

# 10th Annual Planet in Focus Film Festival Announces Award Winners at Closing Gala

**Toronto, October 25, 2009** - The tenth edition of Canada's premiere environmental film festival, the **Planet in Focus International Environmental Film & Video Festival**, came to a close on Sunday October 25th with its most successful run to date. The festival, which ran October 21 to October 25 in Toronto, showcased close to 100 of the world's best films on a wide range of environmental themes by Canadian and international filmmakers. The festival presented its annual film awards at the Royal Ontario Museum just prior to screening the final film of the festival, **Sylvie Van Brabant's *Earth Keepers***.

The **Best Canadian Short Form Film** was awarded to *This Land* (Canada, 2009), a story about a harrowing northern journey taken by seven Canadian and Inuit rangers, accompanied by director **Dianne Whelan**. In the name of reaffirming Canadian arctic sovereignty, Whelan and her team set out to cover more than 2000 km of the harshest terrain on the planet to plant the Canadian flag on the furthest reach of national soil some 412 km from the North Pole.

*Earth Keepers* (Canada, 2009) by **Sylvie Van Brabant** was named **Best Canadian Long Form Film**. The film follows Quebec activist Mikael Rioux as he meets international visionaries with exciting new projects for building a more environmentally friendly future.

The **Best International Short Form Film** honour was given to *Pančevo - The Dead City* (Italy, 2007). Directed by **Antonio Martino**, the film explores the city of Pančevo, Serbia, where emissions from a nearby petrochemical plant routinely convert the city to "the largest gas chamber in the world." Martino speaks with the citizens of Pančevo to examine the political and corporate interests that have left the air toxic and the inhabitants betrayed.

*Marina of the Zabbaleen* (Egypt/USA, 2007) was declared **Best International Long Form Film**. Director **Engi Wassef** takes a stunning look at the Zabbaleen, a culture of Coptic Christians living in Egypt, who make a living through garbage collection and recycling.

The **Mark Haslam Award**, established in honour of the festival's founder, is awarded to "any drama, animation, documentary or experimental film that gives voice to individuals, communities, struggles or stories that are under-represented in the media." This year, the honour was given to the **Wapikoni: Mobile** program, a collection of short films from Canada that deal with environmental issues from young aboriginal perspective in remote communities in Quebec.

The **Eco-Hero Awards** are given to an individual or organization that "has demonstrated outstanding leadership and made a lasting contribution to environmental awareness, action and change on the international stage." The celebrated and long-running CBC program *The Nature of Things with David Suzuki* was designated an **Industry/Media Eco-Hero** for its instrumental role in enhancing environmental awareness among its viewers. This year Suzuki celebrates his 30th season as host of the series which has brought environmental issues into the homes of millions of Canadians and viewers worldwide.

Previously, at the opening Gala event on October 21st, renowned Canadian activist, author, and environmentalist **Maude Barlow** was presented with the **International Eco-Hero Award** for her work as the tireless champion for universal water rights. Canadian entrepreneur and founder of ZENN Motor Company **Ian Clifford** was also presented with the **Canadian Eco-Hero Award** for his work in developing zero emissions automotive technologies.

The **Green Pitch Award** went to **Damir Frkovic** for his project, *World's Fastest Submarine*.

The panel of jurors for this year's festival included **Ziya Tong**, co-host of the Discovery Channel's Daily Planet program, **Vanessa Farquharson**, arts reporter, film critic, and environmental columnist at the National Post, and **Ian Connacher**, independent filmmaker and producer of environmental documentaries and programs.

In addition to the films, the festival featured pre- and post-screening discussions, panels, industry workshops, a "Green Marketplace" business centre, a silent auction, special children's and school programs, and Land & Conflict, a collaborative series of films, music, photography, and poetry that focused on diasporic voices. For more information on Planet in Focus, visit: [www.planetinfoocus.org](http://www.planetinfoocus.org)

### **Planet in Focus International Environmental Film & Video Festival Award Winners Wrap Up**

<b>Best Canadian Short Form Film</b>	<i>This Land</i> (Canada, 2009) Dianne Whelan
<b>Best Canadian Long Form Film</b>	<i>Earth Keepers</i> (Canada, 2009) Sylvie Van Brabant
<b>Best International Short Form Film</b>	<i>Pançevo - The Dead City</i> (Italy, 2007) Antonio Martino
<b>Best International Long Form Film</b>	<i>Marina of the Zabbaleen</i> (Egypt/USA, 2007) Engi Wassef
<b>Mark Haslam Award</b>	<i>Wapikoni: Mobile</i> (Shorts: Canada) various
<b>Industry/Media Eco Hero</b>	<i>The Nature of Things with David Suzuki</i>
<b>International Eco Hero</b>	Maude Barlow
<b>Canadian Eco Hero</b>	Ian Clifford
<b>Green Pitch Award</b>	Damir Frkovic

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