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Waking the Green Tiger best at Planet Fest.
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(October 17, 2011 - Toronto, Ontario) The 12th edition of Planet in Focus Environmental Film Festival wrapped its most successful film festival to date last night at the Closing Night Gala, with the announcement of this year's award winners. The five day festival featured 75 film premieres and a wide array of programming that included leading filmmakers and environmentalists from all over the world. Despite worries about the economy in some areas, this year's festival reported record attendance. Festival Executive Director Sarah Margolis points to this growth as a sign people are becoming more interested in what's happening to our planet.

There's "a hunger for films on key environmental issues and stories about the state of our planet. Our public screenings, expanded Industry Series for film and television professionals as well as our free Children's and Youth Programs continue to break new ground for audiences of all ages," said Margolis.

Kathleen Mullen, Director of Programming, added, "We had local and international filmmakers debating and showcasing their films with all kinds of subjects and styles. The work was of stellar quality and our audiences embraced the festival this year more than ever."

Planet in Focus presents five competitive awards each year, including a special award in honour of Festival founder Mark Haslam. The 2011 Best Canadian Feature Film Award was awarded to *Waking the Green Tiger*, directed by Gary Marcuse. The television version will air later this year on CBC's *The Nature of Things with David Suzuki*.

Waking the Green Tiger follows an extraordinary campaign to stop a huge dam project on the Upper Yangtze River in southwestern China. Featuring astonishing archival footage never seen outside of China, as well as interviews with a government insider and the people who are working to save the river, *Waking the Green Tiger* is an inspired look at the new environmental movement in China.

Honourable Mention for Best Canadian Feature Film: *The Ailing Queen (La reine malade)*, directed by Pascal Sanchez.



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The 2011 Best Canadian Short Film Award was awarded to *Nanameskueu (Tremblement de terre)* directed by Réal Junior Leblanc and produced by Wapikoni Mobile.

Nanameskueu is a poetic and colourful dual-screen collage of the faces, trees, waves and moon around him. This film was one of the nine short films in the Alternative Landscapes shorts program.

The 2011 Best International Feature Film Award was awarded to *There Once Was an Island (Te henua e nnoho)*, directed by Briar March. Shot over four years on the Takuu Atoll off the coast of Papua New Guinea, *There Once Was an Island* examines the ever-changing and very personal debate vexing clans indigenous to the flood-stricken and fast-eroding island chain. Honourable Mention went to *On Coal River*, directed by Francine Cavanaugh and Adams Wood.

The 2011 Best International Short Film Award went to *Carbon for Water*, directed by Evan Abramson and Carmen Elsa Lopez Abramson. *Carbon for Water* explores how limited access to clean water in Kenya's Western Province is forcing its population to fell trees to boil drinking water. With projected carbon emission cuts at 2,000,000 tons in the first year, an innovative company has financed the distribution and maintenance of 900,000 water filters to communities in the Western Province based entirely on carbon credits. Honourable Mention: *The Past as Future*, directed by Ton van Zantvoort.

The Mark Haslam Award, established in honour of Mark Haslam, the founder of Planet in Focus, was awarded to *Keepers of the Water*, directed by Ayelen Liberona. *Keepers of the Water* looks at Native youth living directly downstream from the Alberta Tar Sands in Fort Chipewyan, who share stories about the illnesses their families endure because of contaminated water and government inaction.

In addition, the following awards were presented during the Industry Series Reception on Friday, October 14 at the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre:

The Green Pitch Award is an exciting competition awarding \$5,500 in development funding and services to the best eco-film idea pitched before a jury of film and television professionals. The Green Pitch Award went to Charlotte Engel for her documentary *Carpe Diem*, sponsored by CBC's *The Nature of Things with David Suzuki*, Precision Transfer Technologies and Wallace Film Studios.

The inaugural Planet in Focus Green Screen Award, which consists of a cash prize of \$5,000, was presented to Producer Avi Federgreen for *Score: A Hockey Musical*. The Green Screen Award recognizes a filmmaker or producer who has taken behind-the-scenes action to incorporate eco-friendly film production techniques in a film or television production. The Green Screen Award is sponsored by Astral's Harold Greenberg Fund. The Green Screen Award Honourable Mention and a cash prize of \$1000 went to David Chernushenko for *Powerful: Energy for Everyone*.

Other 2011 Planet in Focus Award winners included celebrated Canadian filmmaker [Kevin McMahon](#) who received the 2011 Canadian Eco Hero Award before the Opening Night screening of *Revenge of The Electric Car*. Renowned dolphin activist Richard (Ric) O'Barry, featured in the 2010 Academy Award-winning documentary *The Cove*, was honoured with the International Eco Hero Award on the last night of the Festival as part of the Discovery World HD Closing Night Gala Presentation of The Whale.

The Planet in Focus Jury, which decided on films in competition, was comprised of broadcast executive Janice Tufford; award-winning film director Liz Marshall (*Water on the Table*); and award-winning director and photojournalist, Powys Dewhurst.

The Green Screen Award: Jurors included John Galway, President, The Harold Greenberg Fund, Astral Media; Eva Ligeti, Executive Director, Clean Air Partnership and Co-Chair, GTA Clean Air Council; and Nicholas de Pencier, President, Mercury Films Inc.

The Green Pitch Award: Jurors included Gordon Henderson, Director/Producer, 90th Parallel Productions; Andrew Johnson, Production Executive, Shaw Media's Original Factual Content Group; and Caroline Underwood, Senior Producer, CBC's Science and Natural History Unit.

Planet in Focus is Canada's leading not-for-profit environmental [media arts organization](#), producing year-round programming across Canada and around the world and fostering a new generation of environmental filmmakers.

