



hotdocs

OUTSPOKEN.OUTSTANDING.

YEAR IN REVIEW

2024-2025

Donor Impact Report

Contents



03	A Message from Diana Sanchez
04	2025 Hot Docs Festival
07	Supporting Filmmakers
08	Docs For Schools
09	Hot Docs Volunteers
10	Year-Round at Hot Docs Cinema
11	For Viola
12	Year-Round Industry Programs
13	Citizen Minutes
14	Friends of Hot Docs Campaign
15	Founders Circle
19	Champions of Hot Docs
20	Foundation Partners

A Message From DIANA SANCHEZ

Hot Docs Executive Director



On behalf of the entire Hot Docs team, thank you for your invaluable support during a pivotal year for our organization.

2025 has been a year of transformation, one in which we have emerged stronger—driven by the dedication of our staff, the generosity of our supporters, and the passion of our community.

This year's Festival marked a confident return, with a focused program, vibrant audiences, and powerful storytelling that sparked conversation and connection.

Your contribution made this possible. With your support, we elevated underrepresented voices, spotlighted stories that matter, strengthened the global documentary community, and engaged and enriched diverse audiences of all ages.

As we reflect on the impact we've made together, we're filled with renewed purpose and excitement for what's ahead. Thank you for standing with us. We're inspired to continue this journey with you.

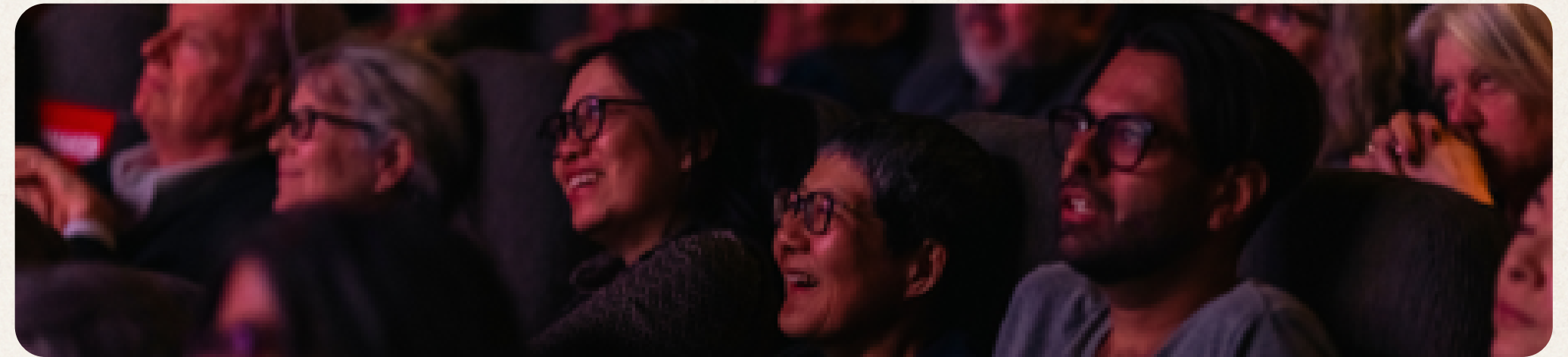
Warmly,

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'D. Sanchez'.

2025 Hot Docs Festival

April 24 – May 4

The 2025 Hot Docs Festival was an inspiring 11-day celebration of documentary storytelling. As an Academy Award-qualifying festival, Hot Docs brought bold, urgent, and unforgettable films to screens across Toronto, and sparked meaningful conversations among filmmakers and audiences alike. This year, we proudly presented 113 of the finest documentaries from 47 countries, illuminating the most pressing stories of our time and connecting them with passionate, engaged audiences.



The 32nd edition of the Festival featured 179 screenings across five screens at two venues in Toronto, with over 150 filmmaker Q&As, including four extended discussions with filmmakers and special guests as part of the Big Ideas Series, and a special panel discussion with filmmakers participating in our first-ever Made In Exile program.

