



May 2019 Newsletter

Alliance Française-Lansing May Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Conversation Café at the café in Schuler's Bookstore in Meridian Mall 3:00-4:30 PM	3	4
5	6 East Lansing Public Library French Club 7:00-8:00 PM	7	8 Conversation entre amis. Aspen Lake Estates Clubhouse, 3879 Lone Pine Rd., Holt, 6:30	9 Conversation Café at the café in Schuler's Bookstore in Meridian Mall 3:00-4:30 PM	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 Conversation Café at the café in Schuler's Bookstore in Meridian Mall 3:00-4:30 PM	17	18 <i>AF-Lansing Soirée</i>
19 <i>AF- Lansing Board Meeting Chez Kelly</i>	20 East Lansing Public Library French Club 7:00-8:00 PM	21	22 Conversation entre amis. Aspen Lake Estates Clubhouse, 3879 Lone Pine Rd., Holt, 6:30	23 Conversation Café at the café in Schuler's Bookstore in Meridian Mall 3:00-4:30 PM	24	25
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We'll Always Have Notre-Dame de Paris

April 18th, 2019 by Guy Sorman (Translated from French by Alexander Uff)
#Notre-Dame de Paris, #Paris

No one could have predicted the global swell of emotion inspired by the fire in the cathedral in Paris. The French are generally so divided and there are few regular churchgoers. And yet they suddenly found themselves united in collective mourning. Condolences flooded in from all over the world as if every French person had lost a loved one, and considerable sums of money were donated to rebuild the cathedral.

Just as this emotional outpouring was not predictable, the combined immediacy and timelessness also made it difficult to explain. The instant aspect that inspired such a universal sentiment was the chilling,

fascinating spectacle of one of the oldest examples of Western art going up in smoke. Notre-Dame belongs to the intangible heritage shared by humanity. Everyone has seen the cathedral in real life or in photographs. Everyone has visited it or is hoping to one day. On a personal note, I attended a midnight mass with my wife the night before our first child was born. This building is far more than a collection of stones; it is also built with faith, history, literature, and music. Few monuments across the world — St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and the temples of Angkor are perhaps some of the only exceptions — are as infused with centuries of history and passion.

Aside from the tragic spectacle, we were also reminded thanks to social media that Notre-Dame embodied the nation for the French. This was not so obvious before. But even without its complete destruction, the mere threat to its structural integrity proved its status as a national symbol. This is very meaningful; despite living in a time of globalization, travel, and individualism, the concept of a nation remains true, more in emotional than rational terms. Notre-Dame is therefore also part of the symbolic heritage of French citizens, contributing to their identity and their sense of belonging. This is something else of which we were unaware: The absence, or the threat of being left without, has revealed true significance. If we take a biological metaphor, we are unaware of having a heart as long as it continues to beat normally, and we only discover its necessary function if it falters.

Another surprise is the extent to which French national identity is intertwined with a cathedral, despite the country's secular society and the fact only 5% of the population go to mass regularly. In reality, we are now seeing what many historians and sociologists have said for a long time: France is fundamentally Catholic. And more Catholic than Christian. By this I mean that the French have been shaped by the material and spiritual precepts of Catholicism, more by its rites than by faith and its temporal and sacred hierarchy. Even today, the least Christian of French people continue to respect the rites of baptisms, weddings, and funerals. This is the purpose still served by churches and their dwindling clergy.

Notre-Dame, theology made mineral, a *Deo gratias* in hewn stone, is the most perfect representation of what being eternally French means. If our explanation is correct, it also sheds light on a certain complexity in being French during a period of major migration. The new French people recently arrived from Africa or Asia, generally Muslims or Buddhists, have no historical, physical, or cultural ties to Notre-Dame. For them, it is quite difficult to become totally French. Either that, or they will become French in other ways, and Notre-Dame will be the novel by Victor Hugo more than an interiorized passion. If we compare with the United States, by contrast, becoming American essentially means adhering to a living text, the Constitution, whose contents are applied on a daily basis. Being American does not require the espousal and integration of American history. But then being French does not require recognizing the Gauls as one's ancestors, as we once taught to colonized African children. However, it does imply, at least implicitly, recognizing Notre-Dame as a somewhat distant parent. A parent eight centuries old.

Age is no small point. This cathedral is France because it is as old as France. This speaks volumes about a country that more spontaneously identifies with its past and the prowess of its nameless artisans than with its yet unwritten future. In a way, the burning of Notre-Dame is the burning of our eternal identity, leaving us faced with a national future that seems arbitrary, not necessarily national — perhaps European — and more technical than sentimental. Certain conservative pundits and politicians have of course read a little too much into the emotion of the moment, interpreting it as a sort of old-fashioned patriotic reconstruction. But it is true that this fire has drawn a psychological frontier between an overly idealized past and a coldly robotized future.

This country-wide procrastination between the passionate past and the cerebral future is already manifesting itself in the debate over the cathedral's reconstruction. President Macron has promised it will take no more than five years, thereby recognizing the building's central, national role. However, to achieve this in five years, building experts have declared that any reconstruction will not be a reproduction. New materials, steel or concrete, will replace the oak framework of yore. Notre-Dame will

also be kitted out with new smoke detectors and other modern accoutrements. A battle is already raging between the old and new worlds. Perhaps the national unification will only have lasted for the fire, and the national quarrel will soon resume. But surely quarrelling, even over which material to use for rebuilding a cathedral's framework, is also what it really means to be French.

Editor's note: This article is copied in its entirety from France-Amérique. Alliance Française-Lansing has a subscription to the English/French magazine and members can borrow copies if they like. Please check with a board member to get a copy to read.

Correspondence received via AF-Lansing website

Summer Employment Opportunities for French speakers

I hope this message finds you very well. I am the US Recruiting Agent for a company called "Les Aventures Makwa" based in Montreal. You may have received a message from Makwa last year, and so I'm happy to reach out to share again this opportunity.

Makwa is actively hiring US residents with conversational French proficiency to work this summer 2019 as Tour Leaders across the USA (California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, New York, Florida, Hawaii, among others) during the months of July and August. Tour Leaders will accompany groups of French students on excursions through national parks and cities, sharing their culture and discovering new places and faces. The position is paid, and travel, transportation, accommodations, national parks entrance fees, and all meals are included.

We would like to ask for your assistance in sharing this job opportunity with your French-speaking colleagues, staff, alumni, or other partners who you think could be interested in these summer positions. We would appreciate very much if you could share this information by email, on newsletters, posts on job boards, on social media, or by printing the attached documents and posting them on bulletin boards. The most important criteria for selection is that the applicant has conversational French proficiency and is motivated to work with students. We think this position is particularly well-suited for French language teachers, students of French, graduate students of education or language, your alumni, and any others who might enjoy this chance to work with French students, in a francophone environment, while traveling to interesting destinations across the USA.

Many positions are available and they will be filled on a rolling basis, early applicants will be considered for their priority destinations. More information can also be found on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/aventures.makwa/posts/1091645731041421> and on our flyer and job description attached in this message. Applicants can apply online at <https://www.makwa-travel.com/career> or send their CV and cover letter to rh-usa@makwa.net. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

I look forward to working with you and with interested candidates that you might refer.

Bien cordialement,

Rodrigo

- RODRIGO TENZE -

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The logo for Makwa, featuring the word "Makwa" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.