



FASCINASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

Program Guide

The organizers of FascinAsian Film Festival 2026 welcome you! This year, we're excited to have you join us in-person in Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg. **Enjoy the show.**

Thank you to all of our Funders, Sponsors, and Partners!



FascinAsian Film Festival Turns 5!

2026 — the Year of the Horse, the Year of the Trailblazer — marks the fifth anniversary of the Calgary edition of the FascinAsian Film Festival. This milestone year celebrates the vibrant impact of Asian storytellers in film and media, spotlighting emerging and established talents while continuing to champion greater awareness and representation for Asian communities.

Our Vision

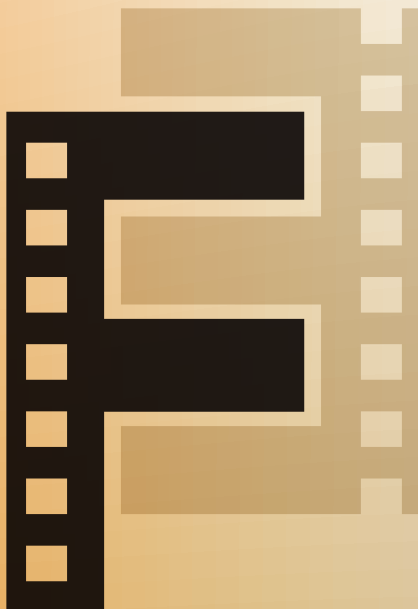
FascinAsian Film Festival envisions a world where North American Asian storytellers, performers, and other film and media creatives have equal access to resources and opportunities to shape and enhance cultural understanding.

Our Mission

FascinAsian Film Festival (F3) is committed to promoting and celebrating Asian perspectives, culture and integrity in film and media. F3 works to foster understanding and appreciation of Asian arts and culture within the Canadian mosaic. F3 aims to highlight filmmakers, performers and other media arts creatives from the Asian diaspora. F3 strives to create programming that inspires, educates, and brings the community together in appreciation of the art form and its collective effort.

Our Goals

- To share and highlight stories from the Asian diaspora and feature Asian talent from Canada and around the world.
- To educate and inform audiences about the unique Asian-Canadian experience.
- To offer unique opportunities for education and training in film and media.
- To create an inclusive, safe and fun environment for Asian artists to share and celebrate their work.
- To create meaningful dialogue about issues of equal opportunity and equity in the media arts.
- To build bridges within the community through partnerships and collaboration.
- To facilitate a multi-day festival of events, supporting these goals.
- To operate an organization that will be fiscally and ethically responsible and sustainable.



FASCINASIAN
FILM FESTIVAL

Message from Mayor Jeromy Farkas

On behalf of the City of Calgary, I am delighted to welcome you to the 5th Annual FascinAsian Film Festival in Calgary. As we mark five years of celebrating Asian stories, perspectives, and talent in film and media, I extend my warmest greetings to all filmmakers, artists, volunteers, organizers, and audience members gathered for this milestone occasion.

The FascinAsian Film Festival has grown from a bold idea into one of the most vibrant cultural events on the Canadian Prairies. Since its Calgary debut in 2022, the festival has expanded in both scope and impact, becoming a signature celebration of Asian Heritage Month that brings together communities across Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg. This growth reflects the strength and creativity of the Asian-Canadian community and the deep appetite audiences have for diverse and authentic stories on screen.

Film has a unique ability to build bridges between cultures, foster understanding, and inspire us to see the world through new eyes. The FascinAsian Film Festival does exactly this by elevating the voices of Asian-Canadian and Asian-American filmmakers, sharing powerful narratives of identity, resilience, and belonging, and creating spaces for meaningful dialogue.

Your work enriches Calgary's cultural fabric and strengthens our city's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and the celebration of every community that calls Calgary home.

I commend the dedicated team of organizers and volunteers, and the many sponsors and partners who make this festival possible. Your passion and tireless efforts over these five years have built something truly special for our city.

I wish everyone an inspiring festival filled with outstanding films, engaging conversations, and lasting connections. Enjoy the show!



Jeromy Farkas
Mayor of Calgary



Message from Julie Roy, Telefilm Canada

Festivals like the FascinAsian Film Festival play a vital role in connecting Canadian cinema with audiences at home and abroad. They showcase our stories, our artists and our creativity, while strengthening the bond between filmmakers and audiences around the world. Canadian cinema plays a key role in shaping and promoting our cultural identity. As audiences seek out stories that resonate with them, festivals bring us together.

At Telefilm Canada, our core mission is to invest in and highlight the importance of film. We support productions every step of the way, from development to distribution, so that Canadian stories are seen and celebrated. By working with our industry partners, we contribute to a strong and vibrant film ecosystem.

Beyond their screenings, festivals are places of dialogue, collaboration and exchange. They bring together professionals, emerging and established talent, as well as film lovers and audiences of all kinds. In pursuing our mission to support Canadian cinema, we recognize that festivals are essential to the vitality of our industry.

