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OPEN CINEMA in the Driver Seat! Cross-Canada Roadtrip Connects Documentary Screening Programs to Engage Doc Lovers.

March 18, 2013 Victoria, BC - This summer, OPEN CINEMA is planning to spend four months driving across the birthplace of documentary, from Victoria to St John's, Newfoundland and back in a VW Westfalia. Along the way, **Get on the Doc Bus** will connect with doc lovers, filmmakers and community screening programs, to explore documentary and community building during a challenging time of change for the industry. The goal: to seed a nationwide community screening network.

Get on the Doc Bus is the brainchild of OPEN CINEMA founder & program director Mandy Leith. "I've dreamed of doing this for over a decade. The documentary industry is at a cross-roads and it's time to get out there and talk to people." The Canadian born genre has found itself in the eye of a perfect storm over the last 5 years, says Leith, who has worked in the industry for over 30 years. The economic downturn has negatively impacted the broadcast industry's advertising revenues, which previously fuelled documentary production in Canada. Dwindling funding, axed documentary strands replaced by reality TV, changing technology, a dearth of political support for the Arts and the question of how to monetize the Internet are all making it hard for documentaries to find funding and audiences.

Meanwhile, community screening programs like OPEN CINEMA are finding that documentaries are a valuable tool for community engagement and social enterprise. Now completing its tenth successful season of thought-provoking documentaries in cafe-style venues followed by open forum discussion with invited guests, OPEN CINEMA was referred to as "*one of Victoria's most successful enterprises*" by Times Colonist entertainment reviewer Michael D. Reid in 2011.

In 2012, OPEN CINEMA exponentially expanded its potential by adding an innovative virtual complement to its local program. A livestream feed of the post-screening discussion is coupled with a [moderated Twitter chat](#) about the film's topic, and the option to watch the film online. The [#opencinema Tweetchat](#) alone has a reach of 20,000 to 45,000 Twitter followers at each event, according to Hashtracking.com. "We're very excited about the potential of our [new hybrid event model](#) to connect local community screening events to a global audience."

Leith plans to share her experience and passion with other community screening organizers and doc lovers across the country, while exploring the development of a broad grassroots network that can support filmmakers, audiences and local community building initiatives. She will document the journey with video and photography, blogging and tweeting as she makes her way across the country. A crowdfunding campaign is planned for April, in anticipation of a June departure.

"I'd like to think of this journey as the cinematic equivalent of Stomping Tom's musical adventures. We want to meet Canadians, to talk about Canada's documentary legacy. Let's not wait until it's gone before we give it the respect it deserves." For more information, visit www.GetontheDocBus.wordpress.com

CONTACT: Mandy Leith ph:250.882.7441 e: GetontheDocBus@gmail.com

www.opencinema.ca

OPEN CINEMA is a program of [MediaNet](#)