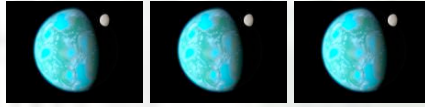


THE LAST PLANET



Feature-length documentary

◆ Director/Producer
Sylvie Van Brabant

◆ Associate producer
Lucille Veilleux

◆ Executive producer
Peter Wintonick
Yves Bisailon, NFB

◆ Producers
Marie-France Côté
Patricia Bergeron, NFB

◆ On-line producer
Denis McCready

Summary

**RAPIDE
BLANC**



SODÉC

SYNOPSIS

We all know this much: extreme climate change is now a stark reality. An exponential population explosion and a dysfunctional global economy threaten the future. For the first time in our history, we must come together with one common purpose: save the planet to save ourselves.

THE LAST PLANET : an international road movie for the ecological age !

It tells the story of **Mikaël Rioux**, a young passionate environmental Canadian champion, who is on an international quest to meet planet-saving mentors, scientists and guides. In his twenties, Mikaël stood up to the Government to save the river he has loved since childhood, protesting a plan to build an unnecessary dam. Stretching a cable between two trees, he suspended himself for a month above the rushing waters. This began his restless journey to change the world.

Mikaël meets 80 year old **Christian De Laet**, one of the twelve “wisdom keepers” at the United Nation's *Rio Earth Summit*. De Laet is preoccupied with the ecological and social disaster looming ahead. Thrilled to discover such a young committed leader, De Laet sends Mikaël on a voyage to meet other visionaries dedicated to renewing the world.

WHO ARE THE VISIONARY CHARACTERS HE MEETS ALONG THE WAY?

India's **Ashok Khosla** of the world's largest private alternative development agency, *Development Alternatives*; Sweden's **Karl-Henrik Robèrt**, one of the world's foremost sustainability experts and founder of *The Natural Step* framework; Africa's Nobel Peace Prize winner, **Wangari Maathai**, founder of the *Green Belt Movement*, and North-America's ecological designer, **John Todd**, the famed inventor of revolutionnary eco-machines which mimic nature to revitalize water.

THE LAST PLANET : a survival guide for this century !

Our camera follows Mikaël on his homerian journey. Each stop along his eco-way reveals amazing possibilities for restoring the balance between nature and ourselves. But our pilgrim is not only content to meet the wise, he puts thought to action, adapting acquired knowledge to his immediate circumstances. In this, he provides a continuity to the 70's adage about thinking globally and acting locally. A natural leader, he is surrounded by an armada of equally passionate young believers. Together, they are creating a green social revolution for the world to partake in. The film will track them as they are changing the world using direct action, media activism, consensus-building, web-based viral communications, social education, ecological festivals, and events created to save the last pieces of the virgin world. For his generation, there are no limits. And there's no turning back.

THE LAST PLANET treats content in a holistic and visionary manner, offering new ways of seeing the challenges for the 21st century. As we follow Mikaël on his personal quest, we share the knowledge, hope and solutions he acquires and the emotions they inspire. This feature documentary and its cross-media versions mix cinematics, passion and positive examples. Through the personal quest of our main character, audiences will be inspired, motivated, provoked, and propelled into emotional identification and personal action.

A TRANS-GENERATIONAL CONNECTION

As a kid growing up in Quebec, Mikaël's father provided him with many educational and natural experiences, including the first-hand magic in visits to the great whales of the Saint Lawrence river. That initiation marked the beginning of Mikaël's profound relationship with nature and started him on his eco-way. Mikaël has recently become a father. Poised between the old and the new, this transformative experience pushes him to break with the top-down approaches and energizes him to help create a future shaped by ecological and social imperatives. Gathering knowledge and experience from seasoned visionaries serves his personal interest to guarantee a better planet for his child... and for all tomorrow's children.

Our story works across generations, with decisive meetings between experienced elders sharing their practical and positive wisdom and coming face to face with Mikaël's fire of young idealism. Sometimes, it's a dialogue between promise and compromise.

