

# **The idea of North** **By Glenn Gould**

**Adapted by**  
**Benoit Giros**

# **Block 1    Departure    Winnipeg, MB    22:00**

The audience enters the stage.

A pianist works on a score by Mendelssohn.

The actors are on stage, around a couch at their disposal. They are idle, both focused and relaxed.

The female radio director is with them; she is very busy.

She finishes reviewing the course of her recording.

When all spectators are seated:

Marguerite: (*heading to the control room*) Places everyone, we'll be on air in a minute!

Catherine, Vincent, Jean-François, you're here?

Three actors take their place behind their own microphones.

**BLACKOUT**

## Block 2

## Portage-la-Prairie

23:01

The on-air signal is on.

The three actors are around the microphone with their “score” in hand. They come and go around the microphone to transcribe the “forte” and “piano” of the original television show.

### SCHROEDER

I was fascinated by the country as such. I flew north from Churchill to Coral Harbour on Southampton Island at the end of September. Snow had begun to fall and the country was partially covered by it. Some of the lakes were frozen around the edges but towards the centre of the lakes you could still see the clear, clear water. And flying over this country, you could look down and see various shades of green in the water and you could see the bottom of the lakes, and it was a most fascinating experience. I remember I was up in the cockpit with the pilot, and I was forever looking out, left and right, and I could see ice-floes over the Hudson's Bay and I was always looking for a polar bear or some seals that I could spot but, unfortunately, there were none.

Schroeder	Vallee	Phillips
<p>And as we flew along the East coast of Hudson's Bay, this flat, flat country frightened me a little, because it just seemed endless. We seemed to be going into nowhere, and the further north we went the more monotonous it became. There was nothing but snow and, to our right, the waters of Hudson's Bay. Now, this was my impression during the winter, but I also flew over the country during the spring and the summer, and this I found intriguing; because, then, I could see the outlines of the lakes and the rivers and, on the tundra, huge spots of moss or rock – there is hardly any vegetation that one can spot from the air...</p>	<p>I don't go, let me say this again, I don't go for this northmanship bit at all. I don't knock those people who do claim that they want to go farther and farther north, but I see it as a game, this northmanship bit. People say, "well, were you ever up at the North Pole?" "And, hell, I did a dog-sled trip of 22 days," and the other fellow says "well, I did one of 30 days!" you know, it's pretty childish. Perhaps they would see themselves as more skeptical...</p>	<p>And, then, for another 11 years, I served the North in various capacities. Sure the North has changed my life; I can't conceive of anyone being in close touch with the North—whether they lived there all the time or simply travelled it month after month and year after year — I can't conceive of such a person as really being untouched by the North.</p>

<p>It is most difficult to describe. It was complete isolation, this is very true, And I knew very well that I could not go anywhere...: except for a mile or two, walking. I always think of the long summer nights, when the snow had melted and the lakes were open and the geese and ducks had started to fly north. During that time, the sun would set but, when there was still the last shimmer in the sky, I would look out one of those lakes and watch those ducks and geese just flying around peacefully or sitting on the water, and I thought I was almost part of that country, part of that peaceful surrounding, and I wished that it would never end.</p>	<p>...more skeptical about the offerings of the mass media----</p> <p>And it goes on like this, as though there's some special merit, some virtue, in being in the North or some special virtue in having been with primitive people: well, you know, what special virtue is there in that? And so I think that I'd be more interested in Baker Lake right now, if indeed it is changing significantly which I...more important than that I think I would be...Still you don't...In the way of technological...of thinking that the world outside is too complex. It's too...The mass media, which, incidentally...I think that people tend to go for the more...programmes...</p>	<p>When I left in 1965, at least, left the job there, it wasn't because of being tired o f the North, the feeling that it had no more interest, or anything of the sort; I was as keen as ever. I left because I'm a public servant, I was asked to do another job related to fighting the war against poverty... and I suppose the main reason that I left...but I had...has ever experienced. The trouble is when you go North, today if you go...a one-time tourist or even if you go often for a year or two, you start...a mental snatch of the world around you...You never see the North as...You don't realize how it's changed. You hold on to that fallacy of thinking "Ah-ha! Here the North should be opened up the day before yesterday." Are we right to open it? But the real truth about the North...White man...supreme competence towards the rest of the world...our children...our grandchildren.</p>
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**Marguerite** : Thank you!

## Block 3 Gladstone 23:49

**Lotz** : This is Glenn Gould,

**Schroeder** : This is Glenn Gould,

**Philips** : This is Glenn Gould,

**Vallee** : This is Glenn Gould,

**Schroeder** : and this programme is called “The Idea of North”. I've long been intrigued by that incredible tapestry of tundra and taiga which constitutes the Arctic and Sub-Arctic of our country.

**Philips** : I've read about it, written about it, and even pulled up my parka once and gone there. Yet, like all but a very few Canadians, I've had no real experience of the North THE IDEA OF NORTH  
Glenn Gould– I've remained, of necessity, an outsider.

**Vallee** : And the North has remained for me, a convenient place to dream about, spin tall tales about, and, in the end, avoid.

**Philips** : This programme, however, brings together some remarkable people who have had a direct confrontation with that northern third of Canada who have lived and worked there and in whose lives the North has played a very vital role.

**Lotz** : There's a geographer and anthropologist– Jim Lotz;

**Vallee** : a sociologist– Frank Vallee;

**Philips** : a government official– Bob Phillips;

**Schroeder** : and a nurse– Marianne Schroeder.

**Lotz** : There's also a fifth character and therein lies a story : several years ago, I went north aboard a train known affectionately to Westerners as the Muskeg Express– Winnipeg to Fort Churchill 1,015 miles, two nights, one day, four double bedrooms, eight sections, diner and coach. And at breakfast, I struck up a conversation with one W. V. McLean, or as he was known along the line and at all the hamlet-sidings where his bunk-car would be parked– Wally.

**Schroeder** : Wally McLean is a surveyor, now retired, and within the first minutes of what proved to be a day-long conversation, he endeavoured to persuade me of the metaphorical significance of his profession. He parlayed surveying into a literary tool, even as Jorge Luis Borges manipulates mirrors, and Franz Kafka badgers beetles.

**Philips** : And as he did so, I began to realize that his relation to a craft, which has as its subject the land, enabled him to read the signs of that land, to find in the most minute measurement, a suggestion of the infinite, to encompass the universal within the particular.

**Vallee** : And so when it came time to organize this programme and to correlate the disparate views of our four other guests, I invited Wally McLean to be our narrator and to tell me how, in his view, one can best attain an idea of North.

**Black**

## **BLOCK 4    Plumas    00:13**

The director is back on stage. She is seated alongside the actors. They all have their scripts in hand.

**Marguerite:** That's true, it's a text...you can feel it when you read it, it's a spoken text. But at the same time, it's a spoken text so you have to leave it as is, but at the same time you can tell it's not a realistic text. Anyway, you know what I mean.

**Catherine:** It's a spoken text but it's not spontaneous.

**Marguerite:** Right, exactly, the flaws are left out. So I think what you're looking for is actually...what you're really looking for is, I think, the most important thing is musicality, it's rare to have to search for that kind of things. Yet without obliterating its meaning because for me, that's what struck me when I listened to it again, I listened to *The Idea of North* several times... of course I don't understand English or just barely so it doesn't help but what struck me still is, I wonder how far you can go until the meaning goes down the drain. Then it becomes the problem, it's a problem because you need to make music, I think that's really the way to go, the whole project and all the stuff around it must keep that musicality, it's all in the sound, all in the texture, but I don't mean musicality in terms of rhythm but at the same time what strikes me, the thing that strikes me most when I read these texts, is that there is meaning being conveyed, and that meaning, I'd like it to come through and that meaning, it's just that but it's also Glenn Gould's persona, it's the meaning he wanted to convey somehow...through his own existence and not only through that documentary because deep down he has people say whatever he wants to say himself somehow, and that, it bothers me it doesn't show because here is something that's also my job to pay attention to and make sure everything is accurate rhythmically and musically but also make sure the meaning of what is said can be heard because otherwise the music obliterates the meaning and I don't know to what extent the meaning is not obliterated in Glenn Gould's *Idea of North*.

**Catherine:** Gee, you're starting out with a bang.

**Marguerite:** Alright, I'm going to shut up, besides, I don't even usually talk.

**Catherine:** No, no, no, that was great, but you're opening the floodgates real wide.

**Marguerite:** No, but that's what we're looking for in fact, you need to find that stuff and then the meaning needs to be there. So I'm going to shut up now.