Special guests included Academy Award-winner Marlee Matlin, artist Rashaad Newsome, investigative journalist Christo Grozev, comedian and activist Noam Shuster-Eliassi, NATO's Dylan P. White, Afghanistan's ambassador Manizha Bakhtari, and Olympic athlete Mirza Nikolajev, who all enriched this year's powerful conversations and community engagement.

2025 Hot Docs Festival

**"HOT DOCS ENDED ITS 2025
FESTIVAL ON A HIGH NOTE. THE
2025 EVENT DEFINED ITSELF
WITH OPTIMISM AND ENERGY."
— PAT MULLEN, POV**



**"A UNIVERSE OF CINEMA
IN YOUR CITY. IT'S RARE
TO HAVE ACCESS TO
THESE MANY AMAZING
DOCUMENTARIES IN
LOCAL THEATRES—EVEN
IN A CULTURAL HUB LIKE
TORONTO."
—TORONTO LIFE**



**"A NEW LEADER AND NEW VISION."
—GLOBE & MAIL**

2025 Hot Docs Festival

By The Numbers



179

Screenings

150

Live Q&As

34

Canadian Docs

3,971

Free Student & Senior
Tickets Claimed

43,289

Tickets Distributed

35 World Premieres
17 International Premieres
26 North American
Premieres

Supporting Filmmakers

Hot Docs Industry Programs



\$140K

Awarded to
Filmmakers

37

Industry Sessions

93

Decision Makers

979

Industry Delegates
from **54** Countries

777

Total Meetings
Generated

\$600K

Reported Sales
Generated To Date

Docs For Schools



At the 2025 Festival, we offered four free Docs For Schools screenings for middle and high school students. Screenings were immediately booked to capacity, with a growing waitlist.

In total, we welcomed over 2,000 students from 49 schools over the four events, highlighting the popularity of this longstanding program, as well as the strong demand and enthusiasm for documentary content for youth.



We are committed to restoring Docs For Schools to historic levels in the coming year, ensuring even more students can access the power of documentary film.





Hot Docs Volunteers

Our volunteer program is at the heart of Hot Docs' vibrant community. Every year, hundreds of dedicated volunteers come together to help bring North America's leading documentary festival to life. Volunteers assist with screenings, industry events, and filmmaker Q&As, gaining behind-the-scenes access, networking opportunities, and a chance to join a passionate film community.

430

Festival Volunteers

9,324

Volunteer Hours



Year-Round at Hot Docs Cinema



Blue Rodeo

Hot Docs proudly showcased **BLUE RODEO: LOST TOGETHER**, which lovingly traces the journey of one of Canada's most beloved bands. Following the screening, the original band members took the stage to share stories, reflect on their legacy, and connect with an enthusiastic audience.



Bob Mackie

Hot Docs was thrilled to present **BOB MACKIE: NAKED ILLUSION**, a captivating celebration of the legendary designer's life and career. Following the screening, Bob Mackie himself took to the stage for an engrossing conversation about his iconic work, offering the audience rare and memorable first-hand insights into his creative journey.



Your Tomorrow

Hot Docs hosted a special screening of **YOUR TOMORROW**, followed by a Q&A with local director Ali Weinstein. An intimate portrait of those who cherished Ontario Place, the film captures the site in its final year before redevelopment. Through archival footage and day-in-the-life vignettes, it highlights Ontario Place's role as a vital public space, serving as both a historical artifact of the beloved location and a meditation on the fragility of shared civic spaces within our city.

For Viola

Free Screening Series

The 2024-25 edition of Hot Docs' celebrated For Viola series presented four screenings to packed houses. Named in honour of Canadian civil rights icon Viola Desmond, the series centres BIPOC filmmakers, stories, and audiences, and seeks to affirm Hot Docs as a space of inclusion. To minimize barriers to audience participation, all screenings are free of charge. When claiming their free tickets, attendees can make an optional donation that goes directly to the filmmakers (in addition to screening fees paid to the filmmakers by Hot Docs).

