

## SMALL GRANT REPORT: *LE MAINE FRANCOPHONE: HIER ET AUJOURD'HUI*

To commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Champlain's founding of the city of Quebec, Casco Bay High School (CBHS) students prepared a documentary exhibit entitled "Le Maine Francophone: Hier et Aujourd'hui" which told the story of Franco-Americans in Maine. The exhibit took place at the Franco-American Heritage Center in Lewiston, Maine in June 2008.

From January through June 2008, Casco Bay High School French students went to *La Rencontre*, the monthly lunch at the Franco-American Heritage Center in Lewiston, where they interviewed Franco-Americans from the Lewiston area. The individuals whom the CBHS students interviewed will be the subjects of the documentary exhibit. Each interview focused on a theme in the history of Franco-Americans in Lewiston. Students also read portions and analyzed data presented in "La genèse s'une communauté canadienne-française en nouvelle-angleterre: Lewiston, Maine, 1800-1880." (mai 1988). (Thèse présentée à l'École des gradués de l'Université Laval pour l'obtention du grade de Philosophe Doctor (Ph.D.), Faculté des Lettres, Université Laval, Québec). In the process, CBHS students conducted their interviews in French to use the language in an authentic way.

Thanks to the support from the AATF Small Grants Program, students were able to travel to Lewiston to conduct the interviews. In addition, we were able to welcome a Franco-American Panel to Casco Bay High School. The panel included Rita Dubé, Executive Director of the Franco-American Heritage Center; Yvon Labbé, Director of the Franco-American Center in Orono, Maine; David Vermette, a Franco-American researcher; and Lillian Richard, a Franco-American from Rumford, Maine. The \$500 dollars from the AATF Small Grants Program was matched by funds and donated services from the Maine Community Foundation, The Franco-American Heritage Center (Lewiston, Maine), The Portland Educational Partnership, and The Franco-American Center (Orono, Maine).

Some student reactions to the project include the following:

*I am enjoying this project very much...I absolutely LOVE going up to Lewiston and meeting the adorable old people who really enjoy telling us their story. They're not afraid to tell us things and I really think that's great because a lot of negative things happened to them. I also appreciate the respect between the two age groups. The teens are respecting the older folk and they're respecting us, which is hard to find these days. As a*

*teenager, a lot of people think we're awful people. I really am enjoying this.*

*I did not know anything about Franco-*



*Americans, except for the fact that my grandfather is French Canadian. But I didn't know anything about his family history at all. So everything I've learned in our studies has been new information to me.*

*I wouldn't say it has changed [my knowledge of the Franco-American Experience], but my knowledge has most certainly grown. I always have known a bit about Franco-Americans in Maine, but more so in Manchester, New Hampshire. This year I really feel a connection between my family in New Hampshire and what I have been learning about in Maine.*

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