



Western Development Museum
Saskatoon

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 19, 2019

WESTERN DEVELOPMENT MUSEUM - SASKATOON OPENS NEW EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTING TRADITIONS OF THE SASKATCHEWAN DOUKHOBOR COMMUNITY

The Western Development Museum (WDM), in partnership with Spirit Wrestler Productions, a non-profit organization created by Ryan Androsoff which is dedicated to preserving the history of the Doukhobor community, and Dr. Ashleigh Androsoff, a Doukhobor historian from the University of Saskatchewan, are thrilled to announce the opening of new historical exhibit and multimedia installation at the WDM as part of the Saskatchewan Doukhobor Living Book Project.

The *Saskatchewan Doukhobor Living Book Project* (doukhoborlivingbook.ca) is an initiative aimed at preserving the oral history and spiritual traditions of the Saskatchewan Doukhobor community. Through the immersive multimedia Spirit Wrestler Soundscape installation, a historical exhibit produced by the WDM, and a documentary film, the project tells the story of how the Doukhobors in Saskatchewan practice their faith by documenting the Doukhobor 'Moleniye' (prayer service) as practiced by Saskatchewan's Independent Doukhobors. It preserves the oral history of Doukhobor elders and explores how the community has evolved since first immigrating to Saskatchewan 120 years ago.

"2019 marks 120 years since nearly eight thousand Russian Doukhobors arrived in what would become Saskatchewan. This year is an opportune time to reflect on the community's history and showcase Saskatchewan's diversity," says WDM Curator Dr. Elizabeth Scott. "With the opening of this exhibit, visitors to the WDM Saskatoon will experience first-hand the sounds of Doukhobor choral harmonization and learn more about Doukhobor life in Saskatchewan through featured artifacts from the WDM Collection, some of which date back to the 1890s."

"We started this project with the intention of preserving the unique spiritual and cultural traditions of the Doukhobor community in Saskatchewan, which has endured for 120 years since first arriving as religious refugees fleeing persecution in Russia," said Ryan Androsoff, founder and Executive Director of Spirit Wrestler Productions. "As a direct descendant of those original Doukhobor settlers, I felt a personal calling to take on this project to preserve the legacy of my ancestors for future generations. We are very excited about this partnership with the Western Development Museum which will allow us to bring the story of the Doukhobor community to a much wider audience as we tell that story through a unique and immersive audio-visual experience."

Dr. Ashleigh Androsoff, Doukhobor historian and western Canadian history specialist at the University of Saskatchewan, notes that “many Western Canadians have heard about the Doukhobors, but few have had an opportunity to get to know them personally. This project’s documentary film, soundscape installation, and museum exhibit will provide audiences with the opportunity to learn more about an ethnoreligious minority that has made significant contributions to Saskatchewan’s agricultural and cultural landscapes since their arrival in 1899. Learning more about the Independent Doukhobors’ unique approach to ‘cultural harmonization’, which allowed them to integrate socially, economically, and politically while retaining key features of their religious beliefs and cultural practices, may help us to better understand and support other ethnoreligious minority communities in this province and beyond.”

Saskatchewan Doukhobor Living Book Project
Historical Exhibit and Multimedia Spirit Wrestler Soundscape
Open June 29 - October 20, 2019
Western Development Museum - Saskatoon
2610 Lorne Avenue
9:00 am - 5:00 pm daily. Regular Museum admission applies.

Media are invited to attend the launch event for the exhibit and soundscape on Friday June 2^h at the WDM Saskatoon starting at 7:00 pm.
Please RSVP to Tanya Callaway at: tcallaway@wdm.ca or 306-934-1400 EX. 237

Grand Premiere Screening of Documentary Film:
We’ve Concluded Our Assembly: The Saskatchewan Doukhobors
June 29, 2019 – 2:00 pm
Broadway Theatre
715 Broadway Avenue, Saskatoon

Tickets available at the door or in advance at: <http://doukhobor-living-book.eventbrite.ca>

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