

# EDMONTON INSIDE & OUT



JASON SCOTT, THE JOURNAL

Andre Boudreau, president of the Centre culturel Marie-Anne Gaboury, displays porcelain versions of his feet. Saskatoon artist Eveline Boudreau created the feet to represent the survival of the Acadian culture through centuries of migration.

## Acadians celebrate great years in Alberta

### Come to their festival

Forgive Andre Boudreau if he sheds a few tears tonight.

Boudreau and his cohorts at the Marie-Anne Gaboury Cultural Centre are throwing a festival this weekend and next to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

The bash kicks off at 5 p.m. at that distinctive pink stucco building at 8711 Whyte Ave.

The theme of the festival, which features musical acts and all-you-can-eat lobster suppers, is: "I felt like a party."

But there's a serious side to the festival, which recalls the tragic events of the Acadian expulsion, immortalized in Longfellow's romantic poem  *Evangeline*.

Boudreau, president of the centre, looked a tad wistful this week.

In the courtyard, he held up a pair of porcelain feet, an exact copy of his own. They were cast by Acadian artist Eveline Boudreau, a distant relative who lives in Saskatoon when she's not on the road exhibiting her work.

Andre's porcelain feet — and others Eveline has made at earlier Acadian festivals — collectively symbolize the history and survival of the Acadian people, whose ancestors were deported in 1755 because they were considered a threat to the new English settlement of Halifax.

In a sense, Andre was uprooted, too. "Because of the economic situation in New Brunswick, it's normal for Acadians to move," said Boudreau.

In March 1980, he left his native Nigadoo, N.B. ("What, you can't find it on the globe?") as head of an eight-member construction crew bound for booming Alberta.

Like many French-speakers from eastern Canada who came here fully expecting to return home, never quite getting around to it, Boudreau found that Alberta slowly grew on him.

Still, he missed not having a place where he could hang out, speak his language and enjoy other aspects of his culture. One night some like-minded souls formed a centre to call their own.

Boudreau roared with laughter when asked if he's surprised the centre has lasted a full decade. After reflection, he said it's maybe not such a surprise.

"We have more of a need to get together than Franco-Albertans," said Boudreau, adding that francophones born here speak flawless English and don't feel the same cultural gap with other Albertans.

The centre was named after the first white woman to settle in Edmonton. Marie-Anne Gaboury was also the grandmother of Louis Riel, who founded Manitoba and led the Northwest rebellion of 1885. Edmonton named 91st Street in the heart of the francophone quarter after her.

Among Acadians, here and elsewhere, Boudreau is held in high esteem. In 1988, from distant Alberta, he started organizing the first Acadian World Congress in Moncton, N.B. The 10-day event in August, 1994, attracted 350,000 people from all over the world.

The current festival is more modest in its aims, though Boudreau hopes it will bring Edmonton's French-speaking community closer together.

He also extends a warm invitation to non-francos to come and feast on the fresh lobsters flown in from the Maritimes, soak up the vibrant music and participate in the various workshops and other activities.

"We want to share our culture."

(Tickets can be reserved by calling 468-6983.)

By Don Retson