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## HOT DOCS ANNOUNCES 2025 FESTIVAL AWARD WINNERS AND \$90,000 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 14 awards, along with \$90,000 in cash and prizes, was celebrated at the Hot Docs 2025 Awards Presentation, held earlier today at El Mocambo and hosted by arts journalist and co-founder of Media Girlfriends, Garvia Bailey. 2025 Hot Docs Festival screenings will continue at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema and TIFF Lightbox today through Sunday, and Hot Docs 2025 will close on Sunday, May 4. 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 7:00 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/mid-length documentary and short documentary will be announced after the close of the 2025 Festival. The Awards Presentation was immediately followed by the Hot Docs 2025 Awards Reception, sponsored by Crave.

**Hot Docs Betty Youson Award for Best Canadian Short Documentary**, supported by John and Betty Youson, was presented to ***Delta Dawn*** (D: Asia Youngman | Canada | 26 min), which chronicles the electric rise to fame of wrestling sensation Dawn Murphy in the 1980s and early 1990s. Known as Princess Delta Dawn, she was the first Indigenous and Canadian woman to compete professionally in Japan. The Award includes a \$3,000 cash prize.

Jury statement: “For expertly using hybridity to create a space of reflection that allows for a dialogue between who the protagonist was and who she is today, and for bringing the patriarchal world of wrestling into a feminist perspective that includes the nuances of identity, empowerment and indigenous legacy, the jury awards Best Canadian Short Documentary to Asia Youngman for *Delta Dawn*.”

**Hot Docs Best International Short Documentary**, sponsored by TVO Docs, was presented to ***Alice*** (D: Gabriel Novis | Brazil | 17 min), in which Alice, a trans woman, finds solace in surfing the waters of Maceió, Brazil. Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$3,000 cash prize, courtesy of TVO Docs. Jury statement: “For the sensitive, nuanced and brilliant way in which the cinematography and script brings us into the experience of the protagonist and transports us into a reality that is both full of kindness and beauty, but also extremely dangerous and threatening for trans people everywhere, the jury awards Hot Docs Best International Short Documentary to Gabriel Novis for *Alice*.”

Hot Docs is an Academy Awards® qualifying festival for short documentaries and, as winners of the 2025 Hot Docs Best International Short Documentary and the Hot Docs Betty Youson Award for Best Canadian

Short Documentary, respectively, *Alice* and *Delta Dawn* 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 **Cornelia Principe**, producer of *Shamed* (D: Matt Gallagher | P: Cornelia Principe | Canada | 2025 | 90 min), in which an online vigilante, self-described as the “Creep Hunter,” seeks out potential sexual predators and ambushes them in videotaped confrontations, exposing them to the court of public opinion, 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.

**Hot Docs Best Mid-Length Documentary**, sponsored by Mubi, was presented to *Climate In Therapy* (D: Nathan Grossman | P: Cecilia Nessen | Sweden, Norway | 2025 | 64 min), in which seven climate scientists gather to discuss a taboo subject in their field: emotions. What emerges is a transformational discussion that humanizes the enormity of the climate crisis, powerfully voicing the unspeakable. Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$3,000 cash prize, courtesy of Mubi.

Jury statement: “The Hot Docs Best Mid-Length Documentary goes to a bold and emotionally resonant experiment in documentary filmmaking. Nothing is staged—what unfolds on screen is raw, unscripted, and profoundly authentic. This unfiltered approach is precisely what made us laugh, cry, and feel so deeply connected to the characters. The editing is exceptional, allowing moments of silence to ring with meaning and even laughter, while subtle glimmers of hope emerge in a subject matter that is often overwhelming and disheartening. The film breaks down walls with its intimate and deeply human portrayal of its participants. Their vulnerability, courage, and spontaneous interactions create a group dynamic that feels entirely natural and unscripted, yet artfully shaped by the director's sensitive lens. This improvisational spirit brings a rare freshness to the screen and raises thoughtful questions about the ethics of filmmaking, representation, and shared space. What truly struck us was how close we felt to the people in this film—they felt like our friends, family members, neighbours, or teachers. Their stories and struggles stayed with us long after the credits rolled. We could have watched them for hours. For its authenticity, artistry, and emotional power, we are honored to present *Climate in Therapy* with this award.”

