



20th
Anniversary

GENDER
EQUITY IN
MEDIA
FILM
FESTIVAL

GEM FEST

VIFF
CENTRE

MARCH
5 — 9
2025

gemfest.org

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

GEMS gratefully acknowledges that we live, work, and benefit from operating on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) peoples. These nations were the original stewards of these territories and have been caring for these lands and waters since time immemorial. We would also like to acknowledge the Stó:lō Nation, who use the waterways around these areas.

GEMS is dedicated to supporting and championing Indigenous voices and stories. We strive to ensure Indigenous representation on our board, in our programs and festival, on our selection committees, juries, and among selected participants and filmmakers. Last year, as an increased effort, we inaugurated the role of Indigenous Programming Coordinator at GEMFest and we are grateful to have expanded this role for GEMFest 2025.

We truly value equitable representation, and we pride ourselves on being an organization that does not shy away from growth and change as we continue to re-evaluate our position as advocates and champions for equity. As you partake in the offerings at GEMFest, we hope you will take the time to reflect on your position on these lands, and what it means to be occupying space here. We also encourage you to take in our Indigenous film offerings, as a means of supporting Indigenous filmmakers, and the communities they represent. Please also encourage your Indigenous community members to reach out to us for free tickets to any of our events and films.

WELCOME TO GEMFEST 2025!

Dear GEMFest guests,

A special welcome to you on the 20th anniversary of this festival!

This time 20 years ago a group of very dedicated women and their supporters put on the very first Vancouver International Women in Film Festival, which was re-named in 2023 to Gender Equity in Media Festival, or GEMFest.

We pride ourselves on cultivating 20 years of stories, of connections, of friendship and allyship, of art and creativity, and of course, of films! We love to imagine how many collaborations have begun from the conversations had after a screening at our festival, or between panels.

With two decades of festivals also comes a responsibility to keep changing and innovating - as evidenced by our recent name change and rebrand - we are not satisfied with rinse and repeat. We keep challenging ourselves and we want to challenge our community as well, by bringing you different and ever-changing opportunities to engage with our programming. We hope you will find this year's program brings back your favourite offerings and a healthy dose of fresh elements.

Gender equity, and human equity in a broader sense, are under threat on a global scale. We are not looking at a clear road ahead - and we need allies, supporters and community, now more than ever. By attending our festival, you are supporting our organization and our mission. You can continue to do so by engaging with our programming, becoming a member, and donating to us or sponsoring us if you or your company are in a position to do so. We are dedicated to continuing to foster a safe space for our community with your support.

We're here for you, through thick and thin, at the festival and beyond.

Sincerely,
The GEMS Staff and Board



THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND SPONSORS

Dear GEMFest Funders and Sponsors,

On behalf of the Gender Equity in Media Festival (GEMFest) organizing committee, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your generous sponsorship of our 20th annual international film festival. Your support plays a pivotal role in advancing our mission to champion gender equity and diversity in media.

Your contribution has enabled us to amplify the voices of underrepresented filmmakers, challenge societal norms, and celebrate the richness of diversity in storytelling. Together, we are creating a platform where creativity knows no bounds and all voices are heard and valued.

Thanks to you, GEMFest remains accessible to all, fostering meaningful dialogue and inspiring change within the industry and beyond. This year, we are able to continue to showcase an incredible array of talent from both established and emerging women and gender-diverse filmmakers worldwide.

Once again, thank you for your commitment and unwavering support to advancing gender equity in media. Your generosity has made so much possible for so many people. We look forward to collaborating again in the future as we move towards a more diverse and equitable film industry.

With gratitude,
The GEMS Team

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
4	WELCOME TO GEMFEST 2025
5	THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS
8	GEMFEST PROGRAMMERS
10	SCHEDULE
12	OPENING FEATURE + RECEPTION
13	SPECIAL PRESENTATION
14	FEATURE FILMS
17	CLOSING FEATURE
18	SHORT FILMS
24	WORKSHOPS, EVENTS, AND PANELS
27	AWARDS CEREMONY
29	FUNDERS & SPONSORS
30	FESTIVAL TEAM
31	SPECIAL THANKS

MEET GEMFEST'S PROGRAMMERS



LAURA ARBOLEDA
Features Programmer

Laura Arboleda is a queer Colombian-Mestizo filmmaker and programmer. She holds a BFA in Film Production from Simon Fraser University and is an alum of Vancouver International Film Festival's Mentorship Program. Her previous short films have screened in festivals and venues across North America, Asia, and Europe. She continues to expand her film practice, making short documentaries and process-based experimental films.

