

PRESS RELEASE

Multimedia water theatre in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield



Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, May 31st, 2010

This summer, as dusk hits the Old Beauharnois Canal, the heart of downtown Salaberry-de-Valleyfield will come alive to the water and lights of a multimedia theatre retracing the little-known history of the rapids and canals located upstream of Montreal in the territory known as the Haut-Saint-Laurent.

Ohneka will combine the state-of-the-art technologies of water effects, lighting, video projection on water screen and laser animation. The show consists of numerous fountains surrounding a giant water screen of 90 feet long by 30 feet high, 32 000 watts of underwater lighting and a 16 - million colors - laser projector. All together, fountains will have a flow rate of 6,000 litres per minute and an underwater cable system of over 2 km long will be necessary for the installation. All of the above technologies are environmentally friendly.

Prelude

A long, long time ago, the lands of North-Eastern America were flooded by an inland sea. Two beings, Amont and Aval, lived there as brother and sister in absolute peace and harmony. One fateful day, the sea retreated dramatically, separating them from each other. Between Amont—who was confined to the great inland lakes—and Aval—who was relegated at the foot of the ocean, loomed a great river with rapids so fierce it made any attempt of reuniting brother and sister impossible.

Under the warm sun and blue sky in which they could mirror each other, Amont and Aval dreamt incessantly of being reunited. Amont and Aval's deepest wish would finally come true with the help of brave men who dug the long canals needed to avoid the rapids. This dream would come true in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield where Amont and Aval would thus prosper again.

In the 19th century, two expansive canals were dug in an effort to avoid the tumultuous rapids. The first of these was the Lachine Canal—bordering the West Island of Montréal. The other, on the opposite shore of Lake Saint-Louis—dug from Beauharnois all the way to what would come to be known as the City of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield—was the first Beauharnois Canal. This canal was the fruit of the hard manual labour of mainly Irish workers. Today, only 2 km of the initial 20 km remain in the heart of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield.

Through Amont and Aval—Ohneka’s headlining characters—spectators will witness the immense work sites that resulted from the construction of the first major network of canals in the country. They will also bear witness to the birth of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, a necessary crossing point between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. Closed to navigation in 1907, the first Beauharnois Canal—at the origin of the City of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield itself—was re-opened for pleasure boating in 2006.

The artistic team of Ohneka is made up of Thomas Pintal as Artistic Director, Bruno Lachapelle for original score and sound mixing and Vincent Girard at video and motion design. Ohneka is the creation of Montreal-based firms Héritage Maritime Canada and Laser Quantum.

A City of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield initiative made possible by the Société du Vieux Canal de Beauharnois, this water multimedia show aims at spotlighting the City as a major nautical hub for tourists. “We truly believe that this project will strengthen Salaberry-de-Valleyfield’s uniqueness and nautical character, and help further promote the City,” stated Mr. Denis Lapointe, Mayor of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield. “Indeed, it is another high quality attraction we can add to our list of summer tourist offerings—a list that has been fervently growing since the re-opening of the old canal. We are pleased to be able to count on the Société du Vieux Canal’s help in carrying out this project and we are also very grateful to the Beauharnois-Salaberry LDC for its financial contribution,” added the mayor.

Ohneka—inspired by the Iroquois word for water—will be presented from July 15th to September 4th inclusively, every Thursday to Saturday at 9:30 p.m. Admission is free and the entrance to the show will be located at the corner of Victoria Street and Du Centenaire Avenue alongside the Old Beauharnois Canal. The show will be approximately 23 minutes long. Note that, on the evenings of the show, Victoria Street will be closed to traffic between Du Centenaire Avenue and Nicholson Street starting at 9:00 p.m. and parking will be prohibited from 8:30 p.m.

For more information, visit www.ohneka.com

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