

hotdocs presents

CITIZEN MINUTES

Hot Docs proudly presents *Citizen Minutes* Series 2, a short doc collection that shines a spotlight on ordinary Canadians doing extraordinary things to make their communities better places. Meet courageous and bold changemakers who inspire us to jump in and get involved in civic issues that touch our lives and neighbourhoods.

This new series of Hot Docs-produced Canadian short films premiered at the 2023 Hot Docs Festival and follows the success of *Citizen Minutes*' initial series in 2021, which featured eight short docs that have gone on to screen independently and win awards at over 25 Canadian and international film festivals, as well as streaming on Crave and Hot Docs at Home.

Complementary educational resources are available to educators to use the films as teaching tools. The films will also be used in community settings allowing groups to engage in conversation around taking action and creating positive youth-led civic engagement.

Through the Docs For Schools program 33,745 Canadian students from 397 classes (representing 274 schools and 358 individual educators) engaged with the *Citizen Minutes* Series 1 films.

To learn more about all 15 films in *Citizen Minutes*, visit citizenminutes.ca

CREATIVE PRODUCERS:

John Choi
Lisa Rideout

MEDIA CONTACT:

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SCREENING REQUESTS:

citizenminutes.ca

Citizen Minutes Resource
Development Partner



Citizen Minutes films:

**ANCESTRAL
THREADS**

**DO YOU HEAR
WHAT I HEAR?**

**JANELLE NILES:
INCONVENIENT**

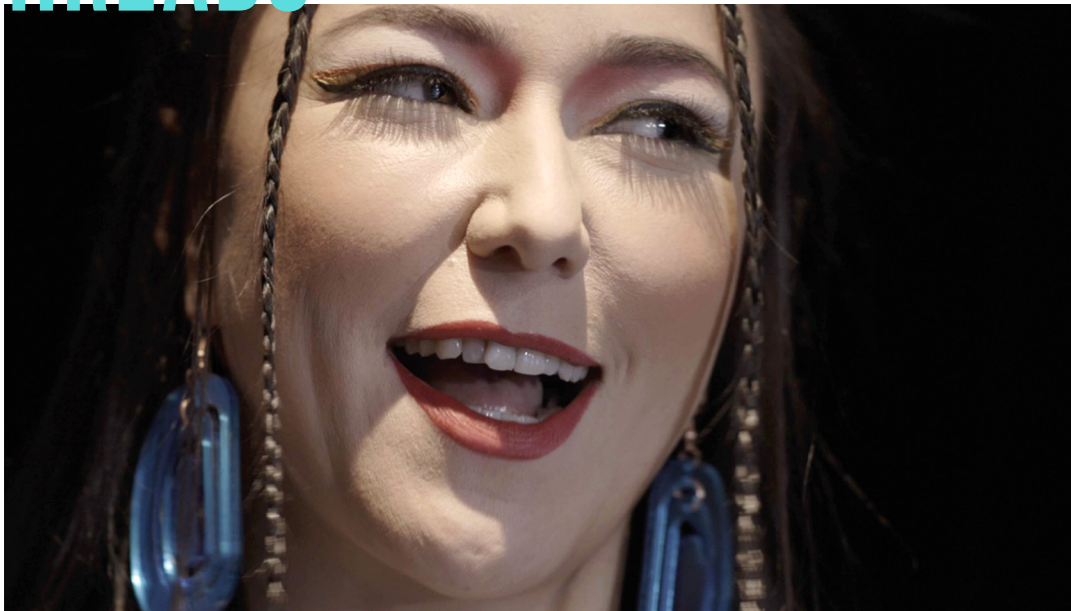
**LOUD
& HERE**

**MIND CHECK
1-2, 1-2**

**RIISING FROM
THE ASHES**

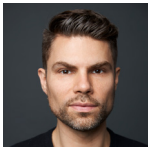
**SISTERHOOD
SOFTBALL**

ANCESTRAL THREADS



Director/Producer/Writer/Cinematographer/Sound: Sean Stiller | **Producer:** John Choi | **Editor:** David Schmidt
Music: David Schmidt | **Composer:** Anthony Wallace | 12 min | Canada

Synopsis: *Ancestral Threads* follows Joleen Mitton on her mission to use fashion as medicine for Vancouver's Indigenous community. From humble beginnings in Vancouver's downtown eastside to a modeling career in Asia, her journey to community leader is woven into the unfolding of Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week—the first event of its kind, and her life's work.



