

VIFF



VIFF thanks the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaɬ/Səlilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations for their continued stewardship of the unceded and occupied land on which our work takes place. As an organization founded and predominantly directed by settlers and immigrants, we understand our responsibility to seek out and build authentic relationships with Indigenous communities, and to allow this ongoing dialogue to influence our practices. As part of this process, we remain committed to collaborating with and supporting Indigenous artists, filmmakers, curators, and audiences.

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Executive Summary

Every so often an event happens at exactly the right time, hitting the perfect note to reflect the moment, and this year’s Vancouver International Film Festival was just that. As though in spite of the tumultuous, exhausting geopolitical and economic climate, this year’s VIFF emanated warmth, an invigorating celebration of art, ideas, and humanity. A small but welcome antidote to intolerance, the festival served as a connection between Vancouver and the wider world, a truly international exchange of perspective and story.

On a personal level, I’ve had the pleasure of taking part in over 10 editions of VIFF, and this was by far the most positive and rewarding. I’m so proud of our incredible team, who managed to take VIFF’s professionalism and culture to the next level, delivering one of the smoothest and happiest festivals in our history.

Thanks to the excellent contributions of Curtis Woloschuk, Sonja Baksa, the Program Administration team, and our many festival curators, and programmers, we received nothing but excellent feedback from the hundreds of filmmakers, musicians, and other creatives who took part. Our screenings were full of enthusiastic audiences; all skillfully cared for by nearly a thousand of the best volunteers in Vancouver.

With the highest attendance in many years, and having met our fundraising goal in record time, it’s clear that VIFF is on to something. Our programming team evolved significantly, incorporating new and exciting voices, which resulted in one of VIFF’s strongest film programs in memory. Our music, performance, and creative tech programs all flourished, finding moments where they could converge and interact. Our new festival model, defined by dynamism, interactivity, and celebration, is quickly establishing VIFF as one of the world’s most exciting and progressive festivals.

The VIFF Centre enjoyed a banner year too, with more screenings and larger audiences than at any point in its 20-year history. Our goal is simple; to cement the VIFF Centre as the gold standard arthouse cinema in Canada. Our incredible team propelled us towards that objective with courage, creativity, and care. Under Tom Charity’s leadership the program was excellent again this year, from New Spanish Cinema in January, to the year’s best international features in December. We continued the VIFF Centre’s transformation from traditional cinema to vibrant cultural landmark through a variety of dynamic means, including dozens of VIFF Live performances and collaborations with international partners like the Consulates of Ireland and Romania to present culturally rich film series from their respective regions.

And finally, with the addition of Ana Belén Asfura as Director of the Institute for the Moving Image, we took huge strides towards redesigning and revitalizing our care for BC filmmakers and other creative professionals. With Ana’s experience and energy behind us, we had one of our most vibrant festival Industry programs in years. We’ve begun to lay the groundwork for the next phase of programs and artist care.

In many ways, it feels like one important chapter is coming to a close at VIFF, and the next exciting one is set to begin. The future is bright for VIFF! Thanks for being such an important part of this year’s success, and for inspiring us onwards as we grow.



Kyle Fostner
Executive Director



There is a room in the heart of Vancouver which opens a window on the world.

That room is our theatre, the VIFF Centre: two screens operating 364 days of the year, six, eight, ten, or 12 hours of the day... More than 500 films screening across the year, thousands of screenings, movies of all shapes and sizes from Hollywood blockbusters to no-budget shorts, Canadian and Indigenous films, documentaries, art films, comedies and classics.

Extending the 360-degree vision of the festival across all 12 months of the year, the VIFF Centre offers a focal point for a growing community of cinephiles and film lovers from multiple cultures and across the generations. Our audience, like our movies, come from all over the world but finds a home away from home in Vancouver.

VIFF Centre programming is predicated on artistic excellence and cultural curiosity. Like the festival, we want to champion local talent and connect Canadian filmmakers with audiences in meaningful dialogue. And we want to introduce our patrons to the most exciting and diverse artists working across the globe.



