

Ancestors AND Elders

Shumka Presents

“Dancing on Eggshells – The Making of Ancestors & Elders”

The **Ukrainian Shumka Dancers** were proud to present the world premiere *Dancing on Eggshells: The Making of Ancestors & Elders* at **Metro Cinema** on **Tuesday, September 17** at **7 pm**.

The documentary explores the creation of Shumka’s 2018/19 work **Ancestors & Elders**, a historic union of Cree and Ukrainian culture featuring Shumka and the **Running Thunder Dancers and Drummers**. Following Shumka choreographer **Joseph Hoffman** and indigenous theatre artist **Barry Bilinsky**, the film examines the unlikely pair’s creative process as they navigate the difficulties of uniting their respective stories, while dancing around 150 years of cultural baggage. The film offers a glimpse into the artistic process of creating a work that is reflective and respectful of both Cree and Ukrainian culture, all while honouring the traditions of our ancestors with an eye to the path ahead.

The presentation features a full performance of **Ancestors & Elders**, a dance production telling the story of the first Ukrainian settlers in Alberta and their relationship with the Indigenous people of Treaty 6 territory they encountered. The work features Canada’s Ukrainian Shumka Dancers and the renowned Running Thunder Cree Dancers and Drummers, both based in Edmonton.

Dancing on Eggshells is directed by Edmonton filmmakers **Leslie Sereda** and **Steven Glassman**. A Shumka alumnist and current Senior Creative Director, Sereda is the principal owner of Blue Toque Productions, an Edmonton-based media firm specializing in storytelling through documentaries. Glassman produced numerous projects for CBC over 30-plus years, and currently is a consulting executive entertainment producer specializing in media production.

This project was made possible with the support of the **Rena Hanchuk & Yaroslav Kitynskyy Award for Ukrainian Artistry (ACUA)**, **Edmonton Heritage Council** and **Telus**.

Dancing on Eggshells – The Making of Ancestors & Elders is available for free on demand on **TELUS Optik TV** beginning **October 15, 2019**.



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Documentary Directors

Leslie Sereda

Leslie Sereda is the owner, director and producer of Blue Toque Productions, an Edmonton-based media company specializing in telling stories through documentary-style films. Throughout his career, he has worked as a dancer, choreographer, director, visual designer and filmmaker, developing a holistic sense of art and its creation. He has been working in video, media and theatre production for the last 20 years.

Sereda first joined Shumka in 1991, performing in numerous North American tours with the company up to his retirement. From 2004 to 2010, he served as the Artistic Director of Viter Ukrainian Dancers, before returning to Shumka in 2018 to produce Mosquito's Wedding, an enchanting new work that speaks to audiences of all ages. In 2019, Shumka welcomed Sereda back as Senior Creative Director for their 60th Anniversary season.

Steve Glassman

Steve Glassman is recognized as one of Canada's most-respected entertainment Executive Producers. Throughout his career, he has played a major role on hundreds of award-winning national television programs.

Glassman developed and produced the critically acclaimed Country Beat TV music series, earning a Gemini nomination and three AMPIA Awards. He is a founding Producer and later Executive Producer of the CBC Winnipeg Comedy Festival TV series, which received the Gracie Award in New York and the New York Festival Award for comedy and satire. He was also the Canadian co-producer of The Jim Henson Hour, a multi-million dollar production for CBC and NBC.

Glassman was the commissioning editor for the award-winning Lost Years, a program exploring 150 years of Chinese diaspora, and The Ward, highlighting the need for kidney donations in Canada. His documentary 'Will the Spirit Live On?' earned The Certificate of Merit at the Chicago International Film Festival. Get-A Laugh, the story of the Edmonton International Street Performers Festival won the AMPIA Award for Best Variety show, and his TV special on the Arctic Winter Games won an AMPIA for Best Production Reflecting Cultural Diversity.

Stage Performance Directors

Barry Bilinsky

Barry Bilinsky is a professional theatre practitioner of Metis/Cree and Ukrainian heritage. He has worked as a performing artist, technical/production manager, and theatre director across Alberta, with recent credits centred around Indigenous arts and collaborations.

Primarily, Barry focuses on creating work with diverse communities through various art disciplines. He studied English and Theatre at the University of Alberta, attaining a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2012.

Barry is an Artistic Associate with Alberta Aboriginal Performing Arts, as well as having been involved in The Making Treaty 7 Cultural Society, Iiniistsii Treaty Arts Society (REDx Talks), Akpik Theatre, and other companies in Edmonton and Calgary.

Joseph Hoffman

Joseph Hoffman is an experienced dance instructor, writer, choreographer, and director. He was worked with performing studios around Alberta in a wide variety of disciplines, and has spent the last four years developing original work as a co-founder of Kinda Epic Productions.

Joseph started as a dancer with Avrova Ukrainian Dancers in 1996, before moving on to Shumka in 2010. While training as a dancer, he pursued a degree in kinesiology at the University of Alberta which he received in 2015. Joseph's background as a dancer, paired with his specialization in physiology and coaching, have made him an authority on dance education.

During his time at Shumka, Joseph took on numerous roles, including positions on Shumka's Wellness Committee and as Artistic Associate on Shumka's Artistic Team. In 2016, he spearheaded Seniors Can Shumka, a new program bringing both the cultural knowledge and fitness benefits of Ukrainian dance to older generations.

Dance Companies

Ukrainian Shumka Dancers – Executive Producer

Established in Edmonton in 1959, the Ukrainian Shumka Dancers is Canada's only professional Ukrainian dance company. Shumka presents dance-theatre touring productions, as well as intimate concert repertoire across the country and around the world. Seen by millions on international television broadcasts, the company has presented command performances for Queens, Prime Ministers, and Presidents.

More than 60 years of performance history has shaped Shumka's signature music and dance style. While maintaining deep respect for their heritage, Shumka continually challenges conventional boundaries to redefine the experience of Ukrainian dance in the context of today's society.

Part of Shumka's mandate is the creation of a centre of excellence in dance education to prepare the next generation of dancers. The Shumka School of Dance trains over 200 young dancers using North

America's only syllabus for Ukrainian dance, in addition to contemporary movement and RAD ballet instruction. Studia Shumka – a junior performing ensemble and bridging program between the School and the professional company - was established in the Fall of 2018. Shumka also offers Ukrainian dance and RAD-based fitness classes for seniors and adults.

Running Thunder Dancers

The Running Thunder Dancers were founded in 2010 by Adrian Lachance. They have delivered their spectacular brand of song, dance, and storytelling throughout the world, including New Zealand, Mongolia, Beijing, Shanghai, United Kingdom, Holland, and Germany. Their presentations are an ideal opportunity for everyone to learn about how they can celebrate through song and dance.

In addition to performing at schools, conferences, gatherings, celebrations and other venues, the Running Thunder Dancers and Adrian Lachance are also involved in teaching cultural awareness, protocol, values, beliefs, living a healthy lifestyle, and finding the right balance in life. The group also offers workshops that deal with topics like traditional life skills, bullying and lateral violence, goal setting, and understanding and improving self-esteem and self-worth.