

**Media Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 13, 2017**

Edmonton Arts Council recognizes outstanding local artists

Tonight the Edmonton Arts Council will recognize the 2016 recipients of the **Cultural Diversity in the Arts** project grants and the **Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund** awards.

Presenters include Mayor Don Iveson, bringing greetings on behalf of the City of Edmonton. The evening will also feature performances by The Ceileigh Cardinal Band and DJ Creeasian. Two short films by Jason Gondziola, of mtset productions, will also be screened, showcasing the award and grant recipients. The videos will be released at 7:00 p.m. MST on the Edmonton Arts Council's Facebook page. **Contact the Edmonton Arts Council if you would like an embargoed preview of these shorts.**

When: February 13, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. (presentation to take place 7:00 to 7:40 p.m.)

What: Awards presentation and reception, media photo opportunity

Where: The Needle Vinyl Tavern (10524 Jasper Avenue)

"We are so pleased to support and celebrate these 23 outstanding artists," said Stephen Williams, Grants Director of the Edmonton Arts Council. "Our diverse community of artists is one of the forces that holds our city together, and we are so fortunate to have such inspiring people call Edmonton home. I look forward to seeing the projects and performances that will result from the investments announced tonight."

The City of Edmonton through the Edmonton Arts Council established the **Cultural Diversity in the Arts program** to recognize that artists from all parts of the world enrich Edmonton's cultural scene. Artists from these communities can apply to any Edmonton Arts Council program, but many also face cultural, linguistic or historical barriers to accessing support. Grants will support the activities of individual, Edmonton artists for a specific time towards a specific project.

The **Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund** provides awards of \$7,500 to encourage artists to stay in our community. The funds are intended to offset living and working expenses, allowing artists to devote a concentrated period of time to their artistic activities, career enhancement and/or development. The award is available to artists at any stage of their professional career.

More information about the Edmonton Arts Council's grants and award programs can be found at: grants.edmontonarts.ca

Backgrounder: 2016 Cultural Diversity in the Arts and Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund recipients

Recipients of the 2016 Cultural Diversity in the Arts program:

Nasra Adem is a multi-disciplinary artist and slam poet, and is currently serving as the City of Edmonton's second Youth Poet Laureate. She is working to transition Sister2Sisterhood from platform to collective, with a focus on sustainability, accessibility, and healing for women of colour through art.

Jacob Amon is a multi-disciplinary Canadian/Sudanese artist. His current project of twenty visual arts pieces will explore the theme of change and the settlement process of newcomers in Edmonton.

Jewish filmmaker **Adam Bentley** uses film to tell personal stories about space, place, and identity. His current project recounts the story of a young Jewish girl hiding in a Dutch family's bakery during the Holocaust, inspired by real events associated with one Edmonton family.

Justin (Justice) Berger is a Métis visual artist whose current project, "The Walls of Justice", consist of large paintings to be installed in public locations throughout the city.

As a members of Edmonton based Vaughn String Quartet, cellist **Silvia Buttiglione** and her quartet members will record their first CD, paying tribute to the cultural origins of the four group members.

Persian classical musician and composer **Farhad Khosravi** will stretch the boundaries of the Persian classical genre with his first album "Sleeping in Sorrow – Songs of Child Labour", shedding light on the challenges of the labour children and orphans in Iran.

William LeBlanc (a.k.a. Rellik) is an urban, Indigenous hip-hop artist. The music video for his song "The Hour (Mama's Song)" addresses the subject of losing a parent, a common theme among today's society and within Aboriginal communities.

An Assistant Professor in Middle Eastern and African Studies at the University of Alberta, **Iman Mersal's** book of lyrical poetry will explore immigrant accents, strung together by a narrative thread of prose.

Oksana Movchan is a visual artist originally from Kyiv, Ukraine. Her current project will result in a series of six paintings and a polyptych exploring the theme of "home"; something both uniquely personal and universal.