Director bio: Sean Stiller is an award-winning filmmaker specializing in documentary, Indigenous, commercial and commissioned films. Over the past seven years he has worked on a variety of productions, from TV series to feature length films and branded documentary series, as well as his own original projects. His films have screened domestically and internationally, at the Vancouver International Film Festival, Lunenburg Docs, Hot Docs Festival, ImagineNative, Planet In Focus Environmental Film Festival, Maoriland, and Maryland International Film Festival, among others.

He is a 2020 recipient of the Hot Docs CrossCurrents Doc Fund. His first feature-length documentary, *Returning Home*, won Best Canadian Feature Documentary at the 2021 Vancouver International Film Festival, Calgary International Film Festival and the Edmonton International Film Festival.

He is a member of the William's Lake First Nation (T'exelc), part of the Secwépemc Nation.

Director statement: *Ancestral Threads* is a labour of love, and an opportunity to celebrate the life work of my dear friend, Joleen Mitton. When Joleen first imagined Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week (VIFW), I saw it as just another fashion show, expressed through a cultural lens. I quickly understood that her vision encompasses so much more. It celebrates the best of Indigenous culture and honours our world class art. It's also connected to community accountability—to her daily commitment to support youth in care, and so many others who depend on her. At VIFW, I see elders and young people working intimately with one another, and a space where everyone's role is celebrated and held in high esteem. The impact of VIFW on each individual lives on far after the event itself. And in spite of the toll that community work demands, Joleen doesn't complain. On the contrary, she calls this her spirit work—her life purpose that gets her through long days of grinding effort.

In a much smaller way, I see my practice as grounded in similar principles of trust and reciprocity. As a close friend and creative collaborator, my obligation is to tell her story with integrity and passion, to inspire people in the same way I've been inspired over the many years of our friendship.

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DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?



Directors: Cat Mills | **Producer:** Lisa Rideout | **Writer:** Cat Mills | **Editor:** Erin Gulas | **Cinematographer:** Godfred Adjei | **Sound:** George Petrovic | **Composer:** Mathew Chalmers | 8 min | Canada

Synopsis: Mufflers, honks, and drilling—the perpetual soundscape of Toronto. Fed up with sleepless nights, a couple of activists take the fight to city hall in the hopes of changing the outdated noise bylaws.



Director bio: Cat Mills is an award-winning filmmaker with a passion for the unconventional.

She is a graduate of the University of British Columbia, holding a BFA in Film Production. Cat is the winner of the 2016 and 2020 Hot Docs Short Pitch competition and the director of seven short films, including *Big Men, Small Dogs*, which went viral with over a million views. Cat is a fellow of the CFTPA Producers Internships program, the Documentary Channel Doc Accelerator Program and the DOC Breakthrough Program. Her work has appeared on CBC, TVO, Al Jazeera, BBC, RT and NBC news. Cat resides in Toronto and has a passion for b-movies, sharks and espresso cups.

Directors' statement: I first met Ingrid through the Toronto Public Space Committee. She had introduced herself at a meeting and said she was fighting against noise pollution in the city. Noise pollution was something I wasn't overly familiar with. Sure, noise is annoying, but is it really that big of a deal?