**Catherine:** No, don't.

**Marguerite:** No, but the fact is I usually never talk, I don't, I usually just shut my mouth.

**Catherine:** That's awesome, it's just what I need this morning, it really is.

**Marguerite:** Ok, then, it's fine. Everything's good. I don't know what got into me.

**BLACKOUT**

**BLOCK 5      Glenella    00:35**

One of the actors turns on the television, there in the couch nook since the beginning of the show. Image of railroad tracks and a platform appears on screen. Start of a forward tracking shot. Tracks moving faster and faster. Out of the city, deep into the forest, stopping at a rural train station, moving on. Endless. Image keeps moving in until

**BLACKOUT**

## **BLOCK 6      McCreary    00:59**

One actor is on the couch in the couch nook.  
Under the television.

### **Wally Mac Lean**

Well, the only way I see this happening is in an extended ride north. When I say that, I mean a long, terrible, trying trip, perhaps to Churchill— by way of Thompson, going and coming, past Ilford and Gillam – this long, almost trans-Siberian experience that we now face. And for those that face it, perhaps for the first or second or third time, there's almost a traumatic experience. They feel : “ah, this is going to become impossible. It may not be now but it's going to become”. And yet they're able to do little or nothing about it. What finally, you ask, is done about it? Well, here's my guess. What really happens is this: the train is about to leave The Pas, say a specific point, and 510 miles away north and east is going to be Churchill, a day later. And what does the person do on leaving The Pas? Do you know what happens? He sits there in the day coach. The newsey is just ahead of him and these people, the conductor and the brakeman and so forth who are accustomed to this, are sort of making nothing of it. He sits there wondering, “Oh, this is going to be forever. It's already been a day, now it's going to be another day and what about this one?” Before long he's going to have to perhaps say “hello” and you know, pass the odd word to his fellow man. And indeed it isn't long before— well, we've heard what he has to say, why, for the first time he's going North. With what? Well, with the army, with the navy, with the air force, with these initials that he always throws at you— “DPW”, “What's that? Oh! Department of Public Works”. “With DRNL”, “what's that? What is it?”, “Defence Research Northern Laboratories?”, “What's that? Well, you're studying the Northern lights then? Well, well, well.” Now you can listen for awhile, because what do any of us know about the Northern Lights?



## **BLOCK 7      Laurier      01:09**

The on-air signal is turned on.

Marguerite (into the microphone from the booth): We're on!

### **Jim Lotz**

Well, like I think quite a large number of people who end up in the North, I sort of got there by mistake. I strayed in there. I think my first attempt to go North was when, during a summer vacation when I was at university in England, I thought about going to Iceland. I'm not too sure why. And instead, because I'd made a mistake about the fare, I end up in Morocco. I'm a geographer by training and I have this belief, you see that geographers are people who have no sense of direction, just as sociologists are people who don't like society and economists are people who can't really manage their own money. Though some evidence in the North indicates they have a pretty good time with the public purse. I came to Canada after I'd been in West Africa for a year. I came to Canada again like so many other immigrants because I couldn't get a job in England. I came to Ottawa to place my services at the disposal of the federal government and the federal government had other ideas. So, after working in a few dead-end jobs in Ottawa— advertising and copyrighting and other things, I applied to McGill and was encouraged to go North to the McGill Subarctic Research Laboratory to do some field work for a thesis. The thesis was on soils and agricultural possibilities in the Knob Lake area, PQ. There isn't a great deal of soil, and as far as I can make out, there are no agricultural possibilities. This is what's known as negative evidence in science. And I began to get the impression that the North is a land of very narrow, very thin margins. Man, of course, is a biological improbability at the best of times. If you wanted to design something that could live on this earth, you wouldn't design a man. And in the North, in many respects, we're at our sort of greatest and our most grotesques.

### **Wally McLean**

He's sitting there sort of away from the madding crowd that's stampeding up and down the aisles and actually he's trying to sort of isolate himself because, in fact, shortly he will be isolated, for a long period of time, in the lonely North.

### **Jim Lotz**

Just about the time that I was finishing off my thesis on Knob Lake, the phone rang and Dr. Sven Norvik, then with the department of geography at McGill, asked me if I'd like to go North on an arctic expedition and of course, being English, I said yes. There are several traditions of arctic expeditions. The English tradition is where everybody puts 50 pounds in the pot and sort of hires husky dogs from Greenland and lives on Bovril and Ovaltine and this sort of thing. And then there's the American tradition where you have a massive "before-operations" report and a massive "after-operations" report but very little in the middle. I was to undergo an American arctic expedition and I use the term "undergo" as of an operation, advisedly. So Sven Norvik phoned me up and said "So do you want to go on an arctic expedition?" and I said "Well, certainly." And I was even sort of tickled to death to find out they were going to pay me for this. Memory, of course, tends to cast a pall over our worst and best experiences but looking back at this, this is one of the experiences of my life. A group of men isolated each trusting the other, and each respecting the other, a small community in isolation. And it's not just sort of a touch of the old nostalgia. It's a feeling of having participated in something very meaningful both personally and professionally.

**Wally McLean**

You know what one young fellow told me that was taking, I forget what he was taking, probably philosophy. He said this was "The Myth of Sisyphus." A matter of fact, he lisped, but I didn't, I think and fact is that he had quite a time with it and here was some wretched— was it a king? Was it a king? Yes, a king of Greece... Corinth, well, it might have been Corinth and here he was rolling this confounded rock up to the top of this precipice for some reason or other, then he let gravity take over and it hit the bottom. Then he did the same thing again, no doubt with a larger rock.

**Jim Lotz**

I went back to the North with an American expedition to Northern Ellesmere Island. This was to the ice shelf of Northern Ellesmere Island, even further North than I'd been in '57 and '58. Now this was a fairly ghastly experience. I'll always remember that on the Canadian expedition, we'd eaten dried meats and this sort of thing and we'd enjoyed ourselves, you know. Somebody says "Well, when you go on these arctic expeditions, don't you start missing women?" Well, after about the first month, then you start talking about food. I remember once I had an American Private First Class with me as an assistant, at least I think he was working for me and they dropped one the tracks and they also very kindly dropped us some lettuce and tomatoes and I said "My goodness, look at this! Fresh vegetables!" And he said "Muh, muh, no salad dressing." Anyhow the whole thing was in shambles and a mess. The scientific results were minimal. The whole experience was rather frustrating and disagreeable. Of course it may have been me. You accept this about the North. One always worries about whether it's you or whether it's the country or the other people.

**Wally McLean**

Well, is this a surprise? No, it's no surprise at all. The person that makes the trip, more often of course, is going to realise that before long, he's going to be up against himself. Not against his fellow travelers, no, so much, but he's going to have to be up against his own, sad self.

**Jim Lotz**

And I'd always sort of wanted to work with people in the North. And, in 1960; I transferred to the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources as a community planning officer. The first thing I was asked to undertake was a study of the squatters of Whitehorse. These were a group of people who ultimately, at least in my own work, turned out to be a key to the way that the North is viewed in Canada and the way that the North can be and has developed.

<p><b>Lotz</b> : These people had a tremendous feeling of bad reputation. I was told by all the Northern hands that when I went up to the squatters on the edge of town on the rail just over the Yukon River, the Yukon never gives up its dead...and all these sorts of hairy stories about the wicked squatters. Well I found out of course that these were a bunch of people who were trying to do the best they could in an area whose economic future was uncertain. They didn't want to live in nice, tidy, middle-class houses on nice, tidy, middle-class lots ...with nice, tidy, convenient sort of water. They lived as they could and I know it's kind of a cliché but some of my best friends have been squatters.</p>	<p><b>Mac Lean</b> : Well, somehow the sameness of the trip in and the trip out is part of this endless feeling that we are up against this myth, this business of having to do things for no apparent reason. Fine. But you say to yourself “Well, which of these people I see now am I going to say hello to?” Well, it isn't as though you've lasted that long, you've said hello to a half a dozen, maybe 15 but you had no intention to, – ah, sort of establish, what is that thing called? – rapport with anyone in particular. Now you find it necessary. Isn't that funny, you find it necessary.</p> <p>Why in fact?</p>
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**Jim Lotz**

Well, I did this study and I came back alive shattering the myth of the wicked squatters who wouldn't talk to anybody from Ottawa. Because they hate Ottawa in the North, they just loathe Ottawa.

And I came back, and came back alive and brought back the list of people and from that time on, I was entitled to call myself a Northern expert, and the joke about the word “expert” being derived from two words: "ex", meaning "formerly", and “spurt” meaning “a drip under pressure” is by no means inappropriate in the North. Really as a matter of fact, you can't talk about the North until you've got out of it, so the definition is not all that incorrect.

