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French Heritage Day celebrates ten-year legacy

By Lynn Monty on July 9, 2015 · No Comment



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Entertainment acts at French Heritage Day will include favorite area French-themed bands Va-et-Vient and Déjà Nous, young Québécois fiddlers Nicolas Babineau and Alexis Chartrand sponsored by Young Trad Vermont, Pete Sutherland's Pete's Posse with traditional regional and contra-dance tunes.
Courtesy photo.

this month

French Heritage Day will move from the smallest city in Vermont to the most French-settled for its 10th anniversary. The outdoor celebration of French culture is relocating to the Winooski Falls Way greenspace after nine summer celebrations on the Vergennes green.

Chair-caners, tourtière-bakers, rope-makers, genealogists, fiddlers, petanque-players, trappers, traders and canoe-makers are all expected to join the free festivities on July 11.

“After nine fruitful years hosting our French Heritage Day in Vergennes, we recognized it needed a change to stay fresh and vibrant,” said Sue Hoxie, President of the Addison County Chamber of Commerce.

“Fortunately the Winooski Historical Society undertook to graft it to another one of our French rootstocks, a larger milltown – Winooski.”

Winooski City Manager Deac Decarreau said employment opportunities drew thousands of French-speakers to the city and continues to do so. “Winooski’s first settlers as well as its first millwork immigrant wave were both French-speaking, and we are proud of that heritage which continues today with many French-speaking New Americans from Congo and West Africa,” Decarreau said. “From the French church to our mothers’ tourtière recipes handed down over many generations, we’re excited to be celebrating our history and culture.”

The Vermont French-Canadian Genealogical Society will be on hand at the event to help visitors explore the on-line records of their family connections.

Montreal native Richard Finkelstein is new to Vermont, having lived in Chittenden County for only a year. He’s an Anglophone who grew up in a bilingual province. “One of the reasons I moved to Burlington was to be closer to La Belle Provence,” he said.

There is a true connection between Quebec and

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rundown

Vermont, Finkelstein said. “My wife and I were looking at a cemetery in the old North End and I was not surprised to see all the French names. It was revealing. I think this is what makes our location here so important and fun. There are many Vermonters in Chittenden County with roots in Canada and Quebec: just look at the names in the phone book.”

French Heritage Day is designed to educate the public about the French connection between Quebec and Vermont. “I know there are some pretty amazing chanteurs both here in Vermont and Quebec who sing and make music in the French tradition,” Finkelstein said.

Winooski native Kim Chase, French teacher, historian, and writer, will read selections of her works with colleague Judy Dow. Middlebury College’s Emeritus Professor Simon Barenbaum will lead a community folk sing.

Sponsors include the Winooski Community Partnership, Leunig’s Bistro and Café, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, music promoter Young Trad Vermont, Pete’s Posse, Winooski’s Twincraft Skincare, the Burlington Town Center, and the Alliance Française of the Lake Champlain Region.

The Province of Québec’s Delegation in New England made the initial gift of \$500 through its Cultural Attachée. Alpha Inn Management has approved the use of its riverside hotel site for the event’s music tent and audience area.

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***For more information email
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