

A photograph of a theater performance. The stage is lit with blue and purple lights. A large, colorful, abstract backdrop is visible behind the performers. A band is performing on stage, including a keyboardist, a bassist, a drummer, and a guitarist. The audience is seated in the foreground, and the theater's architecture, including balconies and a large, colorful, abstract ceiling, is visible.

Report to the Community

2020-21

 Arts
Commons



Our Vision

A creative and compassionate society, inspired through the arts.

Our Mission

To bring the arts...to life.

Our Core Values

Do the right thing - behaving with integrity, applying professionalism, being honest, and erring on the side of grace.

Be our best always - in service, in leadership, in professionalism, and in providing a quality experience.

Be open - minds, hearts, arms - through empathy, openness, trust, and collaboration, seizing opportunities to impact our community in a positive way.



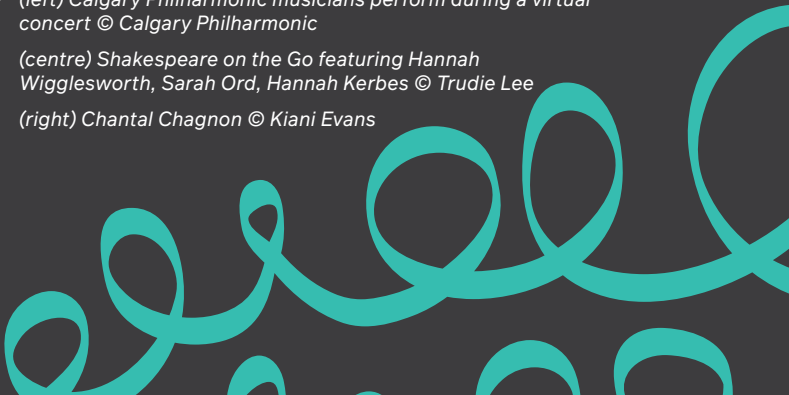
A year like no other 2020-21

Although our doors remained closed for the entire year, our mandate to provide and care for artists and arts organizations, to ensure equitable access and utilization of our venues, and to foster, promote, and celebrate a vibrant arts community remained as vital as ever.

Good stewards embrace innovation and change, and this past season we discovered new opportunities to engage with and support our community on all levels. This year's Report to the Community takes you on a journey through a year like no other.



- ⬅ Classic Albums Live performs during Showtime: A Live Music Celebration, Olympic Plaza © Mike Hopkins
- ⬅ (left) Calgary Philharmonic musicians perform during a virtual concert © Calgary Philharmonic
- (centre) Shakespeare on the Go featuring Hannah Wigglesworth, Sarah Ord, Hannah Kerbes © Trudie Lee
- (right) Chantal Chagnon © Kiani Evans



Letter from the President

Dear friends,

This has truly been a year unlike any other.

As we reflect on the year behind us and plan for the year ahead, one thing has become crystal clear: our need for one another has never been greater. People need the arts to make sense of the world around them; artists need audiences for whom to create and with whom to share and exchange energy; and arts organizations need a home that will nurture and support the evolution of their work. At the intersection of this elaborate, community-driven Venn diagram is Arts Commons, where every single one of us remains committed to the well-being of Calgary audiences, artists, and cultural organizations.

Navigating our role with an increased level of responsibility, we now find ourselves grappling with two immense questions: what will the future of the live arts look like? And, what does Calgary's future hold? At Arts Commons, we aren't waiting to be told the answers—rather, we have used the past year to lean into the answers.

Through our commitment to charting a new future, we created new programs that brought us all closer together. You invited us into your neighbourhoods with ArtsXpeditions and into your homes with digital presentations of music, dance, spoken word, and the inspiring stories of National Geographic Explorers. To cap off this amazing season, we had the privilege of inviting you to Olympic Plaza, our front yard, to experience *Showtime* under the wide-open summer sky. We are continuing to learn from each other what it means to be welcoming to all.

Knowing that our audiences will hold us to higher expectations post-pandemic, we took full advantage of our closure to make unprecedented technological, health, and accessibility improvements to our facilities to welcome you back. We have done everything we can to ensure that you feel safe returning to our building. With hospital grade MERV-14A air filters and ultra-violet germicidal irradiation technology in our ventilation systems, Arts Commons is one of the only buildings in the downtown core from which air is exhausted from our facility cleaner than when it went in. Our ground-breaking partnership with Canon Canada has opened the doors to filming and broadcasting live performances in our wonderful venues with state-of-the-art image and sound – and that's just the beginning!

Perhaps our biggest contribution to addressing what our future holds is the Arts Commons Transformation project, one of the most ambitious cultural infrastructure projects in recent Canadian history. With \$240M already secured, Arts Commons, the City of Calgary, and the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC) are moving forward with the expansion and modernization of an Arts Commons campus in the heart of Calgary's downtown core.

But "what" we do is not nearly as important as "how" we do things. Just as it has on a personal level, the pandemic has given us the opportunity to redefine and strengthen our relationships. Over the course of the past year, we have welcomed new leadership into the Arts Commons community. With the arrival of Maya Choldin (Executive Director, Theatre Calgary), Marc Stevens (President & CEO, Calgary Philharmonic

Orchestra), and Rohit Chokhani (Artistic & Executive Director, Alberta Theatre Projects), the Arts Commons ecosystem is poised for the kind of change the arts world is calling for; and Calgary is uniquely positioned to lead the charge.

Perhaps one of the most important relationships needing attention is not a new one. Last year, under the guidance of Indigenous Elders and the mentorship of United Way of Calgary, Arts Commons began the process of developing an Indigenous Strategy that draws on the parallels between Indigenous ways of knowing and Western ways of doing business. While we have a long way to go in this process, there are three parallels that have already emerged that are increasingly becoming commitments of our work:

We aim to build spaces that bring people together around a shared commitment to **Sanctified Kindness**, where **Building Relatives** with one another transcends notions of allyships and partnerships; and where we recognize that being a **Social Business** must impact what we do all day, every day—and not just when we are putting on events.

As we enter a new era for the arts and for Calgary, I promise that Arts Commons will continue to ask the hard questions, and that we will thrive in the excitement that comes with answering them with the communities that surround us. It is through our day-to-day work with artists, audiences, community partners and organizations that we will make Calgary's future more inclusive and vibrant.

