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8th Annual Sikh Film Festival and Heritage Gala Announces Tie For Top Documentary Prize

**Best Documentary awarded to *The Ulysses* and *Canadian Soldier Sikhs*;
Jagjeet wins Best Short Film; Gurinder Chadha, Jaspal Bindra and Navtej Sarna recognized with
2011 Sikh Heritage Awards**

(October 16, 2011) – The **8th Annual Sikh International Film Festival and Heritage Gala** on Saturday, October 15 at Cipriani's on Wall Street brought to a close the three-day **Sikh International Film Festival and Leadership Summit** with an evening of celebration and ceremony. People from all walks of life ventured to Manhattan for a proud and jovial display of Sikh art and culture. *Canadian Soldier Sikhs* and *The Ulysses* shared the award for Best Documentary, while *Jagjeet* captured the award for Best Short Film.

Commenting on the occasion, the festival's Film Chair, **Dr. Paul Johar**, brought to notice "not only the diverse range of films but the filmmakers from all walks of life behind them." Dr. Johar then gave an overview of the 12 documentary and short films that participated in the festival.

Esteemed director **Gurinder Chadha** presented the film awards. Best Short winner Kanwaljit Singh won for *Jagjeet*, a narrative short film that examines the toll the 1984 Delhi riots takes on the relationship of two lifelong best friends. The Best Documentary Award was shared by two films: director David Gray was recognized for his film *Canadian Soldier Sikhs*, a fascinating chronicle of ten Sikh men in the World War I-era Canadian army struggling through enlistment, training, and the battlefield. Accepting the other Best Documentary award were Alberto Garcia Ortiz and Agatha Maciaszek, directors of *The Ulysses*, a film about Punjabi Indian immigrants in a Spanish enclave of Morocco, awaiting their fate in a shanty community they've built to avoid deportation.

The three film winners were decided by a jury consisting of **Dr. Balbinder S. Bhogal** (Associate Professor in Religion, Hofstra University), video producer **Ian Hall**, **Dr. Sophie Hawkins** (Professor of Religion, Hofstra University), filmmaker **Safina Uberol** (Golden Eagle Award winner, *1-800-India*), **Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany** ("the father of fiber optics"), and **Dr. I.J. Singh** (professor emeritus of anatomical sciences, New York University).

At Saturday evening's closing gala and awards event, Sikh Art & Film Foundation President Mr. Tejinder Singh Bindra and Chief Guest Her Excellency **Preneet Kaur**, Minister of State for External Affairs, India handed out the annual Sikh Heritage Awards. Recipients of 2011 honors were **Gurinder Chadha**, Filmmaker (*Bend It Like Beckham, It's a Wonderful Afterlife*) for Art; **Jaspal Bindra** (CEO Standard Chartered Bank Asia) for Leadership; and author and diplomat Hon. **Navtej Sarna** (India's Ambassador to Israel) for Vision. Ms. Chadha, who is currently working on a groundbreaking new film about the Punjabi-British experience during Partition, expressed her gratitude for the honor, acknowledging the wealth of talent who have shared their films with audiences throughout the festival.

2011 Sikh Heritage Awards Gala festivities were capped off with a performance from The Prince of Bhangra, **Sukhbir**, and a set from **DJ Kucha** brought everyone together on the dance floor for a roaring ending to the event. Along with the filmmakers, award recipients and Sikh Art and Film Foundation leaders, guests included the Hon. **Tarlochan Singh** (Former Member of Parliament and Chairman Minorities Commission India), Hon. **Thomas DiNapoli** (Office of the New York State Comptroller), Hon. **Carol A. Robles-Roman** (Deputy Mayor for Legal Affairs, NYC), Hon. **Prabhu Dayal** (Consul General of India), Hon. **Manjeev Puri** (India's Deputy Permanent Representative to UN), Hon. **Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez** (Commissioner of NY State), Hon. **Jon Kaiman** (Supervisor, Town of Hempstead), **Michael Miller** (CEO Jewish Community Relations Council), and **Stuart Rabinowitz** (President Hofstra University).

In 2011, the Sikh Arts Foundation supported the work of filmmakers by rewarding festival award-winners with cash prizes and screening fees totaling \$15,000.

The events preceding the closing night gala on October 15 included a Children's session held at Hofstra University on October 8, which featured dynamic films such as *Let It Out*, a music video by Michigan filmmaker Gulshan Singh, and *I Will Stand Up*, by Jasleen Kaur--two films that address the pervasive problem of bullying among today's youth. Delving into contemporary issues faced by Sikhs in the Western World were Angad Singh's *(Ex) Changed*, as well as United Sikh's *Fighting for My Crown*.

The sold-out, first annual Sikh Leadership Summit took place on Thursday, October 13 at 7pm at Asia Society. This exciting session brought together leaders and mentors in the Sikh community and beyond to discuss the next generation of leaders and provide an opportunity to network. Participants included **Gurinder Chadha**, **Dr. Mohanbir S. Sawhney** (professor, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University), and **Gurvendra S. Suri** (founder and CEO, Optimal Solutions Integration, Inc.) with moderator **Matthew Breitfelder** (chief talent officer, BlackRock).

On Friday, October 14 the Sikh community of New York welcomed neighbors and friends from across the United States and the world to a homecoming reception, followed by the premieres of Harpeet Kaur's feature-length documentary *A Little Revolution*, a gripping story of hope, empowerment, and dreams in the rural village of Punjab where orphans of farmers have committed suicide; and *The Ulysses*, by directors Alberto Garcia Ortiz and Agatha Maciaszek. An After Party at Asia Society followed the film premieres. The following afternoon introduced the documentary and shorts film session with judges evaluating the selections for the awards, which were given out at the gala later that evening.

The Sikh International Film Festival was founded in 2003 to create awareness and pride in the diversity, culture and history of the Sikhs. The Sikh Art and Film Foundation is planning next year's Festival and Gala in Manhattan in October 2012.

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MEDIA CONTACTS

For photos, clips, press materials, and more information please email or call
Brandon Rohwer , brandonrohwer@gmail.com, 716-904-2459