The For Viola Series is made possible through support by



4

Free Screenings

2000+

Free Tickets
Claimed

\$5,335

Optional
Donations Raised
(Paid Directly to
Filmmakers)



\$135M+

Our market programs have generated an estimated **\$135 million** in investment and deals for documentary filmmakers in the past decade.

Year-Round Industry Programs

Hot Docs-Blue Ice Docs Fund

The Hot Docs-Blue Ice Docs Fund provides development grants of up to \$10,000 CAD and production grants of up to \$40,000 CAD to four to 10 projects annually. Each year, up to five funded projects are invited to participate in a year-long mentorship program, including private filmmaker labs at Hot Docs and Durban FilmMart/Durban International Film Festival or other festivals and markets in Africa. The Fund also collaborates with The New York Times—Op-Docs to commission shorts from African filmmakers to showcased on The Times's Emmy® Award-winning online forum. To date, the Fund has awarded 100 projects from 26 countries.

Hot Docs-Slaight Family Fund

This Fund is dedicated to filmmakers telling engaging, high-quality stories that embrace music artists in all its forms and demonstrate Canadian music's role in the world. It also welcomes international music stories told through the lens of Canadian filmmakers. The Hot Docs-Slaight Family Fund financially supports three to five documentary projects each year with amounts ranging from \$15,000 to \$60,000 CAD.



Citizen Minutes

The Citizen Minutes initiative supports emerging and early career filmmakers by commissioning five to seven short documentaries that highlight civic engagement and community impact. For the third series, participants received funding, mentorship, and professional training through an intensive lab, while also gaining hands-on experience in film production, exhibition, and social impact strategy. The completed films in Citizen Minutes series 3 premiered at the 2025 Hot Docs Festival and are now being distributed across Canada, including in schools, to inspire and spark dialogue around themes like democracy, resilience, and empowerment.



[Click here to visit the Citizen Minutes website!](https://citizenminutes.ca)

The Citizen Minutes project is made possible through support by



Hot Docs works with the filmmakers and seasoned impact producers to activate an impact and engagement strategy around the films, with the goal of using the films as tools for positive change in educational, community, and professional settings. We are particularly interested in stories that centre youth-led civic engagement. Preliminary work is already underway for Series 4 of Citizen Minutes, as we continue to build on the program's momentum and deepen its impact.

Friends of Hot Docs Campaign



From December 2024 to June 2025, the Friends of Hot Docs campaign raised over \$115,000. And thanks to the very generous contribution of The Bennett Family Foundation, the first \$100,000 of donations were matched taking the total to over \$215,000.

We sincerely thank each and every one of the Friends of Hot Docs who have donated. We are grateful that you are a part of our community.



[Click here to watch the trailer!](#)

\$215,000+
Raised

1000+
Individual Donors

[Click here for the full list of Friends!](#)

Special thanks to The Bennett Family Foundation



Founders Circle Events

Part membership, part donation, Founders Circle members make a meaningful charitable impact while getting unique access to Hot Docs events and programming.

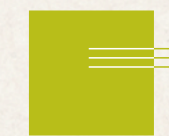


Doc Soup Reception & Screening

The Founders Circle gathered for a lively cocktail reception before each Doc Soup screening. For the 2024-25 season, the well-loved monthly series ran from December to April, featuring the hottest documentaries fresh off the international Festival circuit, followed by Q&As with directors and other special guests.



Founders Circle Festival Events



Insiders Night

At Insiders Night, Founders Circle members got the inside scoop on the best docs to see at this year's Festival through curated recommendations from Hot Docs staff and programmers.



Sneak Peek

Founders Circle members previewed a feature-length Hot Docs official selection before its premiere at the Festival. This year's Sneak Peek screening selection was THE DATING GAME.



First Friday

On the First Friday night of the festival, Founders Circle members enjoyed a private screening of a festival favourite, MR. NOBODY AGAINST PUTIN, followed by a cocktail reception.

Hot Docs Founders Circle

With sincere thanks, we recognize the individuals and organizations who support the Hot Docs Founders Circle.

