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Grand Rapids Public Museum Announces

New Virtual Reality and Touchscreen Experience

*Meet Finny –* Exploring the Museum’s Iconic Fin Whale Skeleton

**Grand Rapids, MI** – The Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) announced today that a new virtual reality experience will be opening on Saturday, December 16 featuring Finny, the Museum’s iconic 1905 finback whale skeleton that hangs above the first floor Galleria.

At the *Meet Finny* kiosk, visitors will come face to face with Finny in the Finny Virtual Reality experience. An HTC Vive headset and hand controls will be available to put on and spend a few minutes interacting with Finny in a whale’s natural environment.

Visitors will see Finny swimming around as you stand on the ocean floor, and learn about whale anatomy through the layers of its body. As visitors look through the headset, small targets will be seen on the whale, that allow users to click and learn more about fin whales. Learn about Finny’s blubber layer, internal organs and skeleton!

Additionally, visitors can interact with two video touchscreens to learn more about Finny and fin whales in general. Museum visitors can explore the history of Finny, how this artifact came to the Museum and see images of Finny throughout history, as well as interact with scientific findings about fin whales, including what they eat, how big they are and more!

“Using technology to enhance our experiences here at the Museum is one of our priorities,” said Dale Robertson, President & CEO of the GRPM. “Creating a virtual reality experience and interactive exhibit for one of our most iconic artifacts allows visitors to learn more about it from a scientific and historical perspective, while adding a new dimension to visitor trips to the Museum.”

*Meet Finny* was created through local partnership with Externa CGI and Freshwater Digital. *Finny Virtual Reality* is sponsored by Externa CGI.

“The team at Externa CGI and I were thrilled to play a part in bringing Virtual Reality (VR) to the Grand Rapids Public Museum,” said Brian Knapp, Creative Director at Externa CGI. “We all love the Museum and what it brings to our community and we are honored to be involved.”

​"It has been a privilege to partner with the Grand Rapids Public Museum on the Finny project. This display has been an iconic piece of Grand Rapids culture for years and we hope the new digital experience will further enhance the exhibit and inspire the public as much as it inspired our team that worked on the project," said Matt Downey, President of Freshwater Digital.

*Meet Finny* and *Finny VR Experience* will be included with general admission to the Museum. For more information, visit grpm.org/MeetFinny.

**About Finny**
The finback whale skeleton was acquired by the GRPM in 1905 from the estate of Dr. Jacob W. Velie of St. Joseph, Michigan. Velie acquired it on a trip to Florida’s Gulf Coast, where the whale had washed ashore.

Measuring about 75 feet in length, the fin or finback whale was a mature adult weighing between 80 and 90 tons. Shaped for speed and endurance, this large baleen mammal is native to the deeper waters of the world’s oceans. The semi-flat v-shared head, tapering flippers, and broad powerful flukes aided in propelling it through the water so swiftly that few predators could overtake it. The large mouths incorporate many rows of baleen plates, a horn-like substance fringed with tiny bristles. This specimen has been restored to reflect how whales appear underwater.

**Grand Rapids Public Museum**

The Grand Rapids Public Museum is an invaluable, publicly-owned institution that is home to more than 250,000 unique artifacts that tell the history of Kent County and beyond, houses the only planetarium in the region, and is responsible for protecting the Norton Indian Mounds, a national historic landmark. The Grand Rapids Public Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, with its main location in downtown Grand Rapids, MI at 272 Pearl Street, NW. For additional information including hours of operation, admission fees and exhibit/event listings, please visit [www.grpm.org](http://www.grpm.org/).

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