

# Vicker's Vedette Honoured Through Art

*By Arlene Davidson and Brian Choptain*

The initial purpose of creating an artistic interpretation of the Vicker's Vedette aircraft was to celebrate the significant history of aviation in Lac du Bonnet and to restore life to the flying canoe that once made its home here.

The project planners, led by Lac du Bonnet <sup>M179C</sup> Historical Society member Gord Emberley, contracted Winnipeg sculptor Gordon Reeve for the task of immortalizing the legacy.

According to Reeve, the aircraft started out as a boat, not that much different than all the other boats that had been floating around for a few millennia – except this one had wings.

It might be argued that the Vedette, the first 'made in Canada' flying boat, is in some ways a symbol of the moment when Canadians recognized that only by knowing the wilderness could they preserve it, Reeve noted.

Of course, its use so long ago in mapping the north, carrying fire crews in valiant attempts to save the wilderness and in establishing communication and transportation links with communities that were until then nearly impossible to maintain, has long since been surpassed by modern technology.

"In the years that I have been working on this project the

principal struggle has been a conceptual one," Reeve said. "Why, 60 years after the last Vedette touched down for the last time, are we planning to make a replica of this tiny, near forgotten flying boat? And after all the time and trouble to make it will anyone ever give it a second glance?"

The Vedette sculpture, unlike the canvas-covered, wood ribbed aircraft, is created from stainless steel and is designed in an open frame concept.

This design gives a unique illusion that the structure is solid when viewed from certain angles.

The rib structures that sustained Reeve's interest are prominent in the sculpture and provide a sequential depth to the craft which compels the viewer to see a transition of time and history.

The openness of the sculpture portrays oneness with the natural surroundings, confirming the historical fact that the craft left no ecological footprint. The polished finish brings life to the piece.

In the creation of the Vedette sculpture, Reeve spoke about his respect for the courageous and skilled pilots that flew the historical aircraft.

The Vedette sculpture was unveiled at a public viewing in August 2013. It is located between the La Verendrye boat launch

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and the old Lakers Ski Club in Lac du Bonnet.

On site near the sculpture are two monuments. On the boat launch side is the poem which Reeve Gus Wruck hoped people would read and realize “other parallels in their own lives” as it symbolizes how pilots are flying from one moment in time to another.

On the ski club side is a bronzed plaque highlighting the Vicker’s Vedette and its aviation history in Lac du Bonnet.

“We don’t have a Canada Goose, or a happy rock, we have something better,” said Wruck about the sculpture, which changes the direction it appears to be flying based on the direction of the prevailing winds.

“One has to respect the wisdom, knowledge and skill of the pilots,” Reeve said. “My hope is that people will come to the site and acknowledge the piece as a work of art.”