Apparently, it is—prolonged exposure to noise can lead to serious negative health outcomes, like diabetes and heart disease. I wanted to explore noise pollution in a way that was quirky and fun—to capture the frustration, angst and annoyance we feel when a loud muffler rattles past us or when we have to shout at the friend who is sitting next to us in a busy area. I also wanted to ask the question: what should Toronto sound like? Traffic and sirens, or birds and buskers? Most importantly, I wanted to follow people who saw a problem in their community and tried to fix it. If Ingrid and Daniella can do it, so can I...and so can you.

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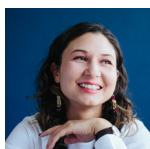
CITIZEN MINUTES

JANELLE NILES: INCONVENIENT



Director/Cinematographer: Kelly Zemnickis, Cass Gardiner | **Producers:** John Choi | **Writers:** Kelly Zemnickis, Cass Gardiner | **Editor:** Serene Husni | **Cinematographers:** Nico Stagias, Jacob Conley | **Sound:** Charles Paquin, Laszlo Szijarto | **Music:** Jeff Greenway | **Composer:** Jeff Greenway | 9 min | Canada

Synopsis: Janelle Niles is a Black, Mi'kmaw, two-spirited woman from Sipekne'katik First Nation in Nova Scotia and a stand-up comedian. Despite a tumultuous upbringing that would break most, Janelle confronts her mixed heritage head-on, embracing her biracial experience and queer identity, while using stand-up to heal and usher in a new era of inclusive Canadian comedy.



Cass Gardiner bio: Cass Gardiner is an Anishinaabe Algonquin filmmaker, programmer, and writer from Kebaowek First Nation. Most recently she co-directed the short documentary *Janelle Niles: Inconvenient* for *Citizen Minutes* Series 2, which premiered at Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Film Festival in 2023. She produced *Jewels Hunt*, a short documentary on subsistence hunting in Unalakleet, Alaska, which was supported by ITVS and TFI, and broadcast on PBS *Independent Lens* in 2020. Her first short, *The Edible Indian*, was nominated for Best Documentary Short at the American Indian Film Festival.

Her writing on Indigenous food, film and culture has been published in *Inuit Art Quarterly*, *Cherry Bombe Magazine*, and *Compound Butter Magazine*. Cass has held a variety of positions within documentary film institutions, namely the National Film Board of Canada and the Tribeca Film Institute, and she has been a juror for the International Documentary Association (IDA). She is an independent contractor for the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. She holds a BA from NYU Gallatin and an MFA from Toronto Metropolitan University.



Kelly Zemnickis bio: Kelly Zemnickis is a filmmaker, stand-up comedian, playwright and podcaster. She co-produced the award-winning feature documentary *No Responders Left Behind* (Paradox Pictures/Blue Ant Media/Discovery +), which received a Canadian Screen Award Nomination for the Donald Brittain Award: Best Social/Political Documentary Program in 2022. As a comedian, Kelly has shared the stage with such comedy greats as Kevin Farley and Gary Gulman and been featured at festivals such as the Burbank Comedy Festival (Best of the Fest selection - 2020). Kelly's theatrical debut *How Does a Drug Deal Become*

a Decent 3rd Date? toured all over North America and even made it to Off-Off Broadway in 2009 with the Frigid NY Festival. Her food-themed podcast *Order Up!* is now available on all streaming services and her comedy album debut *Sugar n' Spice & Smirnoff Ice* will be released in 2023 on Howl & Roar Records. Kelly is overjoyed to make her directorial debut with *Janelle Niles: Inconvenient*, which she co-directed with Cass Gardiner.

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Cass Gardiner statement: As an Anishinaabe Algonquin director, it is an honour to share the story of comedian Janelle Niles. More than just a celebration of comedic talent, *Janelle Niles: Inconvenient* is an opportunity to showcase Janelle's unique perspectives and experiences as a Black/Mi'kmaw two-spirited person in Canada through the art of humour.

Janelle's use of satire, irony and self-deprecating humour addresses serious issues in Canada, such as historical trauma, colonialism, and racism, while also celebrating the resilience and strength of Indigenous people.