**Marguerite**: Thank you, let me listen to it again.

## **BLOCK 8    Ochre River 01:26**

The actors take their place in the sound effects booth.  
One actor grabs two brushes. Another two iron bars.  
An actress has a broom in her hands. Another a whistle.  
They start mimicking “the train”.  
An old steam train, then a diesel train.  
Then the piano joins them on their improvised journey,  
then the music  
Then there is a

**BLACKOUT**

And the music goes on in the dark, the image of the train  
rolls on, but here the screen is backstage left.

## BLOC 9 Dauphin 01:45

### **Lotz**

Well, then I did a series of what you call “quick and dirty” studies. I was up in Inuvik and I wrote a wrong report with a very large number of recommendations, again this is part for the course in the North. You come from Ottawa, you go in the North, you write a report, you make a list of recommendations, you bring it back to Ottawa and nobody pays any attention to it.

### **Lotz :**

In 1962 to '66, I spent the summers in the Yukon. I mounted a Yukon research project, started wondering about the future of Whitehorse, started looking at the future of the Yukon, and then from there, the future of the North, the future of North America, and the future of the world. I sort of kind of stopped there.

This brought me literally, oh blessed man, in contact with Buckminster Fuller , with people who worked on this whole problem of what sort of world we're in, and certainly what sort of world we're moving into. The other thing, of course, about the North is that it is an oral society.

### **Bob Phillips**

I guess my love affair with the North went back about– oh, more than 15 years. I was in the East Block then, as a young officer in the Department of External Affairs, and in the course of my work, it gradually sort of bore into me that Canadians were– well if not throwing away their North for a mess of pottage– at least being supremely oblivious to the responsibilities we had to the people there and I suppose oblivious, too, to the resources, the wealth that we could get from it. We just didn't care about the North. It was a great sort of terra nullius. Now I got kind of frustrated about this, and naturally more and more anxious that we in the government should do something about our responsibilities in the North. Well, the end of 1953 was the beginning of the sort of administrative revolution in the North. Now, not everything started then. A lot of things had started before. And a lot of things were far from starting, but at least there was the focus of the department and it was decided to make a new investment in the North.

It wasn't an easy decision. But eventually I decided that I would sit for a competition for a job in Northern Affairs and therefore in 1954, I moved over, changed my life as you might say and then did something serious about the love affair with the North.

## **BLOC 10      Gilbert Plains 02:23**

The three actors are spread out over different parts of the stage.  
Mac Lean is in the middle of them.

### **Wally Mac Lean**

I feel embarrassed at telling him, or suggesting to him, that there's something more than figures and quantitative things and measurable things that enter into the whole picture of how you get along with yourself, or if you get along with yourself. Seems to me that a man by the name of Pascal, years back, said that most of mankind's troubles would be over with or done away with if he would stay in his own room. At the time I thought this was such a self-evident, banal, a sort of a, well, silly thing to say that I gave it little thought, but then, on looking back perhaps after a few decades, I thought to myself how, indeed, true this is. Can a man get along with himself, usually in this solitary life of the hermit North or the solitary life of anyplace where he secludes himself?

**Marianne Schroeder**

Well I didn't think it was eccentric to go North. Many people who knew me thought it was. They couldn't see my point at all. They didn't think it was a country for a woman, especially for a single woman, because they thought about the social life there and thought that, when a woman reaches a certain age, she should be far more concerned with trying to trap a man than with making a career for herself or with trying to face the world by herself.

**Marianne Schroeder**

You can only leave with the knowledge of many other people. You can't say "I'll take the weekend off and I'll go to the next motel and I'm not to be disturbed." This is impossible.

**Marianne Schroeder**

It just isn't possible to escape from gossip, for instance. We, at Coral Harbour, knew what was going on at Baker Lake or at Eskimo Point or at Rankin Inlet, not by official communication but because it all came more or less by the grapevine. It was absolutely impossible to keep anything from anybody; even if we had a party, they knew it down in Winnipeg.

**Marianne Schroeder**

You get a conglomeration of white people in the North and you don't choose to live with them. You go there and you find them or they come and find you.

I didn't have to go to somebody in Coral and say "I'm lonesome or I'm depressed." I just had to go and visit them, play a game of chess— whatever they wanted to

**Bob Phillips**

I think it takes a strong person to live in the North and really to be a part of it and find satisfaction there. When you're living in a big city in the South, you can always retreat when you fail in your relations with society. You can just go away and nobody really knows the difference. You can't go away when you're in a little village and thousand miles from nowhere and a couple of weeks from the next plane, high in the arctic.

**Bob Phillips**

And so all sorts of curious things happen. In some ways, you may have gone to the North to get away from society and you find yourself far closer to it than you've ever been in your life. You know your neighbours intimately. You know each walk they take down that little 500 yard road.

**Phillips :** You know what their problems are because they're bound to talk to you about them. If they don't, they'll go nuts, just as you'll go nuts when you don't talk.

**Bob Phillips**

Sometimes you'll find yourself, rather pathetically perhaps, persuading yourself that this is great. And you'll sit, on a Saturday night, on that kind of couch that you'll see in every village of the North from Baffin Island to the Mackenzie Delta. They're all identical in the government houses. And you'll get in a sing song with the trader and his wife and the priest, or the other missionary, the policeman and so on.

And you'll sing the same sort of songs whether in Baffin Island or the Mackenzie Delta and you'll exchange the same sort of gossip about so an so who has just moved from this store to that or Doctor so and so who's probably coming through

do— and right away there was a sense of sharing this life. One could realise the value of another human being.

**Jim Lotz**

I was, in many respects, solitary but in a strange way, the North has made me more sort of gregarious, because the North does show you exactly how much you rely on your fellow man, what the sense of community means. The sense of community in the North, unlike in the South, is a matter of life and death. The thing about the North, of course in personal terms, is that in the North you feel “It's so big. It's so vast. It's so immense. It cares so little.” And this sort of diminishes you and then you think “My God, I am here. I've, I've got here. I live here. I live. I breathe. I walk. I laugh. I have companions.”

on the next flight in ten days and so on. And you convince yourself that this is really the life, that there's a kind of precious intimacy about all this.

**Bob Phillips**

You're excluding the rest of the world that will never understand and you've made your own world with these other people. And probably what you'll never know and what nobody else will ever know is whether you're kidding yourself or not. Have you really made your peace with these other people or have you made a peace because the only alternative to that peace is a kind of crack up?



## **BLOCK 12      Togo, SK      03:50**

Vincent is alone recording. Marguerite answers him into the talkback microphone.

**Vincent:** Was I going too fast?

**Marguerite:** You didn't exactly nail it...

**Vincent:** As soon as I started gathering a little bit of speed, you reined me in. Anyway, I'm kind of going in slow motion, but that's kind of my thing, let's say...

**Marguerite:** Now, I have nothing against speed. Whatever carries me away, I'm a very empirical person, it needs to make sense, I need to understand, it needs to make sense musically so if you go at a super-fast pace and it makes sense, then I have no problem with it but still it's a tendency we have because the phrases are so long. But I don't want to nag you on purpose about that.

**Vincent:** You're not nagging me, on the contrary.

**Marguerite:** So let's start again. Don't take notes, poor devil! Every correction means loss of focus for the actor. You need to know that. Go ahead, start again. The signal is on **And the signal is turned on...**

**Frank Vallee**

I'm afraid it's not very romantic you know, my wanting to go up there to find myself or to lose myself or all these various reasons that people give for going into the North. The fact that they're North gives them some extra kudos. I guess they feel : "What a sacrifice I'm making for Canada up here" – but perhaps I'm a bit cynical.

**Marguerite:** You're going too fast. Can you do it again? From the start.

**Frank Vallee :**

I'm afraid it's not very romantic you know, my wanting to go up there to find myself or to lose myself or all these various reasons that people give for going into the North. The fact that they're North gives them some extra kudos. I guess they feel : "What a sacrifice I'm making for Canada up here" – but perhaps I'm a bit cynical.

I usually, I don't go for this kind of stuff. – But you do get a deliberate building up of a kind of cult of personality. You get lots of people attempting to create a style of their own, to be known as characters and this is wonderful. I'm all for it. Some people say "Well it's hypocritical". To heck with that! This is good. People should have styles, you see a lot of these old timers especially "Well I mind the time when I was you know forty days without food" and so on. This becomes part of the front and the stance that "nothing can shake us. And we are down-to-earth people and it's a cup of tea in your hand the minute you stick your head in the door and if I had a bottle out, the last bottle and no plane coming in, you know, for six months, I'd still split this bottle with you because this is the way we are in the North." There's a lot of that going on that is, to some extent, stereotyped although like most stereotypes, people get to believe that this is the way they are, even if that's not the way they were when they first went in. They come to believe this, as you know Pirandello and others point out; you come to believe in your own role.