Tom Charity
VIFF Centre Programmer

More than just a movie theatre, we aim to cultivate an engaged and knowledgeable audience by facilitating Q&As and panel discussions on social and environmental issues. As a cinematheque, we propagate a cinematic culture that goes beyond what's new and commercial, probing and excavating film history to open eyes to artists from different eras and different continents in programmes like **Film Studies** and our monthly **Pantheon** series, which pair landmark movies with 15 minute introductions by film scholars from UBC, Emily Carr and SFU. Film Studies programmes looked at pre-Code Cinema, the art of literary adaptation, and victims of the McCarthy blacklisting of the 1950s.

Retrospectives in 2025 included a Symposium on Korean master Bong Joon-ho, Paul Thomas Anderson, actress Gena Rowlands, composer Ennio Morricone, the Tibetan filmmaker Pema Tsenden, Pixar animation, and the Filipino director Lino Brocka.

Other series included **African Cinema Now!**, curated by Kika Memeh and Fegor Obuwoma, which played in installments across the year; **Samhain: New Irish Horror; New Spanish Cinema**; a **Lunar New Year** programme presented with LunarSplash; **Queering Cinema**, curated by Fay Nass; **Canadian Film Week**; **21st Century Classics** (25 masterpieces from the last 25 years); and **Getting Real**—a two month survey of American screen acting and the impact of the Method, 1945-1980.



513
Films

2526
Screenings

64
Canadian
Films

21
BC Films

8
Indigenous
Films

60
Countries

70
Languages

VIFF | Live

Our innovative **VIFF Live series** welcomed more than 100 local musicians to the VIFF Centre across 36 events exploring the connections between music and film. These shows included tributes to jazz giants like Oscar Peterson, Duke Ellington, and Thelonious Monk; original, especially commissioned live scores to films like Hitchcock's silent masterpiece *The Lodger* and Bunuel's *The Exterminating Angel*; the new BC-made films *Inedia* and *Kryptic* (performed by the soundtrack's composer); and music inspired by new releases like *Universal Language*.



Festival Experience

With its 44th edition, VIFF proved itself as a world class festival delivering exemplary programming. Balancing ambition and empathy, the festival animated and invigorated our city over the course of an incredible 11 days.

This was undoubtedly our strongest film program in ages, delivering every award winner from the Cannes competition of 2025, as well as significant premieres of new work from revered international filmmakers.

VIFF 2025 was also an opportunity for countless discoveries. Almost half of the festival's films had their Canadian premiere at VIFF, giving Vancouver audiences the first chance to experience some of the year's most talked-about cinema.

A greater focus on documentary programming contributed to an uncompromising lineup that was keenly attuned to and in dialogue with pressing contemporary issues. In an age in which intolerance is actively invited to flourish, our programming served as an act of resistance that encouraged audiences to embrace their humanity, openness, and understanding.

Festival Highlights

27

World Premieres

\$68,000

Awarded to Filmmakers

5000+

Submissions

Representation

74

Canadian and Indigenous Films

19

BC Films

70

Countries

69

Languages

Did you know?