Thank you—not just for joining us on this journey, but for holding us accountable to our unwavering belief that a strong arts community is essential to Calgary's social, economic, and civic future.



Alex Sarian
President
and CEO



We nurtured an ecosystem of artists and arts organizations

Facing a widespread lack of ticket revenue and entering our second season of the COVID-19 pandemic, Arts Commons recognized that, more than ever before, it was essential that the members of the arts community come together to ensure the survival of the cultural institutions that are vital to the well-being of Calgary's downtown community.

Within the Arts Commons ecosystem, the resident companies - Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary - all navigated the challenges of reaching our community while our venues remained closed.

In April 2020, prior to the Federal Government's launch of the Canadian Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program, Arts Commons implemented venue occupancy fee reductions of up to 89%; which made us eligible to apply for the CECRA. In the end, Arts Commons absorbed a total of \$584,740 of risk to support our resident companies.

Thanks to the naming sponsorship and long-term partnership of the Royal Bank of Canada, Arts Commons was able to continue the RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program, running a full season of exhibitions in the building that were shared virtually through 3D digital scans of the galleries. The virtual galleries also offered the benefit of a new level of accessibility as anyone could access them anytime from their own personal computer or device. In total, the galleries received 1,520 views.

In addition, the mentorship programs, panels, and workshops that are offered as part of the program moved to an online format as well, allowing all 61 artists to continue to benefit from both the social and professional development initiatives of the RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program.

Launched at the beginning of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, the Arts Commons blog gave Arts Commons a new way to share stories from our resident companies, inspire creative learning, and provide readers with artistic experiences and insights

while isolated at home. In the spring of 2021, Arts Commons took this editorial outreach a step further by launching the Guest Writer Series. Focusing on elevating BIPOC and LGBTQ+ voices from the Calgary arts community, the Guest Writer Series encourages empathy and exploration of different perspectives through thoughtful, personal editorials on the topics of art, culture, visual arts, and live performance. The first article in the series, written by local artist Nabila Walji, is among the top five stories ever shared on the blog with over 680 views.

“As a self-taught artist, my practice thus far has been very isolated and lacking the sort of peers that artists generally meet in school. Through the RBCEVAP, I’ve been exposed to a much broader range of artists and approaches to art-making than I could have imagined possible.”

Katie Barron, RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program participant



↑ RBC Emerging Visual Artists participate in professional development session © Arts Commons

↗ Window Galleries exhibition, Odd and Unusual © Katie Barron

→ 3D Virtual Scan of Window Galleries

↓ Arts Commons Blog, guest writer Nabila Walji © The Institute of Ismaili Studies



We ensured our venues were ready for your return

Since the onset of the pandemic, Arts Commons has worked closely with the resident companies to align on pivotal policies and procedures that err on the side of caution and safety while still allowing for rehearsals and artistic exploration. Arts Commons and the resident companies believe that keeping our community safe is a shared responsibility. As we began to move towards an increase in internal and public-facing activities, we jointly prioritized maintaining open and active lines of communication and collaborated on policies that would ensure the safety and well-being of our fellow coworkers, artists, and guests.

With the key support from the Civic Partner Infrastructure Grant (\$264,611), Arts Commons gained the capacity for an ambitious project to transform the air handling system throughout the building, further supporting a safe reopening for our artists, patrons, and staff. Arts Commons installed hospital grade, energy-efficient MERV-14A air filters (with an upgrade to MERV-15A slated for 2021-22 season) trapping everything from common dust to bacteria/virus carriers and micro allergens. We also implemented an Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI) solution, providing effective

air sterilization through short wavelength light that destroys bacteria, molds, and viruses—including COVID-19. This level of air sterilization ensures that air exhausted from the building is also sterilized, meaning that not only is the air within Arts Commons cleaner than many other downtown office buildings, but the air leaving the building is also cleaner than when it comes in!

To optimally integrate these ventilation upgrades, it was recommended that the HVAC systems in the Max Bell Theatre and Martha Cohen Theatre receive new calibration and upgrades. With these changes, we have maximized the air distribution

Arts Commons installed hospital grade, energy-efficient MERV-14A air filters.

in these spaces, and now they are among the most controllable theatre spaces in North America. The Martha Cohen Theatre now has a custom air distribution system that can be used for multiple effects including injecting confetti, bubbles, snow, and even balloons into the air stream of the theatre for multiple visual effects. This project was completed thanks to

funding from the City of Calgary for the Max Bell Theatre (\$375,000) and Martha Cohen Theatre (\$337,500).

These upgrades are included in a comprehensive Health and Safety Strategy encompassing increased sanitation of high contact surfaces, mandatory masks, frequent hand sanitizing stations, and a vaccination policy for both staff and patrons to ensure that we're taking every possible step to keep people safe while visiting and working in our building.

Though health and safety has been brought front and centre by the pandemic, so too has the need to share the performing arts outside

of our downtown venue. In collaboration with Canon Canada, the Jack Singer Concert Hall now has state-of-the-art technology to transform the space into a 10-camera live broadcast venue for the performing arts. This incredible achievement has unlocked limitless potential for sharing the performing arts virtually.

→ Upgraded HVAC in the Martha Cohen Theatre © Alex Bonyun

↓ Canon camera in the Jack Singer Concert Hall © Will Young

↓ (centre) Health and safety information displayed in the Jack Singer Concert Hall lobby © Will Young



← Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation solution within Arts Commons duct system © Fresh-Aire UV

↑ Facilities staff member demonstrates duct work © Alex Bonyun

We fostered, promoted, and celebrated a vibrant arts community

In a season with unprecedented challenges and course-corrections, the Arts Commons family also faced a personal challenge: losing one of the brightest stars of the Canadian arts community, Alberta Theatre Projects Executive & Artistic Director Darcy Evans. To continue Darcy's powerful legacy, Alberta Theatre Projects announced the Darcy Evans Legacy Fund this year, a three-month mentorship program for emerging professionals to gain executive experience in the theatre industry. Darcy inspired a new generation of cultural leaders, and this important initiative by Alberta Theatre Projects and the family of Darcy Evans will pave the way for that work to continue. The program's fundraising efforts earned over \$100,000 in the 2020-21 season alone.

Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra has always known the value of shared music experiences, or what one audience member this season called "powerful beacons in the darkness." During the COVID-19 pandemic, Calgary Phil launched *All Access*, a virtual portal to performances showcasing everything from Johann Sebastian Bach to Indigenous and JUNO Award winning composer Tanya Tagaq. Thanks to the support of their community, Calgary Phil was also able

to move their Education Concerts online, reaching 52 schools and over 4,200 students!

Taking the challenge of the virtual pivot head on, Downstage presented *Deer Woman*, an undeniably powerful one-woman show that successfully blended the media of film and stage for a story of strength and righteous vengeance. After its premiere, it was picked up and streamed by the National Arts Centre Indigenous Theatre in Ottawa, Chinook Festival in partnership with Azimuth Theatre here in Calgary, and the Kia Mau Festival in New Zealand.

In recognition of the 35th High Performance Rodeo, One Yellow Rabbit – as they always do – found a singular way to celebrate Calgary's longest standing theatre festival. For 35 days, 35 artists from past and future High Performance Rodeos took over the @HPRodeo social media channels with new works lasting one to three minutes. Each artist answered the question "Who Are You Now?" through song, dance, new music, and performances. This free, online, bite-sized festival spread through word of mouth, drastically increasing the festival's social engagement and followers. Its structure allowed audiences from around the world ►

Darcy Evans
1970-2020



↑ Downstage photo of Cherish Violet Blood as Deer Woman
© Prudence Upton

← 35 days, 35 artists from the past and future of the High Performance Rodeo © One Yellow Rabbit



- Marshall Vielle in Theatre Calgary's *A Christmas Carol* © Trudie Lee
- ↓ (top) Amelie Patterson performance at *Showtime: A Live Music Celebration*, Olympic Plaza © Mike Hopkins
- ↓ (bottom) Patrons enjoying *Showtime: A Live Music Celebration*, Olympic Plaza © Mike Hopkins
- ↳ *Classic Albums Live* performance at *Showtime: A Live Music Celebration*, Olympic Plaza © Mike Hopkins



← Dylan Thomas-Bouchier, Rebekah Ogden perform as part of *Shakespeare on the Go* © Trudie Lee

to engage in works from local, national, and international artists. Instagram followers alone grew from approximately 1,000 to over 5,000 in 35 days. The videos created by the artists continue to be the most-viewed content on the @HPRodeo social media platforms, receiving continuous engagement nearly a year later.

In November of 2020, Theatre Calgary welcomed their new Executive Director Maya Choldin who brings with her an extensive and diversified theatre and arts background. She arrived just in time to celebrate the long-time beloved audience tradition, *A Christmas Carol*, in a very different incarnation from seasons past. The virtual presentation of *A Christmas Carol* premiered in December 2020 and was viewed by an estimated 20,000 people, including people from every Canadian province as well as 20 other countries like Mexico, the United Kingdom, Australia, Italy, Qatar, Japan, Kenya, the United States and more. The production was also honoured with six Alberta Media Production Industries Association (AMPIA) Rosie Award nominations for best Directing,

Acting, Score, Writing, Scripted Feature, and Production Reflecting Cultural Diversity.

Also, over the summer, Theatre Calgary packed up their performance mentorship program for young artists and brought it on the road with *Shakespeare on the Go!* Presenting three different casts and scripts of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*, Theatre Calgary popped up in 41 locations all over Calgary.

Arts Commons Presents also celebrated the summer months with a brand-new season of *ArtsXpeditions*, which launched in June and energized neighbourhoods all over Calgary right up until the end of September 2021.

And to bring the summer to a triumphant close, Arts Commons Presents reenergized Calgary's downtown cultural district with *Showtime: A Live Music Celebration*, a free, one-night-only outdoor celebration of food, drink, and live music to thank Calgarians for their support of the arts during the COVID-19 pandemic. The historic Olympic Plaza hosted

1,500 socially distanced friends, patrons, and donors for two spellbinding performances: local gem Amelie Patterson, who serenaded us with her folk-pop melodies, and *Classic Albums Live*, who rocked the plaza with their recreation of the iconic album: Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Chronicle, Vol. 1*. The event was a huge success. Audience members danced the night away under the stars and even the sky applauded *Classic Albums Live*'s final song by downpouring all over the Plaza! In all senses of the word, it was a splashy return to live performance at Arts Commons.



Through Arts Commons Presents we created community online

While the COVID-19 pandemic was full of challenges, it also created opportunities for completely new ways to engage with our community. Arts Commons Presents' wildly successful National Geographic Live series found a new home online, expanding our audience to over twice as many people as could fit in the Jack Singer Concert Hall. Building on the success of *Nat Geo Live: Backstage* from the 2019-20 season, National Geographic Live *Virtual* brought the beloved speaker series to 59,573 viewers across Alberta.

inspire in our audiences a love for learning and compassion for our environment. Without the support of ConocoPhillips Canada, Arts Commons would not have been able to offer National Geographic Live *Virtual* for free to our entire Calgary community.

Arts Commons Presents' TD Amplify Cabarets also made the jump online this season, taking themes of love, cultural learning and understanding, celebration of identity, and personal acceptance to both the stage and screen. Filmed in the Engineered Air Theatre, the series invited patrons

of Treaty 7, with Indigenous dancers and singers alongside African musicians and performers in an impactful evening of art, dialogue, and critical conversations.

Taking the plunge into using the new state-of-the-art Canon gear unveiled in February 2021, TD Jazz invited the Alberta Jazz All-Stars supergroup and songwriter and jazz vocalist Laila Biali to be the first to perform on the Jack Singer Concert Hall stage after nearly 17 months of darkness. Limited, socially distanced audiences experienced the live performances, and virtual audiences later viewed



As with the performing arts, the COVID-19 pandemic also brought unexpected opportunities for our natural world. National Geographic Explorers shared stories of how staying home positively impacted natural habitats and continued to

back into our building, albeit virtually, to witness four hosts and their casts of artists express their truths through dance, music, spoken word, and dialogue. For the *Braving Beauty Cabaret*, Marshall Vielle and Toyin Lamas illuminated the connections between artists from the African diaspora and the Indigenous Nations

the online recordings for free. These virtual performances reached 195 households, with an estimated 480 individual patrons.

59,573

Number of National Geographic Live virtual viewers across Alberta



“It was such a pleasure to be able to return to the Jack Singer and enjoy this concert.”

