla Gunnarsson (NFB)	Feature Documentary	Nomination	GS – Best Direction 1981

Year	Title	Filmmaker	Oscar Category	Outcome	YFF Category
1983	If You Love this Planet	Terri Nash & Edward Le Lorrain (Independent film for the NFB)	Documentary Feature - Short	Won	GS – Certificate of Merit 1982
1984	Flamenco at 5:15	Cynthia Scott (NFB)	Documentary Short Subject	Won	GS – Fine Arts Production 1984
1985	The Painted Door	Bruce Pittman	Live Action	Nominated	GS – Best Performance, Best Script 1985
1985	Making Overtures	Larry Weinstein (Rhombus Media)	Documentary Short Subject	Nomination	GS – Best of Festival
1988	The Man who Planted Trees	Frederic Back (Radio-Canada)	Animation	Won	GS – Animation 1988
1998	Sunrise over Tiananmen Square	Shui-Bo Wang (NFB)	Short Subject	Nomination	GS – Documentary 1999
2001	Strange Invaders	Cordell Barker (NFB)	Short Animation	Nomination	GS – Jury Award 2002
2004	Hardwood	Hubert Davis (NFB)	Short Subject	Nomination	GS – Best of Festival 2004
2006	The Danish Poet	Torvill Kove (NFB)	Animation	Nomination	GS – Animation 2007

This listing may not be complete. Please advise the festival office if you know of other films that were screened at YFF and were nominated or won an Oscar.

Festival Staff and Board from 1950

Yorkton Film Council

1950

President: Paul Welgan

Vice-president: W. J. Croll

Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette Kryski

Executive: Charles Pachal, Robert. Adamson, Mrs. S. Hunter, Miss K. Francis, Otto Yackel, Mrs. G. Sinclair, Stan Stakiw

Advisor: Jim Lysyshyn, N.F.B. Representative, Canora, Sask.

1951

President: Norman Roebuck

Vice-President: William Stearn

Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette Kryski

Librarian: Stan Stakiw

Chairman of Family Fun Night: Paul Welgan

Other members: Bill Croll, Mrs. Sinclair, Mrs. Warren, Rev. Becker, Rev. Wendon, Mr. Gulalzen, John Uremko, Mr. Jensen, Mr. Skwarchuk

Advisor: Jim Lysyshyn, N.F.B. Representative, Canora, Sask.

1952

President: Wm. Stearn

Vice-president: Rev. L. Wenham

Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski

Finance: Charles Pachal

Publicity: Mrs. George Sinclair (newspaper), Merv Phillips (radio)

Projectionist: John Uremko

Librarian: Stan Stakiw

Social: Mrs. Harold Warren

Program: Rev. Wenham and Paul Welgan

Custodian: Norman Roebuck

Other Members: John Delton, Mr. Gulalzen, Mrs. Welgan, Robert Adamson, Harry Elder, Mr. Greer, William Blommaert (These members are representatives from Yorkton organizations to the Yorkton Film Council)

Advisor: Jim. Lysyshyn, N.F.B. Representative, Canora, Sask.

1953

President: Rev. L. Wenham

Vice-President: Rev. M. MacLean

Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski

Finance: Paul Welgan

Publicity: Mabel Andrews

Projectionist Convener: William Stearn

Librarian and custodian: Stan Stakiw

Social Convener: Mrs. H. Warren

Program: Phil Schick and William Stearn

Other members: Florence Anderson, John Delton, John Popoff, Ruth Shaw, Mr. Bergman (Jim Lysyshyn took a leave of absence June 11, 1953 so he could seek treatment for tuberculosis.)

1954

President: Rev. L. Wenham (Moved to British Columbia; he was replaced by John Popoff April 8, 1954)

Vice-president: E. Bligh

Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski

Finance Convener: Phil Schick

Publicity: Mrs. Paul Welgan
 Anderson Projectionist Convener: John Popoff
 Librarian and custodian: Stan Stakiw
 Social Convener: Ruth Shaw, Mrs. Weldman, Mabel Anderson
 Program: Rev. Becker, Phil Schick, William Stearn
 Other members: Robert Adamson, Mr. Underwood, Mrs. Nordquist
 Advisor: Jim Lysyshyn, N.F.B. Representative, Canora, Sask.