We're proud to partner with the FascinAsian Film Festival to celebrate the unifying power of cinema. Enjoy the festival!



Julie Roy
Executive Director and CEO, Telefilm Canada



TELEFILM
CANADA



Canadian films have it all.

Celebrate the richness of Canadian storytelling. Weekly updates deliver fresh releases to inspire, entertain, and immerse you in the vibrant world of Canadian cinema!

seeitall.telefilm.ca

TELEFILM
CANADA

Welcome to the 5th Anniversary of the FascinAsian Film Festival in Calgary

Reaching this milestone is incredibly meaningful. What began as a personal passion—an idea rooted in the desire to celebrate Asian stories, voices, and creativity—has grown into something far greater than I could have imagined. To now be celebrating five years of this festival, surrounded by such a vibrant and supportive community, is both humbling and inspiring.

This journey would not have been possible without the many individuals and organizations who believed in this vision. My sincere thanks go to our funders and sponsors for their continued support, and to the talented filmmakers whose work brings this festival to life each year. A special thank you to our dedicated volunteers—your energy, commitment, and passion are the heart of this festival.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to Alan Wong, President of the Board, who helped spark the growth of what we celebrate today. Because of that vision, we are proud to see the festival continue to expand and thrive. We are now in three cities.

As we welcome you to this year's festival, we are also proud to kick off Asian Heritage Month with a program that reflects our 2026 theme: Year of the Horse – Year of the Trailblazer. This year's films and events celebrate bold voices, new perspectives, and the spirit of those who forge their own paths.

We invite you to immerse yourself in the stories, connect with fellow festivalgoers, and experience all that FascinAsian has to offer. Thank you for being part of this journey—and for celebrating this milestone with us.

Thanks to the Calgary Festival Team for another year of successful coordination and thoughtful collaboration.

Enjoy the festival!



Judy Eng-Hum
Calgary Festival Director

Summary

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

Calgary Central Library, Patricia Whelan Performance Hall
📍 800 3rd St. SE, Calgary

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH EXHIBIT AND FREE PRE-FESTIVAL SCREENING

- 5:30 PM Everyday Trailblazer Photovoice Exhibit
Panel Discussion and Reception
- 6:30 PM Trailer Party
- 7:00 PM *Rental Family* (feature film)

FRIDAY, MAY 1

- 11:30 AM Phone to Film: Cinematography Workshop,
BMO Room

OPENING NIGHT & RECEPTION

- 6:15 PM Drumming performance by Yama No Oto
- 7:00 PM Welcome Remarks
- 7:15 PM *Akashi* (feature film) and Q&A with director
Mayumi Yoshida
- 9:00 PM Opening Night Reception

SATURDAY, MAY 2

- 10:00 AM Industry Resource Fair
- 11:00 AM Trailblazer Spotlight: Lunch & Conversation
Our Ocean Table (film)
and Q&A with featured contributor, Anna Ko
- 1:00 PM Trailblazers: Drive to Win (shorts) and Filmmakers Q&A
- 3:30 PM *Cutting Through Rocks* (feature film)
- 5:30 PM Trailblazers: Journeys of Home (shorts) and Filmmakers Q&A
- 8:00 PM *Montreal, Ma Belle* (feature film, R18+)
and Q&A with director Xiaodan He
- 10:30 PM Dessert Reception (follows shortly after the Q&A)

SUNDAY, MAY 3

- 11:00 AM Trailblazer Spotlight: Lunch & Conversation
Outsiderness (feature film) and Panel Q&A with director Carlo
Alcos and moderated by CBC's Homestretch Chris Dela Torre
- 1:00 PM Trailblazers: The Drive to Win (shorts) with Filmmakers Q&A
- 3:30 PM *Space Cadet* (feature film)
and recorded Q&A with director Kid Koala
- 5:30 PM Reception Gala and Awards Night with Museum Tours
📍 Chinese Cultural Centre, 197 1 St SW, Calgary, AB



INAY



HEATED RIVALRY

INVESTING IN STORIES THAT SHAPE CANADA.



AKASHI



GANGNAM PROJECT

The Canada Media Fund is here to support bold, courageous voices across the audiovisual industry—from television and web series to documentaries, video games, IDM and immersive projects. Wherever there's a vision and a desire to shine a light, we're there to light the spark.