**Vincent looks toward the directing booth, inquiring.**

**Vincent:** I wasn't going too fast, was I?

**Marguerite:** Let me listen to it again for the editing!  
And as the on-air signal is turned off, **BLACKOUT**

## BLOC 13 Kamsack 04:27

Again, two actors in very different spaces.  
The on air signal is on...

### Frank Vallee

I found that the wide open spaces concept isn't quite what it's cracked up to be. I felt cooped-in, in the wide open spaces.

Because I was so afraid to get lost that the environment around me while being vast in the physical sense— one could see theoretically for a thousand miles because there was nothing in the way to block your view— it was surrounded on each side by dangers,....

...it was surrounded on each side by dangers, dangers for instance of getting lost. This was to me the biggest danger of all.

### Bob Phillips

There's a wonderful cliché which I hope I may be forgiven for mentioning once more, that a nation is great only as long as it has a frontier. Now, we've got that frontier. Other people are nostalgically having to dip back 100 years to find their frontier and vicariously become part of it. We've got it and we have a very, very small percentage of our population who really take advantage of it, in the specific physical way; but, for a lot of the rest of us, it is a sort of frontier in much more than the physical sense. Now, this does something to the Canadian character. It means we've got a kind of civilization that does not conform to the rest of North America. Here is a place where non-conformists can live and flourish. The kind of person who goes to the North is rather odd. And if you're smart, you'll go on looking for this kind of odd person.

## **BLOC 14      Mikado 05:02**

### **Wally McLean**

Oh, well, there's no question about this, but, there's such a thing as being a hermit by choice rather than being a hermit by necessity. Now, it all depends on whether you think you're answering a challenge or escaping from yourself. Are you in fact escaping, in any real way, by retreating North or by retreating perhaps by any direction. You know I like to think of myself as part of Shakespeare's – what was that? – “Sweet are the uses of adversity”, you see? I like to think that when I'm stuffed away up North – in some forlorn place where there's not a section house or there's not perhaps more of the odd, wolf or dog team within a long distance – I like to think that I'm getting along with myself, not only that I'm getting along with myself but that I understand the problems that are, not the problems that I create. You see, I think we all create in our own problems and if we haven't got some to discuss, that we would sooner be kicked than remain unnoticed.

**The on air signal is turned on  
Benoit is seated behind a microphone.  
He is recording.**

**Jim Lotz :** There's a very interesting photo in **North** which show children in Alaska on the Kuskokwim...  
**(He stumbles on a word)**

**Marguerite :** Take it from the start...

**Jim Lotz :** There's a very interesting photo in **North** which show children in Alaska on the Kuskokwim...**(He stumbles again and corrects himself)**  
There's a very interesting photo in **North** which show children in Alaska on the Kuskokwim... looking at a television set for the first time and what they were seeing, on the television set, were themselves. They had a closed-circuit rigged up. I suppose, you know, in Einstein's term if space...

**Marguerite :** You have to say Ein-ssss-tein, not Ein-ch-tein. Again.

**Lotz :**  
I suppose, you know, in Einschtein's term if space... is curved...

....

I suppose, you know, in Einstein's term if space is curved and we ever get our eyesight up or our missiles up or our messages up, you know maybe we'll sort of be seeing the back of our heads. I think this is the part of the North, it's important. Like with the gold seekers. I remember an old Swede who, probably didn't, hadn't even read Robert Service and he spread some gold out for me, they keep their little nuggets and he said: "take some gold" and I said: "I can't take your gold." He says: "No," he says: "it's not the gold, it's the finding the gold." And I think the North is process. ...

**Marguerite :** Again

**Lotz :** And I think the North is process.  
And I think the North is process.  
And I think the North is process ....

**Marguerite:** We'll try again after the break. Are you having lunch with us?

The actors are on stage, idle.

**Marguerite** (into the talkback microphone): They are all alone down there, abandoned in the great North. We're starting scene 3. "The deromantizing North" as he called it...

The on air signal is turned on.

Each of the three actors moves very silently from one microphone to the next in the studio. The spectators' points of hearing are thus diversified.

### **Bob Phillips**

I suppose that any perceptive person who wanders about the North and gets to know the Northerners a little bit is bound to have some of his old illusions shattered if his illusions are based on the kind of Romantic approach that we traditionally got from the books and the schoolroom. The stories I mean about the lovely Eskimos and their gleaming white igloos, and how life is simple and unspoiled and unchanged and so on. Well, that kind of life is really ugly, ugly, ugly. And you can't have all your illusions about the charming old life, when you go up and see the tuberculosis and when you see the wretched health conditions, the wretched living conditions, the unspeakable sanitation, when you see the racial distinctions between a sort of "white master race and the lesser breeds" that have always been kept just a little outside the law. I'm not blaming anybody for this, unless I blame us all collectively. But there's a lot in that Romantic tradition that, in my mind, was pretty ugly, judged by today's standards.

### **Marianne Schroeder**

Yes, it did seem like a very Romantic place to me and this was one of the reasons why I wanted to go North, because considering a place Romantic means that one doesn't know too much about it. I had read a great deal about it and it sounded very, very romantic to me and I suppose, in a way, I was influenced by this and when I arrived, it was a cold September day. It was snowing in Coral Harbour and there was absolutely no one there to meet me. I stepped off the plane and then, there were a number of rugged looking men with beards, wearing heavy parkas and boots and here was I, this frail little girl from Winnipeg who came to the North to help the Eskimos. And, at that moment, I think I was more in need of help than anyone else. I felt absolutely lost.

### **Frank Vallee**

I don't know. I think that it's something like marriage, I guess. A person who romanticizes or idealizes his girlfriend, right, and refuses to quote see "reality" – The parents say: "Well look, her teeth are falling out" and so on – a person who refuses to see this and insists on marrying the girl discovers after a while, the parents were right perhaps, and so he gets disenchanted – right?

### **Marianne Schroeder**

I must be out of my mind to come to this place. What will I do here? What is my purpose? Am I really doing the right thing? And I was a little shaken.

**Frank Vallee**

I've seen people who are disenchanted with the North simply withdraw and concentrate on some activity like collecting guns or stamps or whatever; and sort of withdraw into a cocoon and just going through the motions in almost a ritual way. I've seen other people who've turned against their employers or against the government, for instance. And say, "well, you know, if it weren't for them everything would be all right" and "hit out at Ottawa" and that kind of thing. Other people turned against those that they came to help: "these stupid Eskimos. They're still in the stone age" and so on and so on. You get this variety of reactions, the most common one of course is simply to take off and say: "Well I think I'll try Africa, or some other place where the people need me."

**Bob Phillips**

It's moved on in ugly ways. I'm not suggesting everything about the new life in the North is good, heaven knows. There are ugly problems and the alcoholism is talked about a lot. It's probably talked about more as a disease than a symptom and it should be talked about as a symptom of the contradictions in societies. Alcoholism has a lot to do with a sort of protest, the articulate protest of those whose voices were once silent about their place in life. That's ugly. However, we are moving forward. When I was first associated with the administration of the North, one of our sort of heartbreaking tasks was to add up how many Canadian citizens had starved to death in that season. And we used to all keep a sort of chart on the wall of the starvation and hope to heavens that the curve would go down. Well, thank heavens with all the ugliness that there is in the North today, let's remember that that chart is showing a downward curve. In fact, I think it's some years since we've had outright starvation in the North.

**Marianne Schroeder**

When I came south, I felt that I'd had it. I'd been at Coral Harbour for many months without a break and this was just too much for me. I felt that I wasn't able to work effectively. I just didn't want any part of the North any longer. But now, looking back on it, I think I would like to go north again because although there were disadvantages, people mean something there. You're just not one of so many who walk on the street, as in a big city. Sometimes I've been lonelier in a city than I ever was in the North.

**Marguerite :** Again from "But now"

**Marianne Schroeder :**

But now, looking back on it, I think I would like to go north again because although there were disadvantages, people mean something there. You're just not one of so many who walk on the street, as in a big city. Sometimes I've been lonelier in a city than I ever was in the North.

**Marguerite :** Never think that the last sentence is the last... Thankyou...

**Blackout**

Benoit behind a microphone.

He waits a short while, holding his breath, then starts reading.

**Jim Lotz**

First of all, it seems to me that, in the North, we're seeing one of the final playing out of those two great dreams of man: Eldorado or Utopia. Both Eldorado and Utopia were always located in parts unknown. I mean it's very difficult to sort of think of Utopia down in Toronto, for instance, with all due deference to Toronto. We know too much about it, we have too much of an understanding of the reality. But north of 60, it's still empty. It's still, in many ways, the land of the possible and so we have the story of, either A, the rich North, the vast treasure house of literature – which, you know, like making me in Dorothy Parker's terms, sort of “throw up” – or B, the vast, great, empty, useless desert. To me, the North is so Canadian. Andre Siegfried mentioned this about a window on the future, a potential future. He was writing in 1937. Well before, most Canadians woke up to reality in the North. I've seen the shape of a possible future in the North and, quite frankly, it scares the hell out of me.