1955

President: Phil Schick
 Vice-President: John Popoff
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Finance: Charles Pachal
 Projectionist Convener: John Popoff
 Librarian and custodian: Stan Stakiw
 Social Convener: Mrs. Nordquist, Mrs. Weldman
 Program: Mr. G. Underwood
 Other members: Rev. Becker, John Ginther

1956

President: John Popoff
 Vice-President: John Ginther
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Finance: Charles Pachal
 Publicity: Ruth Shaw
 Projectionist Convener: John Ginther
 Librarian, custodian and program convener: Stan Stakiw
 Social: Mrs. Nordquist, Mrs. Weldman
 Other members: John Delton, Marie McDonald, Les Hughes, Ella Haacke, Isobel Birt
Festival Planning Committee
 John Popoff, Paul Welgan, Dr. H. A. L. Portnuff, Antoinette Kryski
 Assisted by: Ethel Castleden, Marie McDonald, Rev. Bruss, M. Phillips, Cliff Shaw,
 Isobel Birt, D. Forsyth, William Korb, Mrs. G. Weldman, Mrs. L. Nordquist, Ruth Shaw,
 Mrs. H. Stein., Mrs. D. Marchant, Les Hughes, John Ginther, J. Koshman, R. J. Reid, M.
 Borys, Charles Pachal, Stan. Stakiw

1957

President: John Popoff
 Vice-President: John Ginther
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Finance: Charles Pachal
 Publicity: Ruth Shaw
 Projectionist Convener: John Ginther
 Librarian, custodian and program convener: Stan Stakiw
 Social: Mrs. Nordquist, Mrs. Weldman

1958

President: John Popoff
 Vice-President: John Ginther
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Finance: Charles Pachal
 Publicity: Ruth Shaw
 Projectionist Convener: John Ginther
 Librarian, custodian and program convener: Stan Stakiw
 Social: Mrs. Weldman
 Other member: Isabel Birt

1959

President: John Popoff
 Vice-President: Mrs. D. J. Matheson
 Second Vice-President: Marie MacDonald
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Finance: Charles Pachal and D. Forsyth
 Publicity: Ruth Shaw
 Projectionist: John. Ginther and Cecil Wilcox
 Social: Mrs. G. Weldman

1960

President: John Popoff
 Vice-President: Mrs. D. J. Matheson
 Second Vice-President: Marie MacDonald
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Finance: Charles Pachal and D. Forsyth
 Publicity: Ruth Shaw
 Projectionist: John Ginther and Cecil Wilcox
 Social Mrs. G. Weldman
 Other members: Margaret ElDeiry, George Loewen, Fred Broadfoot, Frances Purves,
 Mrs. Andrews, William Blommaert
Festival Planning Committee
 Publicity: Norman Roebuck convener. Wilf Burney, The Enterprise, Jerry Birch, CKOSTV,
 Bill Graham, CJGX, Mrs. Ruth Shaw, Sifton papers, Miss Marie Macdonald
 Finance D. O. Forsyth, Royal bank manager; Paul Welgen, H. H. Miller
 House: Geoff Smith
 Banquet: Mrs. G. G. Weldman, convener
 Projection: John Popoff convener, Cecil Wilcox, John Ginther
 Hospitality: Nettie Kryski, convener

1961

According the minutes, election of officers was postponed until an unspecified date.

1962

President: John A. Popoff
 First Vice-President: John Ginther
 Second Vice-President: Marie Holoday
 Secretary-treasurer Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski

Festival Planning Committee:

John Popoff, Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski, Mrs. G. E. Weidman, Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Smith, Ruth Shaw, Mrs. H. A. L. Portnuff, John Ginther, Cecil Wilcox, Frances Purves, Doug Munro, Miss E. Gardiner, Mrs. D. Logan, Dr. M. Nieuwenhuizen

1963

Past President: John A. Popoff
 President: Dr. M. Nieuwenhuizen\
 Vice-President: Doug Munro
 Second Vice-President: Hellmut Lang\
 Secretary treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Social Convener: Mrs. D. Logan
 Publicity Convener: Ruth Shaw
 Projection Convener: John Popoff
 Others: Mrs. Weldman, Mrs. Kohlert, Cecil Wilcox, Miss Gardner (film librarian), Frances Purvis

Other members: Ken Dodds, Sam Zeiben,

Festival Planning Committee:

Doug Munro, chairman, Hellmut Lang, Nettie Kryski, Ruth Shaw, Fred Broadfoot

1964

President: Doug Munroe
 First Vice-President: Hellmut Lang
 Second Vice-President: William Blommaert
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Publicity: Ruth Shaw\
 Social Convener: Marianne Lee
 Projectionist Convener: Cecil Wilcox
 Other members: Mrs. G. A. Ives, Mrs. Andrews

1965

There is no record of an election of officers in the minutes for the year 1965.

1966

Past President: Hellmut Lang\
 President: Fred Broadfoot
 Vice President Mrs. W. Andrews
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Publicity: Margaret ElDeiry
 Social Convener: Mrs. G. A. Ives
 Projectionist: Cecil Wilcox

1967

President: Fred Broadfoot
 Vice-President: George Loewen
 Secretary-Treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Publicity: Margaret. El Deiry

1968

There is no record of an election of officers in the minutes for the year 1968.