CANADA
MEDIA FUND

FONDS DES MÉDIAS
DU CANADA

cmf-fmc.ca

Schedule

★ Events

⦿ Shorts Program

🎬 Feature Films

Time	Thursday, April 30	Friday, May 1	Saturday, May 2	Sunday, May 3
10:00 AM			⌚ 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM ★ Resource Fair	
				10:30 AM Box Office Opens
11:00 AM				⌚ 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM ★ Tailblazer Spotlight: Lunch & Conversation Our Ocean Table Film Panel Discussion
12:00 PM		⌚ 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM ★ Phone To Film Cinematography Workshop		⌚ 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM ★ Tailblazer Spotlight: Lunch & Conversation Outsiderness Panel Discussion
01:00 PM				⌚ 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM ⦿ Shorts Program #1 Trailblazers: The Drive to Win Q&A
02:00 PM				⌚ 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM ⦿ Short Film Program #3 Trailblazers: New Visions Q&A
03:00 PM				
04:00 PM			⌚ 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM 🎬 Feature Film Cutting Through Rocks	⌚ 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM 🎬 Feature Film Space Cadet Q&A
05:00 PM				
06:00 PM	⌚ 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM ★ Everyday Trailblazer Photovoice Exhibit Panel & Reception	6:00 PM Box Office Opens	⌚ 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM ⦿ Shorts Program #2 Trailblazers: Journeys of Home Q&A	⌚ 5:30 PM ★ Trailblazers' Reception, Awards Night & Gala Networking & Museum Tours Begins at 5:30 PM Program Begins at 6:30 PM
07:00 PM	⌚ 6:30 PM ★ Trailer Party	⌚ 6:15 PM ★ Drumming Performance		
08:00 PM	⌚ 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM 🎬 Free Feature Film Rental Family	⌚ 7:00 - 9:30 PM 🎬 Opening Night Feature Film Akashi Q&A Opening Night Reception included in this film showing until 10:30 PM	⌚ 8:00 PM - 10:30 PM 🎬 Feature Film Montreal, Ma Belle (R18+) Q&A Dessert Reception included in this film showing until 11:30 PM	
09:00 PM				
10:00 PM				
11:00 PM				
12:00 AM				

Thursday, April 30

Calgary Central Library – 800 3rd St SE

5:30 PM

★ Everyday Trailblazer Photovoice Exhibit Panel Discussion and Reception

As FascinAsian Film Festival turns five, we shine a light on five Asian-Canadian photographers whose work captures the often-unseen stories of Asian Calgarians—individuals whose quiet leadership and everyday courage help weave a stronger, more vibrant community.



6:30 PM

★ Trailer Party

We'll share a glimpse of what's in store for you at FascinAsian Film Festival 2026 right before our feature film, Rental Family.



7:00 PM FREE PRE-FESTIVAL FEATURE FILM

🎬 Rental Family

An American actor in Tokyo struggles to find purpose until he lands an unusual gig: working for a Japanese 'rental family' agency, playing stand-in roles for strangers. As he immerses himself in his clients' worlds, he begins to form genuine bonds that blur the lines between performance and reality.

Director **Hikari**
Runtime 110 minutes
Language English, Japanese
Country Japan, United States
Year 2025

Friday, May 1

Calgary Central Library – 800 3rd St SE

11:30 AM

★ Phone To Film: A Cinematography Workshop

Learn to Unleash the Power of Your Smartphone for Filming and Photos!

Shoot better videos right from your phone. Join us for a FREE Cinematography Workshop in collaboration with The Calgary Society of Independent Filmmakers, designed to help you unlock the full potential of your smartphone.

Whether you're a total beginner or looking to level up your content, this hands-on session will give you practical tools to capture stronger visuals, tell better stories, and create with confidence, all with a device you already have.

Scan to register



6:30 PM

★ Drumming performance by Yama No Oto

7:00 PM

Opening Remarks

7:15 PM OPENING NIGHT FEATURE FILM

Akashi

Akashi is a multigenerational love story told across parallel timelines. Kana, a struggling artist in Vancouver, returns to Tokyo for her grandmother's funeral, feeling out of place after ten years abroad. As she reflects on a secret only she and her grandmother shared—that her grandfather had another lover—she unexpectedly reconnects with an old love, Hiro. Intercut with the past, which traces her grandfather's decades-long affair, Kana confronts hidden family truths and begins to navigate the complexities of love, sacrifice, and the choices that shape a life between desire and duty.

Q&A with Director Mayumi Yoshida follows the film

Director	Mayumi Yoshida	Year	2025
Runtime	100 minutes	Rating	PG
Language	English, Japanese	Premiere	Manitoba
Country	Canada, Japan	Genre	Drama



★ Opening Night Reception

Don't head out just yet – we're serving Japanese inspired refreshments to keep the celebration going. Grab a bite, mingle, and soak in the festival spirit.



Saturday, May 2

Calgary Central Library – 800 3rd St SE

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

★ Resource Fair

Connect with the heart of Calgary's film industry at this day-long resource fair, featuring key post-secondary education institutions and leading industry organizations. Discover pathways to careers in film through training programs, union memberships, and professional development opportunities. Whether you're a student, emerging artist, or seasoned professional, this event is your chance to network with industry leaders and access the tools to advance your creative journey.



Directors **Sonya Lee, Jonathan Chiang**
Runtime 22 minutes
Language English, Korean
Country Canada
Year 2025

11:00 AM TRAILBLAZER SPOTLIGHT

★ Lunch & Conversation: Our Ocean Table

🍷 Dive into a story where ocean, land, and culture beautifully intersect.