All the actors are in the house among the spectators.  
 Marguerite and Catherine talk on the side, as if in an aside.

<p><b>Marguerite to Catherine:</b>                  What's best for you? I'd say the best at first is to have carte blanche and then depending on what happens... we'll talk about it and then we'll see if we have to redo it and how and why and... because I think that's the reason why you're the one who has to start. First off because you're first and then also because, right, that will play a pretty decisive part later on whether we keep it or not because I don't want to multiply the positions either because you're going to go solo and you're going to play in polyphony so if on top of that when you're going solo I still have two positions. Because in terms of sound, you're going to be different, you're going to be isolated, if you want, really isolated during the</p>	<p><b>Mac Lean and Vincent</b>  <b>g.g.:</b> Apart from being a frustrated member of the board of censors, is any other career of interest to you?  <b>G.G.:</b> I've often thought that I'd like to try my hand at being a prisoner.  <b>g.g.:</b> You regard that as a career?  <b>G.G.:</b> Oh, certainly - on the understanding, of course, that I would be entirely innocent of all charges brought against me.  <b>g.g.:</b> Mr. Gould, has anyone suggested that you could be suffering from a Myshkin complex?  <b>G.G.:</b> No, and I can't accept the compliment. It's simply that, as I indicated, I've never understood the preoccupation with freedom as it's reckoned in the Western world. So far as I can see, freedom of movement usually has to do only with mobility, and freedom of speech most frequently with socially sanctioned verbal aggression, and to be incarcerated would be the perfect test of one's inner mobility and of the strength which would enable one to opt creatively out of the human situation.  <b>g.g.:</b> Mr. Gould, weary as I am, that feels like a contradiction in terms.  <b>G.G.:</b> I don't really think it is. I also think that there's a younger generation than ours -- you are about my age, are you not?  <b>g.g.:</b> I should assume so.  <b>G.G.:</b> - a younger generation that doesn't have to struggle with that concept, to whom the</p>	<p><b>JFP et BDM</b>                  (to translate)                    G.G. - O.K., je cesse de godiller avec le palet. Vous avez tout à fait raison, Harry, j'ai une opinion bien à moi. Je suis opposé aux sports de compétition et je...                  H.B. - <i>A tous les sports de compétition ?</i>                  G.G. - Oui, pratiquement à tous.                  H.B. - <i>Mais, Glenn, vous ne pouvez tout de même pas mettre sur le même pied un passe-temps sédentaire et essentiellement intellectuel tel que les échecs et - prenons son contraire le plus évident - un combat de boxe.</i>                  G.G. - Bien sûr que si. Puis-je citer ici les paroles immortelles d'un certain Bobby Fischer : « J'aime torturer mes adversaires : je voudrais les détruire. »                  H.B. - <i>Humm...</i>                  G.G. - D'ailleurs, l'un des grands aficionados de Fischer est un homme qui se trouve également remplir les fonctions de critique musical pour le New York Times.                  H.B. - Vous voulez parler de Harold Schonberg.                  G.G. - Oui, et, comme vous le savez probablement, Schonberg vient de passer l'été à Reykjavik                  H.B. - J'ai lu quelques-unes de ses dépêches...                  G.G. Dans ses premiers articles, il</p>
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<p>solo parts, and really in polyphonic stereo during the polyphonies, if you want. So, if I multiply a third position in the interplay, you see, it's...Because as soon as you start going for real richness, which is very good, it's always a good thing to have richness but you have to pay attention, at a certain point you will oversaturate it and you could be the one who will...</p>	<p>competitive fact is not an inevitable component of life, and who do program their lives without making allowances for it.  <b>g.g.:</b> Well, your modesty is legendary, of course, Mr. Gould, but what brings you to that conclusion?  <b>G.G.:</b> The fact that I would inevitably impose demands upon my keepers -- demands that a genuinely free spirit could afford to overlook.  <b>g.g.:</b> Such as?  <b>G.G.:</b> The cell would have to be prepared in a battleship-grey decor.  <b>g.g.:</b> I shouldn't think that would pose a problem.  <b>G.G.:</b> Well, I've heard that the new look in penal reform involves primary colours.  <b>g.g.:</b> Oh, I see.</p>	<p>proclamait que Fischer était le Mozart des échecs...  H.B- ...<i>impliquant sans doute par là que le style de Fischer portait la marque d'une pure et classique symétrie.</i>  G.G. - Oui, certainement, mais, vers la fin de l'été, Fischer était devenu pour lui le Beethoven des échecs. Je m'étonne d'ailleurs qu'il n'ait pas, pendant qu'il y était, surnommé Spassky le Salieri des échecs.  H. B. - (<i>rires</i>)</p>
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Three actors are in the sound effects booth and start creating effects for a dinner served on the train...  
The "music" is played again as they go along in the loudspeakers and continue until the actors gradually cease to play with the plates and glasses...

**Jim Lotz**

Well there was a fascinating book called "Prospero and Caliban: On the Psychology of Colonization" by a man called Oscar Mannoni who worked in the Malagasy Republic of Madagascar and he brings up this idea of, you know, Prospero in "The Tempest" could only be Prospero simply because he had Caliban to do all the dirty work. And he points out there's sort of a kind of a symbiosis, in these colonial situations where we think, you know, we're helping the Eskimo, we're doing things for the Eskimo and, you know, he should be grateful to us and we feel that we are, you know, in a sense, manipulating him. We don't seem to realize there's another end to this, that he is manipulating us. We have some detailed evidence out on this in George River  
that you know because we say, you know, "the wonderful Eskimo, fine hunter", etc...He will play the role we have assigned to him. And he will play this only insofar as it sort of keeps us happy. I think there's something fairly insidious about this.

**Frank Vallee**

I moved around the North  
and saw Rankin Inlet which,  
at that time, was quite a place  
to adjust to when you were moving,  
I don't know if you're familiar with it,  
moving to work in the mines,  
a few hundred working in the mines.  
Then there was a great deal  
of dispute going on  
as to whether this was  
a wise thing to do, that it wasn't wise to  
encourage the settlers, that it wasn't in  
their nature to work in the mines. Was it  
in their nature to observe the time  
schedules that we had and so on? And so  
I found it fascinating to actually live in  
that community for three or four weeks  
while it was  
the centre of the controversy  
among those people  
who engage in the art of Northmanship  
the debates, that is about  
how the souls and the culture  
of the Eskimos are to be saved.

**Marianne Schroeder**

And there is another thing. I don't know  
whether it's relevant or not, but a single  
woman in the North has a special status.  
Any white woman who goes North has a  
very specific purpose. Usually she is  
married to a man who is with the  
Department of Northern Affairs or  
whatever. So the wife accompanies her  
husband. She probably has a number of  
small children and her purpose is to be  
with her family. None of these women  
are officially employed and the only  
women who are that I have ever  
encountered in the North were either  
teachers or nurses. The difficult part I  
think – maybe I'm wrong but this was  
certainly my impression – is that these  
nurses would hold a position of  
authority. They have a say  
– I mean not in the government  
necessarily but as far as...  
– how should I describe it –  
... a position

**Bob Phillips**

Well, in our impatience, and the "our"  
here, I think, is the people of Canada or  
the people of Canada who have some  
interest in the North anyway, I think  
we've often tended to do a disservice to  
the Northerners by putting them in  
places where they shouldn't quite be, by  
putting them in places they haven't  
earned themselves, by putting them in  
places which we hope they will earn  
themselves.

There's a tendency  
at times to show  
one's respectability  
anywhere in this continent by having, on  
your board of directors, a tame Negro, or  
a tame female, or a tame Indian. And  
this sort of mood has not been entirely  
absent in the North. It comes from the  
noblest of motives, the very absence of  
racial prejudice but there is, behind it, a  
sort of paternalism ...And we tend to say  
"Look, we're terribly good fellows and  
broad-minded, we whites and we do  
want to turn things over to you,  
Eskimos, so come and sit on our board",  
so to speak.

I don't literally mean a  
board of course.

And then there's such a tendency for the  
Eskimo, the northern Indian, to be a kind  
of showpiece,  
a doll, a puppet.

And this doesn't do  
anybody any good  
because those  
who are sitting quietly  
back on the rock

which carried a certain glamour with it. And I felt sometimes that this was rejected and viewed with hostility by other people who had to stay in the background and this idea did not, of course, fit in at all with the Eskimo society because the Eskimo society is definitely a patriarchal one.