DIRECTOR

Roslyn Bern
Diane Blake & Stephen Smith
Taanta Gupta
Richard & Nancy Hamm
Ruth Ann Harnisch
Subak Family Foundation
Two Anonymous Donors
AIP Connect Inc.

PRODUCER

Susan Caskey & John Francis
Bill & Susan Chinery
Linda Chu & John Donald
Karen Gordon*
The Goring Family Foundation* - Peter Goring
Susan Guichon
Barbara Hackett
Nadir & Shabin Mohamed
Julia & Gilles Ouellette
Andrew Sheiner & Liza Mauer
Maria Martin Stanley
Betty & John Youson*

BENEFACTOR

Colette Barber
John Berton & Kelley McKinnon
Joseph Castrilli
Laurelea Conrad
Intuitive Pictures & Ina Fichman
Michelle Gage*
Dianne Gartley
Susan Gerhard
The Earl A Glick Family
Molline & David Green
Di Hardacre
Brett Hendrie & Sarah Wilson
Kris Heshka
Jan Innes*
Peter & Jane Judd
Miriam Kagan
Michael & Cindy MacMillan

Maria del Mar Lorenzo
Tania Martin & Stephen Dowd
Chris McDonald & Jim Beninger*
Robin Mirsky*
Heather Muir
Nuyten Dime Foundation
Jane Perdue
Perry Orestes & Tim Giguere
David Paperny
Jennifer Parkin & David George
Michina Pope
Paul Rainsberry
Red Door HR Inc.
Beth & Jeff Richmond
John Rider & Karim Karsan
Avis & Brad Sokol
Richard Sugarman
Maia-Mari Sutnik*
Benita Warmbold

*Founding Member

Members as of June 27, 2025

Hot Docs Founders Circle

With sincere thanks, we recognize the individuals and organizations who support the Hot Docs Founders Circle.

ADVOCATE

Alice Abbott & Desmond Brown	Steven & Alison DeNure	John & Catherine Grant	Michelle & Pat Meneley	Tim Ross & Erin Wright
Barry Alper	Robert Desjardins & Pamela Dinsmore	Lorraine Greey	Mary-Ann Metrick	Deborah Rotta-Loria
B Street Collaborative	Leith Drury	The Don Haig Foundation*	K. Milborne	Daniel & Jennet Sandler
Robin & Malcolm Anthony	Diana Dunlap & Paul Duckett	Gordon Henderson	Abby & Perry Minuk	Sarah Scott
Heather Arnold	Charlotte Durand	Judy Holm & Michael McNamara*	J. Susan Monteith	Vincenza Sera
Ian & Libby Bandeen*	Brian & Nancy Enns	David Honderich & Terri Bulger*	Pauline G. Morris	Callum Sheedy
Lorraine Bell & Mark Weisdorf	Catherine Fauquier	Megan & Len Jillard	Drs. Liza & Frederick Murrell	Erica Shuttleworth
Paul Bennett & Catherine Olsen	Laura Finch & Tom Hannam	Janese Kane	Aaron Myran	Geoffrey Singer & Tamar Satov-Singer
Isme Bennie	Peter Finestone*	Sangeet Kaur Sood	Jordan Nahmias & Lisa Steele*	Michele Spicer
Marla Berger & Brian Greenspan	Amy Fisher & Bill Holy	Eugene Keenan	Linda Netten Hodgson	Eric & Daphne Spindler
Rosalyn Black & the late Joseph Black	Patty Fleming	Nancy Kennedy	Mary Newman	Gaye & Andrew Stein
C. Bradley	Focus Construction	Rob & Sandra Knowles	Susan Oppenheim	Debbie Steiss
Bunni & David Bresver	Hue & Jonathan Foo	Vahan & Susie Kololian	Gord & Susan O'Reilly	Patricia Stowe & Paul Jones
Melissa Brizuela	David & Allison Fortier	Nancy Lang	Julie Osborne	Richard Stursberg
Virginia Brooks	Karen Franklin	Ann Leese & Irwin Rotenberg	Katie Osborne	Jennifer & Ken Tanenbaum
Cynthia Colby & Sean McAllindon	Tim & Anne Gallagher	Linda Lewis & Lorie Cappe	Susan Paul & Ken Engelhart	Stephen Taylor
Francesca Colussi, CD	Roger & Kevin Garland	Janet L'Heureux	Michael & Honor de Pencier	Catherine & Paul Temple
Heather Conway	Nancy Garrow	Earl & Jordanna Lipson	Nicholas de Pencier & Jennifer Baichwal	Janet Turnbull Irving
Amanda Coolman	Giles Gherson & Patricia Best	Christine Lucyk	Nadine Pequenez & Jean Philippe Arcand	David Watt & Gwen Anderson
Nancy Coombs	James Girling	Karen Lynch	Primitive Entertainment Inc.*	Keddy Williams
Laura Curtis Ferrera	Judy Gladstone	Michael MacMillan*	Annie Raphael	Peri & Sheldon Wiseman
Janice Dawe	Ira Gluskin & Maxine Granovsky Gluskin	Veronica Maidman	Peter Raymont*	Kate Zeidler & Peter Mackenzie
	Marilyn & David Gluskin	Jenifer McDonald	Susan Reisler	Four Anonymous Donors
	Richard Gotlib	Hilary McLeod	Ellen Roland	