Our Ocean Table is a captivating short film that follows Sonya and Hannah as they celebrate a birthday along the breathtaking kelp forests of the BC coast. What begins as a simple snorkeling adventure unfolds into a rich exploration of culture and connection, as Sonya shares the significance of kelp in Korean cuisine—particularly in miyeok-guk, the traditional seaweed soup enjoyed on birthdays to honour mothers and celebrate life.

This is the second of a three-part series of short films where their journey continues to Calgary, where they meet Tamara Loiselle, who is pioneering innovative uses of seaweed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in cattle farming. From the waters of the Georgia Strait to the prairies of Alberta, the film reveals a surprising and meaningful link between ocean ecosystems, sustainable agriculture, and cultural food traditions.

Far from the sea, Sonya, Hannah, and Chef Jinhee Lee (Top Chef Canada finalist) come together over a warm bowl of miyeok-guk. In this intimate moment, they reflect on identity, motherhood, and what it means to navigate life as Korean-Canadian women—honouring tradition while forging their own paths.

Stay with us for a live interview with one of the women featured in the film – the Executive Director of the Calgary Korean Women's Association, Anna Ko – to bring these themes to life—exploring sustainability, culture, and the evolving stories of women connected by food, heritage, and resilience.

This session includes a taste of Korean Food.

Saturday, May 2

Calgary Central Library – 800 3rd St SE

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM SHORTS PROGRAM 1



Trailblazers: The Drive To Win

Immigrant and diaspora stories

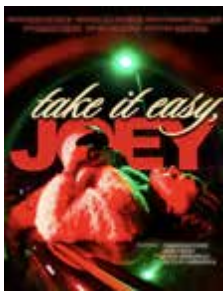
This program highlights determined characters pushing forward in pursuit of victory, recognition, or personal breakthroughs. Like the spirit of the Horse, these stories capture ambition, resilience, and the relentless drive to succeed.



Top of My School

An ambitious high school student's obsession with winning the student council election spirals out of control when a classmate unexpectedly enters the race.

Director **Katherine Lynn-Rose**
Runtime 19 minutes 15 seconds Country United States Rating PG
Language English, Mandarin Chinese Year 2025 Romance, Comedy, Horror, Musical



Take it Easy Joey

A Filipino Canadian creative enters the world of professional wrestling and faces the hardships of obtaining his "greenlight".

Director **Mateo Jose Ignacio**
Runtime 17 minutes 38 seconds Country Canada Rating PG
Language English, Tagalog, Filipino Year 2025



Check Please

Two headstrong Koreans can't agree on who's treating who to dinner, causing their casual restaurant outing to spiral into a martial art deathmatch.

Director **Shane Chung**
Runtime 10 minutes Country Canada Rating PG
Language Korean, English subtitles Year 2024



Red Light Rebel

A pastor stuck at a red light finds himself at a crossroads with God.

Director **Hannah Yang**
Runtime 16 minutes Rating G
Language English Year 2025



A Good Day Will Come

Arash is a professional wrestler with dreams of representing his country and winning gold medals. The country is in turmoil and its people are suffering. Arash must decide between using his platform to stand up to tyranny or put his head down and remain silent.

Director	Amir Zargara		
Runtime	26 minutes	Rating	PG
Language	Persian, English subtitles	Year	2024



Red Pocket

A magical Red Pocket interrupts an anxiety ridden family dinner.

Director	Austin Chen		
Runtime	8 minutes	Screenwriter	Austin Chen
Language	English	Producers	Suri Jiang, Yoko Chen, Austin Chen
Rating	PG	Cast	Tiffany Chu, Yin Yin Liow, Laze Xuepeng Huang
Year	2025	Editor	Judith Yumeng Zhu

★ Please stay for a short Q&A with our filmmakers



3:30 PM FEATURE FILM

Cutting Through Rocks

As the first elected councilwoman of her remote Iranian village, Sara Shahverdi fearlessly breaks patriarchal traditions by training teenage girls to ride motorcycles and stopping child marriages. When accusations arise questioning Sara's intentions to empower the girls, her identity is put in turmoil.

Director	Sara Khaki, Mohammad Reza Eyni
Runtime	95 minutes
Language	Azerbaijani, Arabic, Persian, Turkish English subtitles
Country	United States, Canada, Chile, Qatar, Germany
Year	2025

Saturday, May 2

Calgary Central Library – 800 3rd St SE

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM SHORTS PROGRAM 2

Trailblazers: Journeys of Home

Characters striving to achieve, compete, or overcome obstacles

These films explore the journeys of migration, identity, and belonging. From crossing oceans to building new lives, the stories highlight the courage it takes to forge a path between cultures and generations.



Born an Immigrant – The Dressmaker

An uplifting story about family told through the history of fashion. As the eldest in her family, Lillian Shum quit school at the age of 12 to pick potatoes to support her mother and siblings after her father died. Despite being born in Victoria, Lillian, along with other Chinese Canadians, had to register with the Department of Immigration and Colonization during the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act.

