



Pour l'héritage et les arts du spectacle



MFHLP – Language & Cultural Programs

at Gendron Franco Center

Spring 2016 Newsletter

Winter and spring have proven busy for Maine's French Heritage Language Program and other programs! In addition to regular programming, our staff has been involved with many community-oriented events and projects.

Afterschool programs

At two schools in Auburn, Sherwood Heights and Walton Elementary, the students learned all about Morocco, its culture, its languages, its climate and fauna, and of course, its food. We followed Charlie, a traveling Maine black bear, to Morocco where he made friends with Fennec the desert fox.



Students from Sherwood Heights and Walton partaking in a Moroccan feast at the Franco Center

Together, they helped students discover the differences and similarities between Maine and Morocco. We finished the session with a field trip to the Franco Center where students and staff from both schools were treated to Moroccan Chicken with flat bread eaten Moroccan style. About 40 students and 6 teachers/staff were in attendance for this event.

The next session, which ended with April vacation, was all about Maine's French-speaking communities.

Students followed Charlie and Fennec on a trip from Québec to Acadie all the way to Lewiston-Auburn using the various modes of transportation the French-Canadians and the Acadians used - à pied, en bateau, en charette, en train, etc. - to get to this region. The end of the session was a field



Students and Staff from Walton Elementary school with Christine Holden on the steps of Place St-Louis

trip to Place St-Louis (formerly St-Louis Catholic Church) in New Auburn, where many French speakers have lived for many generations.

The tour was given by Christine Holden, one of the new owners of Place St-Louis, who brought to the students' attention some relevant architectural details such as the stained-glass window paid for by a children's choir and a stone marked with the names of donors for the original organ. Many of the students taking the tour were surprised and pleased to find their own or a grand-parent's last names on the stone.

This spring, the programs were also featured in a cultural blog by James Myall on the Bangor Daily News website: <http://myall.bangordailynews.com/2016/04/15/main/e/ending-the-damaging-myth-of-bad-french-in-new-england/>

Fun in French

This interactive class for younger children and their adult caregiver has become a community favorite. Grand-parents along with grand-children



Fun in French at Rails

like to attend, as well as parents and kids. While some are typical Franco-American families who want to

rekindle the language in the younger generation, other participants are Francophiles who enjoy learning French, and yet others are newly arrived Francophone families who want for their children to retain the French language.

The winter session's focus was on learning table manners, foods and how to order at a restaurant. The final event was held at Rails, a local restaurant in what used to be the Grand Trunk Railroad Train Station. Many of today's Franco-American's ancestors arrived through that station and this event was an opportunity to share some information about the immigration of the French-Canadian to the area with the participating families.

French Clubs

- **Lewiston Public Library**

The partnership with the Lewiston Public Library has been an ongoing and valuable one.



LPL French Club learning body parts with M. Patate

The club, which is for participants who already have some level of French and want to deepen their speaking and word recognition skills, has

covered similar subjects as the after-school programs. The emphasis is on learning to use the language in everyday situations.

- **Hillview Resource Center**

This club for adult French speakers has been going on since September 2015 with much success. Through it, network of Francophones from across cultural and regional differences is emerging, bringing Franco-Americans and new Mainers together in conversations and activities.



Mathilde Landier surrounded by Hillview French Club participants and Franco Center staff

Topics addressed in the club are varied and are meant to bring people together.

March's Francophonie festivities were welcomed by club members as an opportunity to share their pride in speaking the same language.

In April, club members also had the opportunity to meet Mathilde Landier, Officer of the French Heritage Language Program in New York, and a partner of the Club's parent program, the Maine French Heritage Language Program.

- **Tree Street Youth**

While it has been more difficult to have a regular program at Tree Street Youth these past few sessions, we have seen some of our youth become more involved in the greater community, contributing their skills and knowledge in many ways.



Tahir, a young Francophone from Chad, shares some cultural aspect of his country with the TSY French Club

Some of the youth from TSY also participated in the Centre de la Francophonie des Amériques's (CFA) Twittérature contest online during March's Francophone Month festivities.

<http://twitterature.francop>

honiedesameriques.com/

Bates College and Other Schools:

Partnerships & Visits

- **Student Involvement**

We were lucky to have a few French students from Bates participate with Fun in French and some of the Clubs. Their presence has brought an invaluable richness to the encounters.