**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 **Regan Latimer**. The winner will be awarded \$5,000 from the Lindalee Tracey Fund, a \$5,000 in kind voucher from Picture Shop for equipment rentals and services, and a beautiful hand-blown glass sculpture by Andrew Kuntz.

**Hot Docs Docs for Schools Student Choice Award** was presented to *Writing Hawa* (D: Najiba Noori, Rasul Noori (co-director) | P: Christian Popp, Hasse van Nunen, Renko Douze | France, Netherlands, Qatar, Afghanistan | 2024 | 85 min), in which, after freeing herself from a constraining 40-year arranged marriage, the filmmaker’s mother hopes for a brighter future, not only for herself but also her daughter and granddaughter, but her dreams are decimated by the Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan. The winner will receive a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of Scotiabank.

**Hot Docs first look Awards for Works-In-Progress** were presented to *The Blue Sweater with a Yellow Hole* (D: Tetiana Khodakivska, P: Elena Saulich, Tetiana Khodakivska, Executive Producers: Josh Penn, Kevin Macdonald, Maxym Asadchyi); *Land of No Pain* (D: Émilie Martel, P: Émilie Martel), and *Untying the Knot* (D: Chona Mangalindan, P: Chona Mangalindan, Maxime Spinga, Executive Producer: Félicie Roblin). Each of these works will receive a \$5,000 cash prize courtesy of Suzanne DePoe, Peter Goring and Richard Sugarman. Hot Docs *first look* is a curated access program for philanthropic and documentary-loving supporters that grants them behind-the-scenes access to new projects in development and the world of documentary pre-production and production financing. This year Hot Docs *first look* participants have awarded a total of \$15,000 as part of Hot Docs' Works-In-Progress industry event.

**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 **Damien Eagle Bear**, the director of *#skoden* (D: Damien Eagle Bear | P: Damien Eagle Bear | Canada | 2025 | 75 min), in which an iconic Indigenous meme sparks a poignant exploration of the unhoused Alberta man behind the viral phenomenon. Jury Statement: "We are honoured to present the Hot Docs Earl A. Glick Emerging Filmmaker Award to *#skoden* directed by Damien Eagle Bear. The film offers a poignant exploration of identity, reclamation, and community through the lens of a viral meme. Centred on Pernell Bad Arm, a homeless Indigenous Blackfoot man from Lethbridge, Alberta, whose image, initially appropriated and misused by online trolls rooted in racist stereotypes, was subsequently recontextualized and embraced by the filmmaker."

**Hot Docs Bill Nemtin Award for Best Social Impact Documentary**, sponsored by the Bill Nemtin Legacy Fund, which recognizes the producers of a Hot Docs 2025 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 Talal Afifi and Giovanna Stopponi of *Khartoum* (D: Phil Cox, Ibrahim Ahmed, Anas Saeed, Timeea Ahmed, Rawia Alhag | P: Talal Afifi, Giovanna Stopponi | UK, Germany | 2025 | 80 min), in which a group of displaced Sudanese filmmakers empower five of their fellow citizens to re-enact dramatic testimonies of their nation's descent into civil war and their journeys to neighbouring East Africa seeking refuge. The \$10,000 cash prize from the Bill Nemtin Legacy Fund will help enable the winning film team to optimize the impact of the documentary through outreach and marketing activities.

