

A large crowd of people is gathered in a gymnasium, dancing and celebrating. The room is filled with colorful lights, including purple and green beams. Two Christmas trees are visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is festive and energetic.

**POINTS
NORTH**

ANNUAL REPORT

Points North advances the art, artists, and audiences of documentary storytelling.

We believe documentary is one of the most powerful forms of storytelling – and that the stories being told right now matter more than ever.



The **Camden International Film Festival (CIFF)**, held each September in Midcoast Maine, is our most visible program: a gathering of 50 feature and short documentaries, the majority of them premieres, alongside the filmmakers who made them. Widely recognized as one of the world's leading documentary festivals, CIFF is a place where bold work premieres, lasting relationships form, and audiences engage with nonfiction cinema as a shared, living experience. Alongside the films, we host the **Points North Forum** – 11 workshops, pitch sessions, and discussions led by prominent filmmakers and field-leaders – taking you even deeper inside the craft and business of documentary.

Points North's **Artist Programs** support emerging and mid-career documentary filmmakers at pivotal moments in their creative lives, providing mentorship, funding, and access to industry networks. Many supported films go on to premiere at CIFF, and our alumni have become some of the most vital voices in the field.

Together, our work forms a connected ecosystem: artist development, public exhibition, and industry convening that strengthens documentary as an art form and as a public good.

None of it would be possible without the generosity of our supporters – thank you for making this work happen.

To support Points North, visit pointsnorthinstitute.org/support

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

"In the dark times, will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing about the dark times."

I quoted these lines from Bertolt Brecht in the introduction to the CIFF 2025 program guide, and have returned to them often this year. They point to something I believe deeply: that gathering — around a film, around a campfire, around a shared table — is not escape. It's an act of renewal, resilience, and sometimes of resistance.

It hasn't been an easy season for documentary, or for the broader cultural landscape we move within. Public funding for artists and institutions continues to be eroded. Many arts organizations, including our own, have navigated unprecedented uncertainty. And yet, we gathered — and we built.

This year, Points North supported more than 25 film projects in active development, distributing over \$300,000 in direct grants to filmmakers. Through our Points North Fellowship, LEF/CIFF Fellowship, 4th World Media Lab, and the Diane Weyermann Fellowship we brought

together a diverse filmmaker community across a full spectrum of racial and gender identities and lived experiences.

For the first time in our 20+ year history, we were the executive producers on a feature doc, *To Hold a Mountain*, which premiered at Sundance 2026 where it received the Grand Jury Prize for World Cinema Documentary. And we continued our Recovery in Maine program, bringing people with lived experience of substance misuse into conversation with documentary films across the state.

In September, for the 21st edition of the Camden International Film Festival, the nonfiction world once again found its way to Midcoast Maine. As *Filmmaker Magazine* wrote, CIFF offers a kind of "community campfire" — as true this year as ever, though we made space in new ways. For the first time, we expanded to all-day screenings on Thursday. On the evening before opening night, we hosted a free community screening. At sunrise on Beech Hill, festival guests and neighbors ran together overlooking Penobscot Bay — an echo of the long-distance runs of Ku Stevens, protagonist of *Remaining Native*, a film developed through Points North's Artist Programs.



And then there was a moment that felt like singing in the dark times. At a moving screening of *Come See Me In The Good Light*, poet and protagonist Megan Falley joined us following the recent death of her partner, Andrea Gibson. She and our moderator, Beadie Finzi, read poems and journal entries to one another in a thoroughly different kind of Q&A. The theater held silence and grief and laughter all at once.

This year also marked the inaugural Ben Fowlie Audience Award — a \$10,000 prize honoring CIFF's founder, and a reminder that audiences are vital participants in this ecosystem. This year's winner — *Unless Something Goes Terribly Wrong* — is a Maine

story that went through one of our 2023 Artist Programs.

In a year defined by fragmentation, Points North offered something increasingly rare: shared space for discussion, reflection, and ideation.

None of this happens without you. In 2025, Points North raised \$1.85 million in support from individual donors, foundations, and corporate sponsors — making possible both the direct support we provide to filmmakers and the public-facing work of the festival and our community programs.