Bates student Kei Matsunami and Fun in French participants

- **Tours and community Outreach**

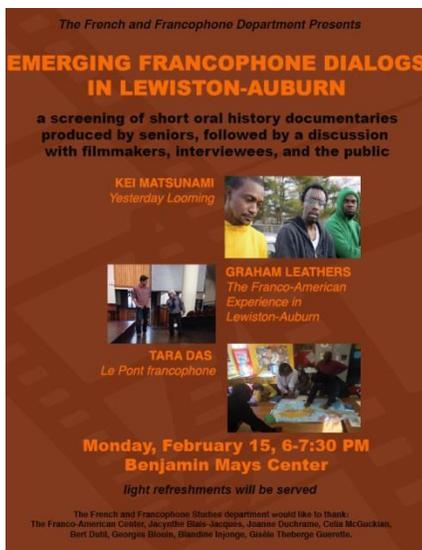
Students from Bates College, Waldorf School, Sherwood Heights, Walton Elementary, Lewiston High School, and Chewonki School, Leavitt High School, among others, have all benefited from visits at the Franco Center.

Through their visits, they had the opportunity to learn more about the building and the *Petit Canada* neighborhood, helping students understand the invaluable contribution of the Franco-Americans to this community and to the state of Maine.

- **Films**

Three Bates College French students used the Center as a starting point/stepping stone for their thesis film this year. The films were shown at a community event, *Emerging Francophone Dialogs in Lewiston-Auburn*, on February 15th.

Interviews with Franco-Americans and French speaking new Mainers showcased the realities and the challenges faced by the French speaking community of Lewiston and Auburn.



Adult classes

This ongoing class, one of the longest running language program here at the Center, French Reacq, has been going steady.

Some new Mainers have joined the ranks of this class, adding world flavor to the subjects approached in the class.

La Francophonie

The annual Francophone events brought many of the various program's participants together.

One event was a showing of the excellent and touching Québécois film *Louis Cyr, the Strongest Man in the World*, which brought about 60 viewers to the Center.

On Francophone day, Wednesday March 16th, a delegation of about 25 people from the Lewiston and Auburn's Francophone community made the trip to Augusta for the festivities and legislature proceedings, which are held in French on that day.

In Augusta, former Franco Center director and president **Raymond Lagueux** was inducted into *Maine's Franco-American Hall of Fame*, with his proud family and many friends in attendance.

For the occasion, the Franco Center hosted a celebration where French as a world language was evident. Baby Pemba, a singer from Angola, Melanie Saucier, a talented young vocalist from Northern Maine, and dancers/drummers from Central Africa, shared the Performance Hall stage, providing the entertainment to close the day.

Réseau de Villes Francophones et Francophiles

Lewiston and Auburn also announced their admission to the *Réseau des Villes Francophones et Francophiles des Amériques (RVFFA)*, the Network of Francophone and Francophile Cities.

The Franco Center, having been a part of the founding event in October 2015, is proud to have been instrumental in helping the cities to become members.

The RVFFA, made up of over 100 cities from across North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, strive to promote the value, richness, and vitality of francophone heritage, to showcase francophone and francophile cultural communities such as Lewiston and Auburn, develop economic and strategic alliances throughout the network, and to promote member cities' tourist attractions on the international scene.

http://villesfrancoamerique.com/nouvelles/2016/lewisston_honneur.aspx

International Children's Festival

During April vacation, the Gendron Franco Center was host to about 65 children who participated in its 2nd International Children's Festival.



Sadie Landry and participants take part in a karate demonstration at the Festival's final event

Through workshops varying in subject from storytelling/theater to Mexican games and foods,

African dances to karate and yoga, from food preparation to contra dancing, the participants, helped by about 25 volunteers of all ages, learned about different cultures through several art forms.

The 2-day event, which was sponsored in part by Center Street Dental and the L/A Children's Foundation, concluded with a presentation by

Dr. Rose on healthy teeth and a performance for parents and community members.

The Festival was featured on the front page of the Sun Journal, a local newspaper:

<http://www.sunjournal.com/news/lewiston-auburn/2016/04/20/expanding-childrens-cultural-horizons/1910746>

In The News

The various Franco Center programs were also featured in some of Radio Canada's radio programs. You can listen here:

http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/l_heure_du_monde/2015-2016/archives.asp?date=2016-03-18

http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/l_heure_du_monde/2015-2016/archives.asp?date=2016-01-06

http://ici.radio-canada.ca/emissions/l_heure_du_monde/2015-2016/archives.asp?date=2016-01-07

Thanks to our Partners, Collaborators and Benefactors!



Lewiston/Auburn Children's Foundation

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We couldn't do it without you!



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