1969

President: Fred Broadfoot
 Chairman: 1969 Festival Committee Mr. G. H. Loewen
 Secretary-treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Promotion Chairman: Colleen Bailey, Mrs. D. F. Matheson, Ethel Castleden, Ruth Shaw
 Social Chairman: Mrs. V. Brown
 Program Sales: Laurence Pearson

Yorkton International Film Festival Society**1971**

Chairperson: Colleen Bailey
 Vice Chairman: Laurence Pearson
 Secretary: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Treasurer: Bill Parker
 Ian Holter, Elwyn Vermette, Bjorn Thorsrud, Harold Fenske, Mrs. P. Mooney, Margaret El Diery, Jeff Smith, Chas. R. Spencer, Chuck Schoffer, John Dowie, Don Logan, Otto. Yakel. Gary Deane, Valerie Deane, Michael Cooper, Frank Switzer, Mrs. George Taylor, Laurence Pearson

1973

Chairman: Laurence Pearson
 Vice-Chairman: Elwyn Vermette
 Executive Secretary: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Secretary: Monika Schindel
 Treasurer: Bill Parker
 Directors: Colleen Bailey, Margaret Cugnet, Gary Deane, Valerie Deane, Irene Grobowsky, Brent Logan, Louise Moore, Shirley Neufeld, Merle Sherwin

1975

Chairman: Elwyn Vermette
 Secretary: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski
 Publicity Chairman: Brian McMillan
 Directors: Louise Moore, Peggy McCaig, Wilf Gardiner, Laurence Pearson, Bill Parker, Wayne Corbett, Colleen Bailey
 Consultant Dave Sharples, NFB

1977

Chairman: Elwyn Vermette

Vice-chairman: Brian Woodward

Past Chairman: Laurence Pearson

Secretary-treasurer: Nettie Kryski,

Secretary: Louise Moore

Directors: Shirley Huziak, Jim Huziak, Alex Morgotch, Scott Miller, Maxine Woodward
Brian Duchscherer, Claire Fluet, Deborah Steen and Randy Hudema

1979*Honorary Patrons*

The Honorable C. Irwin McIntosh – Lieutenant-Governor of Saskatchewan

Mr. Dick Bird – Pioneer Cinematographer, naturalist

Board of Directors

Chairman; Elwyn Vermette

Past-Chairman: Laurence Pearson

Vice-Chairman: Brian Woodward

Secretary-Treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski

Executive-Secretary: Sheila Harris

Committee Chairpersons

Finance: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski

Film Competition: Louise Moore

Education: James Huziak

Publicity, Promotion and Public Relations: Deanna Klassen

Entertainment: Shirley Huziak

Facilities: Randy Hudema

Committee Members:

Dr. Doug MacDougall, John Savigny, Adam Todoruk, Jan White, Ruth Shaw, Chris Nickless, Maxine Woodward, Vange Vallaster, Ragnhild Sprong, Doris Florness

1980*Honourary Patrons:*

The Honourable C. Irwin McIntosh, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan,

Mr. Dick Bird, FP.S.A., A.R.P.S., FZ.S., Hon. LLD Regina University

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Productions, Regina, Saskatchewan

Board of Directors

Chairman: Brian Woodward

Vice-Chairman: Jim Huziak

Treasurer: Antoinette (Nettie) Kryski

Past Chairman: Elwyn Vermette

Directors: Louise Moore, Randy Hudema, Shirley Huziak, Maxine Woodward, Doug McDougall, Vange Vallaster, Ruth Shaw

Staff

Executive Secretary: Sheila Harris

Office Secretary: Rosalie Clark

Yorkton International Short Film and Video Festival**1981***Honorary Patrons*

The Honourable C. Irwin McIntosh, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan,

Mr. Dick Bird, FP.S.A., A.R.P.S., FZ.S., Hon. LLD Regina University

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Productions, Regina, Saskatchewan

Board of Directors

Chairman: Jim Huziak

Vice Chairman: Elwyn Vermette

Treasurer: Doug McDougall

Past Chairman: Brian Woodward

Directors: Shirley Huziak, Randy Hudema, Laurence Pearson, Ruth Shaw, Pat Bymak

Staff

Executive Secretary: Sheila Harris

Office Secretary: Mavis MacDonald

1982*Honorary Patrons*

The Honourable C. Irwin McIntosh, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan,

Mr. Dick Bird, FP.S.A., A.R.P.S., FZ.S., Hon. LLD Regina University

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Productions, Regina, Saskatchewan

Executive

Chairman: Douglas McDougall

Vice Chairman: Laurence Pearson

Treasurer: Pat Bymak

Past Chairman: Jim Huziak

Directors: Randy Hudema, Ruth Shaw, Linda Walker, Peter Legebokoff, Vange Vallaster, Roger Trottier

