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For Immediate Release

Arts Commons Announces the Engagement of 2023-24 TD Incubator Fellow Wakefield Brewster to Lead the Creative Vision for the Upcoming Season

Calgary Poet Laureate and spoken word performer Wakefield Brewster comes full circle with Arts Commons, starting as a program participant and returning to helm the industry-leading artist development program for the 2023-24 season.

May 25, 2023 – Calgary – After a season of exploring the cosmos with the artistic vision of “lo-fi future” under the curation of Sargeant x Comrade, Arts Commons is thrilled to announce the next step of the [TD Incubator program](#). Calgary Poet Laureate Wakefield Brewster will be providing the vision for the 2023-24 season of the TD Incubator program, lending his experience as both a performer and artistic visionary to the TD Incubator program participants.

The TD Incubator program launched in fall of 2021 with the intent of supporting interdisciplinary artists who reflect the diversity and vibrancy of Calgary. The participants of the program join Arts Commons for an entire season and are provided professional development, networking, and performance and exhibition opportunities to showcase work that is in conversation with the world around them. Each season, a different TD Incubator Fellow(s) is chosen to lead the artistic vision in the form of a theme as well as provide guidance to the participants. The theme for the 2023-24 season is “PeoplePuzzle: Some Assembly Required.”

Wakefield Brewster began as a member of the inaugural TD Incubator group under the mentorship and curation of Contra and Jay Sterling. His powerful spoken word pieces commanded attention in multiple TD Amplify Cabaret performances with Arts Commons Presents, Arts Commons' public performance arm, and he inspired his fellow program participants with his altruistic philosophy and passion for spoken word poetry. Throughout his career, Wakefield has been published in several anthologies, such as *T-Dot Griots* (2004), *The Great Black North* (2013), *The Calgary Project* (2014) and *The Black Prairie Archives: An Anthology* (2019). Since moving to Calgary, he has produced two Professional Recordings to his credit, such as *da lyrical pitbull* (2007) and *east2west* (2008). He is a three-time Calgary Poetry Slam Champion & Team Captain (2006, 2008-2009), the inaugural Poet of Honour at the 2011 People's Poetry Festival and former poet-in-residence at Calgary's The Grand. Wakefield Brewster is the City of Calgary's Poet Laureate for 2022-2024, a position elevating his view of Calgary's landscape, cityscape, and civic identity.

“TD Incubator has made me a poet and an artist beyond my understanding of what I could be. It became a cool little community for me. You have a concentrated group of artists to share that energy with. If you don't walk away changed for the better, what are you doing here?” says Brewster. *“I can't think of a greater honour in my career than to step into that role that was so beneficial to me and pass that energy on to this year's artists.”*

Raised in Toronto by parents from the Barbados, Brewster came to Calgary in 2016 in pursuit of a fresh outlook for his spoken word career. What he found was a community eager to call him one of their own. Today he is

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known as one of Canada's most powerful professional performance poets, featured in numerous anthologies, recordings, and currently serving as Calgary's Poet Laureate.

"I can't think of a better artist to lead this season of TD Incubator participants," says Joshua Dalledonne, Associate Director of Social Impact. "Wakefield embodies the best elements of TD Incubator both as an artist and curator, but also in his vision for next season: collaboration, connection, radical joy, and a deep investment in redefining how Calgary sees itself through arts and culture. We're a city on the precipice of great change, and when faced with complicated and complex shifts in priorities and perspectives, it's the poets who give voice to our opportunities and the fears. Wakefield is Calgary's poet and we're in good hands with him gathering artists from across forms and genres."

Arts Commons, with the support of TD Bank Group, is uniquely positioned to support TD Incubator participants through Arts Commons' multidisciplinary programming, including [visual and media arts galleries](#) and performance series like [TD Amplify Cabarets](#). The 2023-24 season will continue to build on the work established by the first two years of the program and continue to support and grow Calgary's thriving arts and culture scene with Wakefield Brewster at the helm.

Arts Commons is currently accepting applications for the 2023-24 TD Incubator program. If you are a local artist looking for networking, professional development, mentorship, and performance and exhibition opportunities, you can apply now at artscommons.ca/incubator before June 30th.

Arts Commons wishes to express our sincere appreciation to the Naming Sponsor of TD Incubator program, TD Bank Group.

To RSVP or for more information contact:
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The **TD Incubator program** is designed to support the artists who are increasingly choosing to move between and blend artistic forms – musicians who make their own films, dancers who are blending movement with visual art, actors who are expanding into spoken word poetry. Prioritizing artists from communities who reflect the diversity and vibrancy of Treaty 7 territory, the mission of TD Incubator is to accelerate these artists' careers. As the largest arts centre in Western Canada and a gathering space for all artistic disciplines, Arts Commons is uniquely positioned to grow, celebrate, elevate, and learn from these artists.

Arts Commons is the steward of one of Canada's largest arts centres, and the artistic and civic cornerstone of Calgary's downtown core, comprised of six world-class resident companies. The organization's strategic priorities include supporting the artists and arts organizations that call Arts Commons home, including the more than 200 community groups that utilize our facilities, to realize their missions, and to foster opportunities for collaboration across our cultural campus. By championing inclusion and reconciliation and increasing the accessibility and reach of the arts in Calgary, we are reimagining the performing arts and ensuring their rightful place at the center of civic life.