

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Sundar Prize Film Festival Announces 2026 Award Finalists Across Film, Performance, and Emerging Talent Categories

Surrey, BC – April 1, 2026 – The Sundar Prize Film Festival is proud to announce the finalists for its 2026 awards, celebrating outstanding achievements in socially conscious filmmaking, animation, documentary, performance, and emerging talent from British Columbia and beyond. Finalists have been selected across a wide range of categories that reflect the festival's ongoing commitment to courageous storytelling, artistic excellence, and voices too often pushed to the margins.

Winners will be announced during the Awards Ceremony on Sunday, April 26, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. at Landmark Cinemas Guildford as part of the festival's four-day run from April 23 to 26, 2026, presented across North Delta Centre for the Arts and Landmark Cinemas Guildford in Surrey.

AWARD CATEGORIES AND CASH PRIZES

This year's finalists span the following award categories and the awards program includes \$18,750 CAD in cash prizes:

- Best Feature Film (Narrative Live Action) – \$2000
- Best Short Film (Narrative Live Action) – \$1000
- Best Feature Documentary – \$2000
- Best Short Documentary – \$1000
- Best Short Animation – \$1000
- Best Environmental Film – \$1000
- Best Spiritual, Health, and Wellness Film – \$1000
- Best 2SLGBTQ+ Film- \$2000
- Best Youth Film (19 and under) – \$500
- Best Student Film – \$500
- Best British Columbia Feature Film – \$2000
- Best British Columbia Short Film – \$1000
- BC Student Film Showcase – \$1000, \$750, and \$500
- KDocsFF Best Emerging Filmmaker Residency Award – \$1000
- The Performer's Mastery Award for Outstanding BC Performance – \$500

Together, these categories spotlight the depth, range, and urgency of contemporary filmmaking while reinforcing the Sundar Prize’s mission to champion stories rooted in social justice, identity, resilience, healing, and change.

QUOTE

“The announcement of our finalists is one of the most exciting moments of the festival because it honours filmmakers and artists whose work is not only creatively exceptional, but also deeply meaningful,” said Amar Sangha, Co-Founder of the Sundar Prize Film Festival and Founder of Sher Pride, the registered charity behind the festival. “At a time when so many communities are facing division, displacement, discrimination, and uncertainty, these films remind us of the power of storytelling to build empathy, spark dialogue, and inspire action. We are proud to uplift both local and international voices, and to help position Surrey, Delta, and the surrounding region as a growing home for bold, socially engaged cinema.”

INDUSTRY SUPPORT AND IN-KIND PRIZES

In addition to the cash prizes, finalists and winners are competing for and receiving access to a substantial package of industry support and in-kind prizes valued at more than \$60,000 CAD overall, including:

- A distribution offer from Moving Images Distribution for the winner of the major BC categories
- A free CONNECT online course from Vancouver Film School for all Sundar Prize winners
- A \$10,000 CAD gift certificate from Keslow Camera for a local BC winning filmmaker
- A \$3,000 CAD equipment rental gift certificate from Sparky’s Film Rentals for a local BC winning filmmaker
- 20 bags of eco-friendly coffee from Forest Bean for local winning filmmakers
- Free tuition valued at \$750 toward a three-day workshop with ACTg Vancouver’s The Performer’s Mastery Workshops for a winning BC actor
- 25 complimentary Museum of Vancouver tickets for local winners and finalists
- A \$400 gear credit from Rainscope Filmworks for the winner of Best BC Short
- And a TELUS STORYHIVE and TELUS originals swag bag for a local BC filmmaker.

The KDocsFF Filmmaker Residency Prize also includes a four-month residency, dedicated workspace, access to film and editing equipment, consultation with film studies faculty, and test screenings with KPU students.

OFFICIAL SUNDAR PRIZE TROPHY

In addition to cash and in-kind prizes, Sundar Prize winners receive the festival’s distinctive official trophy, designed by Co-Founder Vinay Giridhar of Surrey and crafted by Watson Design

in Squamish, British Columbia. Custom made from eco-friendly, sustainable bamboo, the trophy reflects the festival's commitment to artistic excellence, environmental responsibility, and celebrating local British Columbia craftsmanship. More than an award, it is a lasting symbol of the festival's values and its dedication to honouring impactful filmmaking.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FINALISTS IN EACH CATEGORY

The Sundar Prize Film Festival is proud to announce the finalists for the 2026 festival awards, recognizing an inspiring group of films and artists whose work reflects the festival's commitment to bold storytelling, social impact, and underrepresented voices. This year's nominees span feature films, documentaries, shorts, animation, environmental cinema, 2SLGBTQ+ stories, student work, BC talent, and special juried prizes, highlighting the breadth and strength of this year's official selection.