Ultimately, my goal is to create a film that both entertains and educates audiences, while also providing a platform for Native voices and perspectives and inspiring future generations of Indigenous artists to share their stories and experiences with the world.

Kelly Zemnickis statement: I first learned about Janelle Niles reading an article about her in Reader's Digest magazine (*Funny Girl* by Haley Lewis, RD, October 2020) and was immediately struck with the idea that she was the perfect subject for a documentary. As a comedian, and a female one, there was something about Janelle's drive and confidence that I was keen to share with others; because it's SUCH a male dominated art form, I felt it was really important to highlight someone who was making her own stage and sharing her voice. Janelle is proof it can be done, by just going out there and doing the thing! And as a non-Indigenous person, I felt this was a great way for me to learn more and do something other than just sharing a post on social media. We don't listen to each other enough and a film about Janelle felt like the best way to watch and learn. Those of us who do stand-up do it because we must—it's a calling! It can also be soul-crushing as it tests your patience to a degree you didn't know existed, but you get back up there and you tell your truths, and you find the funny in the pain and eventually, you see the light at the end of the tunnel. You see the possibilities. Janelle is doing all of that and more, and I'm really honoured that she let us in and allowed us to share her story.

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LOUD & HERE



Director: Josiane Blanc | **Producers:** Lisa Rideout | **Writer:** Josiane Blanc | **Editor:** Jane MacRae
| **Cinematographer:** Vanessa Abadhir | **Sound:** Juana Rubio | **Composer:** Michelle Lorimer | 12 min | Canada

Synopsis: After noticing too many cases of sexual violence going unreported or unpunished within their own schools, 23 teen girls decided to take matters into their own hands to make meaningful changes to school board policy across Quebec.



Director bio: Josiane is a writer, director, and producer who is passionate about social issues and cultural interactions. In 2020, her short documentary *Tales of Ordinary Fatphobia*, addressing the psychological impact of fatphobia on kids and teens, was produced by the NFB and premiered on CBC/Radio-Canada. A year later, in 2021, *Ainsi va Manu (Hogtown)*—her seven-part short form series—was broadcast on the online platform of French broadcaster TV5 & TFO and was selected for several international festivals, winning a total of 15 awards. The series is now renewed for a second season. That same year, Josiane had

the opportunity to produce and host the French episodes of *Strong & Free*, an Historica Canada and Media Girlfriends podcast series about Canadian Black history. *Strong & Free* recently won the Gold Award for Best Podcast: Arts, Culture and Society at the Digital Publishing Awards, while also being selected on Amazon Music as one of the best podcasts of 2022. Josiane is currently in post-production on her documentary *Words Left Unspoken* and is a writer on several YA programs. In 2022 she won the WIFT Showcase Best Directing award for *Ainsi va Manu (Hogtown)* and was chosen as one of Playback's 10 to watch.

Director statement: When I came across the La Voix des Jeunes Compte collective—a group of teen activists in Quebec—I was immediately inspired by the battle they have been fighting for the past five years: to put in place a law to eradicate sexual violence within primary and secondary schools across Quebec. Sexual violence in schools? I personally had no idea of the extent of the problem, and it was honestly shocking to me to read all the stories coming out in the media which represent only a fraction of the cases. But then, I started thinking and realized that these types of stories existed even back when I was in high school—they moved subtly through the corridors but never really left the school grounds. While everybody knows about it, no one is really talking. I wanted to make this film to highlight this taboo problem that deserves all our attention, but also to highlight the work that these brave teenage girls, who grew up to become young women, have done. They started their activism journey at 12, 13, and 14 years old and spent all their youth fighting for this change. They remained united, strong and determined despite the obstacles and difficulties. They embody the youth who believe they can change the world and I believe that their story will inspire many others to take concrete action to create change within their community. Bringing this type of story to the screen is truly a privilege for me.

