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HOT DOCS ANNOUNCES 2026 FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS AND \$67,000 IN CASH AND PRIZES FOR CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL FILMMAKERS

Toronto, ON— Hot Docs is proud to announce the winning documentaries from this year’s official competition, and to recognize the outstanding achievements of Canadian and international filmmakers with films screening throughout this year’s Festival. A total of 12 awards, along with \$67,000 in cash and prizes, was celebrated at the Hot Docs 2026 Awards Presentation, held earlier today at El Mocambo in Toronto. 2026 Hot Docs Festival screenings will continue at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema and TIFF Lightbox today through Sunday, May 3. The Hot Docs Rogers Audience Award for Best Canadian Documentary will be announced on the last day of the Festival at a special encore screening at 7:30 pm at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema. The top Canadian feature in the audience poll will receive a \$50,000 cash prize, courtesy of Rogers. The winners of the Hot Docs Audience Award for feature and short documentary will be announced on May 4. The Awards Presentation was immediately followed by the Hot Docs 2026 Awards Reception.

Hot Docs Best Canadian Short Documentary was presented to *My Body Goes to Work* (D: Fernanda Molina | P: Daria Lavrova, Fernanda Molina | Canada | 2025 | 12 min). A birth worker by day and a dancer in a strip club by night, Nevaeh navigates two very different worlds, in both of which bodies are judged and celebrated. As she reclaims the beauty and agency of her body while defying societal labels and expectations, she generously invites us to rethink our assumptions about sex, labour and healing. The Award includes a \$3,000 cash prize.

Jury statement: “In just 12 minutes, Fernanda Molina Perez Diez crafts an intimate and humanizing portrait of a Toronto sex worker, revealing the complexity behind job titles and underscoring the nature of care work in all its forms. Raw and observant, the film left the jury in reflection on the everyday realities of sex work, reframing a life too often reduced to a label.”

Hot Docs Best International Short Documentary, sponsored by TVO Docs, was presented to *Replikka* (D: Piratá Waurá, Heloisa Passos | P: Mark Slagle, Heloisa Passos, Yula Rocha | Brazil, USA, UK | 2025 | 16 min). In *Replikka*, technology and Indigenous wisdom merge, creating a contemplative journey and meditation on memory, identity, loss and rebirth. As an act of resistance, this story examines the ancestral truths of the Xinguano people and their sacred territories in the face of destruction. Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$3,000 cash prize, courtesy of TVO Docs.

Jury statement: “The short film offers an unforgettable look at Waura culture and their efforts to protect Indigenous land, traditions, and stories. Its beautiful cinematography and rhythmic sound design made a strong impression on the jury, in addition to its urgent call against the erasure of Indigenous culture and memory, and its unique perspective from within the Waura community.”

Hot Docs is an Academy Awards® qualifying festival for short documentaries and, as winners of the 2026 Hot Docs Best International Short Documentary and the Hot Docs Best Canadian Short Documentary, respectively, **Replikka** and **My Body Goes to Work** will qualify for consideration in the Documentary Short Subject category of the annual Academy Awards® without the standard theatrical run, provided they comply with Academy rules.

Canadian producer **Jennifer Holness** received the **Hot Docs Don Haig Award**, announced earlier in the Festival. The Award is given to an outstanding independent Canadian producer with a film in the Festival in recognition of their creative vision, entrepreneurship and track record for nurturing emerging talent, and comes with a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of the Don Haig Foundation.

The Lindalee Tracey Award, which honours an emerging Canadian filmmaker with a passionate point of view, a strong sense of social justice and a sense of humour, was presented to **Özgün Gündüz**. The Lindalee Tracey award includes a \$5000 cash prize from the Lindalee Tracey Fund, \$5000 in-kind voucher from the Picture Shop and a beautifully glass blown sculpture by Andrew Kuntz.

Hot Docs Docs for Schools Student Choice Award is awarded to the documentary that receives the highest rating in the student audience poll was presented to **Nekai Walks** (D: Rico King | P: David McIlvride | Canada | 2026 | 90 min). At 16, Nekai Foster was shot while walking home in Toronto's Jane and Finch neighbourhood. His journey of survival and recovery—defying all medical odds as he relearns to walk—exposes how gun violence shapes bodies, families and communities. The winner will receive a \$5,000 cash prize.

Hot Docs Earl A. Glick Emerging Canadian Filmmaker Award is given to a Canadian filmmaker whose film in competition is their first or second feature-length film. The award, which includes a \$3,000 cash prize courtesy of the Earl A. Glick Family, was presented to **Sébastien Trahan**, the director of **Code of Misconduct** (D: Sébastien Trahan | P: Annie Bourdeau | Canada | 2026 | 88 min). An investigative journalist's duty to follow the facts leads to the trial of five Canadian professional hockey players charged with sexual assault, unravelling our national pastime and questioning the institutions that hold the sport accountable.

