Leonardo DiCaprio got a little help from his friends in Canada in the making of Blood Diamond. Who knew?

A locally made documentary called Shadow Company tackles the controversial story of mercenaries in modern warfare. Neither obviously left nor right, it was co-directed by Nick Bicanic and Jason Bourque.

Bicanic got the idea to do the film after a classmate from Cambridge, England—a law graduate, no less—announced he was going overseas to become a mercenary. What followed were colourful and detailed e-mails to Bicanic from his friend on the ground in Iraq.

Bicanic sent an early cut of the film to Edward Zwick, director of Blood Diamond. Zwick replied in an e-mail from Mozambique, saying how much he loved the film and wanted to show it to DiCaprio for research on his character, an ex-mercenary.

A few months later, Bicanic travelled to meet DiCaprio on set in Mozambique. He and actress Dominika Wolski spent two days there as guests of the 1st birthday party for Dijmon Hounsou, who plays Fisherman Vandy in Blood Diamond.

Bicanic and Bourque were also invited by Senator Edward Kennedy to a rare sneak preview of Shadow Company on Capital Hill.

The film, a documentary that could have been the perfect other angle of the DiCaprio film, deserved recognition. It received a standing ovation at the film's premiere in January.

Leonardo DiCaprio and Dijmon Hounsou run for their lives in the action-filled drama Blood Diamond. DiCaprio is cast as a former mercenary while Hounsou plays a fisherman.

Ryan Kennedy starred in the Whistler series shot by CTY.

Singer Patti Labelle (left) and actress Marcia Cross share a joke at the grand opening of the new Holt Renfrew store in Vancouver.

It has been a great, great experience," said Spanogle.

Insight Film Studios is set to start shooting two new movies of the year. In the first, called Empty Arms, Laura Lightfoot Savant plays a classical music critic who becomes pregnant after an uncharacteristic one-night stand with a country music star, played by Antonio Cupo. Her quest to find the perfect family to adopt her baby turns into a journey of self-discovery and love for both of them. It is expected to air this fall in Global Canada and on Lifetime in the U.S.

In the second, Reto, Reto Volpe (Olton Ramirez) is the privileged son of a wealthy Eastern European dictator who enrolls for the freshman semester at an American university where his eccentric and hedonistic ways soon establish him as the most colourful character on campus. But when he falls hard for a student activist, played by Katrina Bowden, he begins to question his father's true character and the course of his family's apparently inexhaustible wealth. It is expected to air on the Science Channel this fall.

Local talent agent Lisa Koe says she has a hot one on her hands these days. Ryan Kennedy has just wrapped up a series lead on the soapy series Whistler, which was mostly shot in the resort town.

He plays a lead role in the Stingl/Davis film The Invisible Man in the West End. He has had a number of other lead roles recently and has been offered the starring role in a feature film called Chasing The White Dragon which will be shot in Tupelo, Miss.

That, you will recall, is the birthplace of Elvis.