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MIND CHECK 1-2, 1-2



Director: Ian Keteku | **Producers:** Lisa Rideout, John Choi | **Editor:** Nicole Sison | **Cinematographer:** Dylan Harrison | 10 min | Canada

Synopsis: With nearly three million followers on TikTok and several celebrity endorsements, 23-year-old Nigerian Canadian rapper Akintoye is an internet sensation. In his music, he is vulnerable and introspective about his mental health struggles. He inspires others to take their wellbeing seriously. As Akintoye climbs the music industry ladder, he still makes space to encourage young people to express themselves through art.



Director bio: Ian Keteku is a writer and multimedia artist. He has written and directed projects for the NFB, TVO, CBC, PBS and Sesame Street. An award-winning poet, Keteku is the 2010 World Poetry Slam Champion. His work has been translated into French, Slovak, Russian, Danish, Arabic, ASL and others. Ian Keteku uses his voice to inspire messages of peace, action, and critical thought. With a heritage in Ghana, Ian's work follows in the lineage of ancient African storytellers by paying homage to the past and revisiting themes and lessons from previous generations.

Director statement: I began my artistic career as a slam poet. After some time, I realized being a poet is not just about writing poetry but being able to see the poetry in the world. I believe poetry is the universe's way of showing us the beauty in emotion, the similarity in experiences and the art of living. When I ventured into filmmaking, I carried this mantra with me. I seek to showcase the stories, tribulations and triumphs of African peoples, on the continent and in the diaspora.

With a focus on producing African-centered content, my work showcases and highlights the lives and voices of immigrant, refugee and first-generation Canadians.

People of African descent have been underrepresented or misrepresented in popular media. What happens when we are given the agency and resources to tell our own stories, from our own perspectives? Akintoye's story is just beginning, he's a star on the rise with no limit to where his art can take him. Despite his celebrity status, he keeps to his mission, inspiring others to follow their dreams, to become changemakers in the world around them.

In this way, his music, this film, and the other films in the series are not just entertainment but an opportunity for insight, for connection, for poetry.

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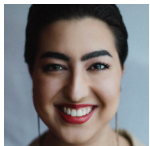
CITIZEN MINUTES

RISING FROM THE ASHES



Director/Writer: Sara Ben-Saud | **Producer:** John Choi | **Editor:** Nicolas Paquette | **Cinematographer:** Francis Leduc | **Sound:** Andrés Solís | **Composer:** Alexandre Pariseau | 11 min | Canada

Synopsis: The Dépanneur Sylvestre in Gatineau, Quebec, was founded 20 years ago to address the growing number of people experiencing social isolation. Destroyed by a fire three years ago, it has now reopened using new models of sustainability to stay relevant for another 20 years and beyond.



Director bio: Winner of Culture Outaouais' Emerging Artist of the Year Award (2020), Sara's artistic curiosity is nourished by her Quebec-Libyan-Tunisian origins. Her thirst to meet her roots and different cultures inspires her in the conception of her productions. Sara Ben-Saud has worked as a director and writer on the documentary series *Skindigenous* about Indigenous tattooing traditions worldwide. She has completed intensive training in directing at L'inis in the new mixed program—covering fiction and documentary—with a grant from Netflix (2021). At the same time, she directed the documentary *À toi Jeddî* about her Libyan roots, produced by Nish Media and funded by SODEC and CALQ (2023). She has just completed two short documentaries as producer, writer, and director—one with the financial support of Reel Canada and Netflix, selected at the RIDM festival and the other commissioned and selected by Hot Docs (2023). She proudly traveled to Tunisia in November (2022) to accept the award Tanit of Bronze during the film festival JCC. Navigating between fiction and documentary, TV and film, she worked with major broadcasters such as TVO, TV5, Radio-Canada, PBS, and APTN at a young age. Sara wishes to change Quebec's audiovisual landscape on the question of diversity. The young director firmly believes that this change begins with the subjects she decides to present in front of the camera and the team behind and in front of the camera. With representation being at the heart of her practice, she hopes that future generations will be able to recognize themselves on our screens and in this industry.

