

METLIB ZURICH - MAY 5, 2015

ONCE UPON A TIME...

Reporting about Canadian and
Finnish Public Libraries

By Suzanne Payette
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ONCE UPON A TIME...

There was a writer
named Linda.



Once upon a time... there was an author who dwelled in the verdant land of Lanaudière.

Her name is Linda, and she sometimes works as a scriptwriter for her good friend Martine, a TV documentary maker.

[CLIC]



Linda is a frequent visitor of the area libraries. She even enjoys volunteering, delivering books to senior citizens and offering them a **moment of happiness**.

[CLIC]



One day, her life takes an unexpected turn: she meets **Prince Charming** and moves to the big city.

In the solitude of the metropolis, writing becomes a reassuring presence for Linda.

She therefore sets out on a project that will eventually take a large place in her life: **writing for teenagers**.

[CLIC]



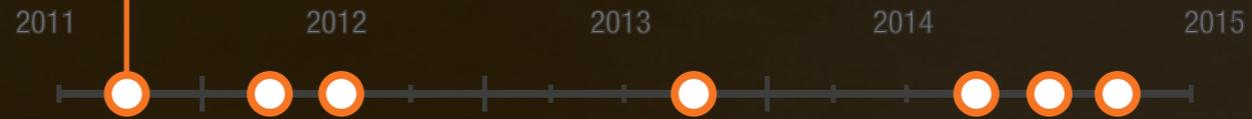
CONTAGION

Part I

One day, in the fall of 2011, Linda is **far from suspecting** that she is about to **be seriously infected**...

During the book award ceremony for which her first young adult novel is a finalist, she meets for the first time Louise... [CLIC]

Fall 2011



One day, in the fall of 2011, Linda is far from suspecting that she is about to be seriously infected...

During the book award ceremony for which her first young adult novel is a finalist, she meets for the first time Louise... [CLIC]



... **who you all know**, and who has always born the **germs of passion for libraries**.

Everyone knows about **Louise's contagiousness**...

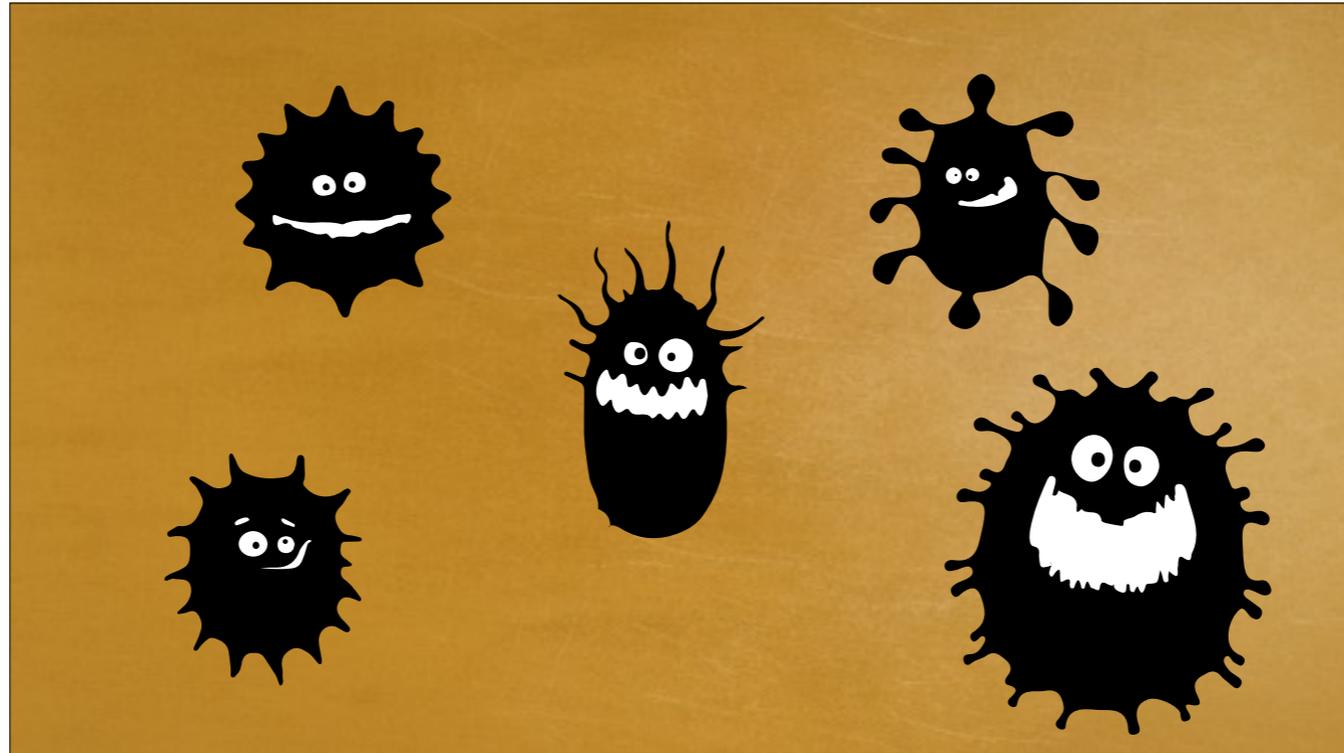
[CLIC]