Leading the pack is "The Fire in Our Hearts", directed by Josias Tschanz, with three nominations in Best Feature Documentary, Best Environmental Film, and Best BC Feature Film. Several films also earned two nominations each, including "A Cree Approach" by Tristin Greyeyes, "Et Maintenant? (What Now?)" by Jocelyn Forgues, "One Day This Kid" by Alexander Farah, "Embers" by Trixie Pacis, and "Light Through the Blindfold" by Alireza Kazemipour. The finalist lineup also reflects strong crossover recognition for BC creators and performers, with artists such as Cory Thibert, Andrew Woo, Neeta John, and Khánh Nguyễn receiving recognition across multiple award streams. Together, these nominations underscore the festival's growing reputation as a platform that champions exceptional filmmaking from British Columbia, across Canada, and around the world.

QUOTE

"Deciding the winners this year out of all the increasing numbers of quality films that got submitted was not an easy task. Thank you to the finalist jury including former educator and social justice advisor Susan Ruzic, KPU Professor Emeritus Greg Chan, and film writer and film critic Carolyn Mauricette for their expertise and opinions in helping decide the nominees and winners of this year's festival," states Executive Director and Senior Programmer, Sidartha Murjani

STATISTICS

Selected from **823 submissions**, only **62 films** were chosen for this year's festival — representing a **7.6% acceptance rate**. The 2026 lineup reflects the festival's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and impactful storytelling:

- **50 Canadian films (79%)**
- **42 films from British Columbia (66%)**
- **33 films directed by women (52%)**

- **48 films from underrepresented communities (73%),** including IBPOC and 2SLGBTQ+ voices

2026 Award Nominees

Best Feature Film (Narrative Live Action)

Bayaan (India, 2025) — **Director:** Bikas Ranjan Mishra — **1:58:00** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *When a letter accusing a revered cult leader of abuse surfaces in a small Indian town, rookie detective Roohi is sent to investigate. Confronted by a wall of silence and blind devotion, she must navigate a closed community to uncover the truth no one dares to speak.* [Assets](#)

Blood Lines (Canada, Saskatchewan, 2025) — **Director:** Gail Maurice — **1:29:41**

Logline: An estranged Métis mother and daughter struggle to overcome their differences but their world comes crashing down when an alluring woman enters their lives. [Assets](#)

World Premiered at TIFF, Blood Lines have had an impressive festival run including Edmonton International Film Festival, Cinefest and VIFF among many others

Et Maintenant? (What Now?) (Canada, 2025) — **Director:** Jocelyn Forgues — **1:36:00** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *When Vincent, a folk artist in his thirties, is diagnosed with tongue cancer, he initially laughs it off, convinced he can quickly move on with his life. Grueling treatments soon erode his independence, forcing him to rely on Renée, a chatty volunteer driver, and Mike, a blunt yet endearing home care nurse. As doubt replaces denial, an unexpected friendship forms, helping Vincent discover a deeper sense of meaning and connection.*

Lorsqu'on annonce à Vincent, un artiste folk dans la trentaine, qu'il est atteint d'un cancer de la langue, il éclate de rire, persuadé qu'il saura rapidement tourner la page. Les traitements éprouvants réduisent toutefois son autonomie et l'obligent à accepter l'aide de Renée, une chauffeuse bénévole volubile, et de Mike, un infirmier à domicile aussi maladroit qu'attachant. Alors que le doute s'installe, une amitié inattendue naît au sein de ce trio et permet à Vincent de redonner un sens plus profond à sa vie.. [Assets](#)

Best Short Film (Narrative Live Action)

One Day This Kid (Canada, 2024) — **Director:** Alexander Farah — **17:25** — **Delta Premiere**

Logline: *Under the weight of his father's expectations, Hamed confronts fear, desire, and shame in search of a self unknown.* [Assets](#)