The natural ecosystems cannot respond to the consumptive addictions of the human species, bringing us on the verge of an unprecedented environmental and social catastrophe. Mikaël has many questions. Why have earlier generations of the environmental movements not been able to stop this ecocide? Why have bureaucrats generated millions of pages of reports, without results? What will be the heritage left by older generations to future ones? Mikaël feels we must examine the root causes. For him, solutions will be powerful if they are put into action collectively.

TREATMENT - A VISUAL AND EMOTIONAL ODYSSEY

THE LAST PLANET is an ambitious project. It deals with ecology, biology, economy, politics, anthropology, ethics and even poetry. Through imagery and vision, this feature-length film will be a visual odyssey imbued with the beauty of Nature and the horror of its devastation. Moving across continents, the camera will reach the most evocative places and reveal the most poignant situations. Music and soundscape will accentuate the tension in this battle between nature and civilization with an ultimate message: let's project ourselves into the future to save our earth now!

As a storyteller, THE LAST PLANET's director, Sylvie Van Brabant, has tackled many difficult subjects. Suicide, youth violence, drug addiction and cancer. She always succeeds, mixing dynamic access with a touch of transcendence. Her strength lies in her ability to touch viewers at deeper emotional levels.

THE LAST PLANET will unfold as a very modern tale through its use of visuals, sound and music. Use of multi-media along with sequences from a Cabaret organized by Mikaël to save the Rupert River, one of the last virgin rivers of the planet, will give the film a Brechtian touch with its surreal poetry and black humor.

Sylvie Van Brabant is working with a team representing the emerging generation of media professionals: her own daughter, Katerine Giguère, is Director of Photography, young co-producer Marie-France Côté and Moment Factory's Jason Rodi, who uses stunning multi-layered visuals to create provocative aesthetics. This team ensures a blending of modernist style with Sylvie's own strengths and cinematographic approach

developed over 25 years of documentary filmmaking. Van Brabant is determined to create a powerful piece of cinema that will strike our imagination and shake our Cartesian minds. After the show is over, we will get up out of our chairs, and put our feet to the ground to save our last, and only planet.

A VITAL FILM

Through “cinéma direct”, we will follow Mikaël’s journey and his meetings with the various visionaries recommended by Christian. We will be challenged to imagine how we can increase our chances for survival by treating our planet’s essential resources differently.

WATER - The essence of life, fragile, finite. **John Todd**, hailed by MIT as one of the “35 most significant inventors of the 20th century”, knows how to revitalize water. This master of bio-mimicry has achieved amazing results throughout the world. He insists that we now have the science and technology to reduce our ecological footprint by 90%. By addressing design issues from an ecological standpoint, John Todd and his partner, writer **Nancy Jack Todd**, have discovered ways to solve many environmental and energy-related problems. Mikaël will learn all about visionary landscapes from his encounters with this couple.

TREES - Majestic, producers of pure air, intimately linked to water, soil and climate. **Wangari Maathai**, with the *Green Belt Movement*, has planted over 30 millions trees. She has seen this movement transform her people. She also remembers when trees were considered sacred to her culture. Wangari Maathai has had to confront political power and has been very successful in creating a strong movement by using a grass roots approach towards community development. The *Green Belt Movement* is behind an amazing roster of initiatives to develop a strong civil society in Africa. Mikaël is also involved in saving Quebec and Canada’s boreal forests and has much to learn from this very powerful woman.

CYCLES – Natural, social and economic, everything is inter-connected. The Swedish oncologist, **Karl-Henrik Robèrt**, has developed a practical, science and systems-based approach to organizational planning based on *The Natural Step Framework*, a structure that shows businesses and municipalities how to integrate the cycles of nature into their management and governance systems. It provides a practical set of design criteria that can be used to direct social, environmental and economic actions. Working with *The Natural Step*, hundreds of organizations, including large-scale corporations like IKEA and Volvo, are leading the way, doing well by doing good. Why does Sweden have an eco-social ethic while North America is addicted to its petro-dollar philosophy? Mikaël wants to push local businesses and governments toward true sustainability. As he stands overlooking the vast Alberta tar sands spewing out more greenhouse gases to tip the earth’s climate over, he wonders what’s wrong with us? The solutions are within each one of us, but they also are political. He can be trusted to use the media and his inspired provocative web clips to push for political accountability.