*Founding Member

Champions of Hot Docs

These remarkable individuals stepped up to support our stabilization efforts over the past several months. Thank you for your timely, generous and crucial assistance.

Colette & Tom Barber
Diane Blake & Stephen Smith
George & Martha Butterfield
Nathalie Butterfield & Niall Robertson
Myrna Daniels

John Donald
Ken Engelhart and Susan Paul
Lorraine Greey
Goring Family Foundation
Susan & Greg Guichon

Taanta Gupta
Jan Innes
Jennifer Parkin & David George
Cathy Spoel & Michael MacMillan
Mercury Films

Robin Mirsky
David Watt & Gwen Anderson
Bulger-Honderich Family
Anonymous

We are also extremely grateful for the patience, support and understanding shown by our industry partners, filmmaker community, public and private stakeholders, former board members, audience members, and staff.

Foundation Partners

We gratefully recognize the foundations who support specific programs and year-round operations at Hot Docs.

The Bennett Family Foundation

The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation

J.P. Bickell Foundation

K.M. Hunter Charitable Foundation

Lind Family Fund

MakeWay Foundation - Harbinger Fund

in memory of Joan VanDuzer

Montgomery Family Foundation

Nick and Lynn Ross Charitable Foundation

The Panicaro Foundation

The Paul Butler and Chris Black Foundation

at Toronto Foundation

The R&M Lang Foundation

The Rossy Foundation

The Slaight Family Foundation

The Susan, Sarah and Nicholas Latremoille Fund

at Toronto Foundation

We are grateful to our major corporate and public sector partners who help sustain our festival and year-round activities.

FOUNDING PARTNER



MAJOR SUPPORTERS



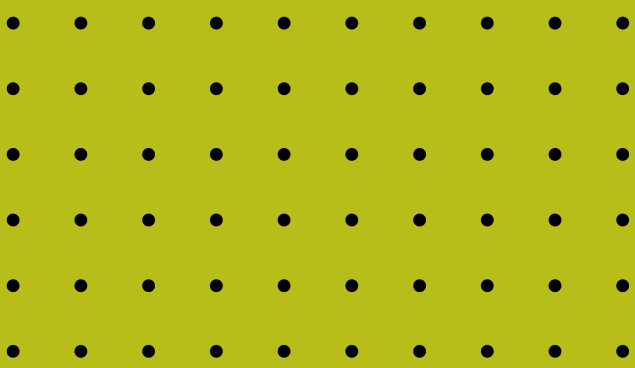
PUBLIC SECTOR PARTNERS

Funded by:
Federal Economic Development
Agency for Southern Ontario

Financé par :
Agence fédérale de
développement économique
pour le Sud de l'Ontario



Thank you



CONTACT US

founders@hotdocs.ca

Jackie Garrow
Director Philanthropy + Impact

jgarrow@hotdocs.ca