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CITY

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EDMONTON JOURNAL

THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2000

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Artist mourns sabotage

Wanton vandalism destroys tribute to early Acadians

In the early morning hours Sunday, vandals smashed several pairs of porcelain feet made by Eveline Boudreau, a Saskatoon artist in town to help the French-speaking Centre Culturel Marie-Anne Gaboury celebrate its 10th anniversary.

Formerly from northern New Brunswick, Boudreau made the feet to symbolize the history and survival of the Acadian people, whose ancestors were deported from the Maritimes in 1755.

About 9 a.m. Sunday, she walked over to the cultural centre at 8711 Whyte Avenue where her work, mounted on pedestals in the open courtyard, is on display. The sun was perfect for taking pictures so she took along her camera.

Twelve of the 23 pairs of feet were in pieces on the ground.

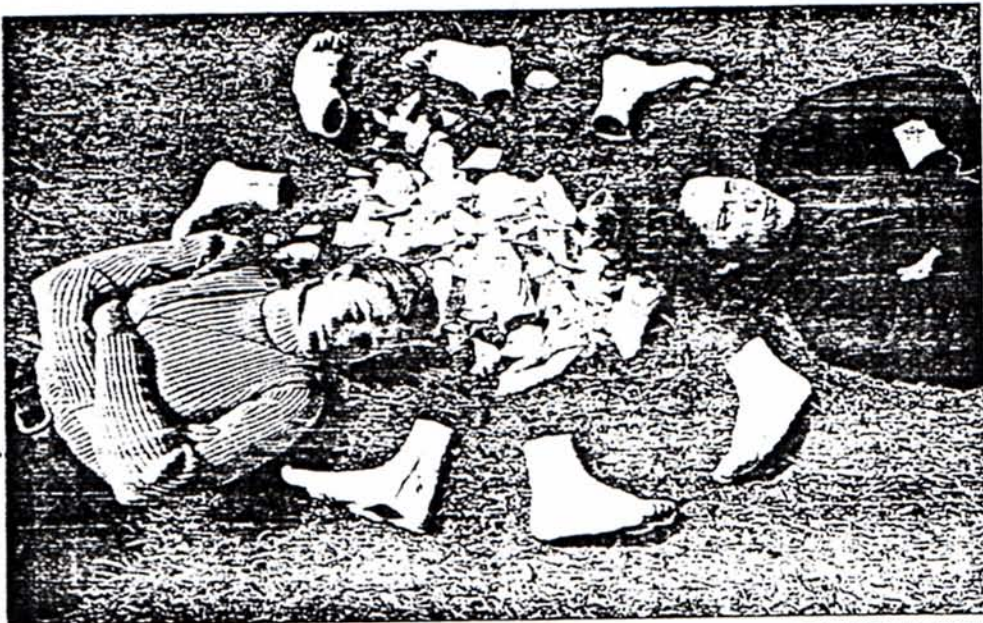
"It was like death," Boudreau said. "I put so much work and attention and care and love in this work. They are very special to me."

Rodrigue Boudreau, president of the local Acadian Association, arrived minutes later to comfort her. Soon, he too was in tears. So were others, especially those who'd assured Boudreau her feet wouldn't be stomped on.

"They're grieving," Boudreau said from Saskatoon. "They're all grieving together. We are all grieving together."

Police have made no arrests in the case.

Boudreau has been the target of bigotry before, but doesn't think the latest vandalism is "an anti-French thing"



GREG SOUTHAM / THE JOURNAL

Nathalie Cormier, co-ordinator of the festival, left, and Catherine Forgues, co-president of the festival, lie among the sculpted feet smashed by vandals outside Centre Culturel Marie-Anne Gaboury.

EDMONTON INSIDE & OUT

Festival co-ordinator Nathalie Cormier agrees, though in retrospect wishes she'd insisted the feet were moved inside at night. They weren't moved because of all the work involved.

Cormier suspects the vandalism was the work of the "same little brats" who'd earlier been confronted and chased out of the courtyard

Despite the incident, the festival will go on this weekend, as planned.

There's all-you-can eat lobster suppers followed by live music Friday, Saturday and Sunday, starting at 5 p.m. Tickets are available at 468-6983.

Boudreau says she feels good about the support she's received from the centre. Many of her

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works are in pieces now. Her dreams are intact.

She's especially pleased the feet — shards and all — will remain on display. She says she made the feet purposely fragile to represent Acadians.

"We are all fragile, even though sometimes we don't want to admit it."

Don Retson