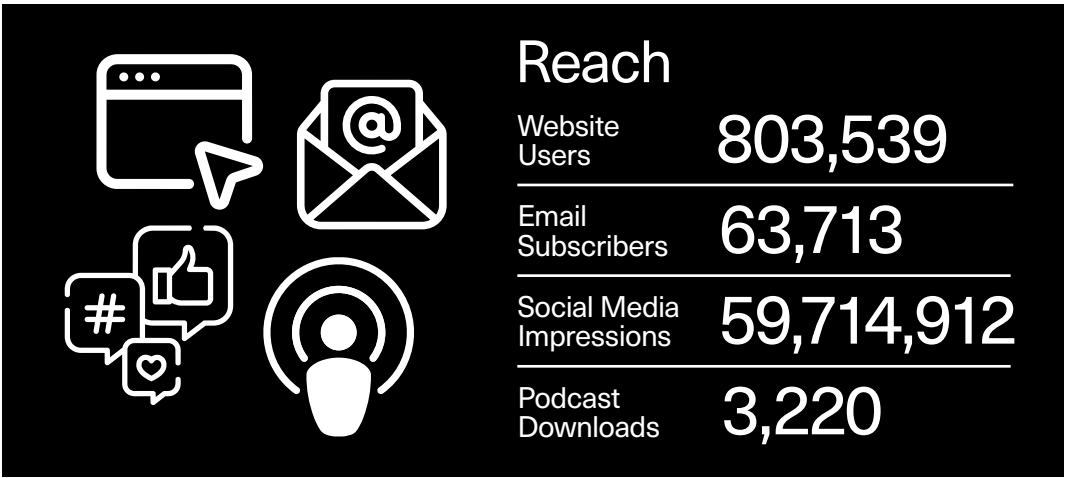
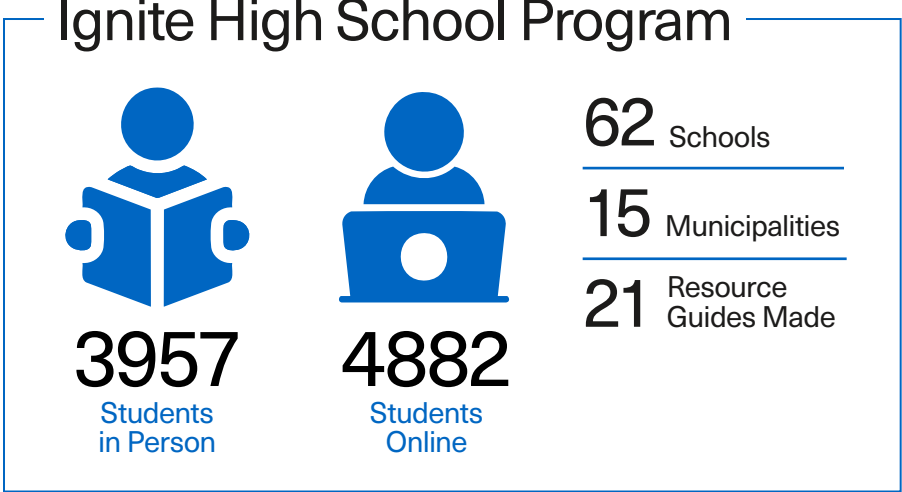
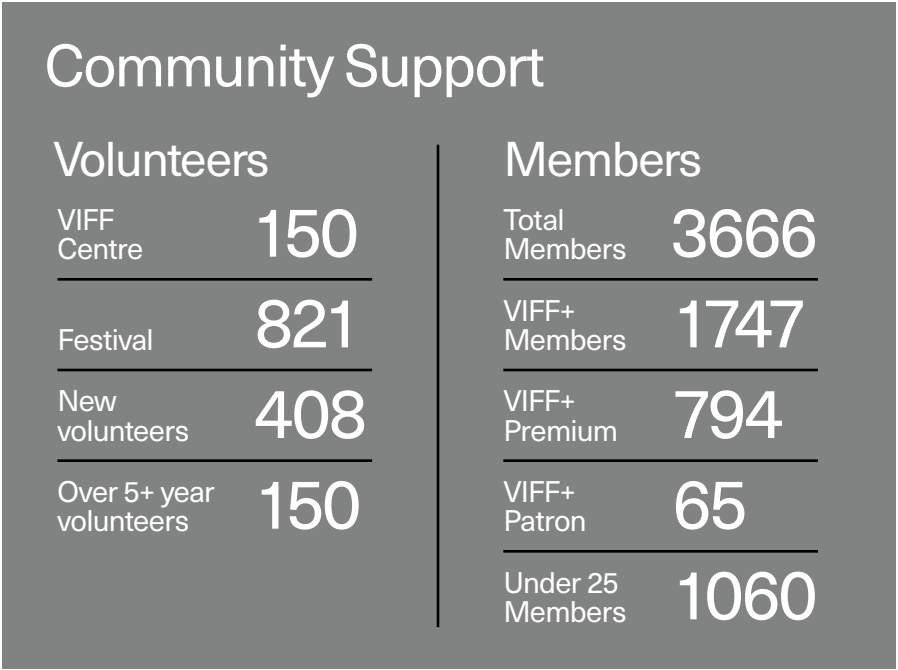
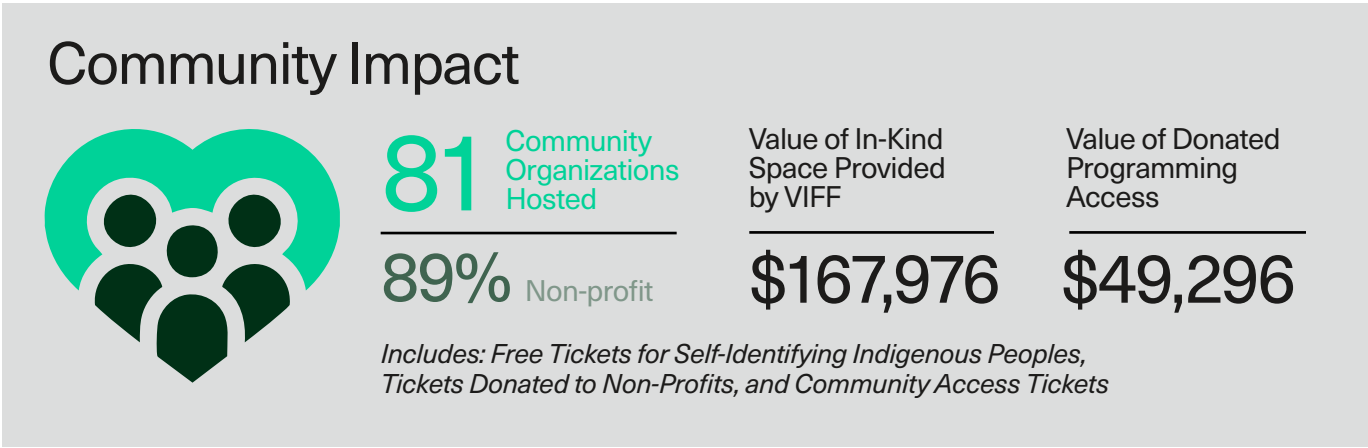
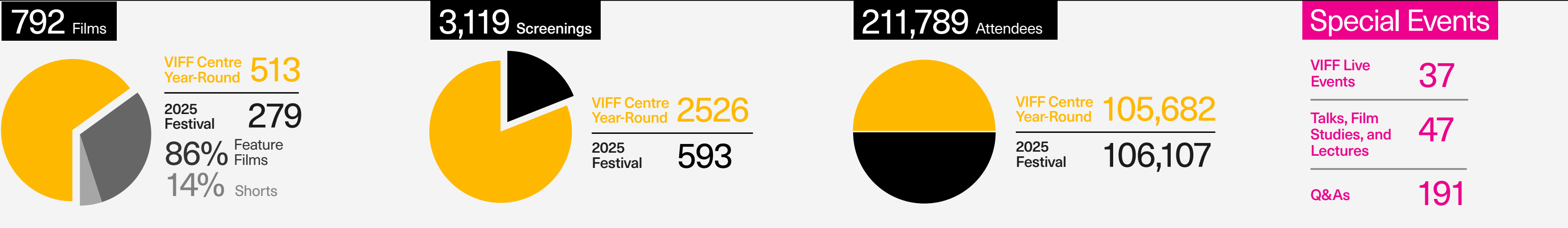
It takes a village to curate incredible festival films. From more than 5,000 submissions, our core programming team worked alongside 56 Screening Committee members, 3 Programming Consultants, and 3 Programming Associates to shape the lineup. Shortlisting begins as early as April, with the confirmed shortlists coming together by June or July. Final selections are confirmed in August, and the films screen at the festival in October.