Staff

Executive Secretary: Sheila Harris

Office Secretary: Mavis MacDonald

Part-time secretary: Sharon E. Bittner

Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival

1983

Honorary Patrons

The Honourable C. Irwin McIntosh, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan,
 Mr. Dick Bird, FP.S.A., A.R.P.S., FZ.S., Hon. LLD Regina University
 Mr. David Sharples Retired NFB
 Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board
 Mr. John Popoff - Past president, Yorkton Film Council
 Mrs. Evelyn Cherry – Cherry Film Productions

Executive

Chairman: Douglas McDougall
 Vice Chairman: Laurence Pearson
 Treasurer: Gloria Lipinski
 Past Chairman: Jim Huziak
 Directors: Celeste Howland, Allan Bailey, Randy Hudema, Ruth Andrusyk, Elwyn Vermette, Bill Johnston

Staff

Executive Secretary: Sheila Harris
 Other staff not listed in Film Festival Program

1984

Honorary Patrons

The Honourable C. Irwin McIntosh, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan,
 Mr. Dick Bird, FPSA, A.R.P.S., FZ.S., Hon. LLD Regina University
 Mr. David Sharples Retired NFB
 Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board
 Mr. John Popoff - Past president, Yorkton Film Council
 Mrs. Evelyn Cherry – Cherry Film Productions

Board of Directors

Chairman: Gloria Lipinski
 Vice Chairman: Laurence Pearson
 Treasurer: Cori Norman
 Past Chairman: Doug McDougall
 Celeste Howland, Ruth Shaw, Jim Huziak, Allan Bailey, Pat Bymak, Bill Johnston

Staff

Executive Secretary: Sheila Harris
 Executive Assistant: Mavis MacDonald
 Office Secretary: Nancy Hancock
 Projectionist: Joseph Dahonick

1985*Honorary Patrons*

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions
 Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board
 Mr. John Popoff, Past president, Yorkton Film Council
 Mr. Dick Bird, FPSA, A.R.P.S., FZ.S., Hon. LLD Regina University
 Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board

Board of Directors

Ian Reid, Ron Balacko, Ruth Shaw, Gloria Lipinski, Doug McDougall, Sue Crowder,
 Laurence Pearson, Fran Hamilton. Gloria Trapp, Celeste Howland, Don List, Allan
 Bailey

Staff

General Manger Sheila Harris
 Executive Assistant: Mavis MacDonald
 Office Worker, Translator: Dian Labreche
 Office Worker, Projectionist: Lee Harris
 Projectionists: Celeste Howland, Will Grainger
 Projection Technician: Randy Hudema

1986*Honorary Patrons*

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions
 Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board
 Mr. John Popoff, Past president, Yorkton Film Council
 Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board
 M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa

Executive

President: Laurence Pearson
 Vice-President: Elwyn Vermette
 Treasurer: Ian Reid
 Past-President: Gloria Lipinski

Directors and Committee Chairman

Ian Reid: Resource Development and Education
 Don List: Film and Video Competition
 Gloria Lipinski: Film and Video Development
 Ruth Shaw: Advertising, Publicity and Promotion
 Ron Balacko: Public Relations

1987*Honorary Patrons*

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions
 Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board

Mr. John Popoff , Past president, Yorkton Film Council
 Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board
 M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa
 Directors: Ron Balacko, Elwyn Vermette, Wil Campbell, Laurence Pearson, Kathryn
 McNaughton, Veronica Gamracy, Roger Trottier, Don List

Staff

Executive Director: Ian Reid
 Assistant Director: Mavis MacDonald
 Bilingual/Communications Coordinator: Catherine Degryse

1988

Honorary Patrons

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions
 Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board
 Mr. John Popoff, Past president, Yorkton Film Council
 Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board
 M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa
 Nancy Morrison, QC
 Lorraine Thorsrud, Canada Council; Canadian Commission UNESCO

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Gloria Lipinski
 Vice-Chairperson: Roger Trottier
 Past Chairperson: Laurence Pearson
 Treasurer: Ruth Shaw
 Directors: Dolores Bonsal, Wendy DeBolt, Gerald Horne, Kathryn McNaughton, Ian
 Rogers, Wil Campbell, Penny Casey, Don List, Carol Olson Elwyn Vermette, Donna
 Yahnolnitsky

Staff

Executive Director: Ian Reid
 Assistant Director Mavis MacDonald
 Bilingual/Communications Coordinator: Catherine Degryse

1989

Honorary Patrons

The Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions
 Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board
 Mr. John Popoff , Past president, Yorkton Film Council
 Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board
 M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa
 Nancy Morrison, QC
 Lorraine Thorsrud, Canada Council; Canadian Commission UNESCO

