



VIFF ANNOUNCES JURIED CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL FILM AWARD WINNERS

45th Vancouver International Film Festival
October 1–11, 2026

VANCOUVER, BC (OCTOBER 8, 2026) Vancouver International Film Festival (VIFF) is thrilled to announce the winners of this year's juried Canadian and international film awards. Winners were announced in a ceremony yesterday evening in the following categories: SUMMIT Award (Outstanding Canadian Narrative Feature), HORIZON Award (Outstanding First or Second Canadian Narrative Feature), TIDES Award (Outstanding Canadian Documentary), and ARBUTUS Award (Outstanding BC Film), in addition to the international VANGUARD Award and SHORT FORUM Award.

The winners of the VIFF Audience Awards will be announced after the festival during the week of October 12.

"This was another exceptional year for independent cinema," says Kyle Fostner, Executive Director of VIFF. "All the filmmakers featured at VIFF 2026 delivered work of extraordinary depth and vision. Our hardworking jury members, artists, and industry leaders themselves, understand firsthand the passion, craft, and dedication poured into every title. It was with great consideration and care that this year's award winners were selected — shining examples of cinematic excellence from an extraordinarily competitive lineup."

CANADIAN FILM AWARD WINNERS

SUMMIT Award (Outstanding Canadian Narrative Feature)

\$15,000 award presented by Directors Guild of Canada

Jury: Rhia Aden, Nach Dudsdeemaytha, Caitlyn Sponheimer

Winner: *Nina Roza*, dir. Geneviève Dulude-De Celles

Jury statement: "We are proud to present the SUMMIT Award to a standout film that weaves together a deeply moving and compassionate story about the immigrant experience. The film uses the mystery of a young prodigy artist to draw our protagonist back to his hometown for the first time in 28 years. His journey offers a critique of artistic exploitation while simultaneously sparking a beautiful exploration of home, identity, and complex feelings around the legacy of a life split between two places. We believe the film's universal themes of identity and belonging will resonate across cultures; we all know what it feels like to long for home. We were all enamored by this film's direction, authentic performances, stunning cinematography, and evocative music. It is our absolute pleasure to present the SUMMIT Award to *Nina Roza* by director Genevieve Dulude-De Celles. We are excited to see what story you will tell next."

Special Mention: *Strong Son*, dir. Ian Bawa

Jury statement: "We're delighted to award a Special Mention for the SUMMIT Award to Ian Bawa's *Strong Son*. This is a beautifully tender film that explores the strong bond between a first-generation immigrant parent and their child. By placing the son, a physically imposing bodybuilder and security guard, into the role of his father's caregiver, the film challenges traditional ideas of masculinity, revealing how the immense weight of familial duty can expose the unspoken shame and the challenge of breaking free from emotional repression. Ian explores this with heart and humour, and we were truly captivated by this film."

HORIZON Award (Outstanding First or Second Canadian Narrative Feature)

\$3,000 award presented by VIFF

Jury: Arjun Ayillath, Madeleine Davis, Michael Mann

Winner: *In the Heart of the South*, dir. Nyla Innuksuk

Jury statement: "The jury was extremely impressed by Nyla Innuksuk's *In the Heart of the South*. Self-referential and poignant yet fast-paced, Innuksuk confirms herself as an essential voice in Canadian cinema. With exceptional performances from Anna Lambe and Zorga Qaunaq and a polished cinematic approach, this film is a strong example of Canadian cinema. Touching on questions of patronage, pressures on Indigenous artists, and authentic storytelling, this film uses its own conceit to examine the very structures that underpin its existence."

Special Mention: *Clubfoot*, dir. Nathan Donovan

Jury statement: "The jury would also like to acknowledge Nathan Donovan's hauntingly beautiful *Clubfoot*. The film stands as a concrete example of independent cinema's ability to communicate a unique point of view with minimal institutional support. With exceptional cinematography and use of sound, the film's withholding language creates a haunting atmosphere that establishes Donovan as a notable emerging voice."

TIDES Award (Outstanding Canadian Documentary)

\$15,000 award presented by ROGERS

Jury: Selwyn Jacob, Lyana Patrick, Jeff Lee Petry

Winner: *Ceremony*, dir. Banchi Hanuse

Jury statement: "The mystery of the disappearance of the ooligan fish from Bella Coola is slowly revealed in this timely, passionate story of the Nuxalk Nations efforts to protect and preserve its lands and waters. Through beautiful cinematography and inventive storytelling, the film documents the strengths of community members consistently challenging the boundaries of imposed systems while drawing upon the resiliency and generosity of their ancestors. The film encourages us to reflect on how cultural resurgence can contribute to the collective good, and for this achievement, we present the TIDES Award to Ceremony."

