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International flare meets small-town charm at fifth annual Lunenburg Doc Fest

Lunenburg, Nova Scotia – Genesis 2.0, a film about the hunt for ‘white gold’ on the edge of Siberia and scientists who want to bring the woolly mammoth back to life, earned top prize at the fifth annual Lunenburg Doc Fest on September 23. The **Best Feature Documentary** award came with a **\$1000 prize** for the first time this year.

“This award means a lot to me and my young co-director Maxim Arbugaev,” said Christian Frei, director of **Genesis 2.0**. “Thank you, Lunenburg and thanks to the jury! Maxim and I embarked together on this journey three and a half years ago, and we are overwhelmed by the positive response all over the world.”

Letter From Masanjia, a feature that was filmed secretly in China to bring the harsh realities of labour camps to light, earned **honourable mention** from the jury.

Director Leon Lee received a standing ovation as he took the stage for a Q&A following the screening of his film. The audience was eager to engage Lee with questions about the injustices faced by Chinese citizens and the logistics of crafting a documentary in secret. In true Lunenburg fashion, the thoughtful discussion continued down the street and into Risser’s Social House, where Lee continued the conversation with filmgoers at a **Meet the Artists Reception**.

“I hope the viewer will do something, however small,” Lee told the crowd. “No matter how small the action is, it might bring some kind of change.”

This year’s vote for LDF’s **Audience Award** went to **Sammy Davis Jr.: I’ve Gotta Be Me**, director Samuel D. Pollard’s film about the inimitable entertainer’s complicated path through the racial divide of 20th-century America.

Prince’s Tale—a portrait of a young actor’s survival of a near-fatal fire, and the journey of mental recovery that brought him back to the stage—received LDF’s **Short Film Award**. The film, directed by Jamie Miller, was part of LDF’s Shorts From Around the World program.

“I am so beyond honoured for our film to be celebrated in Atlantic Canada and selected by this brilliant documentary community,” said Miller. “This story is about the beauty of resiliency and love for human connection. I have learned so much about our capacity for both in this process.”

Director Millefiore Clarke's accolades on the festival circuit grew at Lunenburg Doc Fest. She won the **Atlantic Filmmaker Award** for her film **The Song and the Sorrow**, which screened on September 21 to a packed house. The film followed PEI musician Catherine MacLellan in her journey to learn more about the life of her father, Canadian music legend Gene MacLellan, and her attempts to come to terms with both his and her own struggles with depression.

Clarke stated, "I'm thrilled to receive this award and grateful to everyone who helped me craft **The Song and the Sorrow**—most especially Catherine MacLellan and her family for sharing their story, and the National Film Board team for their guidance and support."

NSCC student **Chris d'Entremont** was the recipient of LDF's **\$1000 Youth** Bursary, which is awarded to a Nova Scotia student pursuing post-secondary media studies.

Festival passes sold out faster than ever this year, and with an expanded and engaging slate of industry events, the charming seaside town played host to filmmakers and industry decision-makers from near and far, including representatives from British Columbia's Knowledge Network, CBC, Hot Docs, National Film Board, Sideways Film (UK/Spain).

Jackie Torrens' short film **Bernie Langille Wants to Know... Who Killed Bernie Langille** screened on September 22 as part of the **Short Films: Truth Be Told** program. She says the town's intimate setting allows filmmakers to have a voice and sets it apart from other festivals.

"This is an amazing festival," said Torrens. "We've been treated so well and have had a really great time. We feel that there's a real celebration and respect for storytelling and storytellers here."

The festival took place in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, September 20–23. Screenings were held in the historic Lunenburg Opera House, including four shorts programs and 12 regional and Canadian film premieres. Lunenburg Doc Fest will return for its sixth edition next year.

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Lunenburg Doc Fest showcases documentary films that entertain, educate, and inspire, creating a cultural experience and place of connection between filmmakers and film enthusiasts in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. The festival is presented with generous support from Arts Nova Scotia, Telefilm and Nova Scotia Communities, Culture and Heritage.

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