As we look ahead to our 22nd edition this September, we're launching a new monthly screening series bringing filmmakers to Midcoast Maine year-round, and reimagining our summer gathering to create even more joyful, inclusive, and inspiring experiences for all.

If there will be singing, there must be a space to gather. I thank you for sustaining this one.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elise". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Elise McCave, Executive Director
Points North Institute



“The Diane Weyermann Fellowship was a life changing experience that empowered us to start working on our film in a totally free way, to rethink both story and production without any boundaries. It nourished my creative desires and opened new possibilities on so many levels. The protected space it offers is a tremendous privilege and yet it’s a necessary condition. It allows us to practice documentary filmmaking as a form of art.”

Biljana Tutorov, Director

SELECTED FOR THE INAUGURAL Diane Weyermann Fellowship cohort in 2023, filmmakers Biljana Tutorov and Petar Glomazić received creative mentorship from Points North over the course of an 18-month period, and \$100,000 in grant funding to support the completion of their feature documentary, *To Hold a Mountain*. Points North is an Executive Producer on the film.

In the remote highlands of Montenegro, the film follows a shepherd mother and daughter proudly defending their ancestral mountain

from the threat of becoming a NATO military training ground, stirring memories of the violence that shattered their family.

The first film completed through the Weyermann Fellowship, *To Hold a Mountain* premiered this winter at Sundance Film Festival where it received an incredible milestone – the Grand Jury Prize for World Documentary. Beyond cinematic accolades, it is directly impacting on the region and communities in which it is set, truly showcasing the power of documentary filmmaking.

PORTLAND, MAINE-BASED directors, Kaitlyn Schwalje and Alex Wolf Lewis, debuted their feature documentary, *Unless Something Goes Terribly Wrong* at the 2025 edition of the Camden International Film Festival where it received a standing ovation and the inaugural Fowlie Audience Award. This was followed by a hometown premiere at the Portland Museum of Art, and a successful series of encore screenings around Maine and beyond.

With humor and charm, the film highlights an aging wastewater treatment facility in Portland and the delightful, passionate team who “keep things running.” The film also shines a spotlight on vital work to keep our water clean that so often remains hidden.

This film began its journey with Points North in 2023 via our LEF/CIFF Fellowship, which supports New England based filmmakers through artistic mentorship from members of the nonfiction industry.



“Premiering at CIFF was a full circle moment for us - like a baby bird coming home with a big worm after flying across the Pacific Ocean. Our documentary was incubated and fed in the warm nest of the LEF/CIFF Fellowship. Just a few short years later we returned back home, so to speak, to show our film.

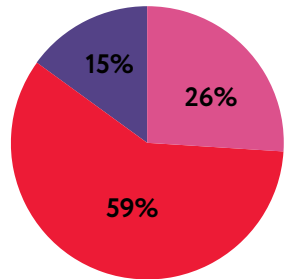
Being a Maine production, it was a joy to attend our premiere with the wastewater community that breathed life into our film. The standing ovation the wastewater operators received on stage got the team a bit teary eyed.

It was maybe the first time Alex and I were able to share our point of view with our subjects and have them see that we’re not the only lunatics thinking they’re the coolest and celebrating all that they do.”

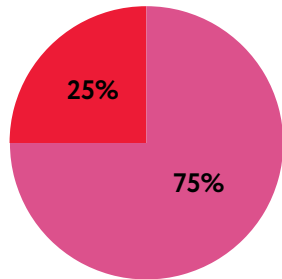
Kaitlyn Schwalje, Co-Director

In 2025, Points North convened four cohorts of filmmakers through the Points North Fellowship, LEF/CIFF Fellowship, 4th World Media Lab, and the Diane Weyermann Fellowship, held this year in Mexico. In partnership with BAVC, POV, and UFO, we also welcomed additional groups of filmmakers to Midcoast Maine.

We continued our **Recovery in Maine** program, bringing people with lived experience of substance misuse into conversation around short documentary films across the state. Additionally, we held screenings throughout the year in Belfast, Camden, Rockland, and Portland, including our weekend-long **Cabin Fever Film Fest** in March.



