

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Sabine Pass to Isle *Dernière*, Cajuns are working to host *Acadie* in 2014

Lafayette, LA – Residents of Greater Lafayette area were present at Lafayette's LITE this morning for the official launch of Louisiana's bid to host the 2014 *Congrès mondial acadien*. The bid's Steering Committee also launched the bid's official website in an effort to increase public awareness of the *Congrès*' campaign. The *Congrès mondial acadien* is a two to three week event happens in a different Acadian area every five years and is recognized as the world's largest gathering of Acadians.

"A lot of people in Louisiana identify themselves as Cajun but some might not understand what that means, both culturally and historically. Beyond being Cajun, we are also Acadians (descendants of those who settled *Acadie* in the 15th and 16th century) and are part of a huge extended family. It's important for everyone to understand that they are included in this worldwide celebration." *Louisiane-Acadie*, Inc. president Ray Trahan explains. *Louisiane-Acadie*, Inc. is coordinating the bid that will include all South Louisiana communities. This group observed the positive effects experienced by the province of Nova Scotia when it hosted the *Congrès mondial acadien* in 2004 and decided to compete in the next bid process. Past *Congrès* programming includes three major events, over sixty family reunions, festivals, community events, conferences, concerts, etc. Any community wanting to showcase their identity can participate. The *Congrès* attracts thousands of Acadians from all over the world, more specifically the Canadian Maritime Provinces, Québec, France and, of course, Louisiana. Louisiana's *Congrès* Bid Steering Committee feels strongly that the economic and cultural impact of the event will greatly benefit Louisiana.

The bid group felt it essential that the launch was inclusive and accessible to all by assuring it was available both live and online to everyone and anyone interested in being part of the celebration. "As a young Cajun today, I certainly understand the power of technology. I use it every day to connect with my friends all over the world. We would have been missing a great opportunity by not incorporating this powerful tool that is so present in the lives of those who will be attending the *Congrès mondial acadien* in five and a half years," says Valerie Broussard, a young Steering Committee member. The bid's website (www.cma2014.com) has three specific goals. Firstly, it is a place for the global Acadian community to obtain information on what makes Louisiana's bid special and unique. Secondly, it provides Acadians an instrument to support the bid of their Cajun cousins and thirdly it personalizes the process, making it interactive and invites everyone to tell the world why Louisiana is the best place to host the 2014 *Congrès*. This is the first time that a bidding region has created a website seeking the support of individuals throughout the world. The goal is to create a platform for grassroots support, impressing the selection committee while increasing local public awareness.

The Steering Committee did not divulge all the bid's secrets at this morning's event, but rather informed the public that the communities in South Louisiana are ready and willing to host this international event. They also emphasized their ability to do so. The passing of hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike has created an awareness of the fragile relationship between Louisiana's environment, culture and language and has created a sense of urgency and alarm. This call to action is being heard throughout South Louisiana and it is time for the Acadians to hear it too and help us create a cultural awakening that will strengthen cultural identity and pride. "We owe it to our youth to create an environment where they can grow and blossom within their own culture and speaking their native French language. That is why the *Congrès mondial acadien* is important for our region. It will be much more than a party, it will be a catalyst for the survival and durability of our culture," emphasizes Trahan.

The enthusiasm that the development of this bid has generated in the community is overwhelming. For example, a group of young Cajuns now meet monthly to talk about their role in the Cajun community and what actions they can take to encourage the evolution of their culture. *Louisiane-Acadie*, Inc. has also seen an increased interest in the cultural cause. Just last month, about thirty associations answered a call to become partners of this organization that represents Cajuns internationally.

“ If you feel, like we do, that the *Congrès mondial acadien* should be here in 2014, please support the bid! Visit the website at www.cma2014.com and add your name to the growing list of supporters. You can also send a homemade video describing why you want the 5th *Congrès* to come to Louisiana.” Trahan explains.

Louisiana’s bid will be submitted to the *Société Nationale de l’Acadie* (National Acadian Society) at the end of March. The announcement of the winning region will be August 9, 2009.

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