Patron, TD Jazz Laila Biali performance



↑ Arts Commons Presents, TD Jazz Laila Biali. © Samuel Obadero

← Screenshot of National Geographic Live Virtual Presentation of Reimagining Dinosaurs

← Recording of TD Amplify Cabaret with Marshall Vielle performing © Josh Dalledonne

“More, more, more! It seemed like it only just started then it stopped! I know it was a full hour of cabaret but I would quite happily have watched more!”

Patron, TD Amplify Cabaret, Sissy Fit: *The Future is Queer Cabaret*



We created connections in a time of isolation



Everyone is now keenly aware of the negative impacts of prolonged isolation on physical and mental health. Whether it's participating in a craft or enjoying a live concert, the arts have a well-documented positive effect on our well-being, especially in its ability to alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation. Arts Commons took every opportunity to reach out and keep our community connected. When we announced the 2020-21 season of PCL Blues, we invited our subscribers to an online announcement with a surprise live performance by beloved local blues performer Tim Williams. Subscribers were moved by this authentically candid performance from Tim's own living room, inviting us all into

Geographic Live series. The move to an online format did not at all diminish the powerful stories shared by the Explorers. The struggles of Velamfundo Primary School in Johannesburg, South Africa shared during the *Women and Migration* presentation with Explorers Saiyna Bashir, Miora Rajaonary, and Danielle Villasana was so poignant that eight generous Explorers Circle members made the financial commitment necessary to keep the doors of the school open. Judith Manjoro, a high school teacher, founded the school to provide support to some of South Africa's most vulnerable migrant students and give them the education that they so desperately need in order to build a brighter future

...eight generous Explorers Circle members made the financial commitment necessary to keep the doors of the school open.

a beautifully intimate moment of artistic expression and sharing. It's opportunities like these, created for our patrons, staff, artists, and greater community, that make all the difference.

No greater was this impact felt than through our beloved National

for themselves and their families. Because of the support of these Calgary donors, she can continue to do so. This is just one example of how the work of Arts Commons Presents gave members of our community an opportunity to reach out, and in this case create lasting change halfway around the world.



- ← Tim Williams performs live
- ↑ Women and Migration Explorers (top to bottom) Miora Rajaonary © Mark Thiessen, Saiyna Bashir © Amber Arnold, and Danielle Villasana © Alfredo Giraldo
- Samantha, Alexa, and Escarle talk together in Escarle's room in San Pedro Sula, Honduras © Danielle Villasana
- Students from the © Velamfundo Primary School
- ↓ School administrators from the © Velamfundo Primary School



“Genuine stories that opened our eyes to the plight of underprivileged women, and the resilience of women who are trying to improve their own lives and the lives of others.”

Patron, National Geographic Live Virtual, Women and Migration





“Great performances! I feel strongly that making this art more accessible to a wider audience is a real positive for the community.”

Patron, ArtsXpeditions

As soon as the weather warmed and people began to venture outside, Arts Commons Presents launched a second season of ArtsXpeditions, a series of pop-up concerts that animated neighbourhoods in all of Calgary's four quadrants. From folk, salsa, pop, and electronica, to drag queens for kids and queer cowboys, ArtsXpeditions demonstrated the incredible spectrum of talent of our local musicians while brightening the days of so many Calgarians. With 78 performances in 30 unique locations, engaging 129 artists, many for multiple engagements, the 2021 edition of ArtsXpeditions more than doubled the impact of the previous year. Over \$36,000 was paid to artists, and over \$20,000 to technicians during a time when the gig economy was unreliable. This significant community initiative was made possible by the generous support of Canadian Heritage through the Support for Workers in Live Arts and Music Sector Fund (\$95,000) and Infrastructure Canada - Healthy Communities Initiative (\$37,500). For Arts Commons Presents' PCL Blues season, we embarked on a new partnership with CKUA Radio Network. The advanced sound equipment in the Jack Singer Concert Hall, optimized to work with the

new Canon camera gear, captured high-quality live performances of PCL Blues performers Tim Williams, Miss Emily, and Rooster Davis, to air on CKUA's Friday Night Blues



Party – the first time the series had ever been broadcast in this way. Recorded in August 2021 and shared through CKUA in September, this newfound application of our sound equipment was only made possible by this unprecedented time to think innovatively and create efficiencies provided by the shutdown of the Arts Commons building.

← PCL Blues performance featuring Miss Emily © Kiani Evans
↓ ArtsXpeditions featuring Aida Cupcake © Alex Bonyun



↑ ArtsXpeditions featuring Mandy Morris © Alex Bonyun



↑ ArtsXpeditions, featuring Silvia Temis © photo by Will Young
← ArtsXpeditions, featuring Chantal Chagnon and Bailey Vazques-Fox © photo by Lucia Juliao
↓ ArtsXpeditions, featuring Perpetual Nwaefido, Chris Wood, Robson Maurice © Kiani Evans

129

Number of talented artists performing at ArtsXpeditions throughout the summer





We inspired learning and provided family-friendly fun

During the pandemic, parents with young children had the added stress of at-home schooling, closed clubs and leisure facilities, and outright exhaustion. Arts Commons was happy to announce a unique collaboration with Australia's Threshold theatre company - *Mountain Goat Mountain*. Offered free of charge, this imaginative audio-led adventure explored the fantastical world of Mountain Goat Mountain, guiding families to build their own stories with just a bed sheet, and other household items as props.

While many of the adults in our community have been dealing with mental health challenges brought on by the pandemic, youth and their experience are more unknown. Through a new pilot program called Teaspoon of Light, Arts Commons introduced an arts healing and wellness resource which allowed students to work through trauma and anxiety through imaginative storytelling. The activities, which were executed through a virtual format, gave students a way to express their feelings openly, as well as nurture hope in themselves while they "mended a dream cloak." In total, five classes participated over

the course of the season and the feedback from both teachers and students was overwhelmingly positive.

A program that has set the stage for unique and impactful learning moments for students in past seasons, ConocoPhillips Hub for Inspired Learning also transitioned to virtual delivery this year with four participating classes. Our Education staff walked the students through guided storytelling and craft activities that helped them explore new concepts and share their feelings. Part of the Campus Calgary – Open Minds program through Calgary Board of Education and the Calgary Catholic School Board, ConocoPhillips Hub

Also making the leap to the virtual this past season, the Calgary City Teachers' Convention engaged thousands of educators with workshops and professional development. To accommodate this new format, Arts Commons produced 25 high-quality virtual interactive and on-demand workshops for Teachers' Convention engaging over 3,142 teachers and 26 artists in subjects as diverse as music, dance, visual art, and performance art.