Special Mention: *Still Night, Burning House*, dir. Carol Nguyen

Jury statement: "Gentle, intimate moments are crafted with care in this moving film about a family reuniting decades after the loss of an uncle to schizophrenia. Experimental in spirit, while remaining beautifully rooted in tradition, the film moves skillfully toward deep human connection and spiritual transcendence through grief relieved of guilt. Filmed and edited with a gentle cadence that always feels purposeful while remaining poetic, every frame builds a bridge toward healing and connection with those loved ones who are no longer here. The jury awards a special mention to *Still Night, Burning House*."

ARBUTUS Award (Outstanding BC Film)

\$10,000 award presented by Creative BC

\$15,000 in post-production services credit provided by Company 3

Jury: Josephine Anderson, Brenda Lieberman, David Taylor

Winner: *How We Stand*, dir. Marie Clements

Jury statement: "The opportunity to experience this incredible offering of British Columbian talent was such a joy and a privilege—thank you to all of you for telling your stories and sharing them with the world. Each film demonstrated its rightful place as part of the 45th edition of VIFF, and deciding on a winner for this award was a grueling effort, to say the least. The film the jury ultimately chose tells an awful story but told beautifully—sharing

a difficult and traumatic history by bringing it into vivid, real, human focus. Its surrealist style, deft storytelling, heart, and powerful heroines at once entertain, educate and demand self-reflection—as individuals, and as a society. But through this reflection, however, the film chooses not to dwell on the trauma it shares but instead uses it as a touchstone to reclaim power, agency, and hope for those impacted—past, present, and future. It gives the jury tremendous honour and pride to present the ARBUTUS Award, to the poignant, harrowing, and magical film that is Marie Clement's *How We Stand*."

Special Mention: *Send the Rain*, dirs. Hayley Gray, Kaayla Whachell

Jury statement: "The jury was taken by this beautifully shot and thoughtfully crafted film, brought to life through compelling performances, evocative locations, and a range of subtle editing choices that enrich the story and deepen its emotional impact. We were particularly struck by the film's ability to connect a family's intimate story to Japan's wartime past, while revealing how that history continues to resonate across generations and distance. For its emotional depth, memorable performances, and assured cinematic storytelling, we are pleased to award VIFF's ARBUTUS Award Special Mention to *Send the Rain*."

INTERNATIONAL FILM AWARD WINNERS

VANGUARD Award (Outstanding International First or Second Narrative Feature)

\$5,000 award presented by Lochmaddy Foundation

Jury: Joaquin Cardoner, Caroline Monnet, Sarah Shamash

Winner: *Hear the Yellow*, dir. Banu Sivaci

Jury statement: "The jury recognizes a film of remarkable depth, formal accomplishment, and emotional precision. Through bold character work and intelligent use of metaphor, it transports us into a vividly specific landscape while creating a powerful dialogue between rural and urban, and a family separated by time. The film asks us to reconsider what we understand as truth, and how it shifts through perspective, memory, and circumstance. We were struck by the clarity and confidence of the filmmaker's vision, and by their trust in ambiguity, contradiction, and discovery. For its originality, singular cinematic language, and its ability to linger in the imagination long after the screening, we are honoured to present this award to *Hear the Yellow*."

Special Mention: *That Shadow Fading*, dir. Samuel Urbina

Jury statement: "The jury wishes to give a special mention to a filmmaker who is developing a unique cinematic voice as demonstrated in the film's bold filmic language. Through character development, image, rhythm, and atmosphere, the film creates an intimate and elusive world, trusting the audience to enter it rather than explain it. Every formal choice is deliberate, precise, and deeply felt, giving the film a quiet yet lasting power. For its formal rigor, boldness, and singular cinematic vision, we are honoured to present this special mention to *That Shadow Fading*."

SHORT FORUM Award

\$5,000 award presented by Nikon

Jury: Tanvi Bhatia, Ariel Bond, Thanh Lieu

Winner: *Pre-Parenting*, dir. Yu Yu

Jury statement: "The winner of the SHORT FORUM Award is a film that quietly swam upstream in our deliberations. We weren't always consciously thinking about it, but somehow it kept making its way back into our conversations. This film stayed with us for its emotional precision, its imagination and its high level of craft. A haunting yet powerful film about motherhood, grief, memory and technology, the filmmaker beautifully holds all of these tensions within such an intimate space. And when it came to making our decision, there was no hesitation. It was a unanimous vote. The award goes to *Pre-Parenting*, an animated film directed by Yu Yu from Taiwan."

Special Mention: *Going Home*, dir. Kamal Aljafari

Jury statement: "This film explores what it means to be part of a diaspora and watch, on a television screen, as your homeland and loved ones undergo the worst things imaginable, the dichotomy of feeling both so close and so far away. Using sound and editing to force the viewer to engage with both what is and isn't being shown, this

film is a true mastery of form, one which remains faithful to its thesis statement: the picture says what the story cannot. We would like to award this year's Special Mention to Kamal Aljafari's *Going Home*."

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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 xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

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