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MEDIA RELEASE

EVERY STORY SOLIDIFIES TIFF'S COMMITMENT TO AMPLIFYING EQUITY-SEEKING CREATORS

The newly created Every Story fund will provide ongoing resources and programming for diverse voices

TORONTO – The Toronto International Film Festival® today announced Every Story, a fund to support and celebrate film's under-represented voices and audiences. This fund represents a tangible commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in film and expands upon TIFF's integrated initiative in support of women in film, Share Her Journey. Through this fund, TIFF is committed to expanding its diversity and inclusion efforts by upholding three primary pillars: **challenging** the status quo; **celebrating** diverse storytellers and audiences; and **creating** opportunities for creators who are Black, Indigenous, people of colour, and/or 2SLGBTQ+ and other equity-seeking creators.

TIFF recognizes that there are systemic barriers to sharing some stories, and that, even with the inception of Every Story, it may not be possible to capture all the unique lived experiences of individuals at the intersections of equity and accessibility. That's why Every Story is not just a fund, but also a goal. Seventy-six of this year's Festival selections were either created or co-created by cisgender or transgender women, or non-binary or two-spirit filmmakers. Seventy-five percent of Industry Conference speakers identify as Black, Indigenous, or a person of colour. This is the beginning of a journey to highlight the stories that may have previously been untold and address the reasons for their erasure.

"The tides have turned. Now is the time to reexamine what inclusion means and how it manifests in our industry," said Joana Vicente, TIFF Executive Director and Co-Head. "With the support of wonderful partners and donors, TIFF will expand upon current efforts for equity-seeking creators and diverse audiences, and create more robust, intentional programmes to foster creativity and make space for these much-needed voices."

In support of the Every Story fund, TIFF is pleased to announce that, as fund Founding Partner, NBCUniversal will match all donations made to Every Story in 2021. Additionally, they will partner with TIFF in developing opportunities to build career momentum for creators, talent, and journalists by providing access and additional resources via programmes like the Media Inclusion Initiative and TIFF Talent Development programmes. This partnership with TIFF and the Every Story fund builds upon NBCUniversal's commitment to creating content that reflects the world in which we live and diversifying the industry's landscape by creating access and opportunities for equity-seeking talent.

As part of Share Her Journey, the CHANEL Women Writers' Network will support a year-round program to advance the careers of women and non-binary alumni of TIFF Writers' Studio. CHANEL's participation extends and enriches TIFF's support for writers and writer-directors by providing funding to facilitate the acceleration and development of their projects and by offering opportunities to connect with a diverse network of mentors

TIFF is a charitable organization with a mission to transform the way people see the world through film.



and peers.

As previously announced, thanks to a renewed commitment from RBC, the RBC Women Creators' Initiative will support the TIFF Talent Accelerator programme, provide TIFF Industry access for women and non-binary creators and film professionals, and support TIFF's International Women's Day programming. RBC has been the official bank of TIFF since 2008 and is a long-standing supporter of the arts and film, recognizing the important role they play in building vibrant communities and strong economies. Diversity and inclusion are cornerstones of RBC's values and its purpose, helping clients thrive and communities prosper.

All of their generous support will be felt through the development and expansion of these year-round initiatives, but programming reflecting the fund's mission begins now with this year's Festival.

Festival programming highlights

In Conversation With... Kristen Stewart

Celebrating the stories of two remarkable women, Share Her Journey presents **In Conversation With... Kristen Stewart**, an intimate conversation focused on Stewart's career and her captivating performance as another compelling woman – the late Princess Diana – in the upcoming film *Spencer*, which premieres at her namesake Princess of Wales Theatre. Stewart, who has been vocal about LGBTQ+ representation behind and in front of the camera, will discuss her love for "soul-driven and explorative" cinema at this free, live virtual event.

TIFF Storytellers' Spotlight

TIFF Storytellers' Spotlight: A Women in Film Panel, presented by RBC, will feature a candid conversation between Festival filmmakers about their careers. This panel will bring together Festival filmmakers Justine Bateman (*Violet*), 2019 TIFF Talent Accelerator alum Shasha Nahkai (*Scarborough*), and Andrea Nirmala Widjanto (*Srikandi*) in conversation to share their stories of forging their own path in film and achieving their dreams, as well as offering advice for aspiring and up-and-coming filmmakers.

Industry Conference highlights

PERSPECTIVES Writing in the Margins: The Need for New Voices and New Platforms in Film Criticism

Representation and lack of diversity in film criticism within prominent outlets is an ongoing issue plaguing the film industry. Three distinguished voices in film criticism – Carlos Aguilar, Jourdain Searles, and Caden Mark Gardner – come together to discuss its future, how established systems need to change, and the new spaces and opportunities being forged by diverse writers.

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PERSPECTIVES Filmmakers on Africa's Cinema Industries: From Development to Distribution
Generously supported by Anne-Marie Canning

Africa's impressive list of TIFF '21 Official Selections spans the Platform, Midnight Madness, Special Presentations, and Wavelengths programmes, with the title in the latter category boasting the position of Opening Night Film. For a continent of storytellers and an "archipelago of cultures," there are still too many African filmmakers who must reckon with western preconceptions that guard pathways to industry and bind creative autonomy. Hear about this and much more – including patterns in which distributors purchase "global" film rights that neglect African audiences – in this panel discussion between Festival filmmakers and TIFF programmer Nataleah Hunter-Young.