100 years later, those immigration documents were made public and digitized for academics, researchers and families. This short doc sheds light on the dark time when the Canadian government was engaged in birthright citizenship. Yet, it's an uplifting story of one woman's dressmaking business in Victoria and the sense of purpose she found behind a Singer sewing machine.

Director	Jennifer Lee			
Runtime	23 minutes	Country	Canada	Rating G
Language	English	Year	2025	



Falcon Eyes

Fourteen-year-old June struggles with face blindness, a condition that makes it impossible for her to recognize people's faces. As she tries to remember her deceased mother's face, June also uncovers a secret kept by her father.

Director	Annlin Chao			
Runtime	20 minutes	Country	Canada	Rating PG
Language	English, Mandarin	Year	2025	



Portraits

Portraits is an intimate window into the life of Hung, a sketch artist in the middle of a bustling night market of Da Nang, Vietnam. With 2 charcoal pencils and masterful skills, he captures the essence of his subjects in minutes.

In a world increasingly obsessed with the speed and precision of Artificial Intelligence, Hung offers a quiet, profound meditation on what it means to create. The film explores his personal journey from discovering a hidden talent to finding purpose in creating tangible, hand-drawn memories for strangers. Hung is a testament to the irreplaceable value of human connection and a unique voice in the conversation about our technological future.

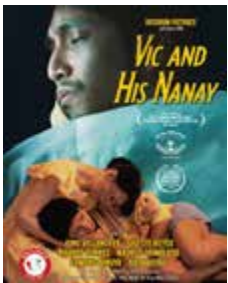
Director	Quan Luong			
Runtime	8 minutes 5 seconds	Country	Vietnam	Rating G
Language	Vietnamese, English subtitles	Year	2026	Biographical, Artist, slice of life, portrait



Find Me Outside

Diudiu and Leo, both Mandarin-speaking immigrants' children, navigate the slopes of the Canadian Rockies as they ski. Celeste, deeply rooted in her Indigenous horse culture, showcases the beauty of riding Indian Horse Relay in the Alberta Prairie. Anika, born into a family of Indian and Austrian climbers, climbs the rocks in her neighbourhood of Squamish, BC. Jade and Ryan, adventurous cold-water surfing girls from Ucluelet, Vancouver Island, ride the waves with enthusiasm.

Director	Ching Yu			
Runtime	17 minutes 20 seconds	Country	Canada	Rating G
Language	English	Year	2024	



Vic and His Nanay

While he's trapped in his apartment recovering from COVID, an exasperated Vic tries to evade a nosy apparition of his late mother.

Director	Jillian Janairo			
Runtime	10 minutes	Country	United States	Rating PG
Language	English	Year	2024	Comedy, Horror, Drama



Diminishing Returns

\$80 due today. Out of time and out of options, Ernesto keeps a positive outlook while he hunts the streets and dumpsters of LA in the hope of finding enough recyclables to pay for his daughter's chemo treatment back home in the Philippines.

Director	Colin Whitman			
Runtime	15 minutes	Rating	PG	
Language	English	Year	2025	



Carved in Ice

A visually striking journey that follows master ice carvers from China as they transform blocks of ice into intricate works of art in Calgary, revealing the cultural traditions, precision, and fleeting beauty behind their craft.

Director	Gabriel Staley			
Runtime	6 minutes	Country	Canada	Rating G
Language	Mandarin, English subtitles	Year	2026	

★ Please stay for a short Q&A with our filmmakers



8:00 PM FEATURE FILM (18+)



Montreal, Ma Belle

Feng Xia, a 53-year-old Chinese immigrant and mother living in Montreal, has spent her life shaped by duty – to her family, her culture, and a loveless marriage. But when she meets Camille, a spirited young Québécoise, a long-buried desire is awakened. In the balmy and joyful Montreal summer, Feng Xia takes the radical step of choosing herself – embarking on a journey of forbidden love and long-overdue self-discovery. Her awakening becomes a profound reckoning with identity, exile, and the steep cost of liberation.

Feng Xia, immigrante chinoise de 53 ans et mère de famille vivant à Montréal, a passé sa vie dans une obéissance silencieuse – envers sa famille, sa culture, et un mariage fondé sur le non-dit. Mais lorsqu'elle rencontre Camille, une jeune Québécoise libre et insouciant, un désir longtemps réprimé refait surface. Sous la chaleur étouffante de l'été montréalais, Feng Xia ose, pour la première fois, se choisir. Son aventure amoureuse interdite et sa quête de soi deviennent une confrontation bouleversante avec ses choix, son passé et le prix de la liberté.

Director	Xiaodan He	Country	Canada
Runtime	117 minutes	Year	2025
Language	Mandarin, English, French subtitles	Genre	Drama
		Rating 18A	Nudity, sex, smoking, language

Q&A

You'll get the opportunity to ask your questions for Director Xiaodan He in the Q&A following immediately after the film.

