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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harpreet Dhanjal of TELUS Spark to Receive 2020 Leadership Award for Engagement from the Alberta Museums Association

September 11, 2020

Edmonton, Alberta - The Alberta Museums Association (AMA) is pleased to announce Harpreet Dhanjal as the recipient of the AMA's 2020 Leadership Award for Engagement, in recognition of her commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in her role as Public Programmer at Calgary's TELUS Spark.

Never one to ignore or let slip an opportunity to advocate for those who are underrepresented, Harpreet is exceptional in her ability to engage diverse community members with culture. She carefully designs visitor experiences that are relevant, narrative-driven, modern, and occasionally provocative, such as the Adults Only Night program titled *He, Her, They, Everyone, and You (A.K.A. Beyond the Binary)*, a program that celebrated gender diversity while educating visitors on the intersection of sexuality, gender, identity, science, history, and art.

When developing programming, Harpreet involves experts who represent a range of identities and perspectives. Fearless in engaging new community partners, Harpreet has created programs that bring together research academics, drag performers, and rocket scientists. She has positioned TELUS Spark as a trusted ally and sought the expertise and collaboration of LGBTQ2S+ community partners.

Passionate about making the cultural sector more welcoming and inclusive, Harpreet always prioritizes equity, diversity, and community engagement in her work. Harpreet crafts meaningful visitor experiences that provoke curiosity, reflection, discussion, and interaction, creating brave spaces for anyone and everyone to learn, play, and engage.

"Harpreet is a dedicated advocate and ally for underrepresented communities, and her voice, experience, and critical eye have shaped TELUS Spark's public programs to be inclusive and engaging," said Meaghan Patterson, Executive Director / CEO. "As a champion for diversity and inclusion across the museum sector, Harpreet exemplifies the leading role museums have as agents of social responsibility."

Nominations for the Leadership Awards are adjudicated by the Leadership Awards Committee, comprised of Individual Members of the AMA. Historically, the Award is presented at an Awards Ceremony held as part of the AMA's Annual Conference. However, in light of COVID-19 and public health requirements, an in-person ceremony will not take place this year, and the AMA will be celebrating Harpreet Dhanjal virtually.

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Background

The Leadership Award for Engagement recognizes those who cultivate museum and community interaction. Recipients in this category are continually searching for ways to engage the public with culture. They see museums as a fundamental part of society – as something to be accessed and embraced by everyone. They lend their space and ideas to engaging programming and other activities that take museums outside their traditional roles in society and encourage inclusive conversations. They create opportunities for reconciliation, hope, and healing. They seek to connect people to museum collections in unusual and daring ways. They advocate for museums as evidenced through their everyday work. They engage various communities to tell exceptional stories that could otherwise be overlooked. These initiatives provide meaningful experiences for Albertans to discover more about the stories of the people and cultures that define our history and shape our modern communities.

The AMA Leadership Awards recognize the exceptional work of Alberta museums and museum professionals in creating value, accessibility, and relevance in their communities. The Leadership Awards recognize excellence, innovation, and creativity in Alberta’s museum community in three categories: Engagement, Education, and Sustainability. More information about the AMA Leadership Awards can be found on the AMA website: <https://museums.ab.ca/what-we-do/awards.aspx>.

The Alberta Museums Association provides a variety of programs and services to over 500 museums and museum professionals across Alberta. Through its focus on community engagement, social responsibility, and sustainability, the AMA utilizes its funding, accreditation, awards, and professional development opportunities to support institutions in their vital role as leading contributors to the social, cultural, and educational fabric of Alberta. The AMA believes that museums can leverage their positions as trusted institutions to encourage respectful dialogue, provide educational opportunities, and bring awareness to some of society’s most pressing issues.

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