**Frank Vallee**

The people who live on the land resist the kinds of situation where they become dependent on someone in the settlement.

They're friendly with people in the settlements but they don't want to get themselves locked into dependency situations with them. It's almost as if they fear

some inner core of selfhood or something would be lost through too much interaction with the people in the settlements, through too much giving of oneself. It's like playing a role in the settlements.

I know many Eskimos who live on the land and when they come into the settlement there's nothing they like better than going to a church service, to sing and holler and go to dances, to hang around the trading post, to do stuff like that. But as to playing a concrete role which ties you to the settlement, now that's another matter. Then you get identified through the networks in the settlement and to the extent you do that so much of yourself is given to the life there.

**Marianne Schroeder**

The man is definitely the head of the household, head of the society. A woman is only a woman. She has to stay in the background and never do you find a woman under those circumstances in a position of authority.

So this was extremely difficult for an Eskimo man to accept. We had an Eskimo employee who was sometimes rather resentful. We didn't order him around, but we asked him to do things for us and we were "the boss, the big wheel" as he kept to say.

watching all this, say "You see, you see, those fellows never know anything. How can they discuss a budget?

Heavens, they're not understanding anything at all. They're just serving as the sort of stooges for you whites who have all the power."

Well, that's one of the dilemmas of changing power over from a "master race", if you like, to a "minority race".

It's one of the dilemmas of changing power from a pretty old-pervasive set of power-elites that is government, traders, churches into the hands of fairly small, local people who don't have any huge institutions behind them.

**Jim Lotz**

But, on the other hand, we've only been in the North in any sort of strength for about – what, 12 or 13 years. And the Eskimos have weathered worse things than civil servants and bureaucrats and the invasion of white foreigners. Northern development since '54 is only the last, in a sense and the most permanent, of a number of waves– the whalers and people like that. The Eskimo is no stranger to the white man. He has a good press image, of course and I'm inclined to think that we admire the Eskimo, not as a stereotype, but as someone who is able to live and survive. Eskimos lived, hunted and raised children in a place where 140 of Britain's best– the Franklin expedition members– died.

We admire the Eskimo for clinging to the very end of the Earth by the skin of his teeth, but he does it. Life-expectancy of course before the white man came, of course was very low. I'm inclined to think if we would only look at the Eskimo not as a quaint, funny little hunter, or as an artist or all these ghastly clichés that clutter up our literature, if we could only look at him as a sort of human being and adapt some of his ways of doing things, his culture, his values. For instance in child-rearing, permissiveness rather than authoritarianism,

I couldn't really understand his attitude but one day, it came home to me very clearly why this attitude is still so prevalent among the Eskimos.

One woman who was expecting a child had made arrangements with another woman to take that particular baby after it was born. She would adopt the baby with the consent of her husband of course. And they all very much hoped for a boy. Anyway, the woman came to the nursing station to have her baby and it turned out to be a girl, to the disappointment of the whole group and the family. The frightening part, the shocking part to me was the fact that they named the girl "Karmala" which means a parasite, a worm, because of the simple fact that she was a girl. And after that, I could very easily understand this hostility towards a white woman holding authority.

#### **Frank Vallee**

The small signs that there are of the Pan-Eskimo indicates that it's among people like this that the movement will spread—that is, among people who are primarily oriented to settlements, who've received some education and who get along well with the whites and act as interpreters, mediators and the like. They're not so much guiding the kabloona as they are advising and getting themselves into key positions. The people who have committed themselves to settlement living – particularly those who have received more than, let's say, a grade five, education which is equivalent almost to a university degree in the Arctic, those people are becoming – they are keys in the networks of communication.

The outsider has to sort of pass through the screen of these people to get at the others and these are the people who are becoming conscious of being, not only members of a settlement or members of a given band but are conscious of being Eskimo

a sense of community rather than a sense of individualism.

#### **Bob Phillips**

Of course it's pretty unfair I suppose, morally to judge the past by today. The way we treated the Eskimos, the Northern Indians, Métis, 25, 50, 100 or 200 years ago was according to the mores of those days.

We weren't any nastier to the native peoples there any more than we were to the rest of the world.

But for today,

it's not good enough to treat the native peoples as natives

with that kind of snarl in our voice or that kind of paternalism in our voice either.

These are Canadian citizens and let's face it, the igloo is not a part of Canadian life because the life-expectancy of 27 years isn't a part of Canadian life.

#### **Jim Lotz**

You see, it makes sense to me to send Eskimos to the moon, if we have to go to the moon, simply because they're accustomed to living in isolation. They're accustomed to living enclosed for extended periods of time. If you look at the records of what happened at the Antarctic stations— where we have aggressive, individualistic, white men huddled up together for a winter. Some pretty grizzly things came out of that. If we don't sort of wear him down and render him into a stereotype image, I think there is promise here. I would like to see Eskimos, for instance, employed as counselors in our school system, telling our school kids exactly what it was like. I remember I watched my small daughter's Christmas play or whatever it was— you know this things, you're never quite sure what they are in school— and the kids were sort of portraying Eskimos and “Oh, you know then, I'm a great hunter. I'm an artist, etc...” Well, of course you know for most of the Eskimos it would have been: “I do jobs that no white man will do because they're either too low status or,

as contrasted with white.  
And these are the people  
who are becoming  
the closest thing that the Eskimos  
have to nationalists.

you know, too dirty!” And I would like  
to see the Eskimos into the school  
system teaching our kids how it really  
was, exposing them to the North as it  
really was in the past, and how it's  
changed – rather than this second hand  
Guttenberg gibberish of the printed page  
that was out-of-date at the time it was  
written.

**Bob Phillips**

We used to say, in the early days of the  
new administration, that our work would  
in effect show signs of success when, for  
the first time, an Eskimo stood up and  
said “No”.

**On stage, moment of recreation.**

**Marguerite:** (Feet on Glenn Gould's chair) Afterwards when he stopped performing in public he recorded 80 hours of music.

**Jean-François:** There must be around a hundred discs or just about

**Marguerite:** And we are going, for instance, to play zero discs from Glenn Gould as a performer, we're going to put in zero in the show, all we're playing is 2 pieces Glenn Gould wrote himself, as a composer, because here in fact we want to really focus on his radio work and not on his work as a performer, as a pianist, so the only allusion comes from Vincent playing the piano so we'll have a piano really really far in the northern wind, and all, we'll have a piano hovering like a ghost. But that's it and it won't even be Glenn Gould playing.

**As she speaks, Vincent at the piano plays the piece by Alexandros Markeas.**

**Inside the piano, the train keeps rolling, projected under the open lid.**

**Jim Lotz**

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**Bob Phillips**

We used to say, in the early days of the new administration, that our work would in effect show signs of success when, for the first time, an Eskimo stood up and said “No”.



The on air signal is on in the studio.

<p><b>Vallee</b> : ...and these are the people who are becoming conscious of being, not only members of a settlement or members of a given band but are conscious of being Eskimo as contrasted with white. And these are the people who are becoming the closest thing that the Eskimos have to nationalists.</p>	<p><b>Marguerite</b> (inside the booth): He doesn't get it, why can't he get it? It's always the same thing, I don't know why he can't get it.</p>
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**Marguerite:** (into the talkback microphone) Because it's the end of your demonstration, if you want, that's where you wanted to get to, and it may even be where you get to be this slightly cynical guy and Glenn Gould hates you if you want because in fact what you do is you start..., you're being very ambiguous towards those people really, you criticize them, see, you don't buy their shtick at all, you're kind of ambiguous towards them and in fact you explain the process so that, exactly, that's where the cynicism comes in, and you, you completely distance yourself from that, and at the same time your opinion, that's right, you don't show your opinion, you don't say I like it or I don't like it that they're nationalists, but you have this kind of totally cold-headed approach to the process if you want, so your whole demonstration takes you there and I have the impression you rush through the end as if it weren't important whereas for you, it is, because, be careful, what you say is these are the people who are becoming, so they're the ones who are going to get us, since you just explained there's this opposition between whites and Eskimos and you are white so if you want, you're either a masochist and all, well...But other than that, see, what happens here is rather worrying for whites.

**Vallee:** Ok, let me try.

**Marguerite:** You have to start from the same passage, "Little signs"

**Frank Vallee**

The small signs that there are of the Pan-Eskimo indicates that it's among people like this that the movement will spread—that is, among people who are primarily oriented to settlements, who've received some education and who get along well with the whites and act as interpreters, mediators and the like. They're not so much guiding the kabloona as they are advising and getting themselves into key positions. The people who have committed themselves to settlement living – particularly those who have received more than, let's say, a grade five, education which is equivalent almost to a university degree in the Arctic, those people are becoming – they are keys in the networks of communication. The outsider has to sort of pass through the screen of these people to get at the others and these are the people who are becoming conscious of being, not only members of a settlement or members of a given band but are conscious of being Eskimo as contrasted with white.

