

YEAR IN REVIEW

The Edmonton Space & Science Foundation can be justly proud of its accomplishments in 2019. It was a year of great strides forward and outstanding achievement in many key areas, from new gallery completion to attendance to fundraising to finances.

If we think back to 2014, we committed to a course of action called the Aurora Project. We told City Council that we would take their investment of \$12 million and turn it into \$40 million. And we would use that funding to re-imagine and re-energize the science

centre, creating a facility and organization that would be ready for another 30 years of success in serving Greater Edmonton and Northern Alberta. 2019 is the year in which we really started seeing results.

Early in 2019, we filled in the final pledge in our quest for funding from all three levels of government. The pledge of \$8.65 million from the Investing in Canadian Infrastructure Program brought all three levels of government into the project with \$12 million from each. The funds raised from the community brought the total raised to just under \$40 million.

In 2019, we completed most of the final renovation phases of the *Aurora Project*, which had a total cost of about \$18 million. Once the renovations were complete, our audience let us know how pleased they were through a huge leap in attendance and in record-setting Membership sales.

Our most fundamental measure is attendance and we did very well. We sold close to 560,000 admissions to the science centre, IMAX theatre, and other camps and programs.

One of our favourite metrics is Memberships, as they represent our community making an investment in the science centre based on the value it provides. At the end of 2019, about 8,000 households held Memberships, representing about 27,500 individuals. These numbers are unprecedented. TELUS World of Science Membership numbers climbed by over 60% since July 2018, when the major Aurora renovations in the Cardinal building were completed.

We started 2019 with a new four-year Strategic Plan that focused the organization on three key goals:

- **outstanding science, relevant to our audience;**
- **completion of the Aurora Project; and,**
- **elevating our standards and expectations for visitor service.**



A compelling outcome of the science goal was to increase the quality of service and relevance of our programs to our Indigenous audience. To that end, an *ad hoc* committee of the Board was struck, and relationships are being built with Indigenous partners and stakeholders so that we can create programming that meets community needs.

With the Aurora Project, we hit three key milestones. In March, we opened *CuriousCITY*, our new early childhood education space. It was enthusiastically received by the community. The reception was so fervent that we had to put special procedures in place to manage the crowds.

The opening of *CuriousCITY*, combined with the launch of the IMAX films *Superpower Dogs* and *Apollo 11*, along with the final week of the travelling exhibition, *BODY WORLDS: Animal Inside Out*, drove terrific attendance numbers during the school Spring Break at the end of March. About 32,000 admissions were sold during that 10-day period. *MythBusters: The Explosive Exhibition* opened in April and we ended the year in a super way with *Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes*.

At the end of June, *The Nature Exchange* opened, again to an exuberant response from visitors. Finally, in December, just in time for Christmas, the new incarnation of *The Science Garage*, dramatically expanded in physical size and in scope of activity. Each of these new spaces were designed to not only provide a great educational experience, but to encourage repeat visitation. Our attendance and Membership sales attest to the success of this strategy.

On April 10, we premiered our first original production developed for the Zeidler Dome. It is called *Legends of the Northern Sky* and was a joint production between TELUS World of Science – Edmonton and Critical Fusion Productions. It was created in consultation with First Nations astronomer Wilfred Buck from Winnipeg, and Cree elder Betty Simons from Maskwacis. It is a 22-minute animated exploration of First Nations stories and wisdom found in the night sky.

2019 was a year of accomplishment, and preparation for the final phase of the Aurora Project, a building expansion of 20,000 square feet, which will start in the spring of 2020. Perhaps the most important lesson from 2019 was the profound impact of the changes created through Aurora. The whole point of the project has been to create a new version of the science centre that meets the changing needs of the community and increases the centre's overall impact. Judging by how our audience has responded, we can be confident we are doing the right things and have made wise decisions. Our relationship with Edmontonians and all our stakeholders is as strong as ever.



Alan Nursall

President and CEO

TELUS World of Science – Edmonton

Edmonton Space & Science Foundation



Sharilee Fossum

Chair, Board of Directors

Edmonton Space & Science Foundation