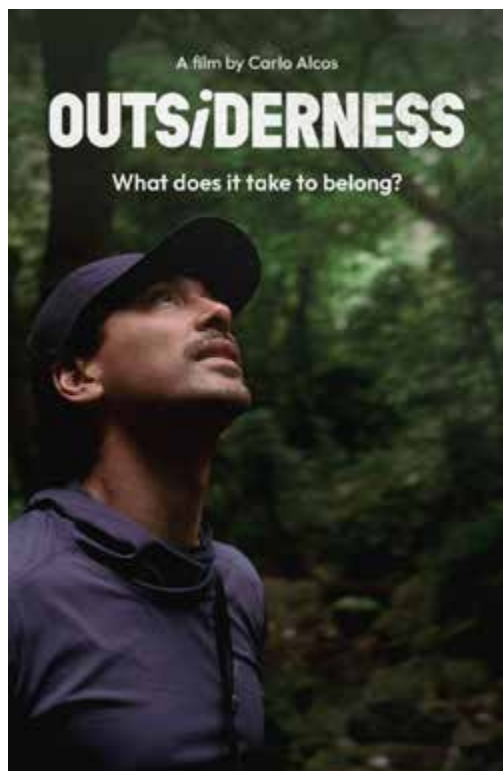
★ Dessert Reception

Stay with us for French and Asian-themed Dessert Reception—a chance to share stories, reflections, and sweet connections.



Sunday, May 3

Calgary Central Library – 800 3rd St SE



11:00 AM TRAILBLAZER SPOTLIGHT

Lunch & Conversation: Outsiderness

Outsiderness is a personal documentary by Carlo Alcos, a 2nd-generation Filipino-Canadian whose parents immigrated to BC in the early '70s. The film explores themes such as identity and belonging from his perspective, that of a brown kid who grew up in a predominantly white suburb and learned to assimilate in order to fit in. In the film, Carlo uncovers what he has sacrificed through adapting and conforming and tries to discover what true belonging means.

★ **Film and Panel Discussion**

After the screening, stay with us for a heartfelt panel conversation—moderated by Chris dela Torre of CBC's *The Homestretch* and co-organized with Filipinos Rising—deepening the film's exploration of identity, belonging, and the Filipino-Canadian experience.

This session includes a taste of Filipino food.

Director **Carlo Alcos**
Run time: 48 minutes 43 seconds
Language English
Country Canada

Presented by Community Partner



Sunday, May 3

Calgary Central Library – 800 3rd St SE

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM SHORTS PROGRAM 3



Trailblazers: New Visions

Creative, experimental, and diverse ideas

This collection celebrates bold storytelling and fresh perspectives. These films push boundaries through unique narratives, artistic styles, and imaginative ideas—reflecting the innovative spirit of trailblazers who chart new paths.



One Who Plays

Sapna, a 12-year-old girl from the de-notified Banchhada caste of Madhya Pradesh (India), dreams of becoming a doctor, inspired by the confidence of a lady doctor who works at the village primary healthcare clinic. However, her dreams are crushed by her community's generational tradition of caste-based prostitution, where girls are forced into the trade to fund their brothers' marriages and run the household. Despite her determination to pursue education, Sapna's illegitimacy denies her a caste certificate required for free schooling, and her mother insists she work at night as a prostitute to support the family. A kind doctor and a social worker try to help, but systemic apathy and cruel justifications thwart their efforts. With no escape, Sapna is forced to abandon her aspirations, taking her mother's place in a life of flesh trade. Her story reflects the harrowing cycle of oppression faced by countless women in her community, crying out for justice and change.

Director	Shobhita Thakur			
Runtime	26 minutes 35 seconds	Country	India	Rating 14A
Language	Hindi, English subtitles	Year	2025	



Papa's Coding Days

Manny, a hardworking tricycle driver, struggles to make ends meet for his small family. His young son, Gelo, dreams of having his father watch him at the school's poetry contest, where he plans to recite a poem he wrote just for Manny. Quietly, Gelo saves up coins to buy his Papa a day off.

When the landlady demands payment, Gelo offers his savings to Manny, hoping to help. What Gelo doesn't know is that Manny, quietly listening all along, uses the money to buy Gelo a real fairy costume—the one Gelo wants to wear for his poem at the contest. At the event, Gelo grows nervous and overwhelmed with longing when he realizes Manny isn't in the crowd. He runs outside, and after getting far, he hears a familiar sound. Manny arrives with their old tricycle now transformed into a makeshift fairytale carriage.

They ride together to a quiet hilltop—somewhere their tricycle usually can't reach. Under the sunset, Gelo recites his poem just for Manny, expressing his love and gratitude. In that peaceful moment, father and son are lifted above life's hardships, proving that love and imagination can take them anywhere.