GOVERNANCE – **Ashok Khosla**, the Harvard-trained physicist, has shown how decentralized small-scale systems directly benefit the environment and determine local autonomy for people in India. Founded in 1983 with the intention of truly serving the people, *Development Alternatives* is now a well-emulated model for the developing world. Khosla has worked extensively with many of the big UN bodies; he knows that

decision-makers fail to engage with the 'whole systems' approach so necessary in this day and time. Inspired, Mikaël wants to train his generation to become true eco-citizens.

ETHICS - For 50 years, **Christian de Laet** has been involved with all areas of environmental thought and activism. A veritable living encyclopedia, he is the ideal mentor for Mikaël on an ethical and philosophical level. Christian provides Mikaël and our viewers with links between the past and the future, and with an overview of many issues facing the planet. At the venerable age of 80, he feels an urgency to transmit his knowledge and principles to others. A colorful witty character, he is the perfect «wise old man» figure.

A MULTI-PLATFORM PROJECT

A feature documentary is the first priority. There can also be shorter compact spin-offs featuring each of the main visionary mentors and their projects. THE LAST PLANET will also be a comprehensive multi-platform web project, an enriched DVD and a strong educational new media project. We will produce short evolutionary diaries during our shoot and edit them for the Web. Short web capsules and video-blogs will inform, pre-promote and mobilize. All the research and information collected with the visionaries will become the basis of the LAST PLANET's educational WEB project. The work of the Todds, Development Alternatives in India, The Natural Step and The Green Belt Movement open us to a world of solutions. How Mikaël incorporates the information he gathers and puts it into action in Quebec and Canada becomes another part of the Web project. Mikaël has proposed a watchtower for the design of the site. The new media project responds to his needs, and our needs, to communicate with his generation. With these different iterations of THE LAST PLANET, we will create tools for reflection in the minds of the audience and tools for change that they can put their hands on.

A CARBON-NEUTRAL DOCUMENTARY

Rapide-Blanc, the production company steering this project, became the first production company in Quebec to adhere to the Equiterre campaign Un Geste à la Fois, (the Quebec equivalent of David Suzuki's Nature Challenge.) We have developed the greencode project, (www.greencodeproject.org) an eco code of ethics and are inviting film companies, festivals, broadcasters, service companies and institutions to join us. Sylvie Van Brabant and producers Marie-France Côté and Peter Wintonick are founding members of the newly formed Green Media Institute. This NGO is created to operate the green code project, coordinate research on the ecological footprint of media, prepare for official green code certification for film and television and lobby for eco-friendly policies concerning the various media industries.

With The Last Planet, the team at Rapide-Blanc, is determined to 'walk their talk". We will honor our eco-code and hope to produce the first carbon neutral documentary in Canada. In addition to producing films that engage popular reflection on important social and environmental issues, we are actively engaged in reducing our ecological footprint.

THE LAST PLANET : AN ESSENTIAL ODYSSEY TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

THE MAIN CHARACTER

Mikaël Rioux was named by MacLean's Magazine as one of the thirty most promising Canadians under 30. His most striking action was saving the river of his childhood from a 3.5-megawatt private dam by holding a 40-day siege. During his stand on the Trois-Pistoles River, he was called to the National Assembly to receive an award for bravery. A year-and-a-half earlier, he led a daring rescue of a man and three boys caught in the undertow while swimming off Quebec's Iles-de-la-Madeleine. He refused the medal and prize unless the government put a stop to the unnecessary dam project. He won and eight days later the Quebec government abandoned the projected dam. He garnered praise in the media for both actions.



He then went on to create a popular movement on the Iles-de-la-Madeleine demanding an environmental assessment of the seismic activity that would be provoked by drilling for gas in the St-Lawrence Seaway. The BAPE (Bureau d'audiences publiques en environnement) finally ruled against the project. This brought about a new approach to wind energy in order to meet the Islands' energy needs. He was then involved in several actions to stop clear cutting on Ile Levasseur in northern Quebec. He attended the World Social Forum in Porto Allegre to inform others about Ile Levasseur.

