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Franco-American Advocacy Article

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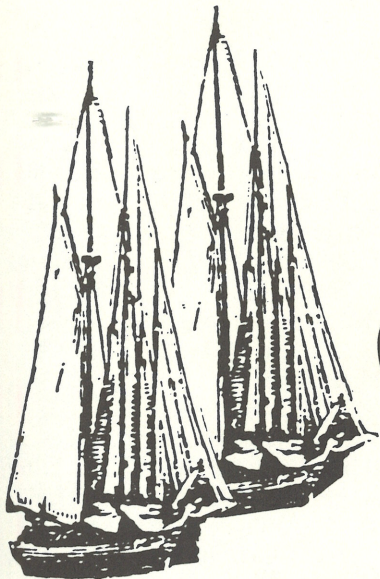
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Madeleine Giguere

(Kramer photo)

Franco-American Advocacy

The Franco-Americans of New England have an advocate in Sociology Professor Madeleine D. Giguere.

For that reason that community honored her recently at a dinner in Lewiston. ActFane (Action for Franco-Americans of the Northeast), sponsor of the annual event, recognized her for her "exceptional contributions" and for providing "an inspirational role model for young Franco-Americans."

Giguere has served the Franco-American community on several levels beginning in her hometown of Lewiston. There she served on the city's Historical Commission and the Board of Library Trustees. Her contributions enabled the public library to develop its French collection into the largest of any public library in New England.

But it was on a regional level where her efforts at demographic research have had their greatest impact. Collecting data from the 1980 census, Giguere discovered that 25 percent of the population in New England have French ancestry. It was the first time that the significance of the Franco-American culture in New England had been quantified. That research resulted in an article in the Boston Globe.

Giguere had lobbied throughout New England prior to that census for people to answer the ethnic questions.

The ActFane honor for what she called her "back office work" was completely unexpected. "No one gets very excited about figures," she said.

With characteristic modesty, she told editorial writers at The Lewiston Daily Sun, "I think it's unusual to have your work recognized, particularly when it isn't world shattering."

But in a lengthy editorial, the Sun noted that Giguere has been responsible for calling attention to the significant contributions of the Franco-American culture at a time when interest in it was at a low ebb. The editorial went on to say that one of the greatest benefits of Giguere's work has been a rekindling of pride in many Franco-Americans.

Again referring to her honor, the Sun reported, "...the state of Maine — indeed all of New England — is richer because of her work."