Her work explores themes of shared memories and spaces. Laura is the Senior Programmer with Vancouver Short Film Festival and serves on the Board of Directors for GEMS Vancouver.

SADIE BARKER
Lead Programmer

Sadie Barker is a researcher in the field of cultural and media studies, the co-editor of *Refractions: A Journal of Postcolonial Cultural Criticism*, and an analyst with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. Over the past few years, alongside working with GEMS, she has worked on various arts and community-oriented projects in Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, and Berlin; recently, she collaborated on the curation of the upcoming exhibition, *Parallax: Reimagining the Canadian-U.S. Border* at the Reach Gallery. She is thrilled and honoured to participate, again this year, in the programming of GEMFest.



DEBBIE COURCHENE
Indigenous Programmer

Debbie Courchene is an Anishinaabe ikwe programmer, producer & comedian and champion of Indigenous storytelling. Deeply moved by the powerful voice in this year's submissions, she is honoured to play a role in shaping this year's festival lineup. Her experience in film and production fuels her commitment to curation that uplifts underrepresented perspectives, knowing that real change happens the people in the room are pulling for those stories. Whether behind the scenes or in the audience, Debbie is always on the lookout for bold stories that challenge, inspire and leave a lasting impact.

FALY MEVAMANA
Shorts Programmer

Faly is an award winning actor and writer who has worked in seven provinces across Canada. She has extensive experience both in front of and behind the camera, from her leading role in the award winning film *Lakeview*, to being the Director's Assistant on *The Queen of My Dreams*, which premiered at TIFF in September 2023. She was a writing shadow on *This hour has 22 Minutes*, and premiered her first play as part of the *Ruby Slippers Advance Theatre Festival* in January. Faly is a facilitator with *Out On Screen* and *REEL Canada*, and spends her spare time volunteering with organizations promoting BIPOC representation in the arts. Coming up, Faly is co-producing the short film *Revenge Body* by Polly Pierce. As a queer mixed-race creator, Faly is passionate about stories which showcase marginalized voices in a joyful way, and is thrilled to be back programming with GEMFest for her second year.



SCHEDULE

FEATURES
 PANELS/WORKSHOPS
 SHORTS
 EVENTS

Venue: VIFF Centre - Vancity Theatre and Studio Theatre, located at 1181 Seymour Street, Vancouver, BC.

FREE EVENT
 OVERLAPPING PROGRAMMING

Wednesday March 5			
Thursday March 6		1:00pm Studio Theatre	3:00pm Studio Theatre
		Shorts Block: Hatch (68 mins) & Filmmaker Q&A (30 min)	Shorts Block: Lift (60 mins) & Filmmaker Q&A (30 min)
Friday March 7	10:30am Studio Theatre	1:00pm Studio Theatre	3:00pm Studio Theatre
	Special: Firecracker Department Screening (120 min)	Shorts Block: Rise (55 mins) & Filmmaker Q&A (30 min)	Shorts Block: Leap (60 mins) & Filmmaker Q&A (30 min)
Saturday March 8	10:30am Vancity Theatre	12:30pm Studio Theatre	12:30pm Vancity Theatre
	Advocacy Panel (80 min)	Shorts Block: Flutter (60 mins) & Filmmaker Q&A (30 min)	Casting Director Panel (80 min)
Sunday March 9	10:30am Vancity Theatre	12:30pm Vancity Theatre	3:00pm Vancity Theatre
	Screenplay Panel (80 min)	Shorts Block: Soar (51 mins) & Filmmaker Q&A (30 min)	GEMS Showcase

Tickets will be available at the door 30 min prior to show times.

Passholders are encouraged to arrive 15-30 minutes prior to showtimes to secure seats. Once registered, passes are non-transferable.

For more information about the program and for ticket and pass purchases in advance please visit gemfest.org

		6:00pm Vancity Theatre	9:00pm Vancity Theatre
		Opening Feature: One Must Wash Eyes (88 mins) & Filmmaker Panel	Opening Reception
4:00pm Vancity Theatre	6:30pm Vancity Theatre	8:30pm Studio Theatre	
Special: Inay & Ask the Plantain (68 mins) & Filmmaker Panel (50 mins)	BC Director Panel (80 min)	Feature: NiimisSak (70 mins)	
4:00pm Vancity Theatre	5:00pm Studio Theatre	6:30pm Vancity Theatre	8:00pm Studio Theatre
Feature: Village Keeper (83 mins)	Expectations vs. Reality Presentation	Ethical Production Panel (80 min)	BIPOC Networking Event
2:30pm Studio Theatre	2:30pm Vancity Theatre		
Feature: Singing Back the Buffalo (98 mins)	Awards Ceremony		
5:30pm Vancity Theatre			
Feature: Seeds (84 mins)			

