

David Suzuki faces mock trial

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David Suzuki. (QMI AGENCY PHOTO)

TORONTO - Canada's most prominent and controversial environmentalist, Dr. David Suzuki, will be put on trial for seditious libel.

That is the premise of a mock trial — and work of interactive art — which will see Suzuki judged in court of public opinion at the Royal Ontario Museum on Nov. 6. Creator and producer Laurie Brown said when she first asked the Suzuki, he was intrigued by the concept, but leery.

“At first he thought, ‘What do you mean you’re going to try me, I’m the one on trial? I should be putting everyone else on trial,’” she said. “I said, ‘I know that’s what you want to do, but that’s what you always do. Let’s turn the tables around and have a different kind of discussion.’”

The trial will see two actual legal teams square off and be presided over by Justice Harriet Sachs. Brown said the courtroom feels like a “safe space” to debate climate change and wants the event to be inclusive of all views.

“It was really imperative that this event brings in everybody,” she said. “People who say that climate change is no biggie and that we’ll all be okay and our government will take care of it and other people who think the economy trumps the environment and other people who think we are on the road to ruin and are putting canned goods in their basements.”

To get the event rolling, Suzuki announced his “Carbon Manifesto” Tuesday. It’s a document written by Suzuki, Brown and lawyers involved in the production. Amongst other things, the document calls for the end of oil use as a primary fuel source in Canada and sets out to make 70% of the energy consumed from renewable resources.

Brown said a jury of 12 people, along with the audience, will vote on Suzuki’s fate at the conclusion of arguments.

“The whole idea about good art is to throw you off balance and be provocative and show the world as being slightly unstable. I kind of think Suzuki on trial for seditious libel all of a sudden puts us in a slightly unstable spot. Maybe that’s when we can do our best thinking.”



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