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Group wants to preserve history of Acadian people

New historical association disagrees with Neguac society's stance on old house

By DERWIN GOWAN

MIRAMICHI - A new group wants to tap into the wealth of Acadian history along the north side of Miramichi Bay.

« Every three months there is an elderly person who dies, » says Kenneth Breau, archivist at l'Université de Moncton.

Mr. Breau, born and raised in the Neguac area, says *L'Association Histoire de Chez Nous* hopes to record the stories these people have to tell before they are lost.

The society plans to publish a newsletter, *La Voix du Passé* (*Voice of the Past*), four times a year. Each issue will feature one old house and the families which lived in it over the years.

Looking further ahead, the group plans to set up some type of library or resource centre for people who want to do genealogical or historical research.

Mr. Breau noted that from Neguac, you have to travel to either Miramichi or Tracadie to find a public library. He says the area needs « at least a 12-by-12 room with a little library and a microfilm reader, maybe. »

And, he says the association needs members from Neguac and surrounding areas - from Covedell to Lavillette, including expatriots like himself.

Mr. Breau says the new group hopes to incorporate before the first issue of *La Voix du Passé* goes out in August. Retired school teacher Rita Savoie is the interim president in the meantime.

Mr. Breau says the newsletter will include things like class pictures, newspaper articles and categories such as folklore, genealogy and geographical names. There will be interviews, opinion and comment.

« It's going to be like a community newspaper but from a historical perspective, » he said.

Anyone interested in either receiving or contributing to the newsletter or joining the association should telephone (506) 858-4397 during the day or (506) 758-0814 in the evening - or send a letter to *L'Association Histoire de Chez Nous*, 53 Chemin Honoré, Robichaud Seulement, N.-B., E9G 3A8.

Mr. Breau says the new historical association will not compete with *La Société Historique de Neguac*, which focuses its efforts on the restoration project at Maison Otho Robichaud in Neguac. He makes no bones about his opposition to the direction in which *La Société Historique* has taken this project.

Stating his personal view, Mr. Breau does not believe *La Société Historique* has proven its case that Otho Robichaud - a colourful character from Neguac's past - built the house.

But, he says that *L'Association Histoire de Chez Nous* can keep itself more than busy without touching that particular controversy.

« You can go to any house and these people have a history they want to tell, » Mr. Breau says. « There are so many historical houses in the area. »

L'Association Histoire de Chez Nous has a minuscule budget - forcing it to rely on word of mouth and hand-delivering membership leaflets throughout the area.

« I am really impressed with the response so far, » Mr. Breau says.