She tells Linda a great **many stories** – **all true, of course** – stories where libraries, and more specifically librarians, made a difference in people’s lives.

For who knows how long, Linda remains captivated by Louise’s narration, **who tells story after story**, as if they were part of a great saga...

[CLIC]



In the meantime, the **Labory virus** makes its way to Linda, who leaves City Hall completely and absolutely infected.

[CLIC]

CONTAGION

Part II

Her head spinning with stories, Linda knows only one way to get rid of this condition: writing. But this time, **it's not enough.**

She tells Martine the stories she heard, **the lives that were changed.** The story of the children in a disadvantaged neighbourhood who take shelter in the library after school to flee the bullies who taunt them... the librarian who gives them **cookies and hot chocolate** to comfort them... hoping that by telling Martine, she will get better.

[CLIC]

But Martine remains **sceptical.** What is the source of this strange illness?

Was it to try and cure her friend or was it curiosity that led her to the 5th floor of a building in Old Montreal?

The story doesn't say, but one thing is certain: Martine has no idea how fast the virus can spread between two bursts of laughter.



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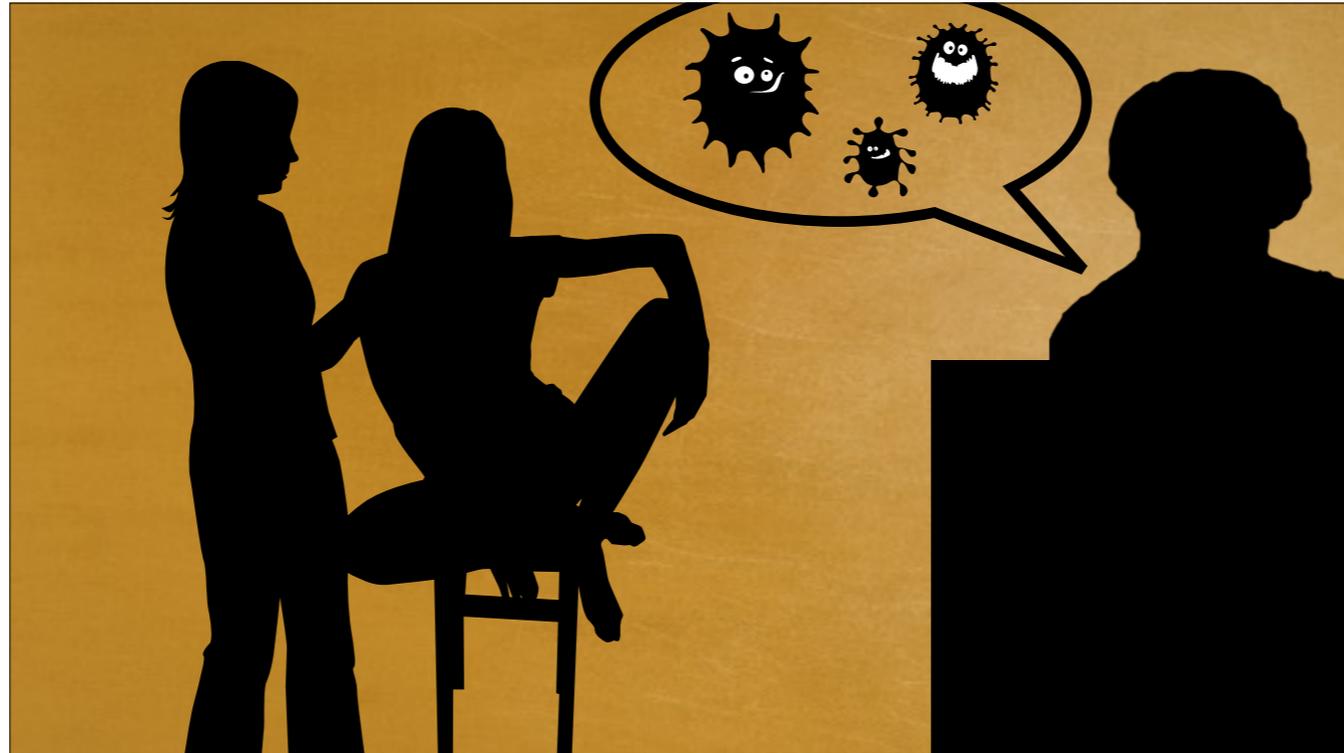
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One clear, cold morning in March 2012, under the blue winter sky, Martine and Linda spend two hours in Louise's office.