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Gloria Lipinski

Vice-Chairperson: Roger Trottier

Past Chairperson: Laurence Pearson

Treasurer: Ruth Shaw

Directors: Dolores Bonsal, Wendy DeBolt, Gerald Horne, Kathryn McNaughton, Ian Rogers, Wil Campbell, Penny Casey, Don List, Carol Olson Elwyn Vermette, Donna Yaholnitsky

Staff

Executive Director: Ian Reid

Assistant Director Mavis MacDonald

Bilingual/Communications Coordinator: Catherine Degryse

1990*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions

Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board

Mr. John Popoff, Past president, Yorkton Film Council

Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board

M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa

Nancy Morrison, QC

Lorraine Thorsrud – Canada Council; Canadian Commission UNESCO

Board of Directors

Co-Chairpersons: Allan Bailey and Wendy DeBolt

Past Chairperson: Gloria Lipinski

Treasurer: Ruth Shaw

Directors: Roger Bakes, Carol Olson, Shirley Huziak, Ian Rogers, Joanne Havelock, Laurence Pearson, Jerry Horne, William Polushin, Frances Bergles, Bruce Rankin, Marshall Gilliland

Staff

Managing Director: Ken Panzer

Assistant Director: Mavis MacDonald

1991*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions

Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board

Mr. John Popoff, Past president, Yorkton Film Council

Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board

M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa

Nancy Morrison, QC

Lorraine Thorsrud, Canada Council; Canadian Commission UNESCO

Board of Directors

Chairman: Allan Bailey

Treasurer: William Polushin

Vice-Chairman: Robert Bakes

Directors: Rob Dewhirst, Brian Fromm, Chris Jones, Gloria Lipinski, Bruce Rankin, Ruth Shaw, Daryl Eberhardt, Tim Gibney, John Kennedy, Carol Olson, Don Reed, Robin Schlaht

Staff

Managing Director: (Feb. – Aug.) Dale Unruh (Nov. – Dec.) Gloria Lipinski

Assistant Director: Mavis MacDonald

1992

Honorary Patrons

Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Mrs. Evelyn Cherry, Cherry Film Productions

Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board

Mr. John Popoff - Past president, Yorkton Film Council

Mr. James Lysyshyn, Information Officer, National Film Board

M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa

Nancy Morrison, QC

Lorraine Thorsrud, Canada Council; Canadian Commission UNESCO

Board of Directors

Chairman: Don Reed

Vice-Chairman: William Polushin

Treasurer: Ruth Shaw

Directors: Rob Dewhirst, Larry Horncastle, Bruce Rankin, Daryl Eberhardt, Ron Goetz, Lorraine Thorsrud

Staff

Managing Director: Gloria Lipinski

Assistant Director: Mavis MacDonald

1993

Honorary Patrons

Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Mr. David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board

M. Jean Oser, Professor, University of Ottawa

Nancy Morrison, QC

Lorraine Thorsrud, Canada Council; Canadian Commission UNESCO

Board of Directors

Acting Chairman: Robert Dewhurst

Past Chairman: Allan Bailey

Vice Chairman: Ruth Shaw

Treasurer: Larry Horncastle

Directors: Denise Barlow, Phil DeVos, Daryl Eberhardt, John Foster, Ron Goetz, Daniel Gouws, Yvonne Malcolmson, Bruce Rankin, Lorraine Thorsrud, Axel Windt

Staff

Managing Director: Gloria Lipinski

Assistant Director: Mavis MacDonald

Office Assistant: Fay Kowal

1994*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

David Sharples, Retired, National Film Board

Jean Oser, University of Regina

Lorraine Thorsrud, Canadian Commission for UNESCO

Nancy Morrison, Q. C.

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Rob Dewhurst

Past Chairperson: Allan Bailey \ Vice Chairperson Ruth Shaw

Vice Chairperson: Denise Barlow

Treasurer: Bob Channing

Directors: Dave Bucsis, Kevin Cowley, Ron Goetz, Axel Windt, Dave Bucsis, Arliss Dellow, Susan Propp, Phil DeVos, John Foster, Yvonne Malcolmson, Harvard Smith

1995*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable J. E. N. Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Jean Oser, Professor Emeritus, University of Regina

Nancy Morrison, Q.C.

