

routes

a rural hip lifestyle magazine

Alain Dubreuil

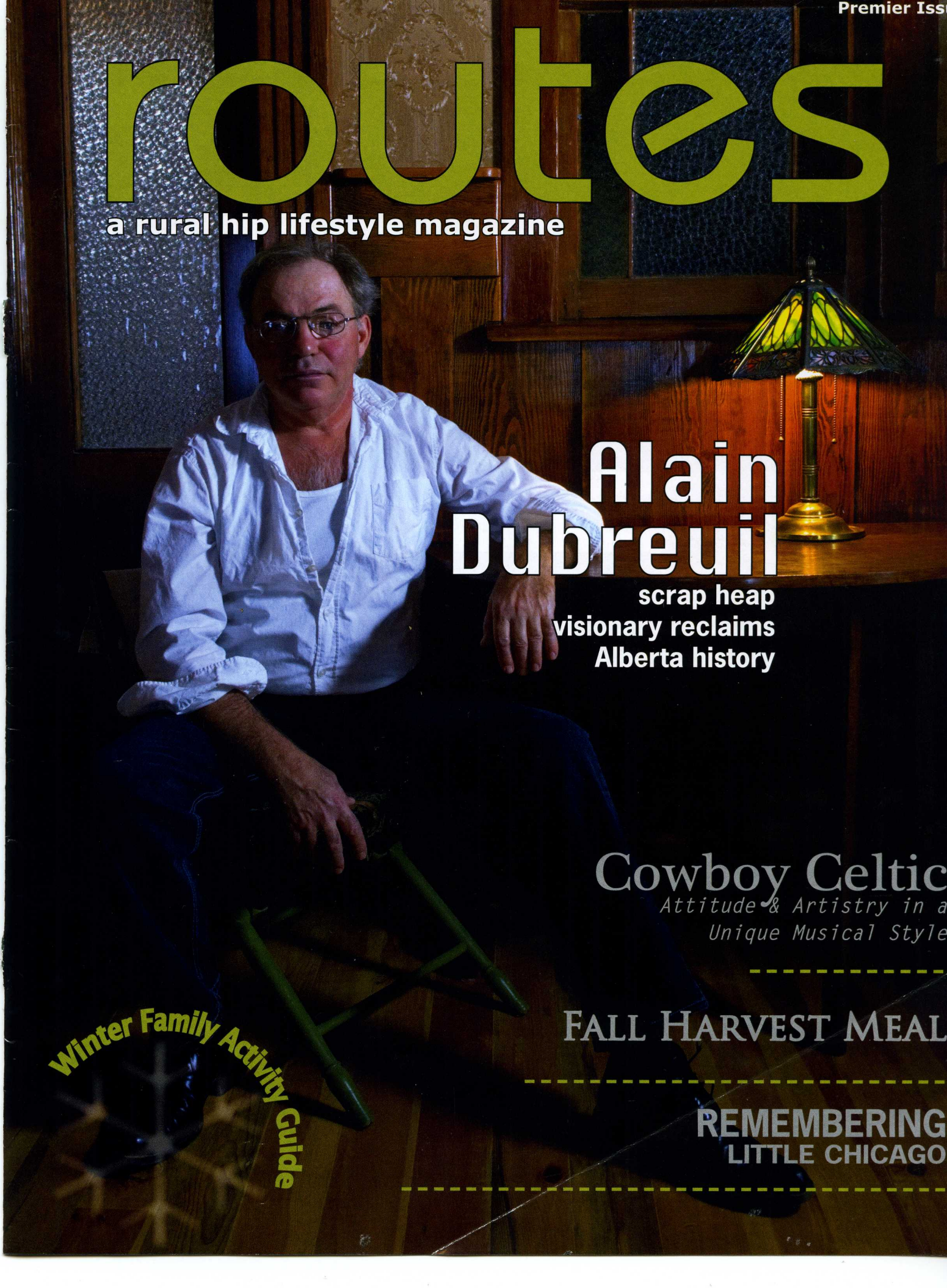
scrap heap
visionary reclaims
Alberta history

Cowboy Celtic
*Attitude & Artistry in a
Unique Musical Style*

FALL HARVEST MEAL

REMEMBERING
LITTLE CHICAGO

Winter Family Activity
Guide



Salvaging History

...one beam at a time



Alain Dubreuil, a true scrapper – feisty, obstinate, stubborn – is the scrap-heap’s messiah. He takes the slogan “reduce, reuse, recycle” far beyond what most manage, into a unique lifestyle, a successful business and a life-long career of treasure hunting.