Director	Michael Pogoy			
Runtime	18 minutes 15 seconds	Country	Philippines	Rating G
Language	Tagalog	Year	2025	Drama, Coming of age

Khmerican



Khmerican

When wounded gangsters seek refuge in his father's donut shop, a Cambodian-American teen striving to escape the gang violence and debts that plague his family is thrust into a life-or-death standoff that tests his loyalty, challenges his identity, and threatens his future.

Director	Jimmy Chiu		
Runtime	20 minutes	Country	United States
Language	English	Rating	14A



Searching for Color

Megan, an Asian adoptee, struggles to assert her identity against her white mother's expectations, finding reprieve in her bond with Gina, a nail technician who becomes a motherly figure. Through the meaning of the color red, Gina brings a newfound confidence to Megan, bolstering her Asian identity. When Gina decides to return to China, Megan faces the emotional challenge of saying goodbye, but ultimately embraces her newfound confidence and cultural roots by choosing bright red nail polish.

Director	Mikayla Ashe		
Runtime	6 minutes	Year	2026
Language	English	Rating	PG



Yolkless Press

Originating in Japan during the 1980s, Risograph printing has seen a resurgence in the last decade, with independent presses popping up across Canada. A new movement of artists are redefining this printing technique, including Areum Kim and Teresa Tam who co-run Yolkless Press in Calgary, Alberta. Started in November 2020, Yolkless Press focuses on publishing artist-driven projects including prints, zines, and publications. This short documentary highlights their projects centered around the Asian diaspora experience, and how they provide a much-needed platform for underrepresented voices.

Director	Vicki Van Chau		
Runtime	17 minutes	Country	Canada
Language	English	Year	2025



Hatch

Trapped inside a water tanker, a refugee boy's escape becomes a journey that will haunt him forever.

Directors	Alireza Kazemipour, Panta Mosleh		
Runtime	10 minutes 57 seconds	Country	Canada
Language	English	Rating	PG

★ Please stay for a short Q&A with our filmmakers

Sunday, May 3



3:30 PM FEATURE FILM

Space Cadet

When the astronaut Celeste blasts off into space on her first solo mission, the guardian robot that has accompanied her throughout her childhood is left alone to wonder: What now? A tomorrow-days lullaby about finding your place in the universe.

Based on the graphic novel by Kid Koala.

“The story of Space Cadet is told through the lens of guardian and child, technology and humankind, past and present. It touches on themes of connectivity and everyone’s innate power to evolve. Space Cadet is a celebration of love and life... the cycles of generations and the bonds that connect us.” – *Director and Composer: Kid Koala aka Eric San*

Interview

A recorded interview with Director and Composer Kid Koala follows the screening

Director	Kid Koala	Country	Canada
Year	2026	Rating	G
Runtime	86 minutes		Animation, Sci-Fi, Family



5:30 PM

 **Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre**

★ **Trailblazers’ Awards Night & Reception Gala**

Join us at Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre for an unforgettable evening of creativity, connection, and celebration.

Doors open at 5:30 PM welcoming you with a guided tour of the Chinese Cultural Centre Museum and offering time to mingle and network with fellow film enthusiasts and festival-goers.

Our Awards Night and Reception begins at 6:30 PM, featuring a custom Pan-Asian menu, a live guzheng musical performance, and a vibrant silent auction filled with unique treasures. It’s the perfect evening to honour artistic excellence and build meaningful connections within the Calgary’s Asian film community.

All awards including an Audience Choice award will be presented on this special night.

Festival Awards – Calgary

At the Calgary edition of the festival, we are proud to celebrate outstanding talent and storytelling through our annual awards. Our distinguished jury have awarded the following awards:

- **Best Short Film**
- **Best Performance in a Short Film**
- **Building Bridges Award**



Jury Profiles

Paolo Oliveros

Paolo Oliveros is a Calgary-based filmmaker, producer, and director of the award-winning documentary *disABLEd*, as well as the documentary series *Hiraya*. He is currently developing his latest project, *Queens of Canada*, and serves as Program Director for *SineMa* (*Sine Mabuhay*), a film exhibition dedicated to showcasing Filipino-Canadian stories and voices.

With a background in journalism, Paolo is a skilled communicator driven by a deep commitment to community building. His work in the non-profit sector focuses on amplifying underrepresented voices through storytelling and creating platforms that foster connection, identity, and cultural pride. He currently works as a Strategic Communications Specialist with Canadian Blood Services, advancing meaningful public engagement initiatives.

In 2022, Paolo was recognized by CBC Calgary as one of 10 Asian changemakers, highlighting his impact as both a storyteller and community advocate. He continues to expand his work across film and media, exploring identity, heritage, and the evolving Filipino-Canadian experience.



Razid Season

Razid Season is an award-winning independent filmmaker whose work centers on socially conscious storytelling, exploring identity, history, and marginalized voices. Born in Abu Dhabi, raised in Dhaka, and now based in New York, his films bridge cultural memory and lived experience with urgent contemporary themes.

His acclaimed short film *Kaddish*, featured in the *Visual History of the Holocaust* project, has received international recognition, broadcast exposure, and institutional preservation, including presentation at the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County.