Dean Musani is a composer/musician who utilizes modern techniques of modular synthesis and sampling in his works. His current project will explore the duality of technology and nature, capturing the sounds of natural Alberta locations of cultural and social significance.

Adriana Onita is a multilingual poet, visual artist, and educator. Her current project encompasses a multilingual poetry and art book, mentorship from Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, and a photography exhibition.

Garth Prinsonsky (a.k.a. Garth Prince) is a vocalist and educator of (World) African music. Prinsonsky will be developing an African music book and program for children.

As the President of the Heart of the City Festival Society of Edmonton, **Mike Siek** will spearhead the Street Prints Artist Collective, a shared initiative between Heart of the City, E4C, and the Inner City Recreation and Wellness Program to offer support and opportunities to inner-city artists.

Brandon Wint is a poet and spoken word artists. His spoken word album, "Infinite Mercies", explores and celebrates the subtle mercies that sustain human life, and will be complemented by classical piano led compositions.

Recipients of the 2016 Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund:

Jessy Ardern is an actor, playwright, and youngest winner of the Harry S. Rintoul Award for Best New Manitoba play. Since moving to Edmonton, she graduated from 2016 BFA acting class at the University of Alberta, and has since shown her collaborative work with Arms Queer Theatre, the Found Festival, the Edmonton Fringe, and the Thousand Faces Festival of Mythic Art.

Jason Chinn is a playwright invested in bringing our local stories to the stage. Through the exploration of controversial topics and the secrets we carry, Chinn continues to push boundaries to find new ways to make theatre more relatable.

Chris Dodd is a performing artist and writer, and was the first Deaf theatre artist to graduate with a B.A. (Honours) in Drama from the University of Alberta. Through his plays, the creation of SOUND OFF: A Deaf Theatre Festival, and the Deaf Artists and Theatres Toolkit, Dodd serves as a strong advocate for Deaf arts community.

Lauren Gillis, better known as Lucette, has been making waves in the folk and country music communities since her album debuted in 2015. She is a firm believer in creating community through art, and supporting other local musicians, helping to provide opportunities for further exposure to new audiences.

As a visual artist, **Taryn Kneteman**, is an avid supporter of Edmonton's network of artist-run centres, and strives to help to foster critical dialogue between artists, institutions, and non-art community members. Her work explores transitory and temporary spaces, providing a fresh perspective on spaces that are typically overlooked.

Dwayne Martineau is a long-time member of the Edmonton Arts community as a musician, photographer, and visual artist. Within the community he has played a connective and developmental role, igniting multiple successful collaborations. His recent artistic work has placed emphasis on the issues facing the Aboriginal community of Edmonton.

Conni Massing has lived and worked in Alberta for the majority of her career as a playwright, screenwriter, author, dramaturge, story editor, and teacher. Massing is a well-established mentor in the community, having worked with the Edmonton Public Library, Workshop West Theatre, and Theatre Network, among many others. In 2005 she was honoured as one the 100 people who have influenced Alberta Theatre in the last one hundred years.

Tony Olivares is a riveting performer and a vibrant member of Edmonton's dance community. As the founder non-profit dance company TONY OLIVARES DANCE, Olivares continues to foster the education and training of the next generation of dancers and visual artists.

Gerry Potter has worked in the Edmonton community as a writer, director, script consultant and producer of both theatre and film for more than 30 years. Among his many contributions to the artistic community, Potter has lent his talents to community-engaged theatre as the founder and Artistic Producer of Rising Sun Theatre, bringing together professional theatre, dance, and musicians with adults with developmental disabilities.

-30-

The Edmonton Arts Council is a non-profit society and charitable organization that supports and promotes the arts community in Edmonton. The EAC works to increase the profile and involvement of arts and culture in all aspects of our community life.

Media Contact:

Jamie Chapelsky, Communications Officer
780.424.2787 ext 239 / jchapelsky@edmontonarts.ca