

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vancouver, BC — March 17, 2026

VIFF Launches the Institute for the Moving Image, a New Year-Round Hub for Artist Development and Industry Innovation

The Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) today announced the launch of the **Institute for the Moving Image**, a major new initiative expanding VIFF's commitment to artist development and industry leadership beyond the annual fall festival. Launching in 2026, the Institute will transform VIFF's longstanding festival-intensive development programs into a year-round model for creative growth, mentorship, professional training, creative business education, and international connection.

The shift to an Institute structure aims to address a gap in the BC filmmaking landscape: a space for filmmaker development focused on creative authorship and artistic practice.. While British Columbia remains one of Canada's most active service production centres, many emerging filmmakers, particularly those facing systemic barriers, lack access to sustained mentorship opportunities, professional training, and access to industry pathways needed to support long-term creative growth. Most of VIFF's current artist training programs are oriented towards emerging talent, but the expansion to a broader Institute framework will allow for a full slate of artist development offerings, from the newly established to the active professional.

The Institute for the Moving Image will have two primary focuses:

1. To help strengthen the quality of work being made, not just the quantity.
2. To leverage VIFF's role as an international film festival to provide attending filmmakers with access to a global platform and connections with peer programs worldwide.

“By shifting from festival-centric development to the creative Institute model, VIFF aims to become a far more valuable resource to filmmakers from BC and across Canada. We're passionate about the calibre of filmmaking talent we see in Canada, and we feel VIFF has a responsibility to be a keystone partner in their future success. This new Institute model will allow us to radically expand our artistic development programs, and to significantly deepen our impact on the careers and artistic practices of future Canadian and Indigenous filmmakers.” — *Kyle Fostner, Executive Director, VIFF*

Leading the Institute for the Moving Image is Ana Belén Asfura, a Chilean-Palestinian film producer with extensive experience in talent development, positioning strategies, and international circulation. Ana brings new vision, purpose, and global industry insight to the VIFF team, drawing from a career that spans consultancy in distribution and marketing as well as service on selection and evaluation committees for international film funds.

“Cinema speaks across borders and cultures. It is a universal language — not of sameness, but of connection across difference. In a world that often feels fragmented and dehumanized, reclaiming this universality is an ethical act.

The Institute for the Moving Image is built on this belief: a space where voices converge and coexist, where disciplines and cultures meet not in hierarchy but in collaboration. A place where ideas, experiences, and emotions flow freely, where artists are nurtured, challenged, and empowered to claim authorship of their own narratives.

For us, creating space for these voices is not optional; it is essential. It is how we restore shared humanity, ignite global dialogue, and forge a more inclusive, vibrant future for cinema.” — *Ana Belén Asfura, Director of Artist and Industry Programs, VIFF*

The Institute represents VIFF’s long-term investment in shaping the creative voices and industry marketplace of the future. Designed to support emerging equity-deserving filmmakers and screen creatives across British Columbia and Canada, it will offer cohort-based programs led by local and international artists, industry activities, market access, and community engagement, nurturing sustainable careers, strengthening BC’s independent film ecosystem, and connecting creators directly with the festival’s international network.

Launching as a pilot year, the Institute is built with intentional room to grow. In the coming years, VIFF envisions expanding into additional training streams for key creative roles, alongside new initiatives such as artist residencies, year-round labs, and the potential to become a source for development funding.

The Institute for the Moving Image’s 2026 pilot programs are made possible with the generous funding support of the Canada Media Fund.

Applications now open: three inaugural Institute cohorts

Animation Cohort

Designed for independent animators exploring author-driven storytelling and distinctive visual languages. The Animation Cohort supports artists working outside commercial pipelines, with a focus on experimentation, personal expression, and narrative risk.

Documentary Cohort

Designed for filmmakers expanding the boundaries of nonfiction storytelling. The Documentary Cohort supports artists exploring bold, hybrid, and socially engaged approaches to nonfiction.

Creative Business Cohort

Designed for filmmakers building sustainable careers without compromising creative ambition. The Creative Business Cohort supports producers and creative leads with the tools, strategies, and industry knowledge needed to sustain long-term creative practice.

Applications for all three cohorts close April 19, 2026.

Applications for other programs, including *Catalyst*, *Composer Filmmaker Accelerator*, *VIFF Amp*, *Co-Production Forum*, and *Work In Progress*, will be announced soon.

Application information is available at viff.org/institute/applications, with full program details and eligibility at viff.org/institute.

ABOUT VIFF

The Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) is one of Canada's leading film organizations and an internationally recognized cultural institution. VIFF presents the annual Vancouver International Film Festival, operates the VIFF Centre, Vancouver's premier arthouse cinema, and leads artist development initiatives through the Institute for the Moving Image. Together, these initiatives nurture filmmakers, strengthen the screen-based arts sector, and bring the joy of bold, original cinema to audiences year-round. Learn more at viff.org.

Founded in 1982, the Greater Vancouver International Film Festival Society is a not-for-profit cultural society and federally registered charitable organization. VIFF is presented on the traditional and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

-30-

[Press Kit](#)

Media Inquiries

Lainé Slater
Vancouver International Film Festival
press@viff.org