What a treat for Louise, who gets to infect yet another **victim!**

That day, the virus reaches its highest potency and infects Martine even worse than it did Linda.

She needs to tell everyone, for everyone's good! The world must know about the power of libraries!

[CLIC]

OPPORTUNITY & AMBITION

As two wise women, Linda and Martine now, know that there is **only one cure for this type of affliction.**

They set on an ambitious project: making a **documentary** about Quebec's libraries.

[CLIC]



Martine writes a **first synopsis** and sends it to the programming director of the national station she usually works with.

But it seems that the virus can't be transmitted by writing... and the director turns her down, arguing that the topic has **no interest**.

But **contaminated** as she is, Martine calls him up on the phone and within ten minutes, the director too starts carrying this strange illness.

Linda and Martine finally have the **prescription to cure their acute disease**: the authorization to produce a one-hour documentary for the national TV station.

The first battle is won.

But what to do without money?

[CLIC]



They start by diving into research mode.

They meet with several of Quebec's finest librarians: Stéphane, Eve, Hélène, Marie, Suzanne... and write a first proposal to develop the project.

Suzanne tells Martine about the success of Finnish libraries and mentions that the August Congress is in Helsinki this year.

[CLIC]



Without hesitation, Martine **breaks her piggy bank** and flies to Finland with Suzanne. (CLIC)

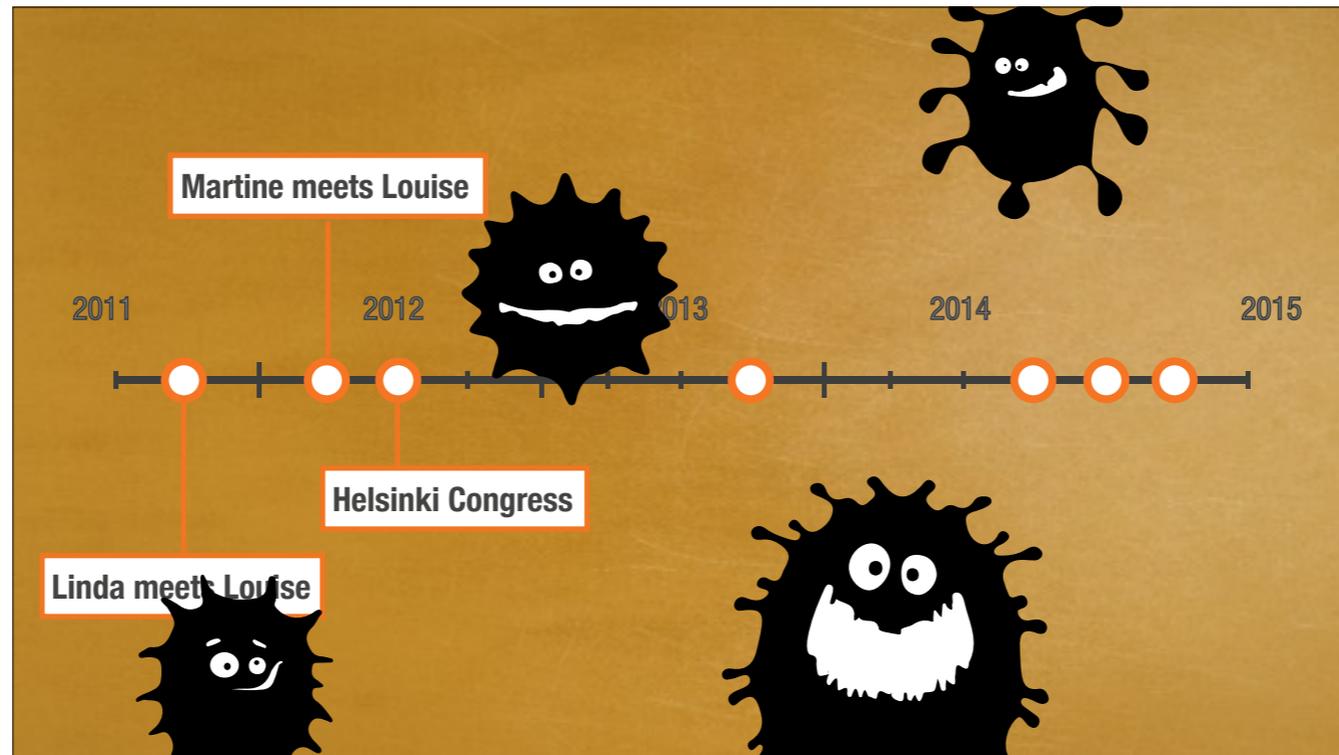
Martine plunges head first into a **highly toxic environment**: she is surrounded by **passionate librarians**, all severely contaminated with the same virus.