**Marguerite:** start from "And these are the people"!

**Vallee** : and these are the people who are becoming conscious of being, not only members of a settlement or members of a given band but are conscious of being Eskimo as contrasted with white. And these are the people who are becoming the closest thing that the Eskimos have to nationalists.

**Marguerite** : Thankyou!

Marguerite and Catherine, alone on the doorstep. They speak to each other as confidantes, amazed by the meeting of their minds.

**Catherine:** I was climbing a mountain path, telling myself: if you only use your intelligence, you risk being too harsh. If you navigate the waters of your sensibility, you risk getting carried away. If you let your willpower drive you, you end up feeling constrained. In short, it's not easy to live in the land of man. When melancholy sets in, you feel the need to move to a quiet place. As soon as you understand it's difficult to live, whatever the place, that's when poetry and painting emerge. The human world wasn't created by either gods or demons. After all, we're talking about ordinary people, like our next-door neighbors. If it's hard to live in this human world created by ordinary men, that shouldn't leave any place to go. All that's left is going to a land without men. Now, it must be harder to live in the land without men than in the human world.

Since it's difficult to live in this world that we can't leave, we must make it somewhat more comfortable, so that our short life can be livable, even though it's short. That's where the poet's calling comes in, that's where his mission comes to light. Every artist is precious in that he appeases the human world and enriches the heart of man.

What can strip this world, which is so difficult to live in, of its utter boredom, what can portray for you a world of grace, is poetry and painting. To be accurate, it's not about portraying the world. All you need is look at it through your own eyes, and that's where poetry comes in and the singing breaks out. Even if the idea is not written down, the sound of crystal resonates in your heart. Even if there is no paint spread on the canvas, the brightness of the colors is reflected in your inner vision. All you need is look at the world you live in, and keep pure and clear in the picture camera of your mind the futile and chaotic world around you.

That's why an anonymous poet who never wrote a single line, an unknown painter who never painted a single canvas, are happier than a millionaire, a prince or all the celebrities in our trivial world, because the former know how to look at life, they can rise above all worries, they are able to enter the world of purity, to build a unique universe and to brush aside the demands of selfishness.

**BLACKOUT**

**Wally McLean**

I am, indeed, a Northern listener, then. And the pity of it all is, I'm not always able to select what I want to hear. I hear what other people inflict upon me. You know the noise, the noise of civilization and its discontents. No matter what we do to try and escape them, unless we select and understand and use what we hear, we are lost indeed, not just lost listeners but indeed lost people. I do believe that being able to select, I do believe that being able to reflect on that selection, makes you more than the mere analyst most of us claim we are. You see, I think the world is ridden with analysts. I think it's hag-ridden with self-appointed people that cut society apart and say "Well this part is worthless and this part is something else." In detaching and reflecting and in listening, I suppose I'm able to synthesize, to have these different rails meet in the infinity that is our conscious hope.

Four actors stand in line and sing an adaptation of “So you want to write a fugue”.

## So you want to write a fugue

So you want to write a fugue.  
You've got the urge to write a fugue.  
You've got the nerve to write a fugue.  
So go ahead and write a fugue that we can sing!

Pay no heed to what we've told you;  
Pay no mind to what we've told you.  
Just forget all that we've told you  
And the theory that you've read.  
For the only way to write one  
Is just to plunge right in and write one.  
So just forget the rules and write one,  
Have a try, yes, try to write a fugue.

So just ignore the rules and try.  
And the fun of it will get you.  
And the joy of it will fetch you.  
It's a pleasure that is bound to satisfy.  
So why not have a try?  
You'll decide that John Sebastian  
must have been a very personable guy.

But never be clever for the sake of being clever,  
For a canon in inversion is a dangerous diversion,  
And a bit of augmentation is a serious temptation,  
While a stretto diminution is an obvious allusion.  
Never be clever for the sake of being clever,  
For the sake of showing off!

It's rather awesome, isn't it?  
And when you've finished writing it  
I think you will find great joy in it. (Hope so)...  
Well, nothing ventured, nothing gained they say  
But still it is rather hard to start.  
Let us try.

Right now.  
We are going to write a fugue ... right now.

**Bob Phillips**

Let's not kid ourselves. The North isn't going to be made up, in future years, of gigantic plastic bubbles surrounding Arctic villages with a cloak of warm air. And it isn't going to be modelled on, at least what's represented as, pretty highly scientific, rational northern towns of the Soviet Union. It isn't going to have the sort of flow of economic life of an Alaska which is so largely based on a defence industry. I think the North in the future is going to look appallingly like the rest of Canada and that's great as far as I'm concerned.

**Jim Lotz**

I would think these towns, these communities will be built for the North and not for the suburbs of Toronto as most of the communities in the North are at the present time. Once we get the jumbo jets, we get a few of the world's ills sorted out, I would expect that, in the summer, the North would become a vast outdoor playground.

We keep getting this lovely idea that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Developments is pursuing that all of the sudden, all the wagons are going to line up along the 60th parallel and we're going to have a land rush. You know, all of a sudden the people are going to sort of rush in. We have two films made recently, you know, by the propaganda arm of the Government— the National Film Board— on the accessible North which show stores, supermarkets, night clubs, houses and hospitals in the North, just to show it's like the rest of Canada. Well my feeling is, if it's like the rest of Canada, why should anybody go there? The North— Alaska, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon— lie between three densely populated areas— North America— United States and Southern Canada— China and Japan— Northwest Europe— and right in the middle, plump, is this vast, outdoor recreation area.

**Bob Phillips**

It's going to look like suburbia, with all the things we deplore about suburbia, the silly, western ranch-style, split level bungalows that are absolutely unfitted to the climate of Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa and are absolutely unfitted to the climate of Frobisher Bay or Igloolik. And that's where we are going to go on building them. This is the Canadian way. Maybe just because I'm getting to be a tired old man, I'm looking at the world a little conservatively but I don't quite see the argosies of magic sail in the North. I think we're going to have to adapt from what's being developed for the rest of North America or for the rest of the world. Now these adaptations are often quite considerable. But the sort of planes you find up there, the sort of train, the sort of vehicles and so on, are extraordinarily like the South ; the adaptation, for example, that is made in vehicles, is probably a piece of corrugated cardboard up the front of the radiator. Now, that isn't a great technological breakthrough; you know, people in Toronto are known to do that. The sort of planes you get there, that might have been predicted in a kind of Buck Rodgers sense 20 years ago, turn out to be the kind of planes that are no longer economical to run in the South. That's all the North can afford so that's what they get.

Philips and Lotz's session is still on. But they no longer read from their score.

They are recording off script, directed by Marguerite, who becomes an orchestra director on stage.

### Jim Lotz

This will be a place where people can actually sort of come and enjoy this. This is recreation, re-creation, the chance to be alone, to be quiet, in the North which we desperately need in this rat-race urban civilization, though I'm a town man I'm afraid – the chance to be alone, to be quiet with one's friends or one's family.

I would see our school kids going up there, in the jumbo jets and learning biology by sort of looking at things and walking around, learning botany through the soles of their feet. I'm a geographer and this strikes a responsive chord.

The North could be a kind of laboratory where we could, because we're an affluent society, take our time and involve people in solving these very complex problems of social change– many of the problems of the underdeveloped world, for instance– how to bring a very high level of science and technology into what we are pleased to call primitive areas among primitive people, and how to do it in such a way that you don't harm or hurt people?

This is very important in this day and age and I would like to see the North as a great outdoor laboratory where one could study and examine these processes, and we would take our time and we could care about things. And this is so terribly important.

### Philips :

I wonder if things are really going to change that much in the future.

We're not going to do really dramatic things like spending a hundred million dollars for a whole new approach to community living up in Resolute Bay. We're not going to build a kind of Arctic version of Habitat around Tuktoyaktuk. We're not going to do so because that isn't quite the Canadian way, as well as for the very practical reason that the first government that suggests such a five-hundred million dollar expenditure is going to find that the Treasury Board removes it from its next year's estimates in the first cuts. No, the general process of Canadian development, I think, is going to carry on in the North. We're going to do things that are dramatic in a way. We've already done things that are dramatic in the sense that we've had oil wells being drilled in the most inconceivable of places, virtually in the shadow of the Pole. That's dramatic alright, how many Canadians know about it? How many Canadians even know about such a dramatic story as running a telegraph line down that whole Mackenzie River – done in silence, while we're still looking at sixth-run movies about how they did it in the American West! Ye gods, we've done things in the North! But what we're not going to do in the North is things which, in the Canadian context, are a bit phony.