VISIONARIES Apichatpong Weerasethakul
Generously supported by Anne-Marie Canning

Born in Bangkok, director Apichatpong Weerasethakul is one of the most influential and revered visual artists of this time. His incisive, visceral relationship with the moving image often draws on the ancestral myths of his country to reflect on his surroundings, from global social issues to the political concerns of modern Thailand. Join us for a conversation with the filmmaker – whose latest feature, *Memoria*, was one of two Jury Prize winners at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival – moderated by TIFF Senior Film Curator Andréa Picard.

VISIONARIES Sahraa Karimi
A Share Her Journey initiative generously supported by Betty-Ann Heggie

Sahraa Karimi is a renowned director and activist, and the first woman to chair Afghan Film. Her first feature, *Hava, Maryam, Ayesha* (2019), was shot entirely in Kabul with Afghan actors and received critical acclaim at its Venice premiere. On August 13, Karimi called on the international film community to protect filmmakers and other creatives from Taliban violence through a deeply honest open letter.

For our closing Industry Conference session, Karimi joins us to speak about fleeing her home country, how the international film community can support and care for Afghan artists, and the role film plays in effecting change.

The Government of Canada opened its borders for non-essential travel from American citizens and permanent residents on August 9, 2021 and plans to open to citizens of any country on September 7, 2021, provided that the domestic epidemiologic situation remains favourable, and that visitors have been fully vaccinated with Government of Canada-approved vaccines (Moderna, Pfizer-BioNTech, Janssen/Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD) at least 14 days prior to entering Canada. Those meeting these requirements can travel to Canada without having to quarantine, including the elimination of the three-night hotel quarantine policy. As of September 2, 76.2% of Canada's eligible population is fully vaccinated, one of the highest vaccination rates in the world. Toronto boasts one of the highest percentages of fully vaccinated citizens in North America with 76.6% of the eligible population completed as of the same date.

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As a result of the opening of the border and increased capacities in cinemas in Ontario, TIFF has added to its list of venues to accommodate a number of additional in-person Public and Press & Industry screenings. TIFF Festival venues include: TIFF Bell Lightbox and marquee venues the Visa Screening Room at the Princess of Wales Theatre and Roy Thomson Hall, Scotiabank Theatre Toronto, and the Cinesphere IMAX Theatre at Ontario Place, plus outdoor screening venues at Ontario Place Festival Village, including the Visa Skyline Drive-In, the RBC Lakeside Drive-In, and the West Island Open Air Cinema. Press & Industry screenings will be held at the Scotiabank Theatre Toronto and TIFF Bell Lightbox. Public in-person screenings will have limited press and industry access.

Beginning on September 9, 2021, Festival staff, audience members and visitors entering TIFF Festival venues from September 9 to 18 will be required to show either proof they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or proof that they have tested negative for COVID-19 within 48 hours prior to entering any TIFF venue. This protocol does not extend to the Visa Skyline Drive-In and RBC Lakeside Drive-In at Ontario Place, where audiences will be in their cars. Previously announced COVID safety measures and detailed protocols and procedures for the public, talent, studios, stakeholders, and other TIFF attendees can be found at tiff.net/covid-19.

Additionally, digital Public screenings will be programmed on digital TIFF Bell Lightbox for the accessibility of Festival-goers but are limited to Canadian audiences. The TIFF Digital Cinema Pro platform will host digital Press & Industry screenings, as well as the TIFF Industry Selects market for industry buyers. Films available to press and industry on TIFF Digital Cinema Pro will be accessible to delegates worldwide; however, some exceptions may occur where the film rights holders have not authorized an online screening in selected regions. The TIFF Bell Digital Talks platform will host a variety of Public and Press & Industry talks, including the In Conversation With... talks series, the Industry Conference, and Press Conferences.

TIFF continues to work closely with the Province of Ontario, the City of Toronto, and public health officials on the safe execution of the Festival, with its number-one priority being the health and well-being of both Festival filmgoers and residents of the community. To help ensure the safest possible experience, TIFF has once again partnered with Medcan, a global health care leader providing medical expertise, consultation, and health inspiration to achieve its mission to help people “Live Well, For Life.” Based on the pillars of evidence-based care, exceptional client service, and the latest in technology, Medcan’s team of over 90 physicians supports employee health care across the continuum of health, including its “Safe at Work System,” which helps organizations navigate the pandemic.

Please visit tiff.net for more information.

For additional information on Every Story please visit tiff.net/everystory

The 46th Toronto International Film Festival runs September 9–18, 2021.

TIFF prefers Visa.

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About TIFF

TIFF is a not-for-profit cultural organization whose mission is to transform the way people see the world through film. An international leader in film culture, TIFF projects include the annual Toronto International Film Festival in September; TIFF Bell Lightbox, which features five cinemas, learning and entertainment facilities; and innovative national distribution program Film Circuit. The organization generates an annual economic impact of \$200 million CAD. TIFF Bell Lightbox is generously supported by contributors including Founding Sponsor Bell, the Province of Ontario, the Government of Canada, the City of Toronto, the Reitman family (Ivan Reitman, Agi Mandel and Susan Michaels), The Daniels Corporation and RBC. For more information, visit tiff.net.

TIFF is generously supported by Lead Sponsor Bell, Major Sponsors RBC, L'Oréal Paris, and Visa, and Major Supporters the Government of Ontario, Telefilm Canada, and the City of Toronto.

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For more information, contact Kali Hopkins-Allen, Manager, Communications at khopkinsallen@tiff.net.

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