Vital (Canada/Iran, 2025) — **Director:** Amir Zargara — **15:00** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *A mother in Iran, considers selling her organs to save her daughter, while in the United States, a doctor faces ethical dilemmas to save his daughter, revealing the complexities of organ trade.* [Assets](#)

Ambush (Canada/Jordan, 2025) — **Director:** Yassmina Karajah — **21:00** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *A pop-up techno club ambushes the streets of downtown Amman flooding a conservative neighborhood with heavy bass and unfamiliar faces. Jana arrives, newly sober, wrestling with intimacy. While across the street, Hasan watches from his family rooftop, anticipating a long-overdue encounter.* [Assets](#)

Best Feature Documentary

Saints And Warriors (Canada, BC, 2024) — **Director:** Patrick Shannon — **1:37:00** — **Delta Premiere**

Logline: *Throughout the Haida basketball season, leaders of the Skidegate Saints fight to defend their All Native Basketball Championship title—while also battling for their land and waters against the government that stole it through the Indian Act.* [Assets](#)

A Cree Approach (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Tristin Greyeyes — **1:10:00** — **Delta**

Logline: *Tristin wants to understand why Cree was not her first language, unraveling the story of her late grandmother, Freda Ahenakew. A single mother of 12 and a high school dropout, Freda witnessed a generational divide in her family—half of her children learned Cree as their first language, while the rest grew up without it. Despite these challenges, Freda became a renowned Indigenous scholar, linguist, and advocate for the Cree language.* [Assets](#)

The Fire in Our Heart (Canada, BC, 2026) — **Director:** Josias Tschanz — **1:27:20** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *As wildfires threaten a remote region of British Columbia, the Cheslatta Carrier Nation and Southside residents choose to stay and defend their land, transforming the crisis into a powerful blueprint for sovereignty, resilience, and collective survival.* [Assets](#)

Best Short Documentary

Light Through the Blindfold (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Alireza Kazemipour — **25:00** — **BC Premiere.**

Logline: *Maryam Salehizadeh, a visually-impaired Paralympian, facing a life-changing surgery that may grant her the gift of sight.* [Assets](#)

Burcu's Angels (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Özgün Gündüz — **19:56** — **Surrey Premiere**

Logline: *For over 30 years, Burcu's Angels was more than a store—it was a radical space of care. As the shop nears closure, this documentary blends archival fragments, poetic reflection, and community memory to honour a Turkish queer elder's defiant presence—and the disappearing spaces that held generations of queer lives.* [Assets](#)

Embers (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Trixie Pacis — **24:16** — **Delta Premiere**

Logline: *After losing everything in a wildfire, aerial artist Sasha Galitzki performs amidst burnt forests and receding glaciers, channeling her grief into a visually arresting journey of environmental advocacy.* [Assets](#)

Best Short Animation

Sing to the Wind (Canada, Ontario, 2025) — **Director:** Yaffa Aboudib Hussein — **11:17** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *Orphaned and displaced from their home in Gaza City, two brothers must find their way to a "safe zone" to survive. Forced to grow up much too fast, the boys confront pain and loss on their tragic path along the shoreline. "Sing to the Wind" is a short, 2D animated film that tells the story of perseverance through the eyes of a child, and the resilience of a people in the face.* [Assets](#)

Pearl (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Alice Shin — **13:48** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *After losing his "pearl", a grieving jeweller is given a final chance to make peace with his mortal desires through a chance encounter with a young lady.*

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삶의 고통과 욕망을 버려야 편안해진다고 이야기한다. [Assets](#)

Grain (Canada, Montreal, 2025) — **Director:** Ilana Zackon — **6:45** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *A young woman, trapped in the throes of a binge eating disorder, becomes a ravenous creature threatening to devour the town.* [Assets](#)

Best Environmental Film

The Fire in Our Heart (Canada, BC, 2026) — **Director:** Josias Tschanz — **1:27:20** — **BC Premiere**

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Best 2SLGBTQ+ Film

IF (India, 2025) — **Director:** Tathagata Ghosh — **25:41** — **Surrey Premiere**

Logline: *An arranged marriage tears a lesbian couple apart, but with a mother's love, perhaps another future is possible.* [Assets](#)

One Day This Kid (Canada, 2024) — **Director:** Alexander Farah — **17:25** — **Delta Premiere**

Logline: *Under the weight of his father's expectations, Hamed confronts fear, desire, and shame in search of a self unknown.* [Assets](#)