Season's work has screened at Oscar-qualifying festivals and been presented at leading institutions such as Yale University, UCSF, CUNY, the New York Public Library, and Queens Public Library.

Beyond filmmaking, he has served as a juror for the *PLURAL+* Youth Film Festival, an initiative of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and as a project evaluator for *POV* on PBS. His recent film *Elijah* continues his commitment to powerful, human-centered storytelling exploring identity, faith, and belonging.



Bao Hong

Bao Hong is a Calgary-based actor and film professional working in locations for film and television productions. With experience across both performance and behind-the-scenes roles, he brings a well-rounded perspective to the industry. Bao has contributed to major union productions for CBC, Netflix, and A24, supporting the creation of large-scale projects while continuing to develop his work as an actor. His practice reflects a strong understanding of on-set collaboration and storytelling, grounded in both technical expertise and creative passion within Calgary's growing screen industry.



Everyday Trailblazers

As FascinAsian celebrates Asian Heritage Month, we are showcasing the work of five photographers that will identify Trailblazers in the eyes of the photographers. Photographers were selected from an open call for submissions for this showcase. Meet the photographers featured in our Everyday Trailblazer Photovoice Exhibit. You can see their work at the Calgary Public Central Library.



Christina Yao



Harjeet Kaur Jassi



Heinrich Domingo



Jessica Cheng



Jon Yee

FascinAsian Trailblazers of 2026

As we celebrate The Year of the Horse and the Year of the Trailblazer, FascinAsian Film Festival has recognized two trailblazers that have made their mark in the film and media industry. These trailblazers also make their mark in our Festival this year, one as the leading actor in the film *Montreal, Ma Belle* and the other as the Director of feature film *Space Cadet*. Congratulations to **Joan Chen** and **Kid Koala**.



Joan Chen



Kid Koala

Performers

Yama No Oto

Yama no Oto is a Calgary-based taiko ensemble founded by passionate drummers dedicated to sharing the powerful rhythms of Japanese drumming. Meaning "Sound of the Mountain," their name reflects a style that is both dynamic and grounded in nature. Known for high-energy performances, the group blends traditional taiko with modern influences and strong showmanship, appearing at festivals and events across the region. Beyond the stage, Yama no Oto is committed to community engagement, offering workshops and classes for all ages and skill levels. Through their work, they continue to foster cultural awareness and bring people together through music.



Mizue Asai-Kaufmann

Mizue Asai-Kaufmann began playing the koto in junior high and later trained in Japan through the NHK Hogaku Musicians Program, specializing in 17-string bass koto. Now based in Calgary, she has performed widely at cultural and community events. Today, she plays a traditional 13-string koto, featuring classical works including Rokud



Harmony Guzheng Ensemble Association

The guzheng produces its distinctive sound through a resonant wooden body, movable bridges, and steel-wrapped nylon strings, offering a tonal range from soft and delicate to bright and powerful. Its music is clear and expressive, often evoking natural imagery like flowing water or chirping birds, blending traditional Chinese melodies with fluid elegance. Enjoy the music of members of the Harmony Guzheng Ensemble. The ensemble has been active in various cultural and community service activities in Calgary for more than ten years. Their aim is to promote Guzheng music and the Chinese music culture.



Jing Wo Cultural Association

Lion Dance is a traditional performance in Chinese culture where dancers mimic a lion's movements in costume to bring good luck and fortune, typically during festivals. It is also performed at occasions such as business openings, weddings, and special celebrations to honor guests within Chinese communities. Jing Wo Cultural Association preserves and promotes Chinese culture in Canada through teaching and performing Lion Dance, welcoming anyone interested to learn and participate in public events. The association fosters connections between Canadian-born Chinese and their heritage by encouraging intergenerational dialogue and cultural exchange in both English and Chinese.



Rozzie Lee

Rozzie Lee is a visual artist and communications professional from Calgary, AB. She is passionate about delivering meaningful and purpose-driven art within the community. Her background in fine arts, graphic design and illustration are applied every day in her favourite mediums of painting, drawing and chalk! Her work brings a sense of whimsy and fun, often listening to the inner child who was drawn to playful and positive imagery that evokes joy. Sharing her creativity, she hopes that the act of creation encourages others that with just a few materials and two hands, a person can create amazing things.





FASCINASIAN FILM FESTIVAL



Thank you!

The FascinAsian Film Festival – Calgary team extends our heartfelt thanks to all our collaborators – our funders, partners, sponsors, filmmakers, dedicated volunteers, and loyal patrons – for helping make our fifth year a remarkable success. As a proudly volunteer-run organization, we are deeply grateful to everyone who has shared their time, talent, and energy. Your commitment fuels our trailblazing spirit and strengthens FascinAsian's mission to uplift Asian stories and build community through film.

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See you next year!

WEB: fascinasian.ca • EMAIL: calgary@fascinasian.ca

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