Pioneer Churches
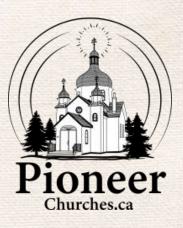
Historic Churches in Northeast Alberta Project
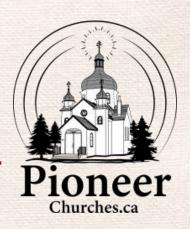
By Russell Sawchuk

PioneerChurches.ca │ Musica-Ukraina.ca

Presentation Outline

1. Introduction to projects
2. Content acquisition and assets
3. Programming and production
4. Marketing and promotion
5. Future plans and questions
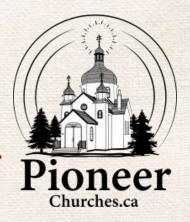6. Resources and sources

1.1 Project Origins

- Lamont County self-guided church tours
- Locations and directions
- Description and histories
- Previous experience photographing churches
- Good use for new drone
- Update and add to self-guided tours
- Discovered tours were 2005 to 2012

1.2 Reasons and Motivation

- Share experiences and lessons learned to encourage and facilitate similar projects

- Inspire and provide ideas to non-profit organizations to use technology

- Doing this presentation as a story teller; not seeking more work!

- Focus on history, not religion or politics
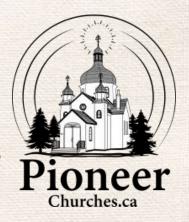
- It's not about the money

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1.3 Project Objectives

1. Virtual tours of historic churches

2. Preserve and share photos and histories

3. A learning experience and share results

Priorities changed from virtual tours to preservation after becoming aware of the status of many of the older churches.
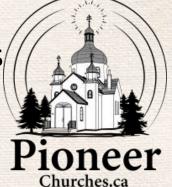
1.4 Expertise and Resources

- Photography experience and expertise
- Technology experience and knowledge
- Latest hardware and software tools
- Dedicated Internet server for websites
- Development of various online applications
- Owner of business (36 years)
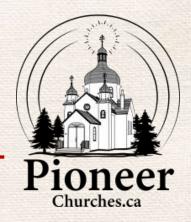- Freedom to do at little cost

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1.5 Virtual Tour Advantages

- Available 24 x 7 from anywhere, anytime
- Environmentally friendly / less expensive
- Detailed information and links
- Videos and multiple photographs
- Different perspectives (drone photos)
- Easy to update and maintain (website)
- Access to much larger, diverse audiences
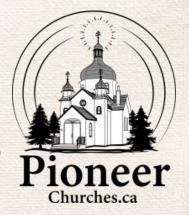
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1.6 Virtual Tour Tips

- Myth: if we have virtual tours, fewer people will come in person

- Simple narrated videos work best, and are most cost-effective

- Complex tours... 360 views, augmented reality, etc. frustrate viewers

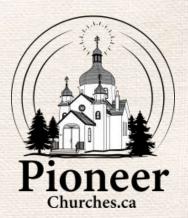- See our *Virtual Tours for Museums and Historic Sites* document

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1.7 Secrets to Success

1. Easy for customers to find you
2. Easy to contact and communicate with you
3. Quality products and services
4. Focus on customer needs and service
5. Easy to pay or donate (credit / debit cards)
6. Convenient delivery or pickup
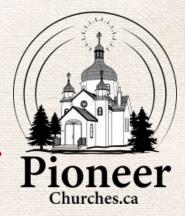7. After sales support

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2.1 Image Sources

- Nikon D850 SLR with GPS

- DJI Mini 4 Pro drone (unregulated)

- DJI Air 2s drone (registered and licensed)

- Other photographers (Fred Alexandruk, Sterling Demchinsky)
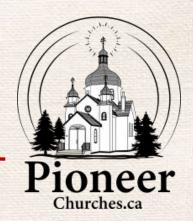
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2.2 History Data Sources

- Lamont County historic churches tour guide

- Jars Balan (UOC histories)

- Canadian Orthodox History Project

- Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton

- OCA Archdiocese of Canada

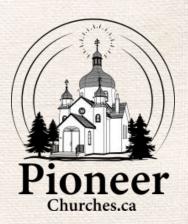- Russian Orthodox Church of Canada

- Google searches

2.3 Find a Grave

- Cemeteries website (600,000 worldwide)
- Has most Alberta cemeteries listed
- Cemetery information and lists of burials
- Free accounts to add information
- Integrated links to each church cemetery
- Post our cemetery photos to their site
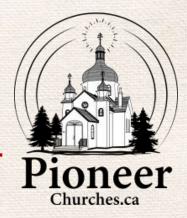- Added missing cemeteries (Onoway)