Ramen Boys (Canada, BC, 2024) — **Director:** Jason Sakaki — **13:20** — **Surrey Premiere**

Logline: *Kevin finally takes a chance to connect with James, the lifeguard he's admired from afar, leading to an extremely expected first kiss and a summer of love and laughter.* [Assets](#)

Best Student Film

Praying For Love (United States, 2025) — **Director:** Sofia Tonin — **6:45**

Logline: *Linda, a female praying mantis, wants to find the one for her but runs into a snag when her cannibalistic tendencies keep prematurely ending her relationships. After one too many failed dates she's about to give up when she realizes maybe she had been looking for love in the wrong place.* [Assets](#)

Knitty Gritty (United States, 2025) **Director:** Hannah Mangione — **3:38** — **Canadian Premiere**

Logline: *A girl finds comfort from an unlikely source when she loses her late Grandmother's knitting needles on the subway.* [Assets](#)

A Ticket Home (Canada, 2025) — **Director:** Magill Moyes — **11:43** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *Appalled by the abuse and neglect suffered by hundreds of discarded Spanish hunting dogs, Tania Schmitt launched an initiative to unite them with loving Canadian families.* [Assets](#)

Best Youth Film (19 and under)

Fallen (United States, 2025) — **Director:** Angela Ruohan Yan — **4:09** — **World Premiere**

Logline: *Mia writes a confession letter to Robyn, recalling their most touching moments together.* [Assets](#)

Drafting (Malaysia, 2025) — **Director:** Janshin Soo — **2:25** — **Canadian Premiere**

Logline: *A student struggles to craft the perfect email to his teacher.* [Assets](#)

Best Friends Notice of Deportation (Canada, BC, 2025)— **Director:** Berenika Widera — **12:42** — **Delta Premiere**

Logline: *In modern-day America, two girls from different backgrounds learn the lesson to temper their pride and form a friendship. Little do they know that one of them is to be deported.* [Assets](#)

Best BC Feature Film

A Cree Approach (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Tristin Greyeyes — **1:10:00** — **Delta**

Logline: *Tristin wants to understand why Cree was not her first language, unraveling the story of her late grandmother, Freda Ahenakew. A single mother of 12 and a high school dropout, Freda witnessed a generational divide in her family—half of her children learned Cree as their first language, while the rest grew up without it. Despite these challenges, Freda became a renowned Indigenous scholar, linguist, and advocate for the Cree language.* [Assets](#)

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Mildlife (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Cory Thibert — **1:25:00** — **Surrey Premiere**

Logline: *A drummer's world is thrown off-beat when his girlfriend wants to leave their hometown of Victoria BC, just as he's struggling to care for his parents who both live with cerebral palsy.* [Assets](#)

Best BC Short Film

Red Light Rebel (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Hannah Yang — **15:56** — **World Premiere**

Logline: *A pastor stuck at a red light finds himself at a crossroads with God* [Assets](#)

Sanjeevani (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Neetha John — **15:00 - World Premiere**

Logline: *In a quiet Kerala home, in Southern India, a young woman grieving in silence crosses paths with a mysterious woman and through their brief connection, finds a small moment of strength she didn't know she needed to change her life.* [Assets](#).

NEPO BABY (Canada, BC, 2025) – Khánh Nguyễn – **15 minutes** – **Canadian Premiere**

Logline: *After a fight with her unsupportive dad, a Vietnamese actress wishes to trade anything for fame, and Buddha listens...* [Assets](#)

BC Student Film Showcase Award

Home Is A Feeling (Canada, BC, 2025) — **Director:** Ryah SM King — **7:04** — **World Premiere**

Logline: *A pink cat navigates a new city—but struggles when everything around her feels at odds with who she really is.* [Assets](#)

Pan de Muerto (Canada, BC, 2025) – Renata Calderon – **7 minutes** – **World Premiere**

Logline: *A young Mexican girl and her strict grandmother bond over the tradition of making Pan de Muerto for Mexico's Day of the Dead.* [Assets](#)

Through the Flow of Summer Snow (Canada, BC, 2024) — **Director:** Sophia Santos — **14:25**

Logline: *In breaking through the fever of adolescence, a young woman's ground becomes unsettled in the face of decaying relationships, her grandmother's cancer diagnosis & an encroaching spore invasion.* [Assets](#)