We're going to live our irrational lives. We're not going to go together, for example, in high-rise apartments, in tremendous propinquity because, generally, Canadians don't like doing that, except in the larger cities.

We'll live in our urban sprawl and waste money

on our sewers that way. We'll waste money on our heat and so on;

because that's the way we tend to be happy

and because that's the way we can go on

You see, the ultimate output in the North, which nobody seems to pay much attention to, is the ultimate basis of civilization, and that's information and knowledge. We've got this opportunity to get a marvellous output of information and knowledge and train people who've dealt with a real world, a world that is, you know, as broad as the horizon and isn't sort of limited by a 6x6 experimental room or something like that. We should use this place to train our people and get knowledge and information on the right way to do things, and when I say "the right way to do things", I think the scientific and humane way to do things. When I'm talking to a Russian, as I have been, or if I'm talking to a Dane or an American, I'm talking about common problems. I'm not talking about what happens in Vladivostok or what happens in Fairbanks or what happened in Inuvik. I'm talking about common problems and I'm admitting as they are, that we know so very little about this space ship Earth

living without committing enormous resources to something no-one's ever done before. We're going to be governed by the cash nexus in the North, far more than in the South even. Because so much of the North is financed by public funds which are scrutinized by parliament, public funds that are in strong competition with funds for things far nearer home—the local subway or the nearest freeway and so on. This alone is a strong factor dictating toward conservatism in approach, in design. Now, whenever an architect draws something that's really imaginative and bright and so on, this doesn't really necessarily bring us much closer to a new approach in the North. What really counts is not the architect's comment. It's the politician's comment. It's the administrator's comment. Above all, it's the tax-payer's comment. But for most Canadians, the other ninety-nine odd per cent, there isn't much questions of a huge investment.

**Lotz :**

And in the North we can find out so much. This sort of quest for Eldorado, it's so phony, it's so unreal in a sense. It's so anti northern. The North is universal. It's a universal environment, you know. The North makes you look at things on the global scale.

**Marguerite:** This image of the North as an Eldorado, etc, that's what he really thinks about the North, that is, the North as universal, that's what matters to us, not the North as an Eldorado. It's universal so how can we convey that? Maybe we need to... "So many things can be found in the North, but that kind of...it's so fake, so anti-Nordic, the North is the Universal!"...How about that? I wonder if we shouldn't say "The North is the Universal" instead of saying "The North is universal", which is a bit weaker, I think. You see: "it's the Universal". Why not? It changes the meaning slightly, that's the problem here, but "The North IS universal", "...is Universal", "the North is Universal", "the North is Universal" so be careful at the end, I'm realizing you really need to underline "the North Is Universal", see at the very very end once you get started on the Eldorado, it's not "the Eldorado etc, etc, the North is universal", because I wanted to change that and emphasize "the North is the Universal", but it doesn't sound right. It shouldn't be small because that's the most important thing for him, that's his whole reasoning, that "the North is the Universal", and now, somehow, you can say "it is Universal". You can find extraordinary things there, and extraordinary for everyone. Start again from "You can find so many things"

**Lotz :**

And in the North we can find out so much. This sort of quest for Eldorado, it's so phony, it's so unreal in a sense. It's so anti northern. The North is universal. It's a universal environment, you know. The North makes you look at things on the global scale.

**Marguerite:** Say it again, "The North is universal"

**Lotz :**

The North is universal. It's a universal environment, you know. The North makes you look at things on the global scale.



Mac Lean's voice is heard as the images of the train are projected onto the most part of the back wall.

Images of the train running on the tracks are still shown.

But here, they become huge in the white space of the studio.

**Wally McLean**

In any case, this man has just told me that this is what he is about to do. Now then, I have to answer in kind: surely, I have to tell him how I came to get stuffed away up there.

Now this is a little harder, isn't it? Because here is a man that's got to live with himself, you must treat him tenderly. You can't let him have the North all in one barrel, so to speak. So, what do you say? Well, what do you say? I suppose you sort of try and become truthful with yourself. This is tough. It's so nearly impossible that it takes all these miles and all this understanding, and perhaps a need for human company. I'm just guessing now, this is hard to get at.

**The on-air signal is switched on.**

**Mac Lean stands beside the piano, in a tuxedo, like a classical singer about to belt out a recital. On the gigantic screen, the tracks images keep rolling by.**

**Mac Lean :**

So you begin by saying: "Oh well, we did at least some of us thought that this was a challenge a while back!" He looks at you sort of: "Well, surely it's a challenge now." I mean, this is the first time he's been on these rails that run North. "Oh yes", you say, "but the challenge was different then." A few years back— certainly in human memory, eh? — People thought that this— well, what we call our North presented a real challenge. But what form did it take? What form? As if everything must have somehow form that you can sort of put in words. "This is hard, this is hard on you. He must notice that you're struggling a bit, eh? But what you're really saying then is something like this that "there was a time when the challenge was understandable." What challenge then? Oh well, here you have to take it easy. A certain William James, then, perhaps at the turn of this, the twentieth century, said that there was no moral equivalent of war. Well, well, I read that. "There is no moral equivalent", said William James, "no moral equivalent of war." That is, that there's nothing like war for providing something for you to be against. Apparently, very few of us can afford to be for something. Apparently, all of us can afford to be against something. Alright then, so I can tell this chap— this research chap heading North for Churchill— that we can all be fellow men when we know what we're against. But what are we against in this situation where we're rolling north— these endless miles of steel, the clickety-clack of the rails, the punctuated monotony of the telegraph wires outside the day coach window— this and that, that make us at least fellow humans. Well, we're..., I'm almost..., I find it impossible to get this over, except to say to this chap (who is bound to listen because the miles are bound to stretch out and the night is going to fall endlessly it seems— there's going to be a little place called Pikwitonei, mile 214 and he'll wonder why the train is standing this long at that lonely spot and the darkness of night is going to surround him and we're going to back up and he's going to be twice perplexed. And in order to answer his perplexity I'm going to say) : "the common enemy of both of us— whether it's now or yesterday or forever, you know? — I suppose the common enemy is Mother Nature, Mother Nature. "Oh," he says "Yes!" Because he is willing now to be a fellow traveler in my imagination, eh? So I go on to say that the North is the war, that you can afford to be against Mother Nature if only humans make it possible. "Well," he asks, "What's wrong with that? What's good about that or bad about that?" I say: "there was a time, believe me, in living memory again when humans used to combine against Mother Nature. Not, not only because they had to, but because in a sense there was a cleanness, a sureness, a definiteness about coming up with Mother Nature that is lacking in our rootless pavements, in our big city anonymity. You know, he shrinks from this and he's got to listen though. Remember the train is barely pulling out. You know, how many hours are left, in his mind? I've no idea but perhaps he hasn't any idea either. But now of course, I get into a complaining mood shortly after this. He looks at me questioningly and my patience— my patience perhaps with myself— runs out. And I say "Ah yes, but that's, as I say, the North that was. No longer do humans combine to defy or to measure or to read or to understand or to live with, this thing we call Mother Nature, our number one enemy, instead of being Mother Nature is, of course, human nature. It's crept stealthily from the South, not necessarily by steel, all these long and endless miles that we've sort of passed and now it's infecting. It's infecting the North with a contagion that's— I don't know what you, what it's like." I don't dare tell this person that it's that it's that bad. I just indicate it. (He's a nice fellow, you know, I don't want to destroy his dream. Also I don't want to smash my own, which is paper-thin at times. So we're up against this William James. The moral equivalent of war. The equivalent of this war now is the North. This William James— who wrote in Harvard this many years ago, whatever he did, I suppose he meant really that— not war. The moral equivalent for us is going North.

BLOC 32      Arrival Churchill, MB      07:30

On screen. The train has arrived at Churchill Station.  
The tracks have disappeared and given way to a tundra landscape.

On stage, Philippe takes his coat and leaves.  
He failed to take leave of Vincent, who remained seated at the piano  
and resumes playing.

On screen.  
A man in a dark coat and a grey cap keeps walking. In the background,  
a strange object, an anomaly in the natural landscape, can be  
discerned.

It is a chair. It is Glenn Gould's chair. Left there.  
The man pauses. He looks around yet without revealing his face.

Then walks on.  
He walks away whereas Gould's chair stays still.  
The man walks away straight ahead until he disappears from sight.

Vincent stops playing.

BLACKOUT

AND

END

Reprise...

## BLOC 32

**Lotz :**

And I think the North is process. The North is finding and, no, not so much finding, so much as seeking. My experience with the North has enriched me immeasurably. I've enjoyed it. I've liked it. I've done some very foolish things there.