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## DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING HEATHER HAYNES ANNOUNCES DEPARTURE FROM HOT DOCS

**Toronto, Canada** – Today, Hot Docs announced that director of programming **Heather Haynes** has concluded her tenure with the organization. Through her nearly 20-year journey with Hot Docs, Haynes’s passionate and thoughtful approach to programming, along with her talent for fostering deep relationships with filmmakers, has had an immeasurable impact on the organization. Hot Docs is deeply grateful for her contributions and unwavering commitment to the transformative power of documentary.

“Being part of Hot Docs has been a deeply meaningful experience,” said Haynes. “At the heart of it all has been the filmmakers—their vision, bravery, and belief in the documentary form as a force for truth, beauty and justice. It has been one of the great privileges of my life to advocate for their work, to help bring their stories into the world, and to witness the ways those stories ripple through audiences and communities.”

“Together with the programming team, whose care, rigour, and integrity have shaped the heart of the Festival, I’m proud of what we accomplished,” continued Haynes. “While this chapter concludes, my commitment to the doc community remains steadfast, and I look forward to continuing to support filmmakers, curators, and platforms that amplify bold, globally relevant storytelling.”

“We are so very thankful to Heather for sharing her incredible love for documentary with Hot Docs and our audiences for so many years,” said Diana Sanchez, executive director of Hot Docs. “Her curatorial vision and collaborative spirit have made her a true leader in our community, and we look forward to seeing what she’ll do next.”

Haynes’ longstanding relationship with Hot Docs began almost 20 years ago as an international programmer for the annual Festival. In 2022, she transitioned to a full-time role, quickly ascending to director of programming in October 2024. Most recently, she led the programming team through the successful 2025 Hot Docs Festival. A passionate advocate for documentary and its storytellers, she continued to create space for urgent, resonant work by launching this year’s successful *Made In Exile* program—a bold new strand that spotlights filmmakers in exile, while deepening Hot Docs’ commitment to human rights, artistic freedom, and global storytelling.

In addition to her festival leadership, Haynes oversaw programming during reopening of the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema in November 2024, working with the team to restore a vital cultural space to the Toronto community.

During this time of transition, executive director Diana Sanchez will lead the programming team.

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Hot Docs ([www.hotdocs.ca](http://www.hotdocs.ca)), North America's leading documentary festival, conference and market, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing and celebrating the art of documentary and to creating production opportunities for documentary filmmakers. Hot Docs will present its 33<sup>rd</sup> edition in Spring 2026, in Toronto. Since its inception in 1993, Hot Docs has supported the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs and production fund portfolio, including the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Fund, CrossCurrents Doc Funds, Hot Docs-Slaight Family Fund, Hot Docs-Blue Ice Docs Fund and Hot Docs Partners, and valuable professional development programs, including Doc Ignite and Hot Docs Incubator.

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