Best Spiritual, Health & Wellness Film

Et Maintenant? (What Now?) (Canada, 2025) — **Director:** Jocelyn Forgues — **1:36:00** — **BC Premiere**

Logline: *When Vincent, a folk artist in his thirties, is diagnosed with tongue cancer, he initially laughs it off, convinced he can quickly move on with his life. Grueling treatments soon erode his independence, forcing him to rely on Renée, a chatty volunteer driver, and Mike, a blunt yet endearing home care nurse. As doubt replaces denial, an unexpected friendship forms, helping Vincent discover a deeper sense of meaning and connection.*

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BC Performer's Mastery Award

Medha Gautham (*E For Effort never Excellence, Shitcute, It's Not You*)

Cory Thibert (*Mildlife*)

Andrew Woo (*Red Light Rebel*)

The announcement of this year's finalists marks an exciting milestone for the 2026 Sundar Prize Film Festival as audiences prepare to experience a powerful programme of films that challenge, inspire, and connect communities through cinema. From socially conscious documentaries to daring narrative work, student voices, and outstanding BC talent, this year's nominees reflect the heart of a festival that continues to celebrate film as a tool for empathy, dialogue, and change.

About the Festival

The Sundar Prize Film Festival is an international film festival dedicated to socially conscious storytelling and diverse voices. The festival brings together filmmakers, audiences, and industry leaders for screenings, panels, and community engagement, positioning Surrey and the surrounding region as a growing hub for film and cultural dialogue. The festival is founded by local filmmakers Amar Sangha of North Delta and Vinay Giridhar of Surrey.

FULL FESTIVAL LINEUP, SCREENING SCHEDULE, AND TICKETS

The full festival lineup and screening schedule can be found here - [Link](#)

Summary of Schedule

<https://sundarprize.com/2026-programme-summary/>

Thursday, April 23, 2026 – North Delta Centre for the Arts (11425 84 Ave, Delta, BC V4C 2L9), Opening Night, Film Screenings, and Refreshments, 5 pm to 11 pm (Opening Remarks start at 6:00 pm).

Friday, April 24, 2026 – North Delta Centre for the Arts (11425 84 Ave, Delta, BC V4C 2L9), Film Screenings, 12 pm to midnight.

Saturday, April 25, 2026 – Landmark Cinemas Guildford, Surrey (15051 101 Ave, Surrey, BC V3R 7Z1), Film Screenings, 10 am to 9:30 pm.

Sunday, April 26, 2026 – Landmark Cinemas Guildford, Surrey (15051 101 Ave, Surrey, BC V3R 7Z1), Closing Night, Film Screenings, and Award Ceremony, 1 pm to 9:30 pm (Awards Ceremony starts at 7:30 pm).

Festival and Programming Inquiries

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Sponsorship and Marketing Inquiries

Amar Sangha

Co-Founder of the Sundar Prize Film Festival and Founder of Sher Pride
info@sherpride.ca

OFFICIAL WEBSITES

www.sundarprize.com
www.sherpride.ca

OFFICIAL SPONSORS

100 Gay Men For A Cause
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Knowledge Network
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Landmark Cinemas Surrey, Guildford
Museum of Vancouver
Pacific Backlot
Rainscope Filmworks
Sparky's Film Rentals
Sunbelt Rentals Film and TV
TELUS STORYHIVE and TELUS originals
Unifor – Social Justice Fund
Vancouver Film School
Vancouver Film Studios

FILM FESTIVAL PARTNERS

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MENA Film Festival
Vancouver Asian Film Festival
Vancouver International Film Festival
Vancouver Latin American Film Festival
Vancouver Queer Film Festival

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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Love Intersections
Moving Images Distribution
Mustang Justice
Punjabi Market Collective
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The Celluloid Social Club
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Stir

Thank you for your support!

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to Sher Vancouver LGBTQ Friends Society (Sher Pride), the registered charity behind the Sundar Prize Film Festival. For nearly 20 years, Sher Pride has created safe, life-affirming spaces, amplified marginalized voices, and used the power of film and community to drive social change. Your support helps sustain this vital work and ensures it continues for generations to come.

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/sher-vancouver-lgbtq-friends-society/>

The Sundar Prize Film Festival takes place on the unceded traditional homelands of the Semiahmoo, Musqueam, Katzie, Kwikwetlem, Kwantlen, Qayqayt and Tsawwassen people.