Following his siege on the river, he started Québec's first environmental fair in his hometown of Trois-Pistoles, in order to celebrate the victory over the dam but also to prove to the local elite that the river could be profitably used for recreational activities. L'Écho Fête won a major provincial environmental award in 2004 (Phénix de l'environnement) in the education category. Now in its 5th year, the festival brings more economic benefits to the municipality than the \$25,000 annual benefit that would have been incurred by projected dam.

He also partook in a reality television program "Destination Nor'Ouest" where nine persons paddled 2,500 kilometers across Canada in a birch bark canoe living like 18th century "voyageurs." The director of this 8 hour series hailed him as the leader of the pack.

Mikaël has also traveled extensively in North and South America to witness first-hand the devastating effects of poverty, and the social and environmental impacts of certain mega-projects that profit mainly the First World. Mikaël responds to all requests to talk in schools, science fairs, forums; any activity that involves communicating his beliefs to others. His attachment to children is also striking. This young man who has the courage of his convictions wants to transmit his ideals to the younger generation. He is a definite role model in Quebec.

THE VISIONARIES

CHRISTIAN DE LAET, PhD

Dr. Christian de Laet has over 50 years of experience in environmental issues. In 1964 he was appointed Secretary General of the Canadian Council of Resources and Environment Ministers. In the 70s he moved from policy-making to the field, working in Asia, the Caribbean and South Pacific. He went on to become a consultant and advisor to UN agencies such as UNESCO, UNEP, and the World Health Organization. In 1977 he was appointed advisor and secretary to the Commonwealth Science Council. In this position he developed collaborative research programs aimed at self-reliance in developing countries through the use of local resources. In 1983 he moved to India as the co-founder of Development Alternatives, the world's largest advisory group dealing with rural technologies and environmental issues. Dr. de Laet has organized hundreds of conferences, written many articles and is the recipient of numerous awards: Canadian Achievers – Environment (1990), the Centennial Medal (1967); and is a Life Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.



As his eventful life draws to a close, he feels the urgent need to transmit his knowledge to the younger generations who, he hopes, will manage to break down obstacles against which he and many others have struggled. This man with an incredible sense of humor also has the ability to charm everyone he meets.

ASHOK KHOSLA, PhD



Ashok Khosla is the president of Development Alternatives (D.A), which he co-founded in India with Dr. De Laet, with the mandate to stem the impoverishment of the environment while contributing to develop entrepreneurship among the Indian people. He headed the United Nations program for the environment in Nairobi for 6 years, was special advisor to the World Commission on Environment and Development in Geneva and a consultant to the World Bank. He continues to sit on the boards of several international organizations. Dr. Khosla is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards for leadership such as the Prix Sasakawa, equivalent of a Nobel prize in the environmental arena, awarded to leaders in international conservation. He studied and taught at Harvard; Al Gore is among his former students. This man, one of a long line of civil servants, has always worked for the common good and continues to seek solutions to redeem human dignity.

KARL-HENRIK ROBERT, Dr., PhD

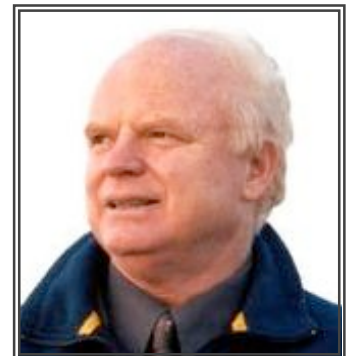


This renowned oncologist and scientist founded « The Natural Step » in Sweden in 1989. Robert worked with scientific colleagues to achieve consensus on the root of our environmental and social problems. The Natural Step is an international non-profit that has offices on all continents and provides education, training, coaching and advice to hundreds of corporations, municipalities and other organizations (*Ikea, Scandic Hotels, Interface*) to help them become more sustainable. Dr. Robert is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards including Mikhail Gorbachev's *Millennium Award* (1999) and the *Blue Planet Award* (2000). This enthusiastic yet pragmatic man has a profound belief in the human spirit and a passion for informing tomorrow's leaders in the hope they will be able to insure a sustainable future for us all.