3,142

Number of teachers attending Arts Commons' virtual interactive and on-demand workshops

for Inspired Learning encourages inquiry, problem solving, and critical thinking for students through the medium of the arts.



“Well done! The narration, the music, the sounds of the mountain and engaging families to use their imaginations while helping each other on this wonderful adventure! Thank you for sharing your imaginations!”

Patron, Mountain Goat Mountain



↑ Student art work from Father Scollen Catholic School

↑ (top) A child's rendering of the creature on Mountain Goat Mountain © Threshold

(centre) Mountain Goat Mountain © Lakshal Perera

→ MacKenzie Lake School, Grade 3/4 class taking part in Teaspoon of Light

“You feel special, like a superhero student!”

Grade 3/4 participant in Teaspoon of Light



We planned for the future

The future is digital

In January 2021, the design and installation of a new Canon multi-camera cinema production set-up began at Calgary's Jack Singer Concert Hall. The new equipment included 10 cinema-quality cameras, six of which are permanently mounted on robotic heads, with the remaining four unattached for maximum flexibility. This set-up has allowed for the broadcasting and capture of live concerts and performances at a quality that only state-of-the-art equipment can achieve.

The need to connect to others, especially during periods of lockdown and extreme isolation, have revealed how essential creative expression is for our emotional and mental health and for our shared humanity. This new relationship with Canon

allows Arts Commons to create innovative ways for performing arts to be experienced and enjoyed – both virtually and in real life.

This equipment was put to the test and passed with flying colours as we shared the TD Jazz performance of Alberta Jazz-All Stars and Laila Biali with a virtual audience of 195 households,

The new equipment included 10 cinema-quality cameras, six of which are permanently mounted on robotic heads, with the remaining four unattached for maximum flexibility.

or an estimated 480 individual patrons, and we can't wait to see what we'll be able to share next.

↓ (left) Canon camera gear in the Jack Singer Concert Hall (centre) Patrons at Alberta Jazz All Stars recording © Mike Hopkins (right) TD Incubator Fellows Jae Sterling and Contra © Asim Overstands



The future is inclusive

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, Arts Commons has continued to build our Indigenous Strategy, working with community Elders Dr. Reg and Dr. Rose Crowshoe of the Piikani and Blackfoot Nations. Following in the footsteps of organizations such as the United Way of Calgary, Arts Commons recognizes that this is a path that we must forge together, finding parallels between Indigenous and Western practices and discovering new ways of thinking. As we continue to develop our strategy, we are focused on three key components: sanctified kindness and respect for all existence; all my relations and the importance of "building relatives" for lasting, authentic relationships; and the commitment to operating a "social business," balancing our social objectives with our primary business and mission of bringing the arts to life.

A year in the making, Arts Commons announced the Arts Commons Incubator program (now TD Incubator), a first-of-its-kind professional interdisciplinary artist development program focused on providing its cohort with a season of engagements under four themes: networking; professional development; mentorship; and paid live performance, exhibition, and teaching opportunities within Arts Commons programming. Featured in the September 2021 issue of Avenue Magazine, in an article titled "Racial Equity in the Arts in Calgary," Avenue calls the Arts Commons Incubator Program "a glimmer of hope" toward "building a scene in which racialized artists can thrive." For the inaugural season 2021-22 season, Jae Sterling and Contra were selected to guide the program. As Incubator Fellows, they will select

the first cohort, curate public engagements with Incubator artists through exhibitions and performances, and receive direct support, including exposure to audiences during the 2021-22 Arts Commons season.

Our commitment to inclusivity was also reflected in our hiring processes, as we have taken steps to begin to invite and cultivate a more diverse workforce in the arts. As job postings are one of the front-facing communications from our organization, Arts Commons Human Resources staff updated them to feature more inclusive language and to highlight our workplace values and culture. We also made the decision to include salary ranges, as many members of BIPOC communities have noted concerns of unclear salaries as a barrier. We expanded our posting platforms and shared postings with organizations such as Immigrants Council for Arts Innovation (ICAI) and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS). These changes resulted in higher quality candidates and a more diverse applicant pool and internally aligned with Arts Commons' commitment to I.D.E.A. – Inclusivity, Diversity, Equality, and Accessibility.

Our venues are also transforming to allow for greater accessibility to the backstage areas of Jack Singer Concert Hall as well as the Max Bell and Martha Cohen Theatres. The scope of this project includes creating accessible dressing rooms and washrooms. These changes will make it possible for actors, staff, and stage crew of any mobility to equally use the backstage areas of Arts Commons' largest and most prominent venues.

The future is **local**

While proliferous screens give us access to the work of practically anyone in history from anywhere in world, it remains true that local artists are the voices that speak to our immediate experiences and those of our neighbours. Through the RBC Emerging Visual Artists Program and Arts Commons Incubator, we are fostering the next generation of creators and meaning-makers in Calgary.

Through our presenting arm, Arts Commons Presents, we ensure local artists meet their future fans and audiences in professional engagements that elevate their stories and perspectives through series like TD Amplify Cabarets and ArtsXpeditions. If Calgary is to successfully retain our cultural and artistic talent, we will need to continue this work, and recognize and reflect the many different intersections of experiences that exist in this city.



The future is **healthy**

As we forge ahead into a new season, we look forward to celebrating the arts together safely in a post-pandemic reality. The rapid spread of COVID-19 and the fear of transmission controls what kinds of spaces we want to be in. Never have we been presented with such challenges, and Arts Commons has brought innovation and industry-leading technology to the forefront in response with the expert-led HVAC and ventilation recalibration, and installation and testing as well as optimization of all our air distribution systems.

As we embark on the expansion phase of the Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project, we know that we will need to approach things differently. What may have been considered modern design in the past may now be inappropriate for a world where the pandemic has influenced how we think about and relate to gathering in public spaces. We are excited to be one of the world's first performing arts centres designed since COVID-19, requiring a re-imagining of how buildings, arts venues, and cultural experiences are envisioned.

“Arts Commons will be a key contributor to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of Calgarians and visitors alike, and an important building-block for the revitalization of the downtown core suffering.”