Jury Statement: "For its journalistically rich examination of accountability and power and privilege within Canadian hockey, as well as the film's amplification of voices calling for justice, the Jury presents the Hot Docs Earl A. Glick Emerging Canadian Filmmaker Award to Sébastien Trahan for *Code of Misconduct*."

Hot Docs Bill Nemin Award for Best Social Impact Documentary, sponsored by the Bill Nemin Legacy Fund, which recognizes the producers of a Hot Docs 2026 official selection film who find and tell compelling stories that inspire social or political change, and encourage their audiences to change their attitudes or behaviours or strive for policy change, went to directors **Chul Young Cho, Shin Wan Kim, Jong Woo Kim**, and producers **Sona Jo and Shin Wan Kim** of **The Seoul Guardians** (D: Chul Young Cho, Shin Wan Kim, Jong Woo Kim | P: Sona Jo, Shin Wan Kim | South Korea | 2026 | 71 min). When martial law was shockingly declared in 2024, the people of Seoul took to the streets to protect their democracy.

Driven by memories of past dictatorships, this urgent reportage-style film captures a night of chaos and powerful, collective citizen resistance.

A \$10,000 cash prize accompanies the award, supported by the Bill Nemtin Legacy Fund.

Jury Statement: “For a film of great urgency that speaks to the vagaries of political upheaval, the power of protest, and the foundational need for any free society to have an engaged press ready to pursue the truth in all of its messiness and meaningfulness, the Jury presents the Hot Docs Bill Nemtin Award for Best Social Impact Documentary to the film team behind *The Seoul Guardians*, the directors Chul Young Cho, Shin Wan Kim, Jong Woo Kim, and producers Sona Jo and Shin Wan Kim.”

Hot Docs Emerging International Filmmaker Award, supported by the R&M Lang Foundation, was awarded to **Dawood Hilmandi**, director of *Paikar* (D: Dawood Hilmandi | P: Frank Hoeve, Katja Draaijer | Netherlands | 2025 | 97 min). From exile in Amsterdam, filmmaker Dawood Hilmandi reflects on his family nickname, Paikar, the Persian word for warrior. Returning to Iran to reconcile with his authoritarian father, their journey to Afghanistan during a pandemic transforms a lifetime of displacement into a story of survival.

The award is given to an international filmmaker whose film in competition is their first or second feature-length film, and includes a \$3,000 cash prize, courtesy of the R&M Lang Foundation.

Jury statement: For its poetic meditation on transgenerational trauma that evocatively navigates the entanglement of memory, war and exile from a deeply personal perspective—initiating a moving dialogue across a lifetime of displacement, the Jury presents the Hot Docs Emerging International Filmmaker Award to Dawood Hilmandi for *Paikar*.”

Hot Docs DGC Special Jury Prize-Canadian Feature Documentary, sponsored by DGC National and DGC Ontario, is awarded to a feature-length documentary in the Canadian Spectrum Competition program that the jury feels is deserving of special recognition and was presented to **Ceremony** (D: Banchi Hanuse | P: Banchi Hanuse | Canada | 2026 | 84 min). At Nuxalk Radio, a ramshackled station on the edge of the world, an inquiry into the vanished ooligan fish uncovers a chilling history rooted in the attempted erasure of the Nuxalk people and their enduring resilience.

The award comes with a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of DGC National and DGC Ontario.

Jury Statement: “For this film’s poignant look at Indigenous resistance and reclamation of past-traditions, illustrating a community grappling to resuscitate unceded lands, all while showing how the actions of a Nation foster healing by respecting what came before while working towards a better future, the Hot Docs DGC Special Jury Prize for Canadian Feature goes to Banchi Hanuse’s *Ceremony*.”

Hot Docs Joan VanDuzer Special Jury Prize-International Feature Documentary, in memory of long time Hot Docs supporter Joan VanDuzer, is awarded to a feature-length documentary in the International Spectrum Competition program that the jury feels is deserving of special recognition and was given to **The 49th Year** (D: Heidrun Holzfeind | P: Heidrun Holzfeind | Austria, Germany, Japan | 2026 | 88 min). Through thoughtful letters from prison, an anarchist incarcerated since 1980 reflects on his radical past. This meditative portrait pairs humane narration with contemporary Japanese landscapes, exploring the quiet tensions between aging, political militancy and time itself.

Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$5,000 cash prize, in memory of Joan VanDuzer.

Jury statement: “For its astute view on political ideologies and its meditative exploration of the true costs of radical action beyond isolated moments of protest and conventional electoral politics—and the ways in which periods of dissent can fade into enforced consensus, the jury recognizes Heidrun Holzfeind’s elegiac yet piercing attention to one man and the echoes of his resistance with the Hot Docs Joan VanDuzer Special Jury Prize-International Feature Documentary.”