OPENING FEATURE

ONE MUST WASH EYES, BC PREMIERE

Sepideh Yadegar

Drama | Canada | 2023 | 88 minutes

English and Persian with English Subtitles

Wed. March 5, 6:00pm



Sahar, an Iranian international student in Vancouver, embodies the courage and resilience of a generation. Torn between her academic dreams and her yearning for justice, she secretly writes feminist blogs exposing Iran's oppressive laws. When Mahsa Amini's death sparks global outrage, Sahar joins a Women, Life, Freedom protest, igniting a chain of events that upends her life. Abandoned by her family and employer, Sahar loses her financial support and faces the looming threat of deportation. With Iran's government branding her a danger, returning home is no longer an option. As she navigates heartbreak, betrayal, and impossible odds, Sahar's journey mirrors the struggles of countless Iranian women fighting for their voices to be heard. *One Must Wash Eyes* is a powerful testament to the universal fight for freedom, justice, and identity; a reminder that even in the darkest moments, courage can inspire change and hope for a brighter future.

There will be a special panel immediately following the screening.

OPENING RECEPTION

Wed. March 5, 9:00pm

The opening reception of GEMFest will take place at the VIFF Centre, located at 1181 Seymour Street. Join us in extending a warm welcome to the filmmakers participating in GEMFest 2025, for an evening filled with celebration, refreshments, and connections.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION: VISIONS OF HEALING

ASK THE PLANTAIN

Jaime Leigh Gianopoulos

Documentary | Canada | 2023 | 13 minutes | English

INAY (MAMA)

Thea Loo

Documentary | Canada | 2024 | 56 mins | English and Kapampangan with English subtitles

Thurs. March 6, 4:00pm



Visions of Healing is a special presentation bringing together two local films - *INAY*, a feature documentary, and *ASK THE PLANTAIN*, a short documentary. Alternating between myth and reality, Jaime Leigh Gianopoulos unravels the intricate tapestry of grief and the liminal space that exists between not belonging to the lands one was born on nor the lands one's ancestors once came from. In a powerful exploration of her Greek Canadian heritage, she embarks on an introspective journey through the depths of her heart, akin to traversing a black hole, in search of the gifts hidden within her wounds. With the desire to help answer unresolved questions and heal lingering wounds, *INAY* investigates the flawed immigration pathways between the Philippines and Canada that kept so many Filipino children from their mothers. While on the surface the films are two very different explorations of seemingly different topics, we found ourselves drawn to the common threads of motherhood, disconnection, heritage, and healing in these unique pieces. Both filmmakers bring their lived experiences to the lens in what feels like an experiment - what if film was used as a healing medium? What if we could use it to make ourselves and our loved ones whole again? Join us for a screening of both films and a conversation with the filmmakers to find out.

FEATURES

NIIMISSAK: SISTERS IN FILM

HOMETOWN SCREENING

Jules A. Koostachin

Documentary | Canada | 2024 | 70 mins | English

Thurs. March 6, 8:30pm



NiiMisSak weaves shared truths with the raw personal experiences of being an IsKweWak storyteller in the film/documentary industry, specifically in British Columbia. Now is the time to share these important stories of resiliency and power because we are experiencing a revolutionary shift in Indigenous cinema in Canada. Iskewwak (Indigenous women) are taking control of their own STORIES, more so than in any other time in film herstory.

FEATURES

VILLAGE KEEPER

Karen Chapman

Drama | Canada | 2024 | 83 mins | English

Fri. March 7, 4:00pm



Village Keeper follows a family grappling with secrets that uphold domestic abuse and unresolved rage. After life's precarious scale tips her fortune back into poverty, Jean relocates her children with their grandmother to the community housing project where she grew up. Jean lives in constant fear of everything that could go wrong, going to great lengths to shelter her children, so when a spree of violence comes to her doorstep, she secretly cleans an abandoned crime scene, which unknowingly leads her on a path that exposes generational chains of silence, self-discovery and finally putting herself first.

FEATURES

SINGING BACK THE BUFFALO

Tasha Hubbard

Documentary | Canada | 2024 | 98 mins | English

Sat, March 8, 2:30pm



In a time of immense environmental degradation and global uncertainty, the buffalo can lead us to a better tomorrow. After a dark recent history, the buffalo herds of North America are awaiting their return, aided by dedicated Indigenous activists, leaders and communities, including award-winning Cree filmmaker Tasha Hubbard (nīpawistamāsowin: We Will Stand Up). Together with Blackfoot Elder Leroy Little Bear, Hubbard weaves an intimate story of humanity's connections to buffalo and eloquently reveals how their return to the Great Plains can indeed usher in a new era of sustainability and balance. On her journey, Hubbard explores the challenges faced by buffalo allies and shares the positive steps already taken towards the ultimate - but uncertain - goal of buffalo rematriation. Richly visualised and deeply uplifting, Singing Back the Buffalo is an epic reimagining of North America through the lens of buffalo consciousness and a potent dream of what is within our grasp.

