



# FRANCO AMERICAN PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

## Welcome

*Announcing changes at the Franco American Centre at the University of Maine*



Until June 2011, the University of Maine Franco-American Centre and Franco American Studies program were housed in different locations and reported to two different deans. After many meetings and much discussion, we have now merged into one unit called Franco American Programs. We view this merger as an opportunity to rethink

and revitalize current directions in teaching, research, and community engagement not only within the Franco American Programs but also on the University of Maine campus and beyond. This newsletter is the first in a bi-annual series, whose purpose is to highlight our work.

### Spring 2015



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## Letter from the Director

When Yvon was Director of the Franco American Centre, he used to always introduce me as "La Relève." I have been at the University of Maine since 2000, directing and teaching in the Franco American Studies program, and while I always smiled when Yvon said that, I never really understood what exactly he meant until he retired last summer. Yvon and I are different in many ways: Yvon was born in "La Beauce," my family is

from the St. John Valley in Northern Maine; Yvon experienced first hand the forced shift to English after moving here from Quebec, I grew up understanding my family's French but always speaking English; Yvon maintained an outsider stance, I am trained as an

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## Our Vision of Franco American Programs

Franco American communities constitute a large percentage of the population of Maine and the Northeast region. It is the mission of the Franco American Program to serve these communities while recognizing that cultural patterns do not stop at national borders. The Franco American Program includes the Franco American Centre as well as Franco American Studies.

The primary goal of the Franco-American Centre is to support and enhance the Franco American communities of Maine. The Centre looks to disseminate the richness of Franco history, language, and culture, as well as to bridge Franco Americans both to the University campus and to other peoples of the region.

The primary goal of Franco American Studies is to broaden the canon of knowledge on Franco American peoples, culture, and literature. It encourages and facilitates interdisciplinary research, faculty engagement, and student exploration.

With the merger of the Franco American Centre and Franco American Studies, we aim to strengthen our current efforts by concentrating on community-engaged scholarship. We want to foster the study of Franco America, the articulation of its place within the American experience, and the expansion of Franco American Studies at The University of Maine and beyond. We draw our theoretical models from the field of sustainability science, which provides a framework for discussing and thinking about cultural traditions. As in sustainability science, we aim to emphasize the interrelationship between research and the communities we study, building activities that support our academic, teaching and engagement missions as well as cultivate the continuum and interconnections between them.

*Susan Pinette, Director of Franco American Programs*  
*Lisa Michaud, Coordinator of Community Engagement*

*Joe Arsenault, Research Associate*  
*Tony Brinkley, Faculty Associate*

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## Letter from the Coordinator of Community Engagement

Yvon Labbé retired in August of 2014 after 40+ years of dedication to the Franco-Americans of Maine and beyond. The Franco-American Centre's foundation was laid. It is now our job to build upon this foundation for those to come.

This year was a new adventure while the Franco-American Centre and Franco American Studies were joined and became one unit. Susan and I are working to bring a new, vibrant program to students and our community, offering an array of different workshops, films, trips and scholarships.

Of utmost priority is the establishment of an endowment for the Franco-American Programs. This endowment would ensure and secure the future of the programs and its many initiatives.

We had a wonderful year of different events and collaborations. We held a reception for gubernatorial candidate Mike Michaud; we received a large genealogical book collection from Bristol, IN in memory of Adrien Lanthier Ringuette; Susan Poulin and Michael Parent shared their work with our community group and visited FAS classes; we hosted a holiday gathering; Cathie Pelletier spoke about her writing and the launch of her new press Ethel Books; we held our annual Mardi Gras Party, we screened the film "Un Rêve Américain;" we brought community members to Augusta to the Fourteenth Annual Franco-American Day; and we organized our Fifth annual Gathering of Franco American writers and artists in Walpole.

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## Building a Research Library

### *Our Subject Bibliography*

One important priority is to build tools for both academic and community-based researchers. Up until 2008, the Library of Congress had no subject heading for Franco Americans. This meant that any search in most library catalogs anywhere in the United States (both computerized and in the old-fashioned card catalogs) for Franco Americans often only brought back titles on French-US diplomacy! Now that we have the Library of Congress designator established, from this point forward all new research on Franco Americans will be classified under this subject heading and easily found. Any research done previous to 2008, however, is not. This means that research on Franco Americans is still difficult.

To begin to remedy this problem, we have developed a web-based, annotated subject bibliography that supports both community based and academic researchers. We have over 1700 titles annotated in either French or English (the language of the annotation depends upon what language the title is written in). These titles are grouped by subject (for example, Franco American history, or literature or education) so any user can easily find what research has been done in that topic. The database also is searchable by author and title. And finally, we have also tagged each resource with place-names, so that researchers can find town-specific resources.

<http://francolib.francoamerican.org/>

### *Growing Our Collection: The Ringuette Donation*

Our library at the Franco American Centre continues to grow. Last fall, we were honored to receive a donation by Celeste Ringuette of a very significant and substantial genealogical library. This gift of over 4,500 books, maps, and research materials was made in memory of Celeste's late husband, Adrien Lanthier Ringuette. In pursuing family genealogy, Adrien built an extensive library of valuable research resources. This collection includes unbroken runs of most of the major periodicals in French Canadian genealogical research, genealogical dictionaries, historical

biographical dictionaries, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> French Canadian census records and a large library of supporting materials relating to French, French Canadian, and Franco American history.

