

Thousands participate in work of art

■ Mural was created in Pokemouche during Congrès Mondial Acadien and will be launched Saturday

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Moncton artist Reg Noël is passionate about his vision, but he doesn't mind loosening the reins and inviting others to participate in his creations.

In fact, Reg figures about 8,000 people participated in his most recent project that he created in Pokemouche during the ongoing Congrès Mondial Acadien in the Acadian Peninsula.

The giant 900-pound (408 kg), 17-foot (5.2-metre) by 5-foot (1.5-metre) mural made of cement, copper and acrylic paint was being fastened to a wall at the Tracadie-Sheila public library yesterday, where it will be unveiled on Saturday at 1 p.m.

However, Reg has spent the last couple of weeks working with over 200 passersby-turned-volunteers at the Espace Neuf in Pokemouche. They helped him apply paint and varnish in large quantities, and some even helped move around heavy slabs of cement.

Even before the start of the Congrès Mondial Acadien the co-operation had already begun.

Everything started when Reg saw an ad in the newspaper that



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This photo shows some of the more 200 people who helped assemble Reg Noël's mural during the Congrès Mondial Acadien. In all, more than 8,000 people participated in the 900-pound (408 kg) mural that measures 17 by 5 feet (5.2 by 1.5 metres).

was asking artists to submit ideas to the Congrès Mondial Acadien a couple of years ago.

He decided on an idea that would bring Acadians together and allow the general public to participate in the work, which would feature a sailboat, a sunrise, a wharf, waves and lots of textures.

The project was accepted, and Reg set his plan in motion.

"I decided to have 360-foot-long

pieces of heavy gauge copper wire sent to District 9, which is the school district of the Acadian Peninsula," said Reg, who grew up in the Acadian Peninsula.

"They in turn were supposed to send this copper wire to each class so that everyone in District 9 was involved with bending some copper somewhere." The hands of over 7,000 students in the Acadian Peninsula worked over the pieces of

copper in all sorts of shapes.

The students did their jobs masterfully, working together to bend 360 pieces in all, and Reg incorporated each piece into the waves section of the mural, which also features a sailboat sailing into the future.

"These twisted pieces of copper were imbedded into the part of the mural which represents the seas," said Reg.

"These pieces of copper wire represent the waves in the sea, so these were Acadians making waves in the sea, literally this time."

Visitors from France, Louisiana, and closer to home all participated in the project in Pokemouche at what Reg considered to be one of the high traffic points of the event.

"I had a hard time supplying enough brushes to keep everybody going once they understood they could participate," said Reg, noting that volunteers names will be featured on a plaque next to the mural.

He said it was a wonderful experience from an artist's perspective.

"Personally I like working with people, lots of artists like working on their own and then revealing their work later, but I like creating with people."

For Reg, who is a self-taught artist who came with the melding of copper, cement and acrylic paint in 2004 in a dream, it was only natural to empower others with the chance to participate in a work of art.

"I told them flat out, you are now officially artists."