CLOSING FEATURE

SEEDS

Kaniehtiio Horn

Thriller | Canada | 2024 | 84 minutes | English & Kanien'kéha

Sun. March 9, 5:30pm



Ziggy receives her first internet influencer job offer to promote the seed and fertilizer company Nature's Oath. When her cousin calls her back to the reservation, she is compelled to fight to preserve the history of her people and discovers her strength in the process.

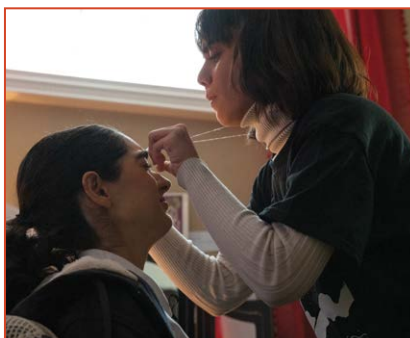
SHORTS — HATCH THUR. MARCH 6, 1:00PM



LOVIN' HER day

Canada/USA | 2024 | 15 mins | English

The breadth of a trans woman's life is shown as she navigates the complexities of a fading memory. Blending the past and present, glimpses of her struggles with love and her evolving gender identity showcase a heartfelt portrait of humanity.



UNIBROW Nedda Sarshar

Canada | 2023 | 14 mins | English and Persian with English Subtitles

Unibrow follows Leyla, a second-generation Irani-Canadian girl striving for the perfect brows, as she befriends a new student from Iran, Sahar, who introduces her to the cultural significance of eyebrows.



SAIGON KISS Canadian Premiere Hong Anh Nguyễn

Vietnam | 2024 | 22 mins | Vietnamese

Mơ roams through the rush hour traffic to avoid an unwanted phone call. When she meets Vicky by the side of the street with her broken motorbike, a visceral chance encounter unfolds between the two young queer women on the loud streets of Saigon.



LEA TUPU'ANGA (MOTHER TONGUE) Vea Mafile'o

New Zealand | 2024 | 16:42 | Tongan & English

Katherine, a young speech therapist of Tongan and European heritage has lied about her Tongan language skills to work with Siaoosi — an elderly patient with aphasia who has lost his ability to speak English. Out of her depth, Katherine must find a way to communicate or risk her patient's life.

SHORTS — LIFT THURS. MARCH 6, 3:00PM



HENDERSON, Canadian Premiere Lori Watt

Canada | 2024 | 11 mins | English

Ally wakes up in an unfamiliar hotel room in Henderson before her friend's Vegas wedding. Her clothes, purse, boots, and a condom are on the floor. Panicked, she dresses and heads to a gas station for help, but with a dead phone and no money for a cab, she relies on strangers to get back to the Strip. She meets Nicholas, a young divorced Spanish father delivering 'eviction notices'. Will Ally make it back in time to greet the bride?



NOOJ GOJI/ ANYWHERE Evelyn Pakinewatik

Canada | 2024 | 20 mins | English

The global pandemic rages on as authorities loosen regulations, leaving two immunocompromised Anishinaabe lovers vulnerable to a world that wants to abandon them. George lives with his Gokmis on a northern reserve, while his partner Eileen lives in Toronto. The universal stressors of long-distance relationships are exacerbated by eugenics, colonial violence, and misogyny. After an intense day, George and Eileen find themselves at a crossroads, prompting George to find answers in their traditional Anishinaabe medicine ways.



LUMEN, BC Premiere Stéphanie Bélanger

Canada | 2024 | 13:21 mins | French with English Subtitles

It has been raining heavily for months and the sixth wave is depressing humanity. In this prevailing darkness, Claude, 70 years old, compulsively buys lamps online to break his solitude and bring light into his life, at any cost.



IS GAY MARRIAGE NEXT? Emily Clark

USA | 2024 | 16 mins | English

Responding to a Supreme Court case in 2003, a groundbreaking cover of Newsweek featured a lesbian couple and asked: Is gay marriage next? A young, closeted woman saw the magazine and found the courage to come out. Two decades later, she searches for the couple who gave her hope.