Former Calgary Mayor, Naheed Nenshi



← (left) Dancer Kayel LaBelle performing at ArtsXpeditions @ Lucia Juliao

(left-centre) Marvelous Aigbogun on keyboard, Toyin Lamas vocalist @ Josh Dalledonne

(centre-right) HVAC UV system within Arts Commons duct system ventilation © Fresh-Aire UV

(right) Exterior of Arts Commons

The future is collaborative

Arts Commons is deeply connected to our surrounding community, situated in the heart of downtown, steps away from City Hall and sharing Stephen Avenue with Olympic Plaza. As we move into the future, embarking on Calgary's Greater Downtown Plan, we look to continue to do our part to re-energize and revitalize downtown. Through collaboration in city-initiated events such as Calgary Culture Days and Chinook Blast, we will elevate the arts and bring a better quality of life to our city.

This past August, Arts Commons announced Season of Gratitude. This program gives back to our essential workers who have sacrificed so much to get us safely through the pandemic by offering up to 10,000 free tickets to performances programmed by our resident companies

including: Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Commons Presents, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Downstage, One Yellow Rabbit, and Theatre Calgary.

Currently, over 3,000 families have signed up for the program with more still to come. Season of Gratitude would not be possible without the remarkable support of long-time Arts Commons patrons and arts fans, Rodney and Karen McCann along with their children, Brandon, Connor, Andrew, and Meghan, as well as the support of Arts Commons Founders Circle and Explorers Circle members. Arts Commons is

beyond grateful to the McCann Family and proud to have Rodney on our Board of Directors.

Further strengthening our ties with our resident companies, Arts Commons Presents, along with Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and Theatre Calgary, have begun the planning of an upcoming co-production. This will be a unique project in Arts Commons history steeped in artistic collaboration, deepening relationships with Arts Commons' community, partners, and stakeholders, and broadening the reach and scope of a more typical Arts Commons Presents production. Though full details will be shared in early 2022, this co-production celebrates the fact that by sharing resources through collaboration, we can accomplish so much more for Calgary.

Arts Commons has begun to explore opportunities for resource sharing and cost savings with our resident companies. By collaborating we hope to find efficiencies within shared operational needs such as ticketing, customer service and administrative functions. Not only will this benefit our individual organizations from a financial perspective but will also ensure the best patron experience possible for anyone interacting with our organizations.

10,000

Number of free tickets to performances programmed by our resident companies



← (left) Season of Gratitude Poster

(left-centre) Karen and Rodney McCann at Showtime: A Live Music Celebration @ Mike Hopkins

(right) Alex Sarian onstage at Showtime: A Live Music Celebration @ Mike Hopkins

ACT Arts Commons Transformation



The future is **bold**

The Arts Commons Transformation (ACT) project has been identified as a pivotal project for downtown's revitalization. On April 26, 2021, Calgary City Council approved \$80 million for Phase 1 of ACT - the expansion of Arts Commons - as part of a \$200 million investment in Calgary's Greater Downtown Plan. Funding was supported by the Federal Government's Canada Community-Building Fund, formerly the Gas Tax Fund, renamed to demonstrate their commitment to local infrastructure priorities. This investment in ACT was the single largest budget item and the only project named in the City's Plan, recognizing ACT as a catalyst for downtown redevelopment and vibrancy.

In addition to the funding commitments by government, this past year brought excitement as we started to assemble the team that would be responsible for the success of this critical project.

In late 2020, the first two members of the project team were brought on. Colliers' locally based team will help guide project management and Fisher Dachs Associates, specialized theatre consultants, will be planning the performance, audience, and support spaces to deliver a truly modern and fully customized facility.

In spring 2021, Venue Consulting, in association with A.W. Hooker, were brought on as Cost Consultants and Entuitive was enlisted as Building Conditioning Assessment (BCA) Consultants to assess the building's structure and systems.

The Prime Design Consultant Team was also selected and announced at our 2021 Annual General Meeting. KPMB is a Canadian, female-led, internationally recognized architectural firm with over 400 respected awards, including 16 Governor General's Medals, Canada's highest honour.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought greater urgency to forge ahead on the development of ACT with our partners at the City of Calgary and Calgary Municipal Land Corporation (CMLC). The Phase 1 expansion of Arts Commons will be one of the first performing arts centres to be designed since the COVID-19 pandemic shifted our perspective on how buildings, arts venues, and cultural experiences are designed.

Our commitment to being radically inclusive will also impact the design, taking into consideration the diversity of our community and our relationship with nature. KPMB will partner with Tawaw's Wanda Dalla Costa to advance Indigenous architectural practices and ensure that an Indigenous viewpoint is weaved into the design process. SLA from Denmark, one of the world's leading urban designers and landscape architects, will ensure that nature, technology, and sustainability are central to our design. And Calgary-based Hindle Architects will provide local expertise to ensure that Arts Commons remains of and for Calgary.

Our vision is to re-imagine the traditional model of a performing arts centre and to give Calgary a world-class venue that reflects the diverse perspectives of our citizens, provides a sense of belonging for every Calgarian, welcomes visitors, and attracts talent – both artistically and to our workforce. Our vision also includes our commitment to create an ecosystem of arts organizations that collaborate and complement each other in order to bring the best in artistic programming to our audiences. ACT will enrich and expand the diverse cultural ecosystem that exists in Calgary today, for generations to come.

Yes, the future is bold. The future of Calgary is a future that is vibrant, that understands and values the positive impact that the arts have on our economy and our collective well-being, and a future that includes you.

↓ (left) Alex Sarian, Druh Farrell, Mayor Naheed Nenshi, and Kate Thompson @ Busola Fapojuwu (centre) Artist conceptual rendering of ACT (right) Overview of ACT expansion





We are grateful

As the pandemic stretched into our 2020-21 fiscal year, Arts Commons remained closed to the public. Many Arts Commons and resident company staff worked remotely, embracing the technologies which allowed us to stay connected, even if just on a screen. A building of our size cannot remain empty though and our security, facility, and production teams stayed to make sure the building was safe. This time was used to do much-needed repairs and, using grants from all three levels of government, complete significant venue upgrades.