Ruth Shaw, Yorkton Chamber of Commerce

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Rob Dewhurst

Directors: Allan Bailey, Dave Bucsis, Kevin Cowley, Randy Goulden, Colette Baker, Merv Catchuk, Arliss Dellow, Susan Propp, Denise Barlow, Bob Channing, Gail Rogoza

Staff

Festival Manager: Fay Kowal

Secretary Receptionist Anne McIntyre

1996*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable J. E. N. Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Jean Oser, Professor Emeritus, University of Regina
 Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Ruth Shaw, Yorkton Chamber of Commerce

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Denise Barlow
 Past Chairperson: Rob Dewhirst
 Vice Chairperson: Merv Catchuk
 Treasurer: Bob Channing
 Directors: Allan Bailey, Kevin Cowley, Ken Chyz, Al Greschuk, Linda Koroluk, Otto Mundt, Holly Preston, Susan Propp, Gail Rogoza

Staff

Festival Manager: Fay Kowal
 Office Assistant: Michelle Mandryk
 Clerical Assistant: Lindsay Isaacson
 Volunteer Coordinator: Michelle Mandryk
 Projectionists: Jason Delesoy and Ken Kohlert

1997*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable J. E. N. Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Jean Oser, Professor Emeritus, University of Regina
 Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Ruth Shaw

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Denise Barlow
 Vice Chairperson: Merv Catchuk
 Treasurer: Bob Channing
 Directors: Allan Bailey, Ken Chyz, Al Greschuk, Ruth Hahn, Linda Koroluk, Otto Mundt, Holly Preston, Gail Rogoza

Staff

Festival Manager: Fay Kowal
 Office Assistant: Michelle Mandryk
 Clerical Assistant: Cheryl Derkatch
 Volunteer Coordinator: Michelle Mandryk
 Projectionists: Jason Delesoy and Tara Trottier

1998*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable J. E. N. Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Jean Oser, Professor Emeritus, University of Regina
 Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Ruth Shaw

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Merv Catchuk
 Vice Chairperson: Ruth Hahn
 Treasurer: Bob Channing
 Directors: Allan Bailey, Ken Chyz, Sonja Gehl, Ron Goetz, Keith Hayward, Linda Koroluk, Sharon Lacey, Otto Mundt, Anu Schebywolok

Staff

Festival Manager: Fay Kowal
 Executive Assistant: Cindy Glauser
 Clerical Support: Linda Channing, Joanne Marteniuk, Cyndy Kachur

1999

Honorary Patrons

Honourable J. E. N. Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Jean Oser, Professor Emeritus, University of Regina
 Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Ruth Shaw

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Bob Channing
 Vice Chairperson: Ruth Hahn
 Treasurer: Anu Schebysolok
 Directors: Allan Bailey, Denise Barlow, Merv Catchuk, Robyn Dawes, Ron Goetz, Janet Hill, Linda Koroluk, Jim Koroluk Sharon Lacey, Otto Mundt

Staff

Festival Manager: Fay Kowal
 Executive Assistant: Sheryl Lungal
 Clerical Support: Linda Channing

2000

Honorary Patrons

Jean Oser Professor Emeritus, University of Regina
 Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Ruth Shaw

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Bob Channing
 Treasurer: Anu Schebysolok
 Directors: Allan Bailey, Gerry Ann Fraser ,Ron Goetz, Ruth Hahn, Janet Hill, Celeste Howland, Wink Howland, Jim Koroluk, Linda Koroluk, Terry Wright

Staff

Festival Manager: Fay Kowal
 Executive Assistant: Cheryl Turner
 Clerical Support: Stephanie Stumph

2001*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable Dr. Lynda M. Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Jean Oser Professor Emeritus, University of Regina
 Nancy Morrison, Q.C.

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Janet Hill
 Vice-Chair: Terry Wright
 Treasurer: Wink Howland
 Past Chair: Bob Channing
 Directors: Daniel Cross, Ron Goetz, Linda Koroluk Angeline Polachek, Gerry Ann Fraser, Celeste Howland, Lori Kuffner, Christine Ramsay

Staff

Festival Manager: Fay Kowal
 Executive Assistant: Amanda Leniuk
 Clerical Support: Linda Channing

2002*Board of Directors*

Chairperson: Janet Hill
 Vice-Chair: Terry Wright
 Treasurer: Wink Howland
 Past Chair: Bob Channing
 Directors: Celeste Howland, Adelle Kopp-McCandless, Lori Kuffner, Bob Maloney, Janet Pollock, Christine Ramsay, Lee Thomas

Advisory Board

Louise Clark Head, Western Independent Prod. Canadian Television Fund
 Brian Dooley, Vice-Pres. Creative, Great North Prods.
 Joe MacDonald, National Film Board of Canada
 Peter Hansen, Alberta College, Edmonton
 Cindy Witten, Alliance Atlantis

Staff

Executive Director: Fay Kowal
 Executive Assistant: Linda Channing
 Office Assistants: Faith Knoll, Shauna Fayant

2003*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable Dr. Lynda M. Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Her Honour, Madam Justice Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Founding Member Ruth Shaw

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Janet Hill
 Vice-Chair: Terry Wright
 Treasure: Wink Howland
 Past Chair: Bob Channing
 Directors: Ron Goetz, David Helberg, Celeste Howland, Lori Kuffner, Bob Maloney,
 Janet Pollock, Christine Ramsay, Lee Thomas

Advisory Board

Louise Clark Head, Western Independent Prod. Canadian Television Fund
 Yvonne Dubourdiou, President, ArtHOUSE Productions, Inc.
 Peter Hansen Program Coordinator, Digital and Interactive Media Desig
 Elizabeth Klinck, Researcher and rights Clearances, E. Klinck Research
 Joe MacDonald National Film Board of Canada
 Cindy Witten, Director, Independent Production, History Television

Staff

Executive Director: Fay Kowal
 Executive Assistant: Linda Channing
 Office Assistants: Faith Knoll, Shauna Fayant

2004*Honorary Patrons*

Honourable Dr. Lynda M. Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Her Honour, Madam Justice Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Founding Member Ruth Shaw
 Nancy Southern, President and CEO, ATCO Ltd.