Curtis Woloschuk
Director of Programming



Our Year in Numbers



Artist & Industry

The 2025 VIFF Artist & Industry programs reinforced the festival's commitment to fostering creativity, mentorship, and professional growth across the Canadian and international film community.



Ana Belén Asfura

We welcomed new Director of the Institute for the Moving Image, Ana Belén Asfura, to expand our Artist & Industry Programming. Under Ana's leadership, VIFF 2025 emphasized creative experimentation, mentorship, professional development, and cross-program collaboration,

cultivating an inclusive, inspiring, and supportive ecosystem for emerging and mid-career filmmakers, composers, and creatives. Participant feedback consistently highlighted the transformative nature of the programs, the value of networking and mentorship, and the festival's unique role in building community and facilitating long-term creative partnerships.

Highlights from 2025



Catalyst

(curated by Mariam Barry) continued to evolve as a premier mentorship program for emerging filmmakers from underrepresented backgrounds, selecting 15 participants from 144 applications. With 10 sessions, 13 mentors, and 26 speakers, Catalyst introduced the inaugural Catalyst Mixer, connecting alumni, curators, and program founders, celebrating achievements, and strengthening networks. Alumni highlights included Dide Su Bilgin (*A Welcome Distraction*), Justin Ducharme (*Positions*), and Ivanna Samuel (*Looking Glass*). Participants praised Catalyst as a transformative and confidence-building experience, emphasizing community, mentorship, and creative inspiration.



Labs

(curated by Ken Tsui) provided a space for intimate, skill-focused engagement with leading filmmakers and creatives, hosting five labs with six speakers and 81 local attendees. Sessions like Justin Li's *Anatomy of Heretic* and Brian McGinn's *Recipe for Chef's Table* highlighted case-study-driven learning and deep audience interaction. Labs fostered experimentation, creative dialogue, and professional insight, consistently adding significant value to participants and the festival.



The Composer Filmmaker Accelerator (CFA)

(curated by Tony Scudellari and Miriam Cutler) strengthened collaborations between filmmakers and composers, selecting 12 composers from 340 applications to work with four filmmakers. CFA's structured model and cross-program integration—including Catalyst Mixer and studio visits—supported ongoing partnerships, while the Listening Party showcased the newly produced compositions and achieved an improved high-quality balance between sound and picture presentation. Participants highlighted the program's creative diversity, international perspectives, and potential for long-term collaborations.



Amp

(curated by Rob Calder and Tony Scudellari) connected composers, musicians, sound artists, and filmmakers through 8 panels, 11 sessions, 2 mixers, and 49 speakers, with 92 participants selected from 295 applicants. Cross-program initiatives, such as the music in video games event within Signals' ecosystem, promoted collaboration between music, film, and emerging media, while participant feedback emphasized transformative networking, professional insights, and a strengthened sense of community within Canada's screen-music ecosystem.



Industry

2025 marked a major restructuring of Industry, hosting 8 panels, 7 workshops, 1 tech showcase, 2 business sessions, and 1 mixer for 757 attendees, covering topics from co-production and indie animation to AI, marketing, and distribution. Strategic partnerships with DGC, CMPA, UBCP/ACTRA, ISO, Knowledge Network, and Creative BC/Reel Green reinforced sector alignment. Highlights included the new space Creative Business Hub, spotlighting South Korea and fostering Asia-Pacific/North American collaborations, as well as expanded documentary-focused programming and professional skills workshops, which received full capacity attendance and high participant satisfaction.

Community Impact

Cinema brings people together, sparks conversation, and welcomes us to explore the beauty and complexity of the world. At VIFF, we're committed to making that experience accessible to everyone. By removing barriers, creating welcoming spaces, and fostering connections across generations, cultures, and communities, our initiatives ensure that the transformative power of cinema reaches those who need it most.

Ignite High School Program

The VIFF Ignite High School Program welcomes thousands of high school students to experience exceptional international and Canadian cinema—for free!

