It's an Acadian celebration where people come in beating on pots and pans and make a whole lot of noise to signal to the world that the Acadians ... that we're still here, still having fun and still alive and kicking.

DAVID CHERAMIE, Bayou Vermilion District CEO

Vermilionville plays host to visitors during Acadian Culture Day celebration

HOLLY DUCHMANN | Special to The Advocate

A blend of Cajun French and English was spoken throughout the Vermilionville Living History & Folk Life Park on Sunday as people from around Acadiana and the French-speaking world wandered the museum’s grounds during the Acadian Culture Day.

About 1,000 visitors took advantage of the various offerings by the museum from boat tours down Bayou Vermilion to touring the historic homes and watching Acadian artisans create such goods as fiddles, accordions and colorful Courir de Mardi Gras costumes.

"Us coming from Canada, from a French-speaking community, it's really something else," said Mario Bourgault of Montreal, Canada, who joined in the festivities with his wife, Elise Trudel.

Phil Frey, of Longfellow State Park, discusses traditional Cajun trapping methods with Michelle and Martin Mignet, who were visiting the area from France.

See CULTURE, page 4A
"We can meet people speaking our language with a different accent. It’s really something that is worth it. The village, the demonstrations, they’re perfect."

The Tintamarre Parade was one of the first events in the morning, featuring people from Scott.

"It’s an Acadian celebration where people come in beating on pots and pans and make a whole lot of noise to signal to the world that the Acadians, in spite of all the tragedies and Le Grand Derangement, you know, the Great Upheaval of the Acadian people from Canada, that we’re still here, still having fun and still alive and kicking," Bayou Vermilion District CEO David Cheramie said.

Among the morning’s itinerary was the presentation of the Acadian Cultural Preservation Award to Barry Jean Ancelet, Cajun folklorist, advocate and expert of Cajun French.

"It feels like an ice cream thank you," Ancelet said. "I have to be honest, it’s nice to know that people noticed. I’ve been working real hard to try to give us a chance to survive into the next generation, and it’s always nice to know that people noticed."

After receiving his award, Ancelet related stories from his career as an advocate for Cajun French. One of the stories he told is how he helped set the precedent on how French is taught in Louisiana schools, as well as the first Festivals Acadiens et Creoles, the festival that will celebrate its 41st year in October.

"It was a magical evening," Ancelet recalled of the event that was originally held at Blackham Coliseum with a crowd that filled the building over capacity. "Where would we be without that first concert?"

As the heat rose with the sun and the cicada’s summer songs started to roar, people took refuge in Vermilionville’s performance center, La Salle de Dance. The dance floor was packed with couples swinging and dipping each other to the rhythm of the accordion and drums and to the tangy voice of the fiddle, with the men’s alligator boots adding to the beat of the music with their tapping against the wooden floor.

Standing and sitting along the edge of the dance floor, many people just sipped their cold beers as they enjoyed listening to the music.