SHORTS — RISE FRI. MARCH 7, 1:00PM



piḱiwi
Olivia Marie Golosky
Canada | 2024 | 4:10 mins | English

piḱiwi follows a Two-Spirit Métis person on a deeply personal journey of healing. Set in the fractured spaces of trauma and resilience, the film explores the nuanced process of self-discovery and reclaiming one's identity in the aftermath of violence.



VIVIE Canadian Premiere
Hweiling Ow
New Zealand | 2024 | 9:20 English

Sexually frustrated Amy has a love-hate relationship with her vagina, Vivie. Every time she tries to have sex with a new lover Vivie absolutely refuses to open up. When Amy's "the one who got away" arrives back in town, Amy wonders if he is the missing key to cracking Vivie.



UNDER THE KASAYA
Jennifer Fan Jiang
Canada | 2024 | 15:17 mins | Chinese with English Subtitles

After an unexpected interaction with her Buddhist mentor, 14-year-old Jean faces a

terrifying dilemma: to stay silent, or to risk it all by confessing the ugly truth to her deeply devout Buddhist mother.



AUTOPHAGY Canadian Premiere
Edie Lawrence
UK | 2024 | 11:04 mins | English

A waterborne disease ravages a town, the affliction slowly morphing you into an octopus. With the societal hatred towards those suffering building, a couple have the limited choice: afford the medication to carry on living, or drink the water and suffer being shunned.



THROUGH MY EYES: AN ARTIST'S RE-CREATION
Kaileigh Coles
Canada | 2024 | 15:42 mins | English

Vancouver artist, Maureen Coles, shares her journey as an artist with low vision and takes us along as she prepares for an accessible exhibition of new paintings, adapting her artistic voice to her changing vision.

SHORTS — LEAP FRI. MARCH 7, 3:00PM



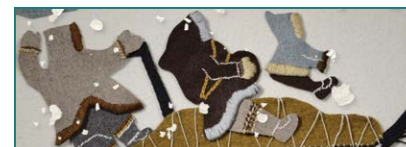
TOMORROW
Canadian Premiere
Ingrid Pérez López
Colombia | 2023 | 14:29 mins | Spanish with English Subtitles

On the eve of her First Communion, Rocío is taken by her father to pick up the dress that she will wear at the ceremony, but, unexpectedly, she will experience the pain of heartbreak. For her, the ceremony and life must go on.



DETOURS AHEAD
Esther Cheung
Canada | 2024 | 7:45 mins

A young woman embarks on a road trip making her way inland from the coast. As she travels, the landscape transforms from idyllic and blissful to cold and unwelcoming. This piece is a meditation on solitude, and articulates a shifting relationship with place.



FEBRUARY SIXTEENTH NINETEEN FORTY SEVEN
Jessica Miinguaaqti
Canada | 2023 | 4 mins | English

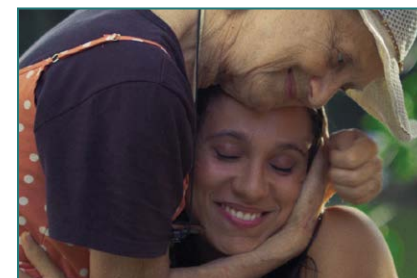
Inuk Elder Levinia Brown shares the oral history

of how she was born on February 16, 1947 while her family was travelling by dogsled across the open tundra from Tavani to Dawson Inlet. Her story is illustrated by cutout stop motion animation of hand sewn Inuit wall hanging designs in the style of her own artwork.



STRANGERS, Western Canadian Premiere
Leah Doz
Canada | 2024 | 13:42 mins | English

After missing their bus on a cold winter night, a young girl confronts the limits of her mother's love.



ALL THAT MATTERS
Canadian Premiere
Coraci Bartman Ruiz
Brazil | 2024 | 20 mins | Portuguese with English Subtitles

All That Matters tells the story of three Brazilian families of trans people and their processes of understanding and celebration of their identities. These mums, dads and grandparents take a step forward and decide to fight for a society that respects and values diversity. Directed by a filmmaker who is herself the mother of a young trans person, the film connects generations by showing stories of love, transformation and learning.

SHORTS — FLUTTER SAT. MARCH 8, 12:30PM



**MAWTINI
(MY HOMETLAND) Western
Canadian Premiere**
Fateema Al-Hamaydeh Miller
Canada | 2023 | 18:46 mins
English and Arabic with English Subtitles

Nawal, a young Palestinian woman grieving the death of her grandmother and clinging to the task of keeping a fig sapling alive as her last thread of connection to Palestine, builds an unlikely friendship with Tanya, an older Indigenous woman growing a guerrilla garden on the lawn of their apartment building. As Nawal helps Tanya with her garden, and her battle against middle management, the two women find home in their connection with each other on the margins.