“ If we think systematically, we will stop asking, ‘How much is nature worth?’ We will know that we are a piece of nature ourselves. ”--K.-H. Robert

JOHN TODD, PhD

Acclaimed for his visionary work in environmental design, John Todd has received numerous awards such as the *Environmental Merit Award* (from the American Agency for Environmental Merit). In 1999, *Times Magazine* named him *Hero of the Earth*. Todd practices and teaches bio-mimetism, which consists of understanding nature's recycling mechanisms in order to neutralize waste produced by human activity. John Todd affirms that we already possess the knowledge to reduce our ecological impact on the environment by 90%. Among his numerous clients: China, where he transformed sewers into cool havens; a chicken slaughterhouse in Maryland where he had the challenge of turning 5 million liters of wastewater into clear water. The actor Marlon Brando called on Todd to provide a sustainable future for his children raised on the atoll of Tahiti. John Todd's sensitivity, vision and love for nature make him a charismatic, natural-born mentor.



NANCY JACK TODD

Nancy Jack Todd is Vice President of Ocean Arks International and editor of its journal *Annals of Earth*. She is co-founder with John Todd of the New Alchemy Institute, which has been at the forefront of work in appropriate-scale technology. She is author and co-author of many works, including *Bio-shelters*, *Ocean Arks* and *City Farming*. Not only is Nancy Todd well acquainted with the technologies that would lead to a sustainable society in the new millennium, but she is also versed in the cultural thinking that underlies and encourages the changes in lifestyle necessary to apply such technologies. Trained as a dancer, she is also a perceptive writer and editor. She contributed all the introductory essays to *People, Land, and Community: Collected E. F. Schumacher Society Lectures* (Yale University Press). Her latest book, *A Safe and Sustainable World: The Promise of Ecological Design* will be published in French in 2007 by Écosociété. Nancy is a gentle, sensitive and gifted woman. She and her partner John form an inspiring couple.



WANGARI MAATHAI, PhD

Founder of the « *Green Belt Movement* » about 30 years ago, Wangari Maathai is determined to fight to protect the environment and human rights. She has undauntingly led political battles on many fronts and has been the object of attacks, beatings and imprisonment. Today she holds the position of Assistant to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources in Kenya, where she was elected to government in 2002 with a resounding 98% majority. She received the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize and numerous other distinctions such as the *Golden Ark Award* (1994) and the *United Nations Africa Prize for Leadership* (1991). This big-hearted woman can move mountains and the masses. Her love for the planet and for humanity is contagious. Her good nature is like a breath of fresh air.



THE TEAM FOR THE LAST PLANET

SYLVIE VAN BRABANT

Director, producer

For over 25 years, filmmaker Sylvie Van Brabant has been directing and producing films that stimulate reflection and the acceptance of others and their differences; films about the importance of conserving one's identity, culture and language, on the status of women, and the respect for human rights and the environment. Her films inevitably become strong educational tools and are used by institutions, NGOs, colleges and universities. As co-founder with Serge Giguère of les Productions du Rapide-Blanc, she has made over twenty documentaries, many of which have received numerous international awards. Their latest success, *A force de rêves* (Driven by Dreams) played theatrically for ten weeks and won Quebec's top award (Jutras) for feature-length documentary. Their films are acclaimed and valued for their unique stamp and their social and political impact in building a more just and equitable society.



Through her films, Sylvie Van Brabant has given a voice to struggling youth, to people marginalized and abandoned by society, and to ordinary people. She has been an activist for point-of-view documentary for twenty years, sitting on the boards of DOC and the Observatoire du Documentaire and Hot Docs. As president of Les Productions du Rapide-Blanc for the past two decades, Sylvie remains committed to the production of quality documentaries that serve society on many levels.