By Michelle Greysen

Photos By Neville Palmer

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I always salvaged. Even as a kid I was collecting copper and cleaning wire. I guess one of my first money [making] ventures was when my dad put a new bathtub in the house and I asked to have the old claw foot one.” Age twelve at the time, Dubreuil bargained with the local scrap yard owner to buy the tub. “I made a deal with a strong kid from school in which we built a horse-like

harness and one of us pulled the 200 pound tub upside down while the other pushed it on the snow for well over eight city blocks and then we split the money.”

A scrapper he is, in every sense of the word, so much so that he was the subject of National Film Board of Canada’s: *Alain Dubreuil, Alchemist*. Set in his previous Vancouver location, the award winning

2002 film described this eccentric, if not brilliant man, as a demolition artist with a treasure trove scrap yard, saving the disused and discarded from the wrecking ball.

Today Dubreuil spends his days reclaiming and brokering salvaged materials from the many buildings and structures he demolishes. He is living a lifestyle reflective of his over-the-top passions for reusing that which would otherwise be landfill. In the ultimate downtown Vancouver

offers up a wide range of architectural and building items such as flooring, doors and windows, which he gingerly removes from historic buildings. His Fort Macleod shop-yard sprawls amid

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experience, recovered shipyard materials are made new again and displayed in ‘high brow’ restaurants and retail buildings in Vancouver’s famous, rejuvenated Yaletown. He has also turned abandoned warehouses into gallery lofts of exquisite living.

Dubreuil has salvaged over 300 houses in his thirty years on the West Coast, “... taking bricks, wood flooring, mouldings, pillars, mantels, stained glass windows, doors and hardware, even the trees were a good re-selling item, rhododendrons, Japanese maple, azaleas and more.”

In 2002, while looking for a change, Dubreuil ventured into the reclaimed timber business, settled in southern Alberta and established Chinook Salvage Ltd. The company

the grounds of what remains of a World War II flight-training centre. There, he demolished two acre-sized airplane hangars - one piece of reclaimed lumber at a time.

It was only natural that Dubreuil would hunt for another unique space to create his Alberta home. Atop three side-by-side, century-old buildings in downtown Fort Macleod, he discovered an abandoned wreck untouched since 1963.

After extensive restoration work in 2001, Dubreuil now enjoys over 630 sq. m (7000 sq. feet) of loft-style living. The home features his eclectic collections of art, vintage lighting, old fireplace mantels, movie posters, radios, cloth and furniture fit for a king; including a grand bed

from the estate of the Earl of Egmont and a castle-size, handcrafted, timber table and chairs. His endless dedication to salvage spills out in the overflowing layers and layers of his passionate collections, to which he jokingly adds, "Do you think because it looks like this, that I am not organized? I actually know exactly where everything is!"

Dubreuil also dedicates his talents and knowledge of structure and salvaging to historic groups, by assisting in moving and preserving many key historic buildings, not only in Fort Macleod, but province wide. Dubreuil's expertise played a substantial role in the reclamation of High River's historic post office (now Carlson's on Macleod).

He is far from sitting still long enough to enjoy his efforts and vast private collections, as he currently spends every spare moment he can get tackling a century old building in Medicine Hat. This living large visionary from the past sees his long history of reclaiming and a passion for collecting as his contribution to mother-earth, but sadly he predicts, "New construction methods of today will allow no one in the future to be able to salvage anything." 7

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Carlson's on Macleod in High River

Carlson's on Macleod is located on the corner of 3rd Avenue and Macleod Trail SW in High River. It is a rare grand building; built by the federal government in the cash-strapped dirty 30's. The building served as the main post office from 1931 to 1972, while sharing space with the RCMP during the 1940's. In 1972 it functioned as the Town office. It sat empty and badly neglected until 2005, when Brenda and Don Carlson bought it and began reclaiming stately space.

Along with the inspirations of salvage-savvy Alain Dubreuil, Carlson's utilized such treasures as reclaimed fir timbers from Dubreuil's aircraft hangers, pieces of an old iron bridge, historic granite steps, salvaged maple flooring and even a massive old door from early Quebec.

Opening in late 2006, Carlson's on Macleod is not only a stylish loft-style living space for the couple, but home to a unique coffee house, wine bar, gallery and special events venue, featuring fine wines, great single malts and live music.