She meets professionals from Finland, Singapore, Barcelona, Toronto, Sweden... and her **notepad fills up faster than she thought possible**.

After each meeting, her plans for her documentary get bigger: she wants to talk about the role of libraries not only in Quebec, but worldwide.

There's so much to say! She needs to talk about the **social role of libraries** all over the world, and how every library meets the specific needs of its patrons... Each new discovery adds pages to her script.

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A LESSON IN PATIENCE

Waiting for the Money

Back in Quebec, Martine lays out her plan to visit libraries in Scandinavia, Singapore, and several large Canadian cities.

But to achieve this dream, she needs money... and a lot of it.

She fills out every funding application possible, but times are tough and the **TV station is cutting production budgets** for the next year.

First disappointment: the trip to Singapore has to be cancelled.

Martine and Linda take advantage of this setback to write yet another version of the script. This revised version is approved, but the money's still missing.

But Martine remains patient, and applies for funding again.

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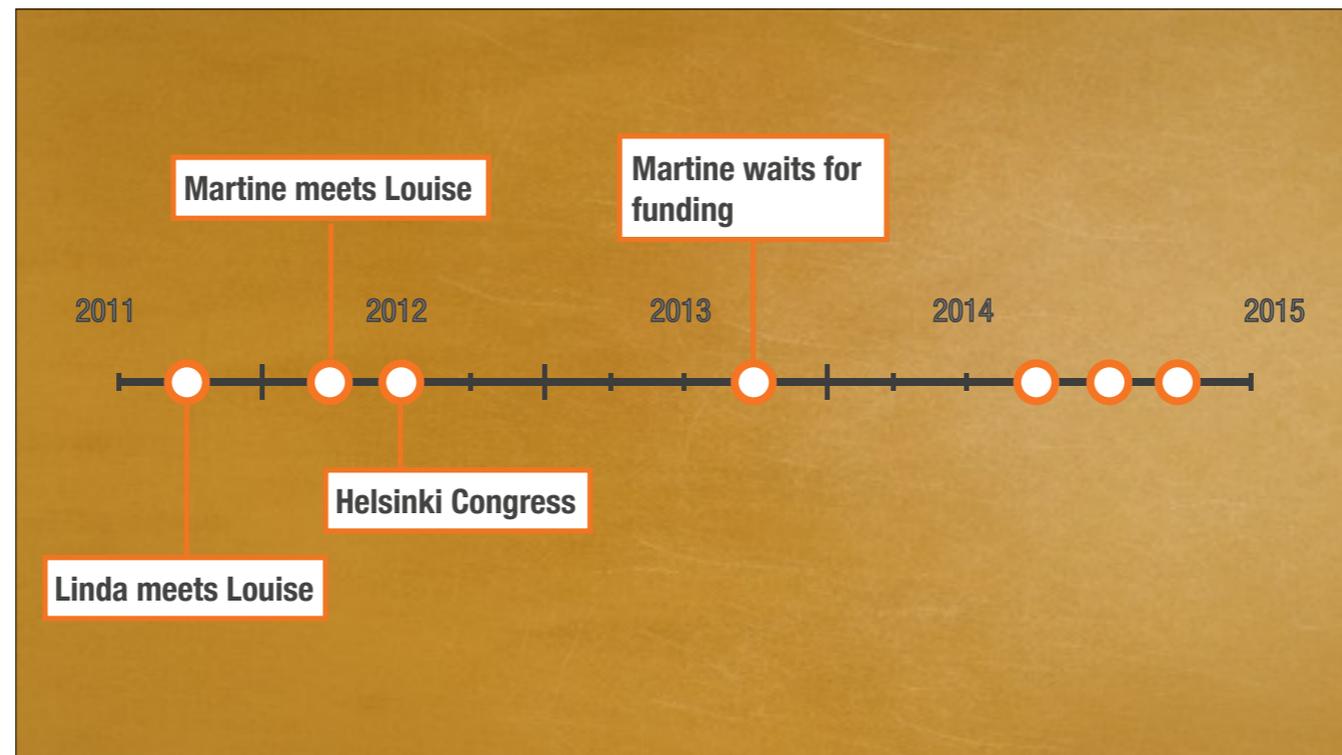
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One day in September 2014, the **phone rings** in Suzanne's office in Brossard. Martine, visibly thrilled, tells Suzanne that her project is finally funded, and that she's already planning shootings in several Quebec libraries.