LUCILLE VEILLEUX

Associate producer



Lucille Veilleux, a lawyer and legal advisor, produced a dozen films before becoming the Assistant Director-General of the National Film Board's French Program in 1987. She then moved to television as the head of original productions and adaptations for Canal D. In 1999 she was named SODEC's Director General of Cinema and Television, where she supervised the funding of writing, development, production and distribution. Particularly notable among films she has produced is *What Remains of Us* by Hugo Latulippe and François Prévost which ran for 13 months in theatres and was awarded Best Documentary at the Hollywood Film Festival, Best Feature and Public's Choice at the Atlantic Film Festival, Most Popular Canadian Film, Vancouver Film Festival, Prix Jutras, Best Quebec Documentary, Prix Ouimet Molson AQCC, Best Film, Telluride Festival, Official Selection London Times Festival, Cannes Film Festival etc.

YVES BISAILLON

NFB Co-producer



Yves Bisailon was born in Montreal and holds a degree in Urban Planning from Université de Montréal and in Communications from Université du Québec à Montréal. Bisailon joined the NFB as a producer in 1997. His productions include *No Quick Fix, Just Watch Me: Trudeau and the '70s Generation* (winner of a Genie Award for best feature-length documentary and best Canadian first feature film at the International Toronto Film Festival, 1999), *Claude Jutra: An Unfinished Story* (2002), which won a Géméaux and three Gemini awards. *La Cueva Sola* (Special Mention at the Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois, best Canadian documentary and best direction in the Canadian Spectrum Program at Hot Docs 2004), *What Remains of Us* (selected at the International Critics' Week, Cannes 2004, winner of the Jutra Award for best documentary in 2005). Most recently, he produced the controversial *Medicine Under the Influence, Who Shot My Brother?* (winner of the Public Award, Festival du nouveau cinéma de Montréal).

PETER WINTONICK

Executive producer

Peter Wintonick is a producer, director, critic and editor of independent film, video and new media. His work includes dramatic features, theatrical documentaries, and educational and socio-political works. A leader in digital documentary production, web work and media literacy, Wintonick is noted for co-producing and co-directing (with Mark Achbar) one of the most successful documentaries in Canadian history, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*. It played in 200 cities, won 22 awards at more than 50 international film festivals and has been broadcast in a dozen languages. Wintonick contributes to film magazines and advises film festivals and film institutions around the world. He lives in Montreal.



DENIS McCREADY
On-line producer



Denis McCready was production manager on more than eight documentaries including “Korea: The Unfinished War” and “The Great War” by Brian McKenna (Galafilm); “Boot It Up! - La Bottine Souriante” by Rénaud Bellemare and “Danser Perreault” by Tim Southam (Films de l’Isle). He was also associate producer on the docu-fantasy “Arthur’s Paradise” by Luc Beauchamp (Visions du Réel, Hot Docs, RIDM). From 2005 to 2007, he line produced the HD documentary series « Mars Rising » (6X60min – Galafilm) for Discovery Canada. Denis McCready cooperated as a photo reporter with Doctors Without Borders in Nagorno-Karabagh and CARE in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In addition to writing for the literary show “Auteurs du Dimanche” since 2004, Denis

McCready won the 2nd prize of the CBC/Radio-Canada Literary Awards with his travel short piece “Return from Sarajevo, first hand account”. As well as being the on-line producer for The last Planet, Denis will spearhead the potential four part series for television presently entitled, *Visionaries of The last Planet*.

MARIE-FRANCE CÔTÉ
Producer

Marie-France Côté is a young hands-on producer with an intimate knowledge of the process. Her apprenticeship at Rapide-Blanc has given her privileged access to experienced filmmakers like Serge Giguère and Sylvie Van Brabant. She is interested in fundamental values that mark the differences between generations. She believes that our concept of the workplace, money, power, and the quality of life need to be redefined. It was Marie-France’s personal initiative that led to Rapide-Blanc’s declaration of sustainable development in 2005: a *code of eco-ethics* to be observed in all aspects of production. This has led to the development of the greencodeproject for the media industries.



JASON RODI
Visual advisor



As one of the founders of *Moment Factory*, Jason has created a forum for artists to share, collaborate and express the new ideas in visual creation. He has created visuals and films for Cirque du Soleil, Aldo, Generation, and has performed in nearly every possible forum, from concerts to raves to art spaces to improvised music concerts. He ensures a collaborative effort and seeks out Montreal’s top visual artists and VJs. Through Jason’s magical touch, THE LAST PLANET is assured to become an immersive visual and sonic experiment.