

May 17, 2013

Race to the End of the Earth on now at the Royal BC Museum

Victoria, BC – The Royal BC Museum today opened its new feature exhibition, *Race to the End of the Earth*, which charts the triumph and tragedy in the race between Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen and British Navy Captain Robert F. Scott to be the first to reach the South Pole in 1911-12.

“To open this important exhibition today, on what is the National Day of Norway, seems a fitting tribute to the accomplishments of one of that country’s national heroes,” said Professor Jack Lohman, Chief Executive Officer of the Royal BC Museum.

“The race to claim Earth’s last great geographical prize is one of the most dramatic stories of discovery and courage in expedition history. It is a celebration of what motivates us as humans to explore and understand the world around us,” continued Lohman.

The Royal BC Museum in Victoria is the first and only Canadian stop for *Race to the End of the Earth*. The exhibition, which runs until Oct. 14, is organized by the American Museum of Natural History in New York, in collaboration with the Royal BC Museum and the Musée des Confluences in Lyon, France.

“Like all great stories, the South Pole saga remains fresh and absorbing because it is much greater than the sum of its individual elements,” said exhibition curator Dr. Ross MacPhee, American Museum of Natural History. “There is grand tragedy as well as selfless sacrifice, dramatic success paired with bitter failure, men tossing the dice with fate in the harshest place on earth. It is the ultimate story of courage and human perseverance.”

Race to the End of the Earth features original artifacts and photographs from both expeditions, including one of the Norwegian team’s sledges, Amundsen’s own binoculars and Scott’s personal goggles.

Authentic re-creations of Scott’s hut at Cape Evans and the Norwegian party’s underground workrooms show what life in Antarctica was like for the teams as they prepared for their push to the Pole.

An emotional display recounts the British team’s final days. It includes the last letter by Scott to his friend and publisher Reginald Smith, written in the small tent in which he, Edward Wilson and Henry Bowers died on their return from the South Pole.

Computer interactive and hands-on educational activities let people explore how scientists live and work in Antarctica today, and what they are learning about the continent’s surprising sub-ice landscape, ocean currents and weather.

The sledging pennant from British team member Cecil Meares, the dog handler in Scott’s party, is on display from the permanent collection of the Royal BC Museum.

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This is one of only a few original pennants in existence today. Meares retired to Victoria and the pennant, his Polar Medal and other personal items were donated to the Royal BC Museum by the Meares family.

A video presentation showcases the work of Royal BC Museum conservator and exhibit arts technician Jana Stefan, who recently returned from her second trip to Antarctica as part of an international effort to restore Scott's expedition base camp and preserve the more than 10,000 artifacts that remain there in the extreme polar environment.

A number of special events will take place at the Royal BC Museum during the run of *Race to the End of the Earth*.

Beginning July 4, the Quest Lecture Series features an exciting line up of British Columbian adventurers who dared to explore the Antarctic. The first presentation is by mountaineer and photographer Pat Morrow, the first person to climb the highest peak on all seven continents including Antarctica's Mount Vinson Massif.

IMAX Victoria in the Royal BC Museum is screening a companion film to the exhibition, Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure. The film tells the extraordinary story of the British explorer's legendary Trans-Antarctic Expedition in 1914-16. Special Museum and IMAX combo pricing is available.

For tickets to the exhibition and a complete calendar of events, visit explore.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca.

About the Royal BC Museum As the provincial museum and archives, the Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. Through collections, research, presentations and partnerships, the museum and archives tell the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Its two-hectare cultural precinct in Victoria includes a number of historically significant buildings and First Nations sites.

For more information about the Royal BC Museum, visit www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca or call 1-888-447-7977.

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