In 2025, the Ignite Program reached over 60 schools across 15 municipalities, and student attendance reached almost 9000. The program's fast expansion (reaching almost double the attendance of 2024!) was made possible by the generosity of the Far Star Impact Fund.

Ignite films offer bold approaches to pressing social and environmental concerns that connect with subjects across the BC curriculum. Prior to the screenings, teachers receive film resource guides to facilitate discussion. At the festival, students also participate in thought-provoking Q&As with both local and international filmmakers.

"Our rural students love being able to get access to high quality, curated, and current art film otherwise inaccessible to them. Our teaching staff loves to bring in tons of great content but curating it and surveying it takes a long time for staff to find the gems. The service is invaluable in giving them access to unique voices they otherwise probably won't hear."

GRADE 10 TEACHER

"We chose to attend because we are trying to provide the students with real cultural experiences outside of the classroom. This adds value to the language of instruction, and also offers new experiences for students that they may not otherwise have like going downtown, going to the movies with friends, making memories. This is what students remember more than the classroom."

GRADE 8 AND 9 TEACHER, FRENCH LANGUAGE

A Place to Connect

The VIFF Centre is a much-needed space for people to exchange ideas and cultural perspectives. New series **Talking Pictures** invited filmgoers aged 55+ to find community with one another and discuss cinema after monthly Tuesday matinees, while the **Film Studies** and **Pantheon** series expanded our understanding of themes, historical context, and the artistic process of some of the most culturally significant films of our time.

Relaxed Screenings

Watching films in a cinema can be overstimulating for some, but it doesn't have to be that way. Our pay-what-you-can Relaxed Screenings provided a sensory friendly movie-going experience, including a designated chill-out space, fidget toys, and lower sound levels.

“

I talked to [a venue manager] and said that I was grateful we were able to get in, and told her a little of why we were interested in this film, and she said that the VIFF tries to make the festival truly international, and to give a voice to those who might otherwise remain marginalized. We are grateful for that too!"

TICKET RECIPIENT
FROM THE KETTLE SOCIETY

Accessible Tickets

In 2025 we provided over 3400 free or heavily discounted tickets to community members who might otherwise have difficulty accessing cinema. A few of the community groups we worked with include Canoo, Covenant House, Kettle Society, and Rainbow Refugee.

Free Admission for Indigenous Peoples

Recognizing the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural expressions, VIFF offers complimentary tickets to anyone who self-identifies as Indigenous. In 2025, over \$22,000 in tickets was redeemed through this program.

Community Partners

Beyond our own screenings, the VIFF Centre is a hub for community groups to gather for cultural events throughout the year. In 2025, over seventy nonprofits received discounted access and mentorship, providing an affordable and welcoming space to connect with their communities.

VIFF+ Memberships

The VIFF+ family grew to almost 4000 people in 2025. Around a thousand of them received free membership through our Under 25 program, providing access to discounts and free events for those aged 19-25.

We also introduced a new benefit for VIFF+ Premium members—they can nominate a film to be played on the big screen! One member's pick, *Lust, Caution*, proved so popular we brought it back for several additional sold-out screenings.



Kids Club

New in 2025, our monthly Kids Club welcomed families to partake in film-themed crafts, enjoy special snacks, and watch curated all-ages films on the big screen.

A Catalyst for Collective Giving



In 2025, the Bennett Family Foundation made a \$100,000 leadership gift to anchor VIFF's Matching Fund campaign. That single act of generosity did more than increase our fundraising total. It created momentum.

Through this extraordinary commitment, the Foundation expressed a profound belief in VIFF's future and inspired others to step forward. Donors across our community responded, knowing their contributions would be amplified and their impact doubled. What followed was not simply a successful campaign, but a shared affirmation of the role cinema plays in connecting us to one another and to the world.

The Foundation's values align naturally with VIFF's mission. Dedicated to strengthening communities through investments in social justice and the arts, the Bennett Family Foundation champions organizations that foster opportunity, resilience, and human connection across Canada.

