



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE DIFFUSION

Nanaimo, December 7 2009 - The 10th Anniversary of Nanaimo's annual Maple Sugar Festival du Sucre d'Érable tickles the senses with sights, sounds and the signature Canadian flavours of French Canadian culture, February 19 – 21, 2010.

If your french is a little rusty, don't worry! This festival – the largest bilingual cultural event on Vancouver Island – is all about celebrating Canada's unique cultural roots instead of your fluency in both official languages. It's a party for all Canadians!

The Festival kicks off Friday afternoon at 4 pm, with live entertainment as of 6 pm, food galore, the Opening Ceremony and an explosive performance by fiddler Eric Speed. On Saturday and Sunday, B.C.'s own 'Maple Man', René Turmel, will transport audiences on an imaginary journey across Canada with his tales and true stories of the tree that bears our national symbol, and he'll explain the role maple sap plays in traditional sugar shacks. Meanwhile, ice-sculpting demonstrations (with chainsaws) will also take place throughout the weekend; the creations will be displayed on-site until the end of the festival.

The First Nations' drum group Ataensha, from Wendake, Quebec is back by popular demand. Their unique performance based on oral tradition and legends is a Festival favourite as they explain how Canada's First Nations were the first to discover the art of tapping maple trees and the symbolism of the drum, known worldwide to unite the cultures. Visitors will enjoy the highly entertaining and educational performance by Ataensha as they guide the listener into the springtime celebration of the past with the use of drums, chants, dance and ancient authentic objects and tools.

On Saturday afternoon, New Brunswick's chanteuse Edith Butler will take the stage. For more than 40 years, this kind-hearted, warm performer has celebrated her rich heritage through songs and storytelling, while delighting audiences with her homey musical style and haunting melodies. Her reputation as a gifted entertainer is known both at home and abroad. Edith Butler is one of the first artists to have brought Acadian culture to the masses, both in Canada and throughout the world.

Saturday evening, the stage offers two high-powered acts. First, Alain François, in the world of traditional music, he combines the fiddle, electric guitars, drums, bass and percussion instruments (cajón, derbouka, and trash can). On stage, he communicates an infectious *Joie de vivre* through his energetic dancing, singing and playing.

To round off the high energy 'Saturday Night Party', the award-winning group 'SWING' will take to the stage. The group calls its sound 'Urban folk' but don't be fooled, since nobody rocks a dance floor like SWING! The festival is excited to have this explosive group back for a third time, as it takes traditional and contemporary roots folk music and turns it on its electric ear.

Continuous music and live performances for all ages aren't the only cultural treats on the menu throughout the weekend. Pure and natural maple toffee on snow – a festival favourite – *poutine*, like it should be, traditional *tourtière*, pea soup, sugar pie and pancakes smothered in maple syrup await you and will be served by VIU's Culinary Arts program students. Meanwhile, the popular Market Tent is the place to discover over 25 vendors showing off their art, crafts, jewellery, gifts and specialty food products, and to meet Francophone representatives of various governmental agencies. Of course, "Toffy" the Festival mascot will be there to mingle with families on the Festival's site, at Beban Park's Centennial Building. And, that's not all; off-site activities include a visual art exhibit by various artists at the Nanaimo Art Gallery, between February 18th and March 13th, 2010 as well as an Exhibit Reception on February 18th, between 6:30pm and 8:30pm at the Nanaimo Art Gallery.

In celebrating francophone traditions, as they are represented by music, culinary and visual arts, the Maple Sugar Festival du Sucre d'Érable continues to remind everyone that Canada is uniquely gifted in its ability to unite the two rich founding cultures.

This 10th annual event is presented by the Francophone Association of Nanaimo and Canadian Maple Delights, and supported by local community sponsors as well as Canada Heritage, the BC Ministry of Culture and the Arts, the BC Arts Council, the BC Francophone Affairs Program / BC Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat, the Quebec Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat (SAIC) and the City of Nanaimo.

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