

## Connecting students with the community

Descendants of this area's settlers gave voice to the French-Canadian history of Kankakee County, and KCC students preserved that history.



KCC students' work, called the French-Canadian Interview Project, has spanned two years and is being led by **Dr. James Paul**, professor in the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences.

"Few experiences in my more than 30 years of college teaching have given me the joy I felt when my students became connected with their community and local history during this project," Dr. Paul said.

A fellow member of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society asked Paul to consider

interviewing descendants of the French-Canadian in our community—before it was too late. Several French-Canadian oral histories were completed about 12 years ago. When Paul learned that another potential interviewee died, he decided to include a 'French-Canadian Interview Project' in his Western Civilization courses."

More than 200 students have taken part in the project, interviewing six French-Canadian descendants; videotaping and transcribing the interviews; conducting research using historical societies, newspapers and local history references; collecting family photographs, family trees, family documents, traditional French-Canadian recipes and maps; and producing a chronology of local history.

More information about this project can be found at <http://www.kcc.cc.il.us/hss/jpaul/french%20canadian>.

As long as there are people to interview, Dr. Paul plans to continue the project with future Western Civilization classes. "It is important to preserve the history, and the French-Canadian Interview Project is an accessible way of making that history known."

*French-Canadian Interview Project descendants pictured above: (clockwise from upper left—Leland Ponton, Bernice (Fortin) Bassailon, professor Dr. James Paul, Sister Madeleine LaMarre, Cecile LaMarre Enright, Lenore Pallissard and Anne Richard.*