Their support of VIFF is closely connected to Catherine Olsen, former VIFF Board member and internationally respected documentary leader. During

her time on the Board, Catherine brought decades of experience and a steadfast belief in the power of socially engaged storytelling. After completing her term due to governance limits, she has remained actively involved as a trusted advisor, continuing to lend her insight and care to VIFF's evolution.

Catherine's husband, Paul Bennett, serves as a Director of the Foundation. The foundation carries forward the legacy of his father, Avie Bennett, one of Canada's most influential cultural champions. As the former owner of McClelland and Stewart, a member of several national arts institutions Boards, and Chancellor of York University, Avie Bennett helped shape Canada's cultural identity. In 2003 he was promoted to a Companion for the Order of Canada for his contributions to Canadian Culture and described as "one of the greatest altruists of our time".

The Bennett Family Foundation's matching gift was more than financial support. It was a statement of belief in the power of culture to bring people together. When leaders stand up for the arts, communities follow and the impact reaches far beyond a single season.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT:

Why Spaces Like the VIFF Centre Matter



Gene Blischen does not describe himself as a lifelong filmgoer. A reader first and foremost, Gene has spent much of his life believing in the power of libraries as pillars of a healthy, democratic society. A retired Vancouverite who has lived across British Columbia and abroad, he has long supported organizations that protect access to information, encourage reflection, and invite thoughtful dialogue.

That belief found a new home for Gene at the VIFF Centre.

After attending a screening of *The Librarians* at the VIFF Centre, Gene saw a direct connection between the film's message and his own experience as a trustee on the Burnaby Public Library board. In recent years, intellectual freedom had become a central focus of the library's work, shaping conversations around policy, expression, and the responsibilities of public institutions.

Watching *The Librarians*, Gene recognized those same values reflected on screen.

"What struck me," Gene recalls, "was that VIFF was upholding intellectual freedom in a space outside the library system—without the security of regular municipal funding. That made me stop and think."

For Gene, the VIFF Centre represents something essential: a cultural space that invites people to slow down, question assumptions, and engage with complex ideas through film. In a world saturated with information and opinion, he sees VIFF as a place where facts, stories, and perspectives can be explored with care.

"Films are often dismissed as entertainment," Gene says. "But many of the films shown at the VIFF Centre challenge us to rethink what we know and relearn what we may have missed."

That realization made his decision to support VIFF a natural one.

Gene believes the impact of the VIFF Centre extends beyond the screen. He points to the moments after a film ends, when audiences linger in the lobby, continuing conversations sparked by what they have just seen. For him, that sense of community—grounded in curiosity and openness—is what makes VIFF so vital.

"These institutions don't survive by accident," Gene says. "They survive because people understand their value and choose to support them."

Volunteers

VIFF could never serve as many people as we do without our incredible and caring volunteers. Over 700 Festival Volunteers and 140 Year-Round Volunteers devoted more than 20,000 hours to help audiences experience extraordinary films.

Mykayla F. & Alberto V.R.

Mykayla and Alberto brought exceptional photography skills and remarkable dedication to the Photography Team all year-round, consistently delivering sharp work with minimal turnaround time while generously going above and beyond in supporting our volunteer onboarding efforts for the festival team.

Orientation Team Leads

Huge thank you to Hoda, Thomas, Tom, and Miyuki!! Together they helped us welcome 60 new volunteers to the year-round volunteer program, hosting their orientations and leading them through a tour of the VIFF Centre.

