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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR SHANE SMITH DEPARTING HOT DOCS AFTER EIGHT SUCCESSFUL YEARS

Toronto, Canada – Hot Docs has announced that artistic director Shane Smith will be departing after eight successful years spearheading the curatorial vision for the annual Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival. His decision to leave comes on the heels of a milestone 30th anniversary edition in April that saw Toronto audiences return in droves for the first fully live Festival since the pandemic. Smith’s final day will be June 30, but he will remain involved as a consultant throughout the transition period. The search for his successor will begin this month.

“With the success of our 30th anniversary now under our belt and the incredibly talented Marie Nelson at the helm as our new president, Hot Docs is on solid footing to chart an exciting path forward. The time seems right for me to do so as well and to explore new opportunities,” said **Shane Smith**. “I’m extremely proud of the work that we’ve done together as a team, especially during the uncertainties of the past few years. I’ll forever be grateful to Hot Docs programmers, staff and particularly the filmmakers who have trusted us to share their stories with our audiences and industry colleagues during my time here.”

“On behalf of my co-chair Robin Mirsky and the entire board, I would like to thank Shane for his deep passion, incredible hard work and extraordinary vision,” said **Lalita Krishna**, co-chair of Hot Docs Board of Directors. “He leaves the Festival with a stellar reputation for offering audiences diverse and compelling stories that inform, inspire and often challenge their understanding of the world, and for offering filmmakers a space where their work will be respected and embraced by enthusiastic and thoughtful audiences. We are grateful for his contributions and for setting such a high standard for us to continue to meet.”

Smith joined Hot Docs in 2015 as programming director to oversee the curation of Hot Docs Festival, the national Docs For Schools education program and a variety of special programming initiatives, including the long-running Doc Soup screening series. In the summer of 2022, he was named artistic director and assumed oversight of year-round programming at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema.

During his tenure, Smith led his team to shape rich, diverse and inclusive Festivals that championed under-represented voices and untold stories, celebrated the extraordinary talent of Canadian filmmakers, and showcased documentary storytelling’s myriad forms. Under Smith, the past six editions featured gender parity amongst directors, and the 2023 Festival saw a high point in representation with 40% of directors identifying as Black, Indigenous or Persons of Colour and a record 72 countries being represented in the official selection. Over his eight festivals, Smith consistently selected Canadian

productions and co-productions for opening night presentations to spotlight for the world the country's incredible and diverse talent.

Smith's legacy includes the introduction of foundational Festival programs such as *Persist*, an audience favourite that features female-led stories of women speaking out and being heard; *Markers*, which features experimental work that pushes the boundaries of the documentary form; and *Deep Dive*, a showcase for long-form, episodic work. His leadership with Docs For Schools, which encourages the use of documentaries as educational tools by providing teachers with free access to films and supporting resources, saw the program expand nationally and reach more than 150,000 students.

In recognition of Smith's contributions to the Festival and to the wider Canadian documentary community, plans are underway for a reception in his honour later this summer to provide colleagues, filmmakers and others an opportunity to gather together to celebrate and thank him.

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Hot Docs (www.hotdocs.ca), North America's largest documentary festival, conference and market, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing and celebrating the art of documentary and to creating production opportunities for documentary filmmakers. Year-round, Hot Docs supports the Canadian and international industry with professional development programs and a multi-million-dollar film fund portfolio, and fosters education through documentaries with its popular free program Docs For Schools. Hot Docs owns and programs the Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema, a century-old landmark located in Toronto's Annex neighbourhood and the world's first and largest documentary cinema, and operates Hot Docs at Home streaming platform.

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