Keeping our staff was a primary focus when the pandemic started in 2019-20 and remained a focus throughout the 2020-21 fiscal year. Significant effort was put into investigating all opportunities for funding to ensure our team remained whole. Critical to this was our ability to access the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy, receiving over \$1.8M in support. We were also successful in recovering some of the resident company venue occupancy fees forgiven in the prior fiscal year, receiving \$299K through the Canadian Emergency Commercial Rent Subsidy Assistance before that program ended in September 2021. Additionally, our application to the Emergency Resiliency Fund program through the City of Calgary was well-received and resulted in us being awarded \$523K.

We could not have gotten through another pandemic season without the help of our community.

We were also faced with the challenge of what we could do with the opportunity of time, something a very busy performing arts centre rarely has. We knew it would not be enough to just survive, we had to emerge stronger, safer, and ready to tackle a new future which would be different — not necessarily better or worse, but different. Our programming and marketing teams used this time to embrace what a post-pandemic world might look like and to prepare to get back to the business of bringing people together with a new lens of how to do that in person and digitally.

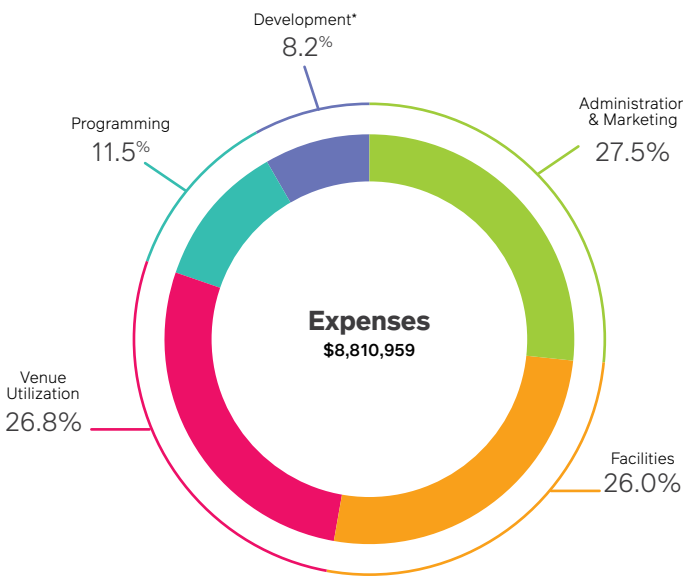
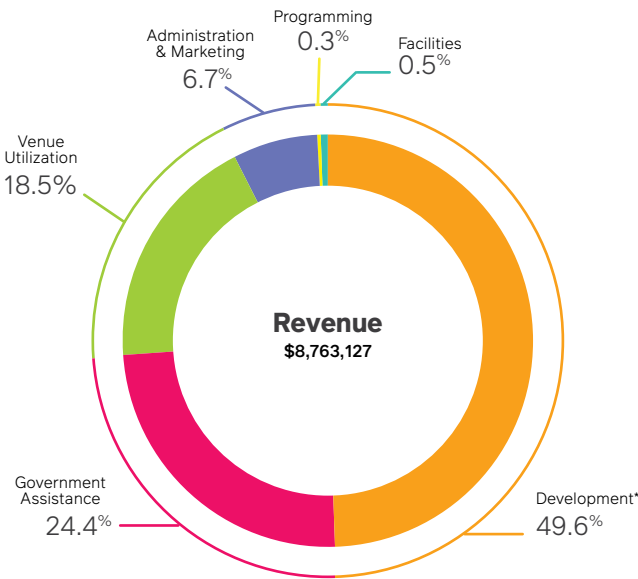
With massive reductions in earned revenues, our development team worked tirelessly to earn grants from Canadian Heritage's Support for Workers in Live Arts and Music Sectors Fund; Infrastructure Canada's Healthy Communities Initiative; Canadian Association for the Performing Arts' Presenters Capacity Building Program, and, Canada Council's Strategic Funds & Initiatives. This support allowed us to not only weather the pandemic but to explore new ways of operating as we look to the future.

Another example of a deep, ongoing relationship is the one we have with our generous and loyal sponsors. Even though we were only able to present a very limited 2020-21 season, we are so grateful to all our sponsors who chose to continue with over \$544K in support and \$198K in gifts in kind throughout a year where nothing was as it should be.

Our Board of Directors kickstarted our philanthropic efforts, committing \$552K. This significant level of leadership allowed us to launch a matching program to which our Founders Circle and Explorers Circle members responded enthusiastically pledging another \$176K.

In addition to this unprecedented level of giving, we received another \$67K from over 359 generous supporters through individual and ticket donations.

We could not have gotten through another pandemic season without the help of our community. We are so grateful for all the support we have received this year. We must also mention our staff who remained focused and open to doing things differently, for their hard work in keeping our home safe, for allowing us to reopen safely and for their enthusiasm for envisioning a future filled with opportunity.



* includes Gift and Services in kind

Arts Commons is where audiences, artists, and organizations can experience excellence on stage and behind the scenes: in our many programs for children, teachers, and aspiring artists; by the companies that call Arts Commons home; and through the hundreds of community-based organizations that depend on our support and facilities. We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the following corporations, foundations and government agencies that provided the support that made it possible for Arts Commons to contribute to the social, economic, cultural, and intellectual life and well-being of our community in spite of the challenges posed by the global health crisis.

Government Operating/Program Support

Canada

Canadian Heritage
Canada Arts Presentation Fund
Canada Cultural Spaces Fund
Emergency Support Fund for Cultural, Heritage and Sport Organizations
Support for Workers in Live Arts and Music Fund

Employment Social Development Canada
Canada Summer Jobs 2021

Infrastructure Canada
Healthy Communities Initiative

Canada Revenue Agency
Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance
Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy



Concept to Realization
Digital Now

Alberta

Alberta Culture and Status of Women
Stabilize Program

Alberta Labour and Immigration
Alberta Jobs Now



Community Support Organizations Operating
Funding Program



Community Services
Civic Partners Infrastructure Grant Program
Civic Partners Operating Grant Program
Emergency Resiliency Fund,
Municipal Stimulus Program



Supporting Sponsor,
BD&P World Stage
and TD Jazz



Title Sponsor,
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Gifts from the
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Calgary International
Children's Festival Fund

Pandemic Recovery
Program, Phase 3



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CKUA Radio Network
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National Safety Services
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Salon Fine Catering & Events
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BD&P World Stage



Arts Commons
FOUNDERS
CIRCLE

The arts inspire, enlighten, and entertain. We are grateful to the following members of Founders Circle that support our work in performance, learning, and community engagement. Enriching the lives of Calgarians through the arts and championing our city’s artists, young people, resident companies, and underrepresented communities, is our shared aspiration.