Director statement: What touched me immediately when I heard the stories about the Espace DEP Sylvestre was the major impact that this place has on many people. I discovered a poignant collective discourse and more importantly two decades of history!

It is important for me to tell this story because social isolation is a reality of our society and our time. The different protagonists in the DEP Space allow us to move from the individual to the community and take an important step.

I also realized how much good volunteering can do. It's a break from the usual routine of working without a monetary reward. Here, it is the human solidarity that is at the forefront and the satisfaction that it brings.

I find this place very touching because the testimonies are endless. It is rare to see such an inclusive place. I invite you to open up and let yourself be inspired by the faces of the Espace DEP Sylvestre!

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SISTERHOOD SOFTBALL



Director/Writer: Farhiya Ahmed | **Producers:** Lisa Rideout | **Editor:** Katie Chipperfield | **Cinematographer:** Silas Eli | **Sound:** Siyao Guo | **Composer:** Terry Gilmore | 8 min | Canada

Synopsis: Following the first all-female Muslim softball league in North America, *Sisterhood Softball* depicts a league that empowers women through sports in a community where women traditionally don't participate and are seen outside of their communities as disempowered.



Director bio: As a Somali-Canadian filmmaker, Farhiya Ahmed's interest in storytelling came from exploring complex narratives, social issues, and lived experiences of first and second-generation immigrants. Through film, Ahmed wants to explore the untold stories of people in her communities and show a nuanced depiction of immigrants with specificity and universal themes.

Being a filmmaker, Ahmed appreciates the power of cinema to illuminate different perspectives. She is inspired to create subtle, intimate films that are emotionally motivated and driven by deep human connections and relationships. Ahmed is interested in the human scale with all its immensity and vulnerability. She is also a determined and self-driven storyteller who strives to take her role as a Muslim woman filmmaker seriously by bringing our communities to the proverbial cinematic table with the stories she chooses to tell.

Director statement: *Sisterhood Softball* is a film about perseverance and the strength of a community to empower women. The story of the only all-women Muslim softball league in North America, this documentary seeks to showcase the inspiring stories of Muslim women who have overcome societal barriers and personal challenges to pursue their passion for sports.

The film shows us a pathway to create change for the individual and the broader community exploring how these women break stereotypes and redefine what it means to be a Muslim woman in sports. We aim to highlight their resilience as they navigate their faith and cultural expectations.

By creating nuanced and rich depictions of underrepresented communities, I hope to build interest in these stories and ensure that our film reaches and is accessible to the communities depicted. While it deals with one league's specifics, it tells a community's universal story. *Sisterhood Softball* tells inspiring stories of ordinary Muslim women doing extraordinary things to make their communities better places and shows us the power of sisterhood to change perceptions.

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CITIZEN MINUTES PRESS BREAKS

NOW Toronto

<https://nowtoronto.com/featured/canadian-changemakers-highlighted-in-short-doc-series-citizen-minutes-at-hot-docs/>

CBC/Radio-Canada

<https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1976606/sara-ben-saud-depanneur-sylvestre>

Realscreen

<https://realscreen.com/2023/02/23/hot-docs-reveals-second-season-of-citizen-minutes-shorts-program/>

MoviePie

<https://moviepie.com/hot-docs-2023-qs-a-la-mode-with-citizen-minutes-filmmakers/>

<https://moviepie.com/hot-docs-2023-2-six-shorts-were-psyched-to-check-out/>

CBC News

<https://www.cbc.ca/newsinteractives/features/akintoye-profile>

Northern Stars

<https://www.northernstars.ca/no-shortage-of-shorts/>

POV Magazine

<https://povmagazine.com/citizen-minutes-2-review-quick-bites-of-democracy/>



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