But before that, she needs to review her list of people to meet: two years have passed and some people have changed jobs or retired. So Linda proceeds to rewrite the script to integrate Martine's many new ideas.

She also holds a **surprise for Suzanne**: she invites her to join them in their tour of Finland. Suzanne is happy to accept the invitation and serve as their guide.

[CLIC]

Martine's Crew



Martine puts together a team of **top professionals**: camera operators, sound technicians, assistants...

She already sees the various aspects she wants to highlight, the spaces set up to meet specific needs... she wants footage of all kinds of users: children, teens, immigrants, senior citizens... and waiting queues!

The schedule is **tighter than tight**: shooting with an entire crew is expensive and not one minute should be wasted.

[CLIC]

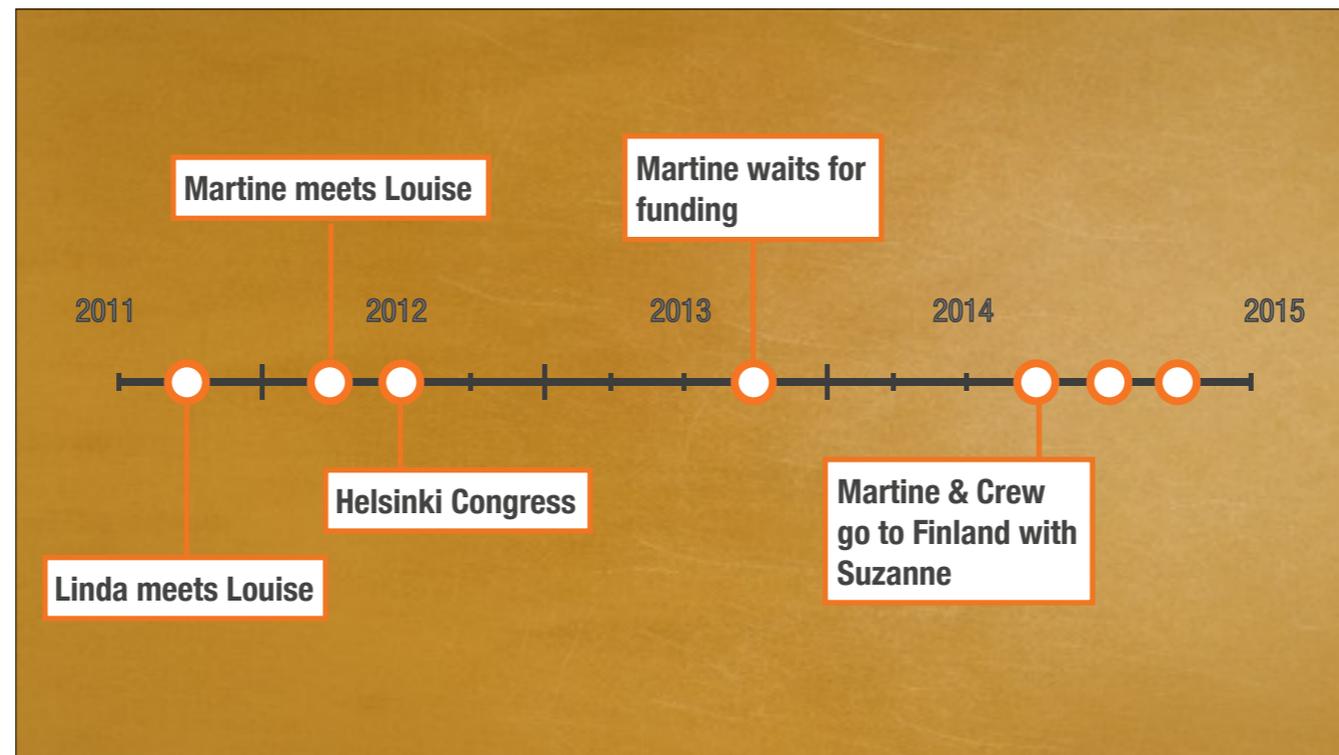


In Quebec, she goes from one library to another: Montréal, Brossard, Joliette, Québec... and further.

She's looking for people who can **communicate on screen their passion**, their message – **which is now hers too** – that, library are an **essential third place** in twenty-first century society.

So she talks to kids, to teens, to professionals, to immigrants, to retired people, and of course, to the indispensable Louise who would not miss this opportunity. She talks with her **heart wide open**, even shedding a tear that shows the **sincerity of her words**.

[CLIC]



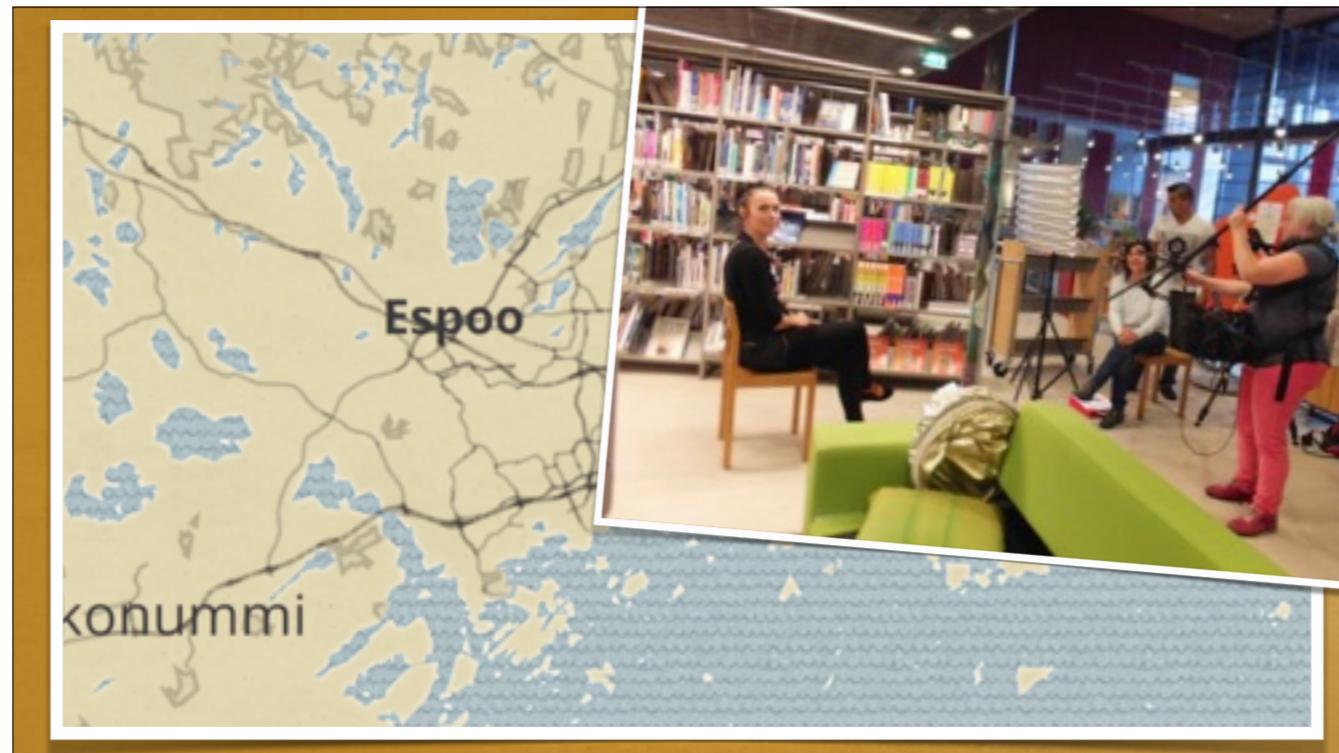
In the fall of 2014, the team flies over to Finland for their frantic four-day tour.

