

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Vancouver's Unique Bhangra Story Revealed

Politics, identity and music intersect in *Bhangra.me: Vancouver's Bhangra Story*, opening May 5 at Museum of Vancouver.

**MEDIA PREVIEW & INTERVIEWS: Tuesday, May 3, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**VANCOUVER, BC** – It's more than just a colourful dance. Museum of Vancouver (MOV) and Vancouver International Bhangra Celebration Society (VIBC) present ***Bhangra.me: Vancouver's Bhangra Story***, May 5 to October 23, 2011 at 1100 Chestnut Street in Vanier Park.

*Bhangra.me* tells the story of Vancouver's South Asian community through the lens of Bhangra dance and music. Experience an interactive exhibition that links Bhangra with issues of identity, politics, diaspora and life in Vancouver.

"Bhangra – and by extension the greater story of South Asians in Vancouver – is deeply intertwined with Vancouver's own story," says MOV guest curator and cultural researcher, Naveen Girn. "Bhangra dancers performed at the Montreal Olympics, Expo 86, and Spokane World's Fair, as well as Vancouver's own 2010 Olympics. This contrasts with the humble and community origins of this dance, where men and women gathered in basements, at community centres, high school gyms, halls, and old temples, to perform, gather, build friendships and nurture their identity in Vancouver."

Co-produced by [VIBC Society](#) and [MOV](#), and co-curated by Viviane Gosselin, Curator of Contemporary Issues, the exhibit tracks several key themes in the development of Bhangra music and dance in Vancouver:

- Bhangra's role in creating an identity and community for Punjabi immigrants in the 1960s and 70s.
- Growth of Bhangra DJ culture, from hall parties to night clubs.
- Role of Bhangra music and dance in labour movements in the 1980s.
- Emergence of Vancouver as hub for award-winning Bhangra dance talent.
- Vancouver's place in the transnational global Bhangra industry.
- Costumes and instruments from performances over the past four decades.
- How Bhangra in Vancouver has emerged as a platform for intercultural encounters.

"Our partnership with Museum of Vancouver brings much-needed legitimacy to an art form that is often sidelined as an "ethnic" activity, or seen as a natural part of our lives within the South Asian community, so that we forget the important role that Bhangra has played in defining our collective identity," says Mo Dhaliwal, Board Chair of VIBC Society. "With *Bhangra.me*, we're broadening and deepening the understanding of what Bhangra means to Vancouver and what it means to be Canadian."

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“We found there was a need for an original exhibition that revealed hidden stories about Bhangra, identity and Vancouver,” says Nancy Noble, CEO at Museum of Vancouver. “With support from Vancouver Foundation, MOV and VIBC Society commissioned original research to uncover Vancouver’s Bhangra stories, culminating in the first major museum exhibition of its kind in Canada, chronicling the lives and experiences of South Asian communities in Canada.”

Co-curator and researcher Naveen Girn spent one year interviewing over 55 people, filming over 100 hours of documentary footage, and uncovering never-before-seen photographs, video, news articles, and stories – all revealed in the exhibition. Visitors can also share their Bhangra-related stories, memories, photographs and videos using the **Bhangra.me Storymap** online at [Bhangra.me](http://Bhangra.me).

*Bhangra.me: Vancouver’s Bhangra Story* runs from May 5 to October 23, 2011 at Museum of Vancouver, located at 1100 Chestnut Street, Vanier Park, Vancouver. On Wednesday, May 4, MOV and VIBC will host the Bhangra.me Opening Party at 7pm. Tickets and more information about the project are available at [www.museumofvancouver.ca](http://www.museumofvancouver.ca).

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**Media Preview: Tuesday, May 3 from 10:00 a.m – 1:00 p.m.**

**Interviews available with curators, project team members and Bhangra artists featured in exhibition.**

Music samples of Vancouver Bhangra can be downloaded at the [Bhangra.me Soundcloud](http://Bhangra.me Soundcloud). Click the downward facing arrow on the right of the screen to download songs for use only by media for Bhangra.me related stories.

#### **Media Contact**

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## ***Bhangra.me: Vancouver's Bhangra Story Team Bios***

### **Naveen Girn / Guest Curator and Cultural Researcher**

Documentary filmmaker, researcher and freelance writer Naveen Girn is a graduate student in Geography at York University and co-curator of the Museum of Vancouver's Bhangra.me exhibition. He holds degrees from Simon Fraser University in History, Political Science and English, and is currently researching a re-imagining of sacred space, the architecture of Arthur Erickson and South Asian history in British Columbia. Previously, Naveen spent ten years working in the local television industry as an editor, TV host and producer, and is currently working on a documentary film that records the stories of first generation South Asian immigrants to Vancouver.

### **Viviane Gosselin / Curator of Contemporary Issues**

Viviane Gosselin is the Curator of Contemporary Issues at the Museum of Vancouver. She has led several exhibition teams in museums for the past fifteen years while serving on peer review committees with the Canadian Museum Association and Canadian Heritage. She is an executive board member of THEN/HiER (The History Education Network/ Histoire et Education en Réseau) and is a research associate with the UBC Centre for the Study of Historical Consciousness.

### **Amanda Gibbs / Director of Audience Engagement**

Amanda Gibbs is currently the Director of Audience Engagement at Museum of Vancouver. She began her work with the museum in 2007 as a consultant supporting the re-visioning and re-think of this century plus local institution. Gibbs' background is a mix of facilitation, social and environmental political engagement and organizational visioning and rebranding. Gibbs has a specialization in working with large not-for-profit, policy-driven organizations. As Strategic Counsel with IMPACS (the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society), from 1999-2004, Gibbs worked with organizations in Canada and throughout the world often in complex, conflict-driven issues with diverse stakeholders. Through her work with creative agencies and her own consulting practice, Gibbs' has a client list that includes a wide range of organizations and ethical companies including: Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Greenpeace, Vancity Credit Union, ParkLane Homes, AMSSA, Vibrant Surrey, Greater Victoria Harbour Authority, LEAD international, Canadian Council for International Cooperation, CIVICUS, LIU Centre for International Relations.

### **Mo Dhaliwal / Board Chair, Vancouver International Bhangra Celebration Society**

A multi-cultural marketing professional with a background in business and software development, Mo is actively involved in the arts community as Treasurer for the Alliance for the Arts and Culture and President of Vancouver Asian Heritage Month. Mo also serves on the Multicultural Advisory Council for the Province of BC and is a member of the Vancouver 125 Advisory Committee.

### **Propellor Design / Bhangra.me Exhibition Designers**

Propellor Design is committed to creating useful, beautiful and ecologically minded objects and experiences. Designers Toby Barratt, Pamela Goddard and Nik Rust became creative allies while studying sculpture at Vancouver's Emily Carr University and have since formed Propellor, a multidisciplinary studio. Propellor's work spans a broad range of disciplines from furniture and lighting design to exhibition design and sculpture. A deep interest in the natural world is at the core of Propellor's practice and is reflected in the concepts, forms, and processes employed in our work. Experimenting with new materials, prototyping new ideas and searching for balance between aesthetic, functional, poetic and environmental concerns keeps us engaged and helps us to get to work on time.