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Janet Hill
 Vice-Chair: Terry Wright
 Treasurer: Bob Maloney
 Directors: Mark Claxton, David Hewlberg, Janet Pollock, Christine Ramsay, Dean Sauer,
 Lee Thomas, Brent Washington

Advisory Board

Valerie Creighton, CEO, Film Commissioner SaskFilm
 Liz Janzen, Development Manager, CTV
 Elizabeth Klinck, Researcher and Rights Clearances, E. Klinck Research
 Joe MacDonald National Film Board of Canada

Cindy Witten, Director, Independent Production, History Television
 John Walker, Producer, Director, John Walker Productions Ltd.

Staff

Executive Director: Fay Kowal
 Office Assistants: Elaine Dobson and Jackie Cherwenuk

2005

Honorary Patrons

Honourable Dr. Lynda M. Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Her Honour, Madam Justice Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Founding Member Ruth Shaw
 Nancy Southern, President and CEO, ATCO Ltd.

Festival Ambassadors

Allan Bailey, Bob Channing

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Janet Hill
 ViceChair: David Helberg
 Treasurer: Janet Pollock
 Directors' Glenna Ottenbreit-Born, Christine Ramsay, Dean Sauer, Jeff Stecyk, Lee Thomas, Elwood Jimmy, Robert Ashcroft

Advisory Board

Hilary Armstrong, Producer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
 Valerie Creighton, CEO Film Commissioner SaskFilm
 Terence McKeown, Producer, Lightship Media Ltd.
 Elizabeth Klinck, Researcher and Copyright Clearances, E. Klinck Research
 Joe MacDonald, Producer of Documentary Western Centre, National Film Board
 John Walker, Producer, Director, John Walker Productions Ltd.
 Cindy Witten, VP Programming, History Television, Alliance Atlantis
 Sydney Suissa, Executive Producer, National Geographics International
 Shawn Watson, Director, Producer, Ocular Productions

Staff

Executive Director: Fay Kowal
 Executive Assistant: Elaine Dobson
 Office Assistants: Sherri Nelson and Rachel Earle

2006

Honorary Patrons

Honourable Dr. Lynda M. Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
 Her Honour, Madam Justice Nancy Morrison, Q.C.
 Founding Member Ruth Shaw
 Nancy Southern, President and CEO, ATCO Ltd.

Festival Ambassadors

Allan Bailey, Bob Channing

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Dean Sauer

Past Chair: Janet Hill

ViceChair: David Helberg

Treasurer: Janet Pollock

Directors: Robert Ashcroft, Rhonda Bailey, Wendy Hoffar, Glenna Ottenbreit-Born, Jeff Stecyk, Axel Windt

Advisory Board

Hilary Armstrong, Producer, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Valerie Creighton, CEO Film Commissioner SaskFilm

Terence McKeown, Producer, Lightship Media Ltd.

Elizabeth Klinck, Researcher and Copyright Clearances, E. Klinck Research

Joe MacDonald Producer of Documentary Western Centre, National Film Board

John Walker, Producer, Director, John Walker Productions Ltd.

Sydney Suissa, Executive Producer, National Geographics International

Shawn Watson, Director, Producer, Ocular Productions

Staff

Executive Director: Fay Kowal

Executive Assistant: Elaine Dobson

Office Assistants: Christine Diduck, Nola St. Pierre

Artistic Programmer: Rob Miller

Student Office Assistant: Janna Petersen

2007*Honorary Patrons*

Madam Justice Nancy Morrison

Founding Member Ruth Shaw

Nancy Southern President and CEO, ATCO Ltd.

