

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Medicine Hat Man Featured in War Documentary *Esplanade Hosts Canadian Premiere on Tuesday*

MEDICINE HAT, AB – The Esplanade Arts and Heritage Centre, TSG Insurance, and Stream Media present the Canadian Premiere of the film *Turangaarere: Born to Fly - The Story of Flying Officer John Pohe*.

Turangaarere: Born to Fly tells the extraordinary story of Porokoru Patapu (John) Pohe, New Zealand's first Maori pilot to see action in the Second World War. The one-hour documentary spans three continents, returning to the site of the Great Escape in Poland and interviewing historians, experts and survivors as well as tracing the last surviving member of John Pohe's crew, **Tom Thomson** in Medicine Hat, Canada.

In an interview with the Maori Television Service in New Zealand, director Julian Arahanga says, "We were astounded when we found Mr. Thomson. He is a warm, inspiring gentleman who was with John Pohe when they were shot down and is the only man today who holds the key to what really happened that night."

On a bombing mission over Hanover, Germany, in August, 1943, Pohe's bomber was shot, forcing the pilot to plunge the bomber from 23,000 feet to 2,000 feet to extinguish a fire that developed in one of the engines. During the descent, seven members of the 10 man crew bailed out. Running out of fuel, Pohe had to ditch the plane in the English Channel close to Brest, France. The three remaining airmen, including Thomson and Pohe, were picked up by a German picket boat and became prisoners of war. Pohe became one of 10,000 prisoners at Stalag Luft III in Sagan, Poland - which became legendary after the movie, "The Great Escape," starring Steve McQueen, James Garner and Charles Bronson, was released in 1963.

A public film screening will take place at the Esplanade on Tuesday, Nov. 10 at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. There will be a reception following the screening with an opportunity to meet Mr. Tom Thomson and his family.

"This is the first time the documentary has been shown in Canada, and we are thrilled to have the premiere right here in Medicine Hat where Mr. Thomson lives," says Barbara Mitchell from Stream Media Inc.

There are only 150 seats available. To guarantee a seat please, the public is urged to pick up a complimentary ticket in advance at the Esplanade or TSG Insurance (623 4th Street SE).

Donations to the Poppy Fund will be gratefully accepted at the door.

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Reference: Press Release by the Maori Television Service: *The Story Of A NZ War Hero On Maori Television*, Thursday, 17 April 2008, 12:57 pm, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/CU0804/S00187.htm>

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