

**Canadian talent dominates Sundance doc field, Katherine Monk,  
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Even before Al Gore began a Nobel-bound journey from the humble floor of a makeshift theatre in the Wasatch mountains, the Sundance Film Festival was already recognized as an early barometer of pressing social issues where everything from the War in Iraq to morbid obesity from McDonald's food could be adressed in a small, safe pool of film festival liberalism.

This year is no different, with a full array of thoughtful, inspired and urgent films about everything from drinking water to government secrets filling out all facets of the program - and a full contingent of Canadian filmmakers looking to bring their message to the world stage.

Canadian documentaries are considered some of the best in the world, thanks in large part to the long-standing and still-sterling international reputation of the National Film Board, the organization that gave birth to modern documentary film via John Grierson's commitment to making "Canada come alive to Canadians" through the magic of celluloid.

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Though this year marks the first time Canada had nothing selected for the World Dramatic competition, the country's strong tradition of documentary filmmaking continues to attract attention - and highly coveted Sundance program slots.

This year, three Canadian documentaries and one Canadian co-production were selected from a field of hundreds for 16 slots in the World Cinema Documentary Competition: Patrick Reed's *Triage*: Dr. James Orbinski's *Humanitarian Dilemma*, Yung Chang's *Up the Yangtze*, Isaac Isitan's *The Women of Brukman* and Tanaz Eshaghian's U.K/U.S/Iran co-production, *Be Like Others*.

With four films in the running, Canada can claim a full quarter of the field - a significant chunk given the intense competition from around the world, and a great indication that when it comes to non-fiction, we're doing something right.

According to the filmmakers, that magic boost is the Canadian condition itself.

"I am a product of Canada," says Isitan, who just wrapped *The Women of Brukman*, his study of factory cooperatives in Turkey and Argentina. "And as a product of this country, I have a large open window on the world... I can see how things could be better, and I'm very committed to sharing these ideas. The world does not have to be as it is. We can change things if we learn from each other... and listen to each other, and this is why I make movies."

Isitan says he learned just how important community could be growing up in a small town in Turkey. "We didn't need anything from the outside world. Everything we needed we could trade amongst ourselves. I think this gave me a very different view of money and value."

Years later, when Isitan discovered how unemployed workers could organize and take over whole factories in order to save their jobs, and their towns, he saw it as an ideal film project. "We have these hot points all over the world, and in each one, people are learning different lessons from each other," he says from his office in Montreal.

"I think people can find great inspiration in the actions of others. And even when I was speaking to the senior programmer at Sundance, she said she wanted to program my movie because people needed to see it. She said no one in the United States would even think of taking over a factory and running it themselves. It wouldn't even occur to them," he says. So again, it's about showing people how the world could be different - how it could be better - if we come together and share ideas, share strategies and... redefine the way we value each other."