

HISTORY & HERITAGE

Lac du Bonnet District Museum

By *Arlene Davidson*

Locals and visitors interested in the rich cultural history of the Lac du Bonnet region can view displays of the past at the Lac du Bonnet District Museum.

The Lac du Bonnet and District Historical Society keeps the museum open to the public from May 17 to September 1, 2014.

In addition to old photographs and historical documents, the museum provides a journey back in time to the early European settlements of the region, offering visitors a glimpse of the way people lived before electricity replaced household appliances run by mechanical gadgets and brute force.

Predating the European settlements, the museum also offers visitors a chance to see how the aboriginal people lived, using stone implements such as arrow heads and rock hammers to complete daily tasks. Pottery shards unearthed throughout the region are also on display showing a variety of patterns which at one time adorned complete vessels.

The museum is a restored stacked log cabin built in 1935 by Norwegian settler Hans Erickson. Repairs to the authentic log structure were completed using the same structural materials used in the original building, restoring its natural

rustic charm.

The inside has been refinished in pine slats proving a warm atmosphere in which historical artefacts are tastefully displayed. An addition to the building also maintains the log exterior and provides additional floor space for offices and a public washroom.

A corner of the museum has been dedicated to the history of trapping, which provided a livelihood to many people in the early days. Traps and pelts are displayed to provide insight into the abundance of wildlife once sought for their valuable furs.

In June, the Lac du Bonnet Museum hosts an annual Old Fashioned Family Picnic at Halliday Park, the beautiful grounds which surround the facility. Museum board members, clad in century costumes, invite the public to enjoy some home baked goodies and fresh fruit, while being entertained by local musicians.

A new attraction at the museum for 2014, includes a display of Latvian heritage, paying tribute to the settlers that established homesteads in Libau, Lettonia, Newcombe and Lee River.

A second newly acquired piece, is a striking totem carving of the Wendigo, a mythical creature of the woods brought to life through stories of the indigenous

people of region. The mystique of the Wendigo has endured history and is ingrained in the culture and traditions of the region.

The stunning two sided carving was created by Walter Kehler of Elma, who used the natural form of the log, with intricate details of totem animals brilliantly embedded into the prized work of art.

The carving of the Wendigo was commissioned by the organizers of Lac du Bonnet's Fire & Water Festival, who have incorporated the beast into the festivities of the August long weekend.

The creation was donated to the Town and RM of Lac du Bonnet by the festival organizers, and when the Lac du Bonnet Historical Society heard that the Wendigo was seeking a home, they proposed that it be placed to rest at Halliday Park.

In addition to operating the museum, the historical society also provides a walking tour of the Town of Lac du Bonnet where visitors can follow route indicators painted on the sidewalks that lead to 14 historic sites in the community.

The museum is open from noon until 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays in May and June. The days of operation during July and August are Wednesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wheelchair access and an accessible washroom facility are provided.

A photograph showing three people in historical attire standing with two horses in front of a log cabin. On the left, a woman in a white apron and dark dress holds a lead rope. In the center, a man in a plaid shirt and hat stands with his hand on a light-colored horse. On the right, a man in a white shirt and dark trousers holds a lead rope for a dark horse. The background shows a log cabin with a red, white, and blue striped awning.

Lac du Bonnet Museum board members Mae Lavoie, John Honer and Leon Clegg celebrate history in century costume at the Old Fashioned Family Picnic.