Jury Statement: "Hot Docs Bill Nemtin Award for Best Social Impact Documentary is awarded to a documentary that captivated us with its creative and innovative portrayal of a challenging topic. The filmmakers began documenting the lives of five different people living in a country they loved prior to the outbreak of war, and when the situation on the ground meant filming on location was no longer safe or tenable, an inspired and inventive approach was borne out of necessity as well as the filmmakers' commitment to continue telling these stories. Paying attention to the dreams and memories of the participants in the film, employing unique and inspired tactics to visualize them involving participant-led reenactments and collaborative storytelling, we were thrilled to watch this playful, charming, emotional and dynamic film that shared with us the full range of the human experience during times of peace and war. This film's strong political statement against war comes through with clarity and exemplifies the

vital importance of truth-telling in times of political turmoil, fulfilling essential criteria for the Bill Nemtin Award. We are delighted to award *Khartoum* with the Hot Docs Bill Nemtin Award for Best Social Impact Documentary for its unique way of celebrating the human spirit on film and for drawing our attention to the first hand lived experiences of those affected by one of the most urgent issues in the world today.”

In the Best Social Impact Documentary category, the jury also acknowledged ***Writing Hawa*** (D: Najiba Noori, Rasul Noori (co-director) | P: Christian Popp, Hasse van Nunen, Renko Douze | France, Netherlands, Qatar, Afghanistan | 2024 | 85 min).

**Hot Docs DGC Special Jury Prize-Canadian Feature Documentary**, sponsored by DGC National and DGC Ontario, was presented to ***Paul*** (D: Denis Côté | P: Karine Bélanger, Hany Ouichou | Canada | 2025 | 87), in which, to cope with depression and social anxiety, Paul finds comfort in doing domestic chores for dominant women. The award comes with a \$5,000 cash prize, courtesy of DGC National and DGC Ontario.

Jury Statement: “We are honoured to present the Special Jury Prize to *Paul*, directed by Denis Côté. Every now and then you watch a film that takes you completely by surprise. A film that zigs when you think it will zag, a film that drops you into the lives of people who you might not imagine identifying with and yet somehow do—powerfully so. For the members of this jury, *Paul* is that film. From its deceptively simple opening scenes, we are introduced to Paul, a shy overweight young man who has a social media following, an obsessive penchant for cleaning, and the goal of losing weight. Yet, scene by scene, we learn that Paul has a set of deeper, more complicated desires—his clients are dominatrices, and he is their subordinate. Through nuanced observation of complex, hierarchical, boundaried, sexually charged punishment-reward relationships, we see Paul gradually learn to navigate, advocate for and, eventually, express himself. He learns to connect. In lesser hands, this film could have been a mess; instead, it is a revelation.”

**Hot Docs Best Canadian Feature Documentary**, supported by Telefilm Canada, was presented to ***Agatha's Almanac*** (D: Amalie Atkins | P: Amalie Akins | Canada | 2025 | 86 min), a cinematic portrait of simple seasonal living in which a fiercely independent Mennonite woman lives alone on her ancestral farm in Southern Manitoba. The winner will receive a \$10,000 cash prize, courtesy of Telefilm Canada. Jury Statement: “Poetic and playful, yet intensely political, and a film - and a protagonist! - that puts into practice what others only preach, this one is a rare and precious flower in the garden of contemporary cinema. Handcrafted with great care in a truly creative spirit over several years, it is a reminder that what might appear radically anti-conformist both as a way of life and of filmmaking may simply be the most authentic. We are very happy to give the 2025 Hot Docs Best Canadian Feature Documentary award to *Agatha's Almanac* by Amalie Atkins.”

**Hot Docs Emerging International Filmmaker Award**, supported by Donner Canadian Foundation, was presented to **Amilcar Infante** and **Sebastian Gonzalez Mendez**, directors of ***Unwelcomed*** (D: Amilcar Infante, Sebastian Gonzalez Mendez | P: Sebastian Gonzalez Mendez | Chile | 2025 | 68 min), which examines contrasting perspectives around the migrant crisis in Chile following the country's most violent anti-immigrant protest, sparked by an unprecedented influx of migrants from Venezuela. 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 Donner Canadian Foundation.