Festival Ambassadors

Bob Channing, Allan Bailey

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Dean Sauer

Vice Chairperson: Rhonda Bailey

Treasurer: Janet Pollock

Past chairperson: Janet Albert

Directors: Nova Alberts, Jenice Arnelien, Robert Ashcroft, Louise Belanger, Karey Harris, David Helberg, Jeff Stecyk, Jayden Soroka

Advisory Board

Hilary Armstrong, film producer
 Elizabeth Klinck, Researcher and Copyright Clearances, E. Klinck Research
 Joe MacDonald, Producer of Documentary, Prairie Centre- National Film Board
 Terence McKeown, Producer, Lightship Media Ltd.
 Christine Ramsey, Department of Media Production and Studies, University of Regina
 Kenton Vaughn, Producer/Director, Spontaneous Human
 John Walker, Producer/Director John Walker Prod. Ltd.
 Shawn Watson, Producer/Director. Ocular Productions
 John Welsman, Composer Producer, Welsman Music

Staff

Festival Director: Fay Kowal
 Artistic Programmer: Rob Miller
 Media Relations Coordinator: Shawn Brandon
 Office Assistants: Joyce Palagina, Elizabeth Wapash

2008*Honorary Patrons*

Madam Justice Nancy Morrison
 Founding Member Ruth Shaw
 Nancy Southern, President and CEO, ATCO Ltd.

Festival Ambassador

Allan Bailey

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Dean Sauer
 Vice Chairperson: Janet Hill
 Treasurer: Louise Belanger
 Secretary: Janet Pollock
 Past chairperson: Janet Albert
 Directors: Nova Alberts, Jenice Arnelien, Robert Ashcroft, Wayne Inverarity, Karey Harris, Jayden Soroka, Richard Gustin

Advisory Board

Hilary Armstrong, film producer
 Elizabeth Klinck, Researcher and Copyright Clearances, E. Klinck Research
 Joe MacDonald, Producer of Documentary, Prairie Centre- National Film Board
 Kenton Vaughn, Filmmaker, Toronto
 John Walker, Producer/Director, John Walker Prod. Ltd.
 Shawn Watson, Producer/Director, Ocular Productions
 John Welsman, Composer Producer, Welsman Music

Staff

Executive Director: Randy Goulden

Office Manager: Lisa Lanigan

Festival Assistant: Allison Mitchell

Yorkton Film Festival

2009

Honorary Patrons

Madam Justice Nancy Morrison

Founding Member Ruth Shaw

Friends of the Festival

Allan Bailey, Bailey's Funeral Home

David Rusnak; Rusnak Balacko Kachur Rusnak and Kyba

Board of Directors

Chairperson: Dean Sauer

Co-Chairperson: Janet Hill

Treasurer: Louise Belanger

Secretary: Janet Pollock

Directors: Nova Alberts, Jenice Arnelien, Robert Ashcroft, Richard Gustin, Wayne

Inverarity, Karey Harris, Dennis Jackson, Stephen Onda

Advisory Board

Hilary Armstrong, film producer

Elizabeth Klinck, Researcher and Copyright Clearances, E. Klinck Research

Joe MacDonald, Producer of Documentary, Prairie Centre- National Film Board

Jeff Stecyk

Bruce Steele

Kenton Vaughn, Filmmaker, Toronto

John Walker, Producer, Director, John Walker Prod. Ltd.

Shawn Watson, Producer/Director, Ocular Productions

John Welsman, Composer Producer, Welsman Music

Staff

Executive Director: Randy Goulden

Office Manager: Lisa Lanigan

Festival Coordinator: Mitch Doll

Festival Coordinator: Allison Mitchell

2010

Honorary Patrons

Madam Justice Nancy Morrison

Founding Member Ruth Shaw

Friends of the Festival

Allan Bailey, Bailey's Funeral Home
 David Rusnak; Rusnak Balacko Kachur Rusnak and Kyba
 Dick DeRyk, UncommonSense Web Solutions

Board of Directors

Co-chairperson: Richard Gustin
 Co-Chairperson: Janet Hill
 Treasurer: Louise Belanger
 Secretary: Janet Pollock
 Directors: Wayne Inverarity, Karey Harris, Ryan Lockwood, Joanne McDonald, Brenda Pries, Jason Rusnak

Advisory Board

Hilary Armstrong, film producer
 Bruce Steele
 John Welsman

Staff

Executive Director: Randy Goulden
 Office Manager: Lisa Lanigan
 Festival Coordinator: Mitch Doll
 Festival Coordinator: Courtney Mintenko

2011*Honorary Patrons*

Madam Justice Nancy Morrison
 Founding Member Ruth Shaw
 Allan Bailey

Board of Directors

Co-chairperson: Richard Gustin
 Co-Chairperson: Karey Harris
 Treasurer: Louise Belanger
 Secretary: Geraldine Hipsley
 Wayne Inverarity, Ryan Lockwood, Joanne McDonald, Brenda Pries, Jason Rusnak, Dan Badowich, Dana Lesiuk, Katrina Ham, Ron Irvine

Staff

Executive Director: Randy Goulden
 Program Manager: Kyle Markewich
 Festival Coordinator: Mitch Doll
 Festival Coordinator: Courtney Mintenko
 Festival Coordinator: Terri-Lynn Mitchell