KARATEKA
Florence Faquet
France | 2024 | 16:40 mins
French with English Subtitles

Gabrielle and Alix are about to compete in the finals of the regional karate championship. But when Gabrielle discovers that she is having her period when she wasn't expecting it, things get complicated.



LITTLE MISS SLEEPY
Jenny Lee-Gilmore
Canada | 2024 | 23 mins
English

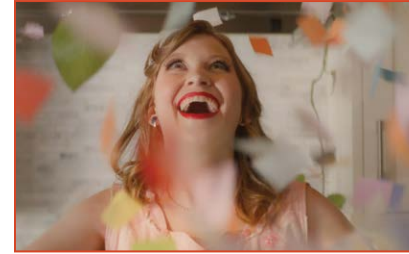
A filmmaker explores her journey of being diagnosed with Narcolepsy at age 21 and documents her participation in a scientific research study to help raise awareness for the condition that currently has no known cure.



PASSAGEWAYS (VOIES DE PASSAGE)
Western Canadian Premiere
*Geneviève Tremblay and
Milla Cummings*
Canada | 2024 | 4:41 mins
French with English Subtitles

Passageways is a stop-motion documentary that takes a positive look at the emotional and physical transformations women experience during menopause. In a poetic and sensitive visual framework, this film offers an intimate portrait of resilience, growth and self-discovery.

SHORTS — SOAR SUN. MARCH 9, 12:30PM



THE WISH BAKER World Premiere
Carolyn Irwin
Canada | 2024 | 6:30 mins
English

Birthdays are special, like your very own personal Christmas. And we all know about Santa, but this short film allows us to finally answer the question of "who is the person who is making your wishes come true when you blow out the candles on your birthday cake?" This film offers a whimsical, comedic exploration into who makes your wishes come true, and what happens if you break the one and only rule behind wish making.



MY WEEK WITH GEORGE CLOONEY
Canadian Premiere
Emilie Sornasse
Belgium | 2023 | 18:35 mins
French with English Subtitles

On vacation in the south of France in November, I experience the emptiness of an out-of-season Banyuls. A handsome actor buddy of mine arrives to rehearse the scripts for his next shoot. I watch him from breakfast, in the privacy of our Airbnb. And outside, I watch him interacting with the others; the villagers, suddenly numerous. By the end of the week, we're bound to be closer. But better that I don't think about it too much.



AUGUST & EBONY Canadian Premiere
Sunyin Zhang
USA | 2023 | 12:51 mins
English

Four-month pregnant Ebony isn't ready for this baby. Her wife of 3-months, August, comforts and reassures her...and it almost works until Justin, her best friend and hook-up-turned-father of her child, bursts into the house, armed with his binder of research. Determined to save these two wholly unprepared mothers-to-be, he invites himself to stay over - much to August's dismay.



MOTHER'S TONGUE
Vanessa Millado
Canada | 2023 | 13:25 mins
English

After moving out of her family home and being estranged from her mother, Gurleen yearns to reconnect with her Punjabi culture through cooking. As she attempts to do so, she quickly realizes she's missing a crucial element - her mother's touch.

ANCILLARY PROGRAMMING & EVENTS

DIRECTOR PANEL Thurs. March 6, 6:30pm



Join BC directors for an in-depth conversation on craft and creative process. Moderated by Carol Whiteman from Women In the Director's Chair (WIDC) and presented in partnership with WIDC and DGC BC.

EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY: STRATEGIC MOVES TO BUILD YOUR FILM CAREER Fri. March 7, 5:00pm

Facilitated by Ghazal Elhaei (Chair of the Board GEMS, Capital G Media), is a 90-minute workshop designed to equip filmmakers and creatives with the strategic tools needed to navigate the business side of the industry. Beyond talent, success requires a strong personal brand, smart networking, and a clear approach to positioning projects. Attendees will learn how to assess their current standing, build key industry relationships, and craft materials that open doors—whether they're just starting out or looking to level up.

Free event - by registration

ETHICAL PRODUCTION PANEL Fri. March 7, 6:30pm

Industry experts discuss the importance of ethical practices in film production, from fair representation to sustainable practices. Panelists include sustainability consultant Smiely Khurana (The Sustainable Act), filmmaker Jules A. Koostachin (NiiMisSak: Sisters In Film), intimacy coordinator Aryn Mott (Vancity Intimacy Coordination), Natasha Tony (Chief Executive Officer, Elevate Inclusion) and filmmaker Shannon Walsh (Adrianne and the Castle). Moderated by Ana'isa Visser (Executive Director of GEMS) and presented in partnership with CMPA.