The kilometers add up as fast as the footage. They go back to Espoo, Tampere and Seinäjoki.

Suzanne proves an invaluable resource to pick libraries, make use of her network and point out of the differences between Quebec and Finland.

The Finnish model, ever so inspiring, will make an interesting and constructive comparison with Quebec's libraries.

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[CLIC]



Back in Quebec, Martine is still writing down ideas and keeps shooting. For more than three weeks, ten hours a day, she grabs on camera hundreds of captivating stories, magical places and generous and passionate people.

She also doesn't miss the chance to interview librarians from the Edmonton Public Library, which was just named Library of the Year by Library Journal.

[CLIC]

After sorting through the footage, Martine faces a **big problem**: she can't choose. She simply has **too much material** for a one-hour television documentary – well, 45 minutes, really, accounting for the ads.

[CLIC]



As she prepares for editing, she realizes that she has enough material for a **second hour**.

Hopeful, she calls the programming director and goes to great lengths to get him to approve a second hour... but her request is denied, again for budget reasons.

She has to fit everything in an hour – well, **45 minutes**.

[CLIC]



Finally, she presents her product in December 2014, and after getting some comments back, she reviews the editing for the last time.

Every scene is analyzed, dissected, and approved: the editing must be perfect to **keep the viewers' attention** until the end.

And the comments she gets are unanimous: her documentary **will be great**.

[CLIC]

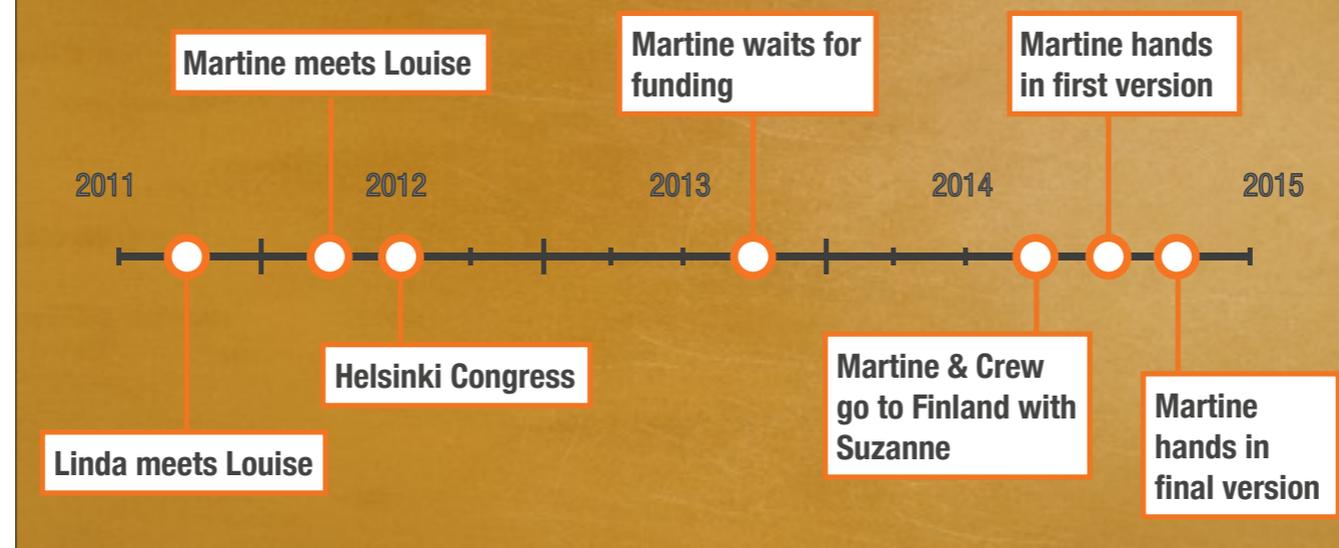
FIRST EPILOGUE



Meanwhile, Linda, who co-wrote the script, didn't keep idle either: she was writing a second novel, *The Amsterdam Garden*, which would be a finalist for the Montreal Libraries Award in fall 2014 and **win first prize...** and the praises of young readers!