HONOURARY
MEMBERS

Dr. Martha Cohen,
C.M., LL.D.
(in memoriam)
Sandra LeBlanc
Vera Swanson, O.C.
(in memoriam)

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↑ Michelle Moss with Maureen Williams (seated) during Maureen’s first Founders Circle Event, BD&P World Stage © Will Young

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Marion Thompson
Kimber Thornton
Sabrina Thornton
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Karen Au Yeung
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Ken Zacharias
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Steve Bermingham



↑ Artists from We Shall Overcome: A Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at a Founders Circle Event, BD&P World Stage © Will Young

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Carolyn Herle
Stephen Herring
Judy Hoad
Eric Hobson
& Susan Wigmore
Martin Hoornaert

Sandra Koeller
Andre Koladich
Rose Koltes
Jennifer Koppe
Eileen Kraft
Anita Kung
Shulamit Kuttner
Barry & Janet Larson
Kathy Laszlo

Michael McDonnell
Elizabeth McFetridge
Lori McLaren
Keith McLeod
Neil & Heather McLeod
Andrea McManus
Alexander Menzies
Claire Menzies



Allison Bernardin
Lynn Berry
Shweta Bhatt
Charis Birchall
Susanna Biro
Gail Bischke
Khysa Bishop
Doug & Patricia Blair
Karen Blair
Pat Blair
Tom Blakemore
Henry Bland
Tara Blum
Kristen Brown
Pat Brown
Rebecca Brown
Doris Brown-Harrison
Dan Brownsberger
Joel Brunetti
Michael Brunner
Brent Buechler
Luz Buritica
David Burkinshaw
Susan Busser
Janet & Raymond
Bwititi
Thomas Cadman
Jennifer Conquergood
Simone Conrad
Thomas Cox
Barry Crean
Doug Crombie
Lucy Curtis
Joanna Czarnecki
Irene Dafoe
Nicole Dalwood
Folu Daniels
Joanne Danyluk-Hall
Larissa David
Megan Davidson



↑ Members of Founders Circle gather in the Founders Room in advance of a members-only event © Will Young

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Thomas Bollmann
Dave Boone
Barbara Booth
Lindsay Borden
Emi Bossio
Anne Bouscal
Cherry Bowhay
David Bowman
Naomie Boylan
Erin Bradley
Jean Bradley
Donna Braitenbach
Leah Brandt
Louise Breadner
Ellen Breen
Dan Brewer
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Robin Brooks- Sherriff
Jocelyne Caldwell
Lisa Caldwell
Djordje Calic
David & Lorraine
Campbell
Helen Campbell
Margaret Camwell
Kevin Carroll
Kimberly Carson
Christine Ceci
Kathryn Champ
Chris Charlton
Priscilla Cherry
Laura D Churchill
Jolles
Philippe Clairo
Bryan Clarke
Danielle Clarke
Robert & Nancy Close
Ann Cockerton
Erin Davies
Loran Davis
Bob Dawson
Louise Day
Laura DeFraine
Peter Deiter
Michelle Desnoyers
Kathryn Dickson
Allan Dixon
Tanya Dixon
Cecily Dobson
Dianne Dodsworth
Jeff Doepker
Ann Donald
Joe & Leslie Dort
Amanda Dow
Justine Dowd
Sue Drader
Ali Drake
Jon Dudley

Brenda Dyck
Jennifer Dyck
Alisa Eaton
Jane Ebberr
Ulrike Eccher
Maryn Edwards
Elisabeth Egli
Debbie Ehrstien
Mark El-Masry
David Elzinga
Lynn Faber
Renee Fagnou
Lynne Fennell
Margot Ferguson
Alex Fernandez
Paul Fesko
Anne Findlay
Becky Finell
Michael Fischer
John Fisher
Louise Forsyth
Natalie Fosty
Hilary Foulkes
Gilles Fournier
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Doug Frenette
Gwen Fujino
Devin Garrett
Owen Gaskill
Ellen Gasser
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Barry Gitzel
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Irene Hanley
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Dawn Hardy
Julie Harris
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Heini He
Candice Healey
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Rhonda Hellard
Rosemarie Heller
Frank Henke
Brett Heron
Gerald Herter
Dee Dee Hibbert
Kelly Hill
Lisa Hill
Lois Hinz
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Dale Huntingford
& Virginia Dobson
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Lynette Hyslop
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Dianne Leonhardt
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Michele Liang
Angela Linke
Ingrid Littmann-tai
Amy Loader
Eva Logan
Lisa Lopez
Kym Lorenz
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Nancy Lutz
Frances MacDonald
John MacDonald
Cara MacEachern
Nancy MacEachern
Darla Macfarlane
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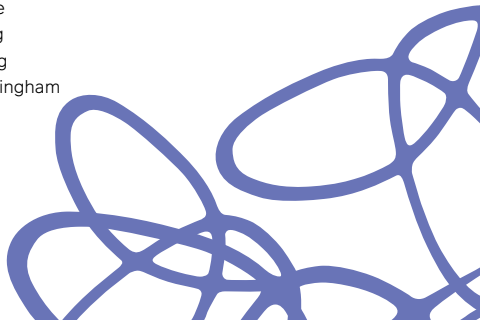
Charles MacMichael
Evan Magnusson
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Jennifer Malzer
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↑ Dr. Beverly Frizzel, Michel Bourque with Explorer Kenny Broad (centre), Bryan Clarke and Jane Durango © Will Young

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Arts Commons is the largest performing arts centre in Western Canada and the third largest in the country. Located in the heart of Calgary's downtown core, the centre occupies a full city block and is home to five theatres, six visual and media arts galleries, and the world-class Jack Singer Concert Hall. But we are so much more than a destination.



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➔ Cover image Alberta Jazz All-Stars on the Jack Singer Concert Hall @ Will Young
 ↑ (top) Patrons at Showtime: A Live Music Celebration @ Mike Hopkins
 (left) Soundcheck for Laila Biali Concert @ Sam Obadero
 (right) ArtsXpeditions featuring Daisy @ Kiani Evans