BIPOC NETWORKING NIGHT Fri. March 7, 8:00pm

An event dedicated to connecting BIPOC creatives and industry professionals, featuring Keynote Speaker Ella Cooper from Black Women Film and musical guest Tonye Aganaba.

Free event - by registration

ADVOCACY PANEL Sat. March 8, 10:30am



A panel on advocacy in film, showcasing organizations whose work drives social change and funders who are working to better their approaches to equitable access. Panelists include Tanvi Bhatia (Outreach and Strategy Lead, Women in View), Patricia Doss (Senior Advisor: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, NFB), Kadon Douglas (EDI and Strategic Communications Specialist), Prem Gill (Chief Executive Officer, Creative BC), Meghna Haldar (Content Analyst, Telefilm), Joy Loewen (Vice President of Growth & Inclusion, CMF) and Alethea Bakogeorge (Director of Programs & Development, DSO). Moderated by Natasha Tony (Chief Executive Officer, Elevate Inclusion Strategies). Presented in partnership with Elevate Inclusion Strategies.

Free event - by registration



CASTING DIRECTOR PANEL Sat. March 8, 12:30pm

Insights from casting directors Corrine Clark and Jennifer Page (Clarke & Page Casting) along with Kris Woznesensky and Kara Eide (Kris & Kara Casting) on the evolving landscape of casting and representation. Moderated by celebrated local actress Johannah Newmarch (When Calls The Heart) and presented in partnership by UBCP/ACTRA.



AWARDS CEREMONY Sat. March 8, 2:30pm

The GEMFest Awards Ceremony honour luminaries in the film and television industry, recognizing individuals who have made a significant contribution to advancing equity and creative excellence.

Free event - by registration

SCREENPLAY COMPETITION PANEL

Sun. March 9, 10:30am

Select finalists from this year's screenplay competition will discuss their work and the power of storytelling in a conversation moderated by filmmaker and GEMS Board Member Andy Alvarez (Curl Power). This year's finalists are: Corina Bizim and Maddy Hillis, Brenna Goodwin-McCabe, Mykayla Filipovic, dre larivée, Jasleen Kaur, MK Morris and Tessa Parker.

Special thanks to the volunteer readers and to the International Screenwriters Association (ISA), for their sponsorship.

Free event - by registration



PITCH FORUM

Sun. March 9, 12:00pm

The GEMFest Pitch Forum serves as a dedicated platform for filmmakers to present their projects to production companies, broadcasters, and distributors within the industry. The event is by registration - registrants will be paired with their desired pitch recipient for a one on one 10 minute pitch. Designed to empower and propel Canadian talent, this event offers a distinctive space for project development, networking, and exposure to influential figures in the film and television industry. Filmmakers are encouraged to research and tailor their pitches to the company they are targeting. Advance registration required.

GEMS SHOWCASE

Sun. March 9, 3:00pm



The very first GEMS Showcase features selected GEMS Talent Lab alumni who will pitch their projects to a panel of industry professionals. The panel will be followed by an awards ceremony celebrating this year's standout contributions to the festival. The Presenting Sponsor for this event is Sunbelt Rentals Film & TV and the event is free of charge.

Free event - by registration



GEMFEST AWARDS

SAT. MARCH 8, 2:30PM

The GEMFest Awards Ceremony honour luminaries in the film and television industry, recognizing individuals who have made a significant contribution to advancing equity and creative excellence.

GEMFest is excited to present a range of awards to our filmmakers, including the following:

FEATURES

- CMPA Impact Award
- UBCP Award for Best Performance in a Feature
- Keslow Camera Award for Best Cinematography
- Best Musical Score
- Best Editing
- CFL Award for Best Screenplay (Festival)
- Best Documentary
- DGC BC Award for Best Direction in a Feature
- Telefilm Award for Best Feature Film

BEST OF BC

Cinealease, MBS Equipment Co. & Vancouver Film Studios award the top three BC films.

SHORTS

- Impact Award
- Best Performance
- Best Cinematography
- Best Editing
- Best Direction
- Best Short

SCREENPLAY COMPETITION

- Best Feature Screenplay
- Best Pilot Screenplay

INDUSTRY

- Lifetime Achievement in Advancing Equity
- Emerging Changemaker Award
- Leadership in Education Award
- IATSE 891 Artistic Achievement Award

The GEMFest Awards Ceremony is a free event and open to all.