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2.4 Vimeo

- Paid video hosting service
- No ads like YouTube
- Saves space on our dedicated server
- Links to Vimeo for each church video
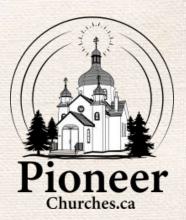- Vimeo videos available to public

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2.5 Freelancer

- Website to find and hire freelancers
- Post projects and/or contests
- Receive proposals and bids
- Ratings and track records of freelancers
- Evaluate and hire contractor or award prize
- Pay only if completely satisfied
- More choices at lower costs

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3.1 Canvas Prints

- Complement online photographs
- Printed in India via Canvas Champ
- Museum quality
- Used in exhibits and events
- Smaller photographs (self-printed)
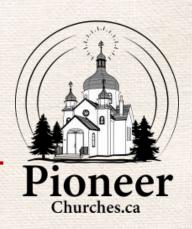- Church cards (self-printed)

3.2 Pioneer Churches Website

- Second version (Joomla 4 CMS)
- Organized by religious denominations
- 118 churches and cemeteries
- 103 videos
- 3,675 images in photo gallery
- Links to cemeteries
- Other information and links
- Clean – no ads, no registrations, etc.

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3.3 Musica Ukraina Website

- Digitization and preservation of historic Ukrainian Canadian music

- Separate website in 2023 (WordPress)

- Sacred, festive, traditional, contemporary

- Other information and links

- Restore to best possible quality

- Current inventory of Ukrainian music: 600 LPs, 100 78s, and 100+ cassettes
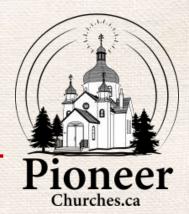
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3.4 Websites Traffic

Pioneer Churches

- 2023: Visitors=9,800|visits=15,000|pages=222,000

- 2024: Visitors=33,600|visits=70,000|pages=302,000

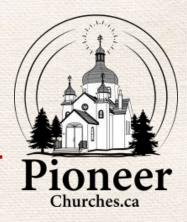- 2025: Visitors=4,400|visits=9,400|pages=35,300

Musica Ukraina

- Jun-Dec 2024: Visitors=6,100|visits=8,700|pages=86,800

4.1 Marketing and Promotion

- Google
  - Search engines listings
  - Photos indexed on Google Images
  - Photos added to Google maps

- Print advertising

- Articles

- Facebook referrals

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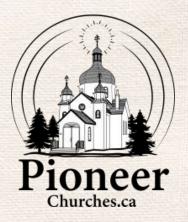Churches.ca

4.2 Marketing and Promotion

- Mailing lists (Alberta Museums Assoc; own)

- Exhibits and events

- Photos added to cemeteries on *FindaGrave.com*

- Giveaways of cards, photos and prints

- Photos in SUCH database at Kule Folklore Centre U of A
  https://suchnetwork.ca/pioneer-churches-on-the-prairies-2

- Don't do: Social media, online ads or search engine optimization (SEO)

5.1 Future Plans

- *History of Ukrainian Orthodox Churches in Alberta* (PDF, eBook and print)

- Remaining UOC churches in northeast Alberta (about 10 to 15)

- Ukrainian Catholic churches in northeast Alberta (about 20 to 30)

5.2 Future Plans

- Sampling of historic Roman Catholic, Polish, Lutheran, Scandinavian churches

- Challenge is to obtain histories on these

- Ukrainian music digitization … priority is on sacred music and old 78s records

- Search for permanent homes for photos, videos, digitized music and websites

- More books?

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6. Resources and Sources

- Articles and Papers:
  https://pioneerchurches.ca/index.php/resources/articles

- Links to Related Resources:
  https://pioneerchurches.ca/index.php/resources/links

- Technology Tools:
  https://pioneerchurches.ca/index.php/technology-tools

- Ukrainian Music Resources
  https://musica-ukraina.ca/resources/

- *History of Ukrainian Orthodox Churches in Alberta* (in progress)
  https://pioneerchurches.ca/book/

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7. Contact Information

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- *PioneerChurches.ca | PrairieChurches.ca*

- *Musica-Ukraina.ca | MusicaUkraina.ca UkrainianMusic.ca | Ukrainian-Music.ca*