

# NEWS RELEASE

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Randall Okita's *The Book of Distance*,  
Sandra Rodriguez's *Chomsky vs. Chomsky: First Encounter* and  
Christopher Auchter's *Now Is the Time* showcased at Sundance Film Festival**  
*NFB selection features two new VR visions and an award-winning Indigenous doc*



(Images provided by the NFB)

December 12, 2019 – Montreal – National Film Board of Canada (NFB)

Two new [NFB](#) virtual reality works will be presented at the [Sundance Film Festival](#) next month, along with an award-winning short doc set in British Columbia's Haida Gwaii.

Recognizing creators who push the boundaries of storytelling with new and immersive technologies, New Frontiers is featuring the world premiere of [The Book of Distance](#), the first VR work by acclaimed Toronto-based artist and filmmaker **Randall Okita** ([The Weatherman and the Shadowboxer](#)), as well as a prologue to the AI project [Chomsky vs. Chomsky: First Encounter](#) (NFB/[Schnellebuntebilder](#)/[EyeSteelFilm](#)), created by distinguished Montreal-based creative director, filmmaker and sociologist of media technologies **Sandra Rodriguez**.

Presented in the festival's Short Film section, [Now Is the Time](#) is the latest work by award-winning Vancouver-based Haida director, animator and illustrator Christopher Auchter ([The Mountain of SGaana](#)), which had its world premiere earlier this year at TIFF.

- ***The Book of Distance***

Synopsis, biographies, images: [mediaspace.nfb.ca/the-book-of-distance](https://mediaspace.nfb.ca/the-book-of-distance)

In 1935, Yonezo Okita left his home in Hiroshima, Japan, for Canada. Then war and racism changed everything. Three generations later, his grandson Randall leads us on an interactive pilgrimage through an emotional geography of immigration and family to recover what was lost.

***The Book of Distance*** is the third NFB production for Randall Okita, who directed the innovative and multi-award-winning ***The Weatherman and the Shadowboxer*** (2014) as well as the NFB short [Ben Heppner: Moving Through Music](#) (2016) for the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards—and whose feature directorial debut *The Lockpicker* received the John Dunning Discovery Award from the Canadian Academy of Cinema and Television. ***The Book of Distance*** is produced by David Oppenheim and executive produced by Anita Lee for the NFB's Ontario Studio in Toronto.

- **Chomsky vs. Chomsky: First Encounter**

Synopsis, biographies, images: [mediaspace.nfb.ca/chomsky-vs-chomsky](https://mediaspace.nfb.ca/chomsky-vs-chomsky)

A prologue to a timely conversation on AI's biggest promises and pitfalls. Lured by the possibility of emulating one of today's most famous minds, we meet and engage with CHOMSKY\_AI, an entity under construction, evolving from the arsenal of digital traces professor Noam Chomsky has left behind.

A Montreal-based artist and visiting scholar and lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Sandra Rodriguez has created groundbreaking documentaries, webdocs and VR/XR projects, including as director of the fifth episode of the NFB-co-produced web series [Do Not Track](#), recipient of a Peabody Award and over two million hits, and creative director/producer of *Manic VR*, winner of a prestigious Golden Nica at Ars Electronica.

**Chomsky vs. Chomsky: First Encounter** is produced by Sandra Rodriguez (EyeSteelFilm), Sebastian Huber (Schnellebuntebilder) and Marie-Pier Gauthier (NFB Digital Studio), and executive produced by Bob Moore (EyeSteelFilm), Louis-Richard Tremblay and Hugues Sweeney (NFB Digital Studio), and Michaela Pnacekova (Schnellebuntebilder), and was funded by the Canada-Germany Digital Media Incentive. The experience is supported in part by Sundance Institute's New Frontier Lab Programs with a grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

- **Now Is the Time** (16 min.)

Synopsis, biographies, images: [mediaspace.nfb.ca/now-is-the-time](https://mediaspace.nfb.ca/now-is-the-time)

When internationally renowned Haida carver Robert Davidson was only 22 years old, he carved the first new totem pole on British Columbia's Haida Gwaii in almost a century. On the 50th anniversary of the pole's raising, Haida filmmaker Christopher Auchter steps easily through history to revisit that day in August 1969, when the entire village of Old Massett gathered to celebrate the event that would signal the rebirth of the Haida spirit.

Auchter made his directorial debut in 2017 with the NFB animated short [The Mountain of SGAana](#), named Best Animated Film or Series for Young Audiences – Ages 6–12 at the Ottawa International Animation Festival and Best Animated Short – Iron Giants Children's Jury Prizes (ages 14+) at the Seattle Children's Film Festival. **Now Is the Time** is produced by Selwyn Jacob and executive produced by Shirley Vercruysse, with Teri Snelgrove as associate producer, for the NFB's BC and Yukon Studio in Vancouver.

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## Related Products

Electronic Press Kit | Images, trailers, synopses: [Chomsky vs. Chomsky: First Encounter](#) | [Now Is the Time](#) | [The Book of Distance](#)

## Associated Links

[Sundance Film Festival](#)  
[Schnellebuntebilder](#)  
[EyeSteelFilm](#)

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