TELEFILM CANADA

PARTENAIRE DE ▶ CHOIX PARTNER OF ▶ CHOICE

FIÈRE DE PROMOUVOIR ET DE FAIRE RAYONNER LES TALENTS CANADIENS ET LEURS HISTOIRES AU PAYS COMME À L'ÉTRANGER. **TÉLÉFILM EST AU CŒUR DE L'INDUSTRIE AUDIOVISUELLE CANADIENNE.**

A PROUD CHAMPION OF CANADIAN TALENT AND STORIES, AT HOME AND ABROAD. **TELEFILM IS AT THE HEART OF THE CANADIAN AUDIOVISUAL INDUSTRY.**

TELEFILM.CA

GEMFEST GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Black Screen Office | Mena Film Festival | UBC |
| Black Women Film Canada | Motion Picture Production | Vancouver Asian Film Festival |
| Capilano University | Industry Association of BC | Vancouver Film School |
| Celluloid Social Club | National Screen Institute | Vancouver International South |
| Crazy 8s | Pacific Screenwriting Program | Asian Film Festival |
| Culture Brew Art | Reelworld | Vancouver Latin American |
| DOXA | Run and Gun | Film Festival |
| Emily Carr | Rove Concepts | Vancouver Post Alliance |
| Filmable | MPPIA | Vancouver Queer Film Festival |
| Film Local | Shine Network | / Out On Screen |
| Form Festival | Simon Fraser University | Vancouver International Film |
| Gearbase Camera Rentals | Sonder Acting Studio | Festival (VIFF) |
| imagineNative | Sparky's Film Rentals | Vancouver Short Film Festival |
| Indigenous Screen Office | Storyhive | Whistler Film Festival |
| InFocus Film School | Student Film Union | Women In the Director's Chair |
| Lucas Talent Inc. | Trans on Screen | Women in View |
| | On Set Headsets | |

FESTIVAL TEAM

GEMS STAFF

Executive Director
Anaïsa Visser

Programming Coordinator
Anna Bui

**Communications
Coordinator**
Cassia Powell

**Project Manager -
Capacity Building**
Debbi Lynn Salmonsén

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President
Ghazal Elhaei

Vice President
Alyssa Aussant

Secretary
Marena Dix

Treasurer
Amanda Burke

Society Directors
Andy Alvarez
Veronika Kurz
Shasha McArthur
Annette Reilly
Mikah Sharkey
Marcy Waughtal

GEMFEST TEAM

Festival Coordinator
Della Haddock

**Media and Industry
Coordinator**
Sophie Caird

Sponsorship Coordinator
Shay Ferdinand

Festival Assistant
Rianna Richards

Features Jury
Sara Blake
Angie Rico
Baljit Sangra

Shorts Jury
Doaa Magdy
Mila Zuo
Christina Adams

TERRITORIAL WELCOME VIDEO

Elder
Violet Davis

Producer
Debbie Courchene

Camera Operator
Valeriya Khan

Sound Mixer
Acacia Nikie

Drone Operator
Joel McCarthy

Editor
KJ Edwards

FESTIVAL VENDORS

Program Design
Lindsey Hampton

Logo Design
Alicia Carvalho

Festival Trailer
Rheanna Toy -
Cloudstreet Media

Public Relations
Nicola Pender - Pender PR

Social Media Consulting
Capital G Media

Award Design
Shrapnel Design

Printing
East Van Graphics
Sudden Impact
Oh My Print Solutions

Media Sponsors
Hollywood North Magazine
Storyed North
Stir Vancouver
The Georgia Straight

THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

The success of the Gender Equity in Media Festival is made possible by a large community of dedicated and generous volunteers. We remain deeply grateful for the unwavering support and tireless efforts of these volunteers, including our evaluation and selection committee, and our event volunteers!

THANK YOU TO OUR GEMS MEMBERS!

Dear GEMS Members

On behalf of Gender Equity in Media Society (GEMS) Vancouver, we extend our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you for your invaluable support and commitment to our cause.

Your decision to join our community signifies not only a personal investment but also a powerful endorsement of our collective mission for gender equity in media.

With your generous support, you are not merely sustaining our organization; you are fueling a movement. Your contributions directly enable us to spearhead advocacy initiatives, develop impactful programming, host engaging events, and curate an inclusive festival that amplifies marginalized voices.

Your membership and continued support symbolizes a shared commitment to effecting tangible change. Together, we are rewriting the narrative and reshaping the industry for the better.

As we embark on this journey together, please know that your support is truly appreciated and deeply valued. Your dedication inspires us to continue pushing boundaries and striving for a future where equity and inclusivity are not aspirations, but realities.

If you are not yet a member, please consider joining. People of all genders are welcome, and our low-barrier price point starts at \$25/year. We welcome everyone!

With heartfelt appreciation,
GEMS

**GENDER
EQUITY_{IN}
MEDIa
SOCIETY**

gemsvancouver.org