We will celebrate the opening of this library to the public this June, 2015.

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*I have enjoyed making new friends as well as attending social and educational functions. I believe even my ability to speak French has improved. My French "Meme" would be pleased.*

*Proud to be a Franco-American...Louella (Rouillard, Lajoie) Rolfe*

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## Plans for Fall 2015

We have spent much of this past semester talking to students, community members and various other people who pass through the Franco American Centre about what they think Franco American programs should do. Though informal and in no way comprehensive, we nevertheless were surprised to find a common theme: most people were interested in travelling AND connecting across generations. Many of our students, for example, have never been to Quebec or Montreal. As we explored and thought about our findings, we wondered if perhaps it might make sense to organize a trip or two – Quebec, Montreal or even a weekend trip exploring French Canadian culture in New York City! This fall, we intend to sponsor at least one trip, open to both students and community members. Our goal is to create intergenerational spaces and, from our initial research, we're confident travel will be one good way to do that.

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*Discovering the Franco-American Centre at the University of Maine after moving back to Bangor in 2013 has been a great experience. I have made some wonderful friends.*

*- Lin LaRochelle*

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## Franco American Studies



*Students giving their final presentations in FAS 120: People, Places, Pasts*

Franco American Studies is an interdisciplinary program that explores the French cultures of the United States. Its emphasis is on the people of Franco American heritage in Maine and the Northeast region but it recognizes that cultural patterns do not stop at national borders. We offer several classes at the University of Maine, most of which are taught in English. This semester, we offered a course called, "FAS 120: People, Places, and Pasts." We looked at which places hold meaning for Franco Americans, and we thought about how these physical and geographical spaces map onto psychic and historical ones, giving Franco Americans a sense of belonging, dislocation, or exile. Final projects included looking at which places are represented in Franco American folk music, how Franco Americans inhabited work spaces, the specificity of Franco American homes, impacts of de-industrialization on communities and various projects on specific towns and places.

*I first attended the Franco-American Center at the University of Maine to learn more about my French ancestors. Lisa Michaud was very helpful and supportive in that endeavor, connecting me with two French genealogists who helped me trace my mother's paternal family line to the 17th century and to my ninth great-grandfather, Germain Doucet. What a thrill!*

*- Martha Whitehouse*

## FRENCH CLASSES



Starting September 2015, Franco American Programs will offer after-school French classes for local children. As Cynthia Fox notes, "Support for French is also now largely absent from the institutions that have traditionally provided the community infrastructure." We think one of the roles of the newly combined Franco American Programs is to provide culturally embedded language opportunities. We are working with nearby elementary schools in Orono and Old Town to also offer French in the Kindergarten classes. The after-school classes will be held twice a week. Students from the College of Education and the French Department will be helping to design the curriculum and teach in the classrooms. We are also looking for volunteers. If you would like to help, please let Susan or Lisa know at 581-3764. We are looking for people to help out in the classrooms and to help organize.

**Letter from the Director (continued)**

academic; and then of course Yvon lives his Franco American culture as a man and I as a woman. Yet despite these differences, I find that we share a fundamental stance -- toward our experience of mainstream culture, our recognition of the complexity of issues in the Franco community, our lived experience of Franco families, work ethnics and language politics – the list goes on. Our differences prove both the diversity of the Franco American experience as well as a fundamental continuity that underlies and ties us all. I miss Yvon at the Franco American Centre, and miss

being able to walk into his office to have him hop up to sweep a stack of papers off a chair so we could talk and share ideas. I respect Yvon's insights and his ability to listen deeply. I missed him this year, as a friend and as a mentor. This year, without him at the Franco Centre I often felt exposed in ways that I never experienced before; I only now see the work he did to create a space within which I could work and teach in naive security. As I look to the future and my work with Lisa, I hope to create as large a space as he did so that we too can cultivate and nurture our "Relève."

Susan Pinette

**Letter from Coordinator of Community Engagement (continued)**

We have two upcoming summer events planned as well. On June 28 we are organizing a group to attend a concert by the Louisiana-based band “La Racolte” in Fort Kent and on July 14 we will venture to Castine to welcome the Hermione ship, which will arrive from France and dock in Castine, ME. Please let Lisa know if you would like to join us.

We have had a busy year and with continued support, we can ensure that these programs and others continue to prosper.

Lisa Michaud

**Contact Information**

We can be reached at (207) 581-3764 or individually through email:  
(first name.last name@umit.maine.edu)

The Franco American Centre is on the University of Maine campus in Orono in Crossland Hall.



*I cannot say enough good things about UMaine’s Franco American Center. It has truly given me a sense of place and identity in the Franco American Community for more than a decade.*

*– Ginny Sand*

*Photos from left to right: Emma (Cormier) Phillips, Martha Whitehouse, Pierrette Larocque, and Lin LaRochelle; Dan Lapierre ; Cindy Larock*



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## Fifth Annual Gathering of Writers and Artists

We held our gathering this year again at the Darling Marine Center (Walpole, ME) from April 24-26, 2015. We had over 30 attendees from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont and Quebec. Participants shared storytelling, writings, research, theatre works, music, conversation, food and good times.



*Photos from left to right: Susan Poulin; Norman Beaupré; Stephen Roberts; Michael Parent; Lin LaRochelle and Pierrette Larocque; Lisa Michaud; Robert Perreault*