

Highlights of the 91st Annual AATF Convention in Martinique

The 91st annual AATF Convention was held July 18-21, 2019 at La-Pointe-du-Bout, Martinique and had as its theme, “Créolité et environnement aux Antilles Francophones.” It was the third time we have held our annual convention in *l’Île aux Fleurs*.

The Executive Council met one day prior to the convention on July 17. In addition, the eighth Future Leaders Fellowship Program with six participants was also held under the able direction of Janel Lafond-Paquin (page 39).

On July 15-16-17, a group of more than 40 participants attended pre-convention seminars organized by Vámonos Tours. Lectures in the morning were followed by activities or excursions. The group on Sunday, July 15 had the remarkable experience of being in Martinique when



Martiniquais reveling in France’s World Cup Victory

the French team won the World Cup, and they were able to witness the final day of the *Tour de Martinique*. On July 17, a group of 40 participants headed toward the north of the island on an excursion to Saint-Pierre, organized by CaribCongrès.

The convention opened officially on Wednesday, July 18 at l’Hôtel La Batelière. AATF President Catherine Daniélou welcomed attendees. Following her remarks, she then introduced Madame Karine Mousseau, *