



# The francophone factor

As the University celebrates 100 years of academia, Campus Saint-Jean has evolved from humble roots to become an integral part of its history

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The University of Alberta isn't the only campus with a centenary celebration this year. Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ), a faculty within the U of A, is also throwing its 100th birthday party in 2008. What began in 1908 as an institution to train boys for the religious order has become one of the foremost francophone campuses in Canada. With a history rich in advancement and cultural influence, staff and students alike have gone all out to commemorate the past 100 years. But as they celebrate past and current success, CSJ also has a great deal to look forward to in the future.

In its 100 years, Campus Saint-Jean (CSJ) has changed with the times, but hasn't lost the original goal of a culturally influenced environment. Established in 1908, the same year as the U of A, CSJ gradually became a French institution. As Frank McMahon, Professor Emeritus at CSJ and research expert of French education in Canada explains, the school was founded by an Oblate priest, giving it distinctly religious roots.

"It was originally set up for boys who wanted to join a religious order," McMahon recalls. "It was [then] opened to all the francophone boys of Alberta in 1943 because it wasn't legal to teach in French in the public schools."

By 1943, Saint-Jean was an all-boys French College, regardless of whether or not they wanted to join the order. Then in 1949, it became a boarding school, offering both high school and postsecondary education.

its current name, Campus Saint-Jean.

Today's CSJ is an integral part of the U of A, one that offers a number of unique opportunities for staff and students.

"It's an atmosphere where people know each other better, and I think it provides all sorts of opportunities for greater levels of knowledge. With knowledge comes more of a tendency to get involved," says CSJ's Dean Marc Arnal.

University of Alberta President Indira Samarasekera agrees with Arnal and hopes to see the relationship between the two institutions continue to strengthen and benefit all of the parties involved.

"We will continue to promote CSJ as an important and distinctive part of the U of A," Samarasekera says. "When students are looking to come to the U of A, it will be widely known that we have CSJ, and that will become an added feature."

This year's CSJ campus has 609 undergraduate students, 91 graduate students, and 28 professors. Although higher enrollment is always desirable, Arnal believes that a smaller campus size has its advantages.

"Small means that it's easier to set in place a more congenial atmosphere. It's easier for professors to get to know their students by their names, and it's easier for us to generally support students."

Size aside, the campus offers a unique educational experience for U of A students who have an interest in Francophone studies.

"There is no point in doing the same thing two miles east of what's already happening at the U of A," McMahon says.

The challenges for the institution, he says, centre around maintaining and expanding on the very aspects that make it stand out in the first place.

"We want to make sure that we've got a particular culture within the institution, [that we are] maintaining a relationship with French language, literature, and culture at the same time as we pursue our other academic goals: good teaching and highly recognized research."

As CSJ continues to focus on its goals for the present, it has also spent this year celebrating the past. The year-long centenary celebration opened with a ceremony on 17 January 2008.

Samarasekera, who attended the event, found it to be the perfect way to showcase the accomplishments of 100 years.

"It was a great event because it showcased the French culture and the traditions of Faculté Saint-Jean. It really highlighted why it is such a special campus," she recalls.

A historical panel depicting 100 years of student life was unveiled, comprised of photographs spanning 1908–2008.

There are also a number of commemorative events spread out throughout the year. Chorale Saint-Jean, which toured to Calgary in March, will perform in Quebec this July. The tour is a

repeat of a trip to Quebec that originally took place in 1949.

"People in Quebec don't realize that there's a French community in Alberta," McMahon explains.

Other upcoming events include "100 rooms/100 years," taking place at Residence Saint-Jean in September, and the creation of a book that celebrates the history of the Oblate fathers at Saint-Jean that will launch in October.

So far, the celebrations have been well received by the public.

"We've had wonderful participation from both within the university and the community. We've had some activities, conferences, and speakers who have spoken in French, English, and some in both," Arnal explains.

In reaching the U of A and the surrounding community, there's more to be gained than just a centennial celebration.

Gabriel Joshee-Arnal, counsel associate to and incumbent for the Vice-President (External) of the Association des Universitaires de la Faculté Saint-Jean, believes that the centenary is a good opportunity to reach out to students at the U of A.

"I think that when students see the campus in the centenary activities, they are seeing all the stuff that we're doing."

He hopes that in the future, there will be increased communication between the students of CSJ and those who simply take courses at the campus.

"There is very much a willingness from the University to work with CSJ in developing and raising the visibility of the students," Joshee-Arnal explains. "I'd definitely like to see more students [enrolling ...], to have more events together and to try and create more of a social community."

Samarasekera also plans to see a continuation of the U of A's partnership with CSJ, and she's more than happy to share the University's centennial with Saint-Jean.

"It's a wonderful thing that's happening at the same time, and we can really feed off each other," she says.

As the U of A continues to grow, Arnal hopes to see the CSJ as a contributing factor in their success.

"We're just very, very proud and very happy to be part of what we consider to be one of the primary universities in Canada," Arnal says.

In terms of the campus itself, Arnal is determined to see its ambitious goals of expansion and community involvement met. He also has high future expectations regarding CSJ's recent advancements in research.

"In the space of about 30 years, [we've] gone from essentially a secondary and non-research teaching institution to a fully functioning part of the U of A," he explains.

In attributing the University's success, McMahon says he would also like to see that the CSJ makes a name for itself on the national stage.

"I think it will probably become one of the top francophone institutions in English-speaking Canada," McMahon believes. "It will establish itself as an outstanding institution in the country."

With 100 years of success behind them, Arnal is confident that CSJ will continue to build on the strong cultural and educational backgrounds that make the campus stand out.

"My indicators of success are going to be that students come here because they've heard about it and its good reputation. It'll be viewed as an asset to the University of Alberta."



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Girls were granted the ability to study at the institution in 1960, and by 1963, CSJ saw its first affiliation with the U of A. This partnership expanded in 1970 when the University established Université Collège, which offered arts, science, and education programs on the college site.

"It functioned as a partnership where the Oblate [fathers] still ran the residence and all the extra curricular activities to ensure a French environment. The U of A offered the academic side," McMahon explains.

Six years later in 1976, the Oblate priests sold the Collège, and it was renamed the Faculté Saint-Jean.

"The U of A decided that they would purchase the lease and the land and offer the whole program as an integrated part of the university, as a faculty," McMahon recalls.

It was only in October of 2005 that it was given