

# SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL REVEALS FIRST NATIONS FILMS

The 71<sup>st</sup> Sydney Film Festival, with the support of Screen Australia's First Nations Department, proudly continues its commitment to showcasing First Nations storytelling from Australia and around the world. In 2024, SFF has introduced the inaugural First Nations Award - the largest cash prize in the world for First Nations filmmaking

The inaugural First Nations Award, proudly supported by Truant Pictures awards \$35,000 to the winning First Nations filmmaker. All films, including short films, featured within the Festival's First Nations program automatically qualify for consideration for the award, with the winner announced at SFF Closing Night on 16 June.

"From historical epics to poignant documentaries and captivating shorts, this year's First Nation films are brimming with diverse ideas and rich perspectives from Indigenous storytellers," said **Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "With the introduction of the inaugural First Nations Award, generously supported by Truant Pictures, we're proud to offer the largest cash prize in global Indigenous filmmaking history, highlighting our ongoing dedication to elevating Indigenous voices in cinema."

**Screen Australia Head of First Nations, Angela Bates** said, "Sydney Film Festival has a long history of showcasing First Nations filmmakers and stories through the First Nations Program, and we're delighted to continue our partnership in presenting this year's selection.

"Following *The Moogai's* successful screenings at SXSW and Sundance, it's fantastic to see it acknowledged with an Australian premiere at Sydney Film Festival – and presented alongside such a diverse program of powerful narratives from around the world. This marks yet another step in First Nations' storytelling remarkable journey and its global impact."

**Zareh Nalbandian, CEO of Truant Pictures** said, "Truant Pictures is proud to stand behind the Sydney Film Festival's inaugural Global First Nations film award. Celebrating the rich tapestry of indigenous storytelling, and championing greater representation and inclusivity in the creative industries."

In a World Premiere screening, *Once Were Warriors* stars Temuera Morrison and Cliff Curtis reunite for *Ka Whawhai Tonu*, a historical epic about Aotearoa's first land war, when vastly outnumbered Māori fought against colonial soldiers.

In *The Convert*, Guy Pearce stars as a British preacher caught up in 1830s Māori wars in Lee Tamahori's (*Once Were Warriors*, 1993; *Mahana*, SFF 2016) sweeping historical drama.

The haunting history of the Stolen Generations looms large in *The Moogai* when a malicious spirit enters the home of a young Indigenous couple with a newborn baby. Based on his SFF-winning short of the same name, writer-director Jon Bell's striking feature debut arrives direct from SXSW and Sundance.

From New Zealand comes *The Mountain*, the directorial debut of actor Rachel House (*Hunt for the Wilderpeople*). Executive produced by Taika Waititi, the film centres on three children discovering friendship's healing power through the spirit of adventure as they trek through spectacular New Zealand landscapes.

Another New Zealand feature, executive produced by Taika Waititi, ***We Were Dangerous*** by director Josephine Stewart-Te Whiu follows three defiant girls caught in New Zealand's history of eugenics.

In ***Ellogierdu – The Tundra Within Me***, an artist returns to her childhood home, reconnecting with her Sámi heritage and finding love with a reindeer herder. This debut feature from Sara Margrethe Oskal was screened at Toronto International Film Festival.

Three First Nations shorts, ***First Horse*** (New Zealand), ***Tayal Forest Club*** (Taiwan) and ***Lea Tupu'anga / Mother Tongue*** (New Zealand), will also individually compete for the award.

The full Sydney Film Festival 2024 program can be found online at [sff.org.au](https://sff.org.au).

**Sydney Film Festival runs from 5-16 June 2024. Tickets and Flexipasses to Sydney Film Festival 2024 are on sale now. Please call 1300 733 733 or visit [sff.org.au](https://sff.org.au) for more information or to book.**

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**\*\*\*Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)**

### **EDITOR'S NOTES**

#### **ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL**

From Wednesday 5 to Sunday 16 June 2024, the 71<sup>st</sup> Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, film guests and more.

Sydney Film Festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest-running film festivals. For more information visit [sff.org.au](https://sff.org.au).

The 71<sup>st</sup> Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney.