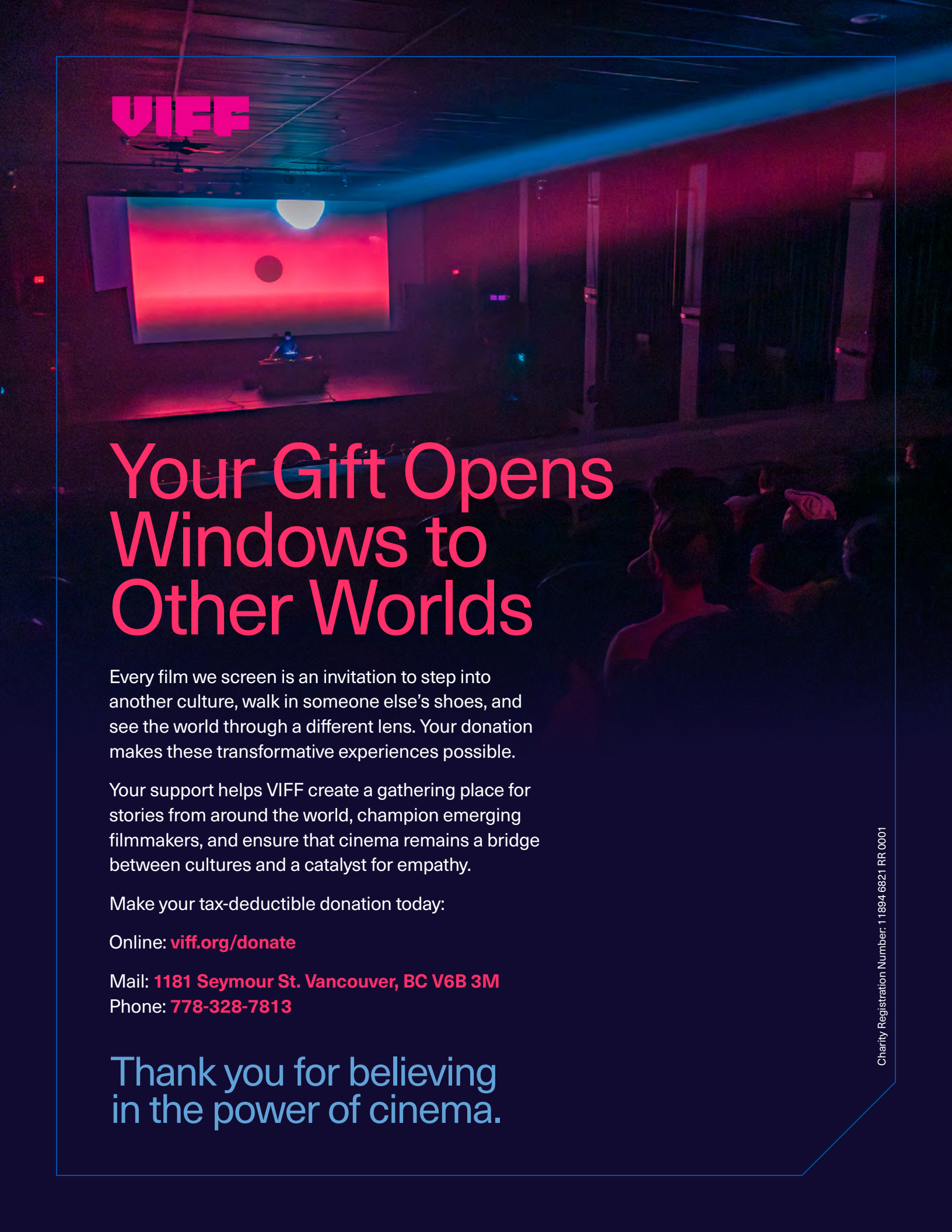
Gwen Litchfield

Gwen's calm and informative communication style made her especially invaluable during high-pressure moments. Whether guiding guests through sold-out screenings or maintaining communications between the door and ushers, Gwen continues to bring genuine warmth and dependability to the volunteer program.



150
Year-Round
Volunteers

821
Festival
Volunteers



VIFF

Your Gift Opens Windows to Other Worlds

Every film we screen is an invitation to step into another culture, walk in someone else's shoes, and see the world through a different lens. Your donation makes these transformative experiences possible.

Your support helps VIFF create a gathering place for stories from around the world, champion emerging filmmakers, and ensure that cinema remains a bridge between cultures and a catalyst for empathy.

Make your tax-deductible donation today:

Online: viff.org/donate

Mail: **1181 Seymour St. Vancouver, BC V6B 3M**

Phone: **778-328-7813**

Thank you for believing
in the power of cinema.