Hot Docs Best Canadian Feature Documentary, supported by Telefilm Canada, is awarded to an exceptional feature-length documentary in the Canadian Spectrum Competition program and was presented to ***Saigon Story: Two Shootings in the Forest Kingdom*** (D: Kim Nguyen | P: Nabil Mehchi, Robert Vroom, Ariel Nasr | Canada | 2026 | 91 min). Oscar-nominated director Kim Nguyen reveals the elusive connection between two families and photojournalist Eddie Adams’s iconic photo, *Saigon Execution*, confronting family secrets left in the wake of the Vietnam War, exposing the resilience of survivors and blurred legacy of wartime memory.

The winner will receive a \$10,000 cash prize, courtesy of Telefilm Canada.

Jury Statement: “For this film’s illuminating look at the story behind an iconic image and the city where it was captured, its compelling analysis of the lasting effects of a conflict from more than a half century ago, and its deep dive into the complex historical, political and emotional aspects that expand well beyond the frame of one of the most haunting moments ever captured on film, the Jury presents the Hot Docs Best Canadian Feature Documentary award to Kim Nguyen’s *Saigon Story: Two Shootings in the Forest Kingdom*.”

Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary, supported by Donner Canadian Foundation, is awarded to an exceptional feature-length documentary in the International Spectrum Competition program and went to ***House of Hope*** (D: Marjolein Busstra | P: Ruby Deelen, Olivia Sophie van Leeuwen, May Jabareen, Ossama Bawardi | Netherlands, Palestine | 2025 | 91 min). In the West Bank lies an elementary school organized and run by a couple set on teaching their young Palestinian students non-violent resistance, offering a refuge from the escalating uncertainty that surrounds them.

Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$10,000 cash prize, courtesy of Donner Canadian Foundation.

Jury Statement: “A powerful and unsentimental film that bears witness to a family-run Waldorf school in the West Bank and its profound commitment to nurturing the humanity of children. For its clear-eyed portrait of educators whose quiet everyday resilience stubbornly insists on hope under the shadow of occupation and genocide, the jury enthusiastically presents Marjolein Busstra with the Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary award for *House of Hope*.”

Hot Docs is an Academy Awards® qualifying festival for feature documentaries. The winner of Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary, ***House of Hope***, will qualify for consideration in the Best Documentary Feature category of the annual Academy Awards® without the standard theatrical run, provided the film complies with Academy rules.

In addition to this year’s juried awards, the new **Hot Docs-CISF Connect Audience Engagement Grant** was announced by Lalita Krishna, Chair of the Canadian Independent Screen Fund for BPOC Creators (CISF). The \$10,000 grant is for Canadian documentaries by Black or racialized creators that screened at

Hot Docs 2026, to provide funding for marketing and audience engagement campaigns, helping to build sustainable audience pipelines beyond festival screenings. Applications will open on May 4 and close on May 31.

The 2026 awards for films in competition were determined by three juries.

Canadian & Bill Nemtin Award Jury:

Avril Benoît, Advisor and Former CEO, Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières
Jason Gorber, Film Journalist and Programmer
Yiqian Zhang, Documentary Producer and Founder, Electric Shadow

International Feature Documentary Jury:

Robyn Citizen, Director of Programming, Festival and Cinematheque, Toronto International Film Festival
Daniela Michel, Founding Director, Morelia International Film Festival
Lina Rodriguez, Filmmaker

Shorts Jury:

Fazila Amiri, Filmmaker
Martin Edralin, Filmmaker
Shonna Foster, Director/Producer

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Hot Docs (hotdocs.ca) is North America's leading documentary festival, conference and market. 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 33rd annual edition in Toronto from April 23 to May 3, 2026. Hot Docs will also mount a dynamic series of knowledge sessions, networking opportunities and market programs for documentary practitioners and industry delegates, including the renowned Hot Docs Forum and Hot Docs Deal Maker. Since its inception in 1993, Hot Docs has supported the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs, production fund portfolio, and valuable professional development programs. The organization fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs also operates the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, a century-old landmark located in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood and the world's first and largest documentary cinema.

Tickets and ticket packages can be purchased and used [online](http://www.hotdocs.ca) at www.hotdocs.ca or in person at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema Box Office, located at 506 Bloor Street West (hours vary daily in accordance with cinema screenings). Single tickets are \$22 (\$20 member) for regular screenings, and \$27 (\$24 member) for Opening Night and Big Ideas screenings. A Festival 12-Pack is \$228 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$340 (\$216 and \$320 members). Hot Docs offers free tickets for regular screenings before 4:00 p.m. to patrons 60+ and students with valid photo I.D., available in-person at the venue on the day of the screening, subject to availability.

Hot Docs is proud to include Rogers as its Founding Partner and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters.



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Hot Docs is a charitable, not-for-profit organization committed to advancing the art of documentary and supporting opportunities for independent filmmakers.