

Close Encounters entering last week

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TIME is running out to catch *Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years*, the landmark, multi-venue show of indigenous art that's been on in Winnipeg since mid-January.

The free exhibition, the largest international show of contemporary indigenous art ever held in North America, closes May 8.

It's been seen by about 10,000 people and has received media coverage from art publications as far away as Australia, says Alix Sobler of the Winnipeg Cultural Capital program, which mounted the show.

"This is a remarkable exhibition," Sobler says. "I hate to think that people would miss it, because it really is quite a magical experience to view all this incredible work by local people, by Canadians and by international artists."

Today from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., there's a free bus tour to the five *Close Encounters* venues, with curator Jenny Western and curatorial assistant Jaya Beange as guides. It begins and ends at Manitoba Hydro Place, 360 Portage Ave. Only a few spots are left on the bus, but anyone can join in and follow the bus in their own vehicle.

The main venue is 109 Pacific Ave. (the former Costume Museum of Canada). The show's theme is questioning what the future will hold for both indigenous and non-indigenous people.

There's a flurry of events before it closes, including film screenings Wednesday at the Planetarium and Thursday at the Winnipeg Art Gallery and a curatorial talk Friday at Plug In ICA.

Wrap-up events next Saturday include a panel discussion at 11 a.m. reflecting on the show's impact (at 109 Pacific Ave.), a talk by co-curators Jenny Western, Lee-Ann Martin, Candice Hopkins and Steve Loft at noon at the same venue, and the exhibition's closing reception at 8 p.m. at the Urban Shaman gallery. For a full schedule of events, see www.artsforall.ca.

Close Encounters: The Next 500 Years is the largest of all the events mounted by the government-funded Winnipeg Cultural Capital of Canada program. It accounted for the largest chunk of the program's overall \$4-million budget.

Participating artists include 17 aboriginal, Métis and Inuit Canadians and about the same number from beyond Canada, including three indigenous artists each from New Zealand and Australia, a Brazilian, two Sámi artists from Finland, and Americans from First Nations such as the Lakota, Navajo and Cherokee.

An episode of the program *Arts & Minds* dedicated to *Close Encounters* airs today at 5 p.m. and Sunday at 6 p.m. on Bravo TV. A broadcast crew was in Winnipeg for the exhibition's opening in January and spoke with many of the artists.