Choral groups to celebrate Acadian heritage

by Wendy Elliott

Two new choral groups are being formed in Grand Pre to celebrate the rich heritage of the Acadian people of the Maritimes.

The Friends of Grand Pre have been meeting for several years at the national historic park and now they are sponsoring small adult and children's choirs.

Spokesman Barbara LeBlanc, who is also park superintendent, said the new choirs will begin meeting this week at the museum in Grand Pre.

Adult chorus members will convene for the first time on Thursday, Feb. 7 at 7:30 p.m. for one hour. Then the children's choir will gather Friday, Feb. 8 at 4 p.m.

The immediate repertoire of the two groups will be drawn from Acadian songs “past and present,” said LeBlanc. The children will begin by learning songs that involve dances.

She adds that having fun will be an important element of the singing as well. As an amateur choir leader, LeBlanc said she plans to call on expert assistance from the region.

The future direction of the two choirs will be determined by the groups themselves, but LeBlanc is hopeful that one goal will be some public performances in the park especially during Acadian Days.

She noted that the startup coincides with Heritage Day Feb. 18, so an early focus will be on the singing heritage of the Acadians. LeBlanc and others are currently researching the celebration of Candlemas by the Acadians.

The Friends of Grand Pre are hoping that students, young people, musicians and Canadian Parents for French members will all be drawn to the choirs. “We'd like to appeal to a variety of people.”

Anyone who has questions about the choirs can contact LeBlanc by phoning 542-3631. She advises that winter parking for the museum is located at the maintenance compound.

Friends of Grand Pre has 28 members, but draws an average of between 12 - 15 people to regular monthly meetings at the museum. It has been conducted solely in French, but LeBlanc would like to see if there is interest in forming an English language group.

Drawing on the talents, knowledge and resources of group members, Friends of Grand Pre has been featuring presentations on Acadian culture in recent months.

Teacher, writer and translator Henri Dominique Paratte of Wolfville spoke at last month’s meeting on Acadian writers and upcoming programs will explore the Mid Lent “Mi-careme” tradition of mumming.

The group uses their get togethers as a chance to socialize, speak French and learn about the evolution of Acadian culture.

LeBlanc stated, “we're quite willing to start an English-based group.” She said that all kinds of goodwill is generated in learning and sharing “no matter what the background.”
Pour les enfants âgés de 5 à 11 ans:
La Chorale des jeunes s'active à Grand-Pré

par Martine Jacquot

GRAND-PRÉ: Barbara LeBlanc, directrice du Parc historique de Grand Pré, a mis sur pied une chorale d'enfants l'hiver dernier. Les enfants ont de 5 à 11 ans et sont déjà une bonne vingtaine. Ils se regroupent dans la chapelle Saint Charles tous les vendredis de 16h00 à 17h00. De plus, certains parents se sont impliqués et peuvent mener le groupe pour relever Barbara.

Le répertoire compte déjà une dizaine de chansons, telles que La boulangère, Les moutons, L’avoine, Mon beau château. Barbara dit utiliser le livre du père Anselme Chiasson «Chansons d’Acadie». La particularité de ces chansons est qu’elles sont également dansées.

«Les enfants apprennent ces chansons de la manière orale traditionnelle» dit Barbara, car les enfants ne savent pas lire la musique, et elle pense qu’ils ramèneront les paroles dans leurs maisons s’ils les mémorisent bien. Donc, les enfants n’ont pas de feuilles en main pour chanter, ce qui facilite la danse.

En plus de présenter des chansons et des danses, le groupe, à la suggestion d’un des enfants, portera des costumes confectionnés sur des patrons de costumes francophones du 18ème siècle.

La première apparition de la chorale en public se fera lors des prochaines journées acadiennes de Grand Pré. De plus, les enfants préparent une exposition de dessins. Ces dessins sont également leurs oeuvres, réalisées pour illustrer leurs chansons, et qui aidera le public non francophone à comprendre de quoi il est question dans la chanson.