Jury statement: “A film that brought home one of the defining issues of our era – the question of who has the right to move, and how borders come to define the limits of our solidarity with others. Told with care, courage and ambition, *Unwelcomed* is the winner of the Hot Docs Emerging International Filmmaker award.”

**Hot Docs Joan VanDuzer Special Jury Prize-International Feature Documentary**, in memory of long time Hot Docs supporter Joan VanDuzer, was given to *River of Grass* (D: Sasha Wortzel | P: Danielle Varga, Sasha Wortzel | USA | 2025 | 83 min), an ode to the Florida Everglades that explores its historical and ongoing challenges through the writings and testimonies of environmentalists, educators and current denizens. Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$5,000 cash prize, in memory of Joan VanDuzer.

Jury statement: “Lyrical, contemplative and layered storytelling establishes a powerful sense of place, while introducing us to the magnificent systems established by nature but placed in peril by the hubris of humanity. For its creative vision and loving gaze, the Hot Docs Joan VanDuzer Special Jury Prize-International Feature Documentary goes to *River of Grass*.”

In the category of Special Jury Prize-International Feature Documentary, the jury also acknowledged *I Dreamed His Name* (D: Angela Carabalí | P: Sandra Tabares Duque, Angela Carabalí | Colombia | 2025 | 86 min).

**Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary** was awarded to *I, Poppy* (D: Vivek Chaudhary | P: Vivek Chaudhary, Xavier Rocher | India | 2024 | 81 min), in which a son fights corrupt officials while his mother tends their poppy farm in India. Hot Docs is pleased to present the winner with a \$10,000 cash prize.

Jury Statement: “A film of negotiations – with family, with community, with the systems that limit our choices and bind our fates. For its moving and thoughtfully crafted chronicle of a family navigating conflicts, contradictions and uncomfortable truths, the jury presents the Best International Feature award to *I, Poppy*.”

Hot Docs is an Academy Awards® qualifying festival for feature documentaries. The winner of Hot Docs Best International Feature Documentary, *I Poppy*, 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.

The 2025 awards for films in competition were determined by four juries.

**Canadian Feature Documentary Jury:**

Mads K. Mikkelsen, Head of Programme, CPH:DOX

Sarah Ouazzani, Artistic Director, DOXA Documentary Film Festival

Noland Walker, Principal Content Consultant/Co-Curator, *Independent Lens* (ITVS)

**International Feature Documentary Jury:**

Brett Story, Director/Producer  
Inti Cordera, Executive Director, DocsMX  
Shane Smith, TVO Docs Programmer

**Mid-Length Documentary + Bill Nemtin Award For Best Social Impact Documentary Jury:**

Alison Duke, Writer/Director/Producer  
Sabine Lange, Commissioning Editor, ARTE  
Ali Weinstein, Filmmaker

**Short Documentary Jury:**

Aeyliya Husain, Filmmaker  
Yvonne Ashley Kouadjo, Series Producer, *Op-Docs* (The New York Times)  
Ruth Somalo, Filmmaker / Programmer & Independent Curator

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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 32<sup>nd</sup> annual edition from April 24 to May 4, 2025, in cinemas across Toronto. 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 Deal Maker and Works-in-Progress screenings. Year-round, Hot Docs supports the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs and a multi-million-dollar film fund portfolio, and fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs owns and programs 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/or redeemed [online](http://www.hotdocs.ca) at [www.hotdocs.ca](http://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 \$20 to regular Festival screenings and \$23 to Special Presentations screenings (\$18-\$20 members). Special events vary in price. A Festival 12-Pack is \$209 and a Festival 20-Pack is \$299. Hot Docs offers free tickets for all screenings before 4:00 p.m. to seniors and students with valid photo I.D., available online the day of the screening, subject to availability.

Hot Docs is proud to include Rogers as its Founding Partner; Netflix as its Presenting Partner; and Telefilm Canada, the Government of Ontario, and the Canada Media Fund as its Major Supporters. Full list of sponsors and partners: <https://hotdocs.ca/about/partners>.

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