[CLIC]

SECOND EPILOGUE

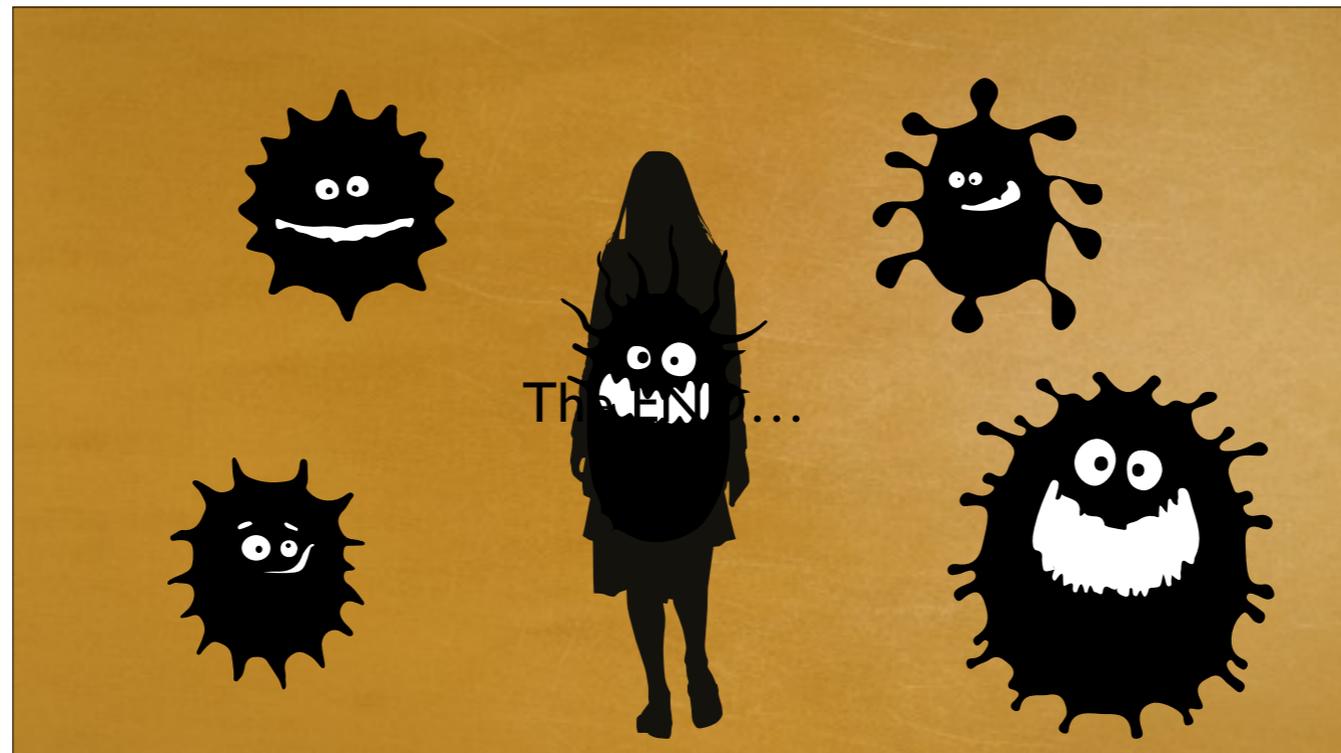


Martine finally hands in the final version of her documentary in **April 2015**.

The presentation of her documentary is set to be on National Television during Fall 2015.

It will have taken four years to achieve what she had set out to do: portray the actual role of libraries in our society.

[CLIC]



Today, Martine knows that she will never really be rid of this virus and **hopes** that through her work, **she will infect everyone**, everywhere... and failing that, at least the viewers who, with her documentary, will discover the tremendous role played by libraries all over the world.

[CLIC FINAL]