- Men
- Women
- Gender Nonconforming + Nonbinary



- BIPOC Filmmakers
- White Filmmakers

26
FILM PROJECTS IN
DEVELOPMENT
SUPPORTED

\$300k
IN DIRECT
GRANTS TO
FILMMAKERS

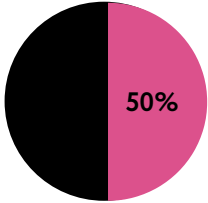
1,300+
MAINERS REACHED
BY **RECOVERY**
IN MAINE
SCREENINGS

11
FREE **RECOVERY**
IN MAINE
SCREENINGS
ACROSS THE STATE

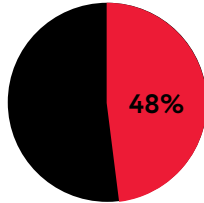


Across four full days of screenings – beginning Thursday morning and opening with a free community event – CIFF 2025 welcomed filmmakers and audiences from around the world.

The program embraced the breadth of contemporary nonfiction, bringing global stories of care, kinship, resilience, and belonging into our shared space here in Midcoast Maine.



● Films directed or co-directed by BIPOC filmmakers



● Films directed or co-directed by female, and gender expansive filmmakers



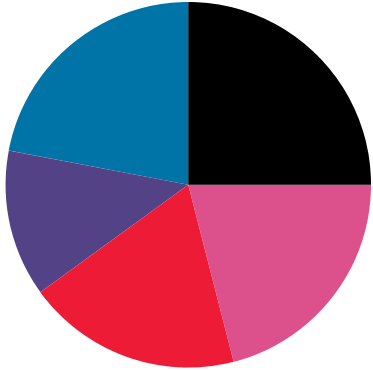
54
FILMS
from
32
COUNTRIES

34
WORLD,
NORTH
AMERICAN,
AND US
PREMIERES

26
FILMMAKERS
PARTICIPATING
IN Q&A
OR PANEL
DISCUSSIONS

Points North maintains a robust and diverse mix of funding sources. We entered 2025 projecting a deficit and closed the year with a surplus – a testament to disciplined stewardship and the generosity of our community.

Total Cash Income: \$1,847,260



- Individual Contributions: \$459,905
- Corporate Sponsorship: \$376,774
- Grant/Foundation Support: \$362,250
- Earned Revenue: \$248,331
- Weyermann Fund: \$400,000



The artists, programs, and gatherings in these pages are made possible by the generosity of more than 100 organizations and individuals. Thank you to every supporter who helps sustain this work.

\$100,000 - \$199,000

Anonymous
Ford Foundation

\$50,000 - \$99,000

Anonymous
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LEF Foundation
National Endowment for the Arts
National Geographic Documentary Films
RandomGood Foundation
Cynthia & John Reed
YETI

\$25,000 - \$49,999

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Robyn & Bob Metcalfe
Perspective Fund
The Leshar Family Foundation

\$10,000 - \$24,000

Cold Mountain Builders
Doc Society
DR Bank
Kickstarter
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Drummond Woodsum Attorneys at Law
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Faliro House
Kanopy
Skip Klein & Judy Sandler

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Maine Film Office
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\$2,500 - \$4,999

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\$1,000 - \$2,499

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Liv Rockefeller & Kenneth Shure
Jonathan Rogers
Paul & Marty Rogers
Ellen Seidman
Laura Stehr Peters
Urban Exodus

\$500 - \$999

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York-Chi & Stephen Harder
Steven Koltai
Maine Math & Science Alliance
Betsy Perry & Neale Sweet
Marvin & Keri Putnam
Matthew T. Rogers
John & Carolyn Rosenblum
Matthew & Keiko Storn



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 Sean Flynn: Points North Co-Founder & Artistic Director
 Kate Fox Stancioff: Development Director
 Zeshawn Ali: Senior Artist Programs Manager
 Clio Berta: Operations Manager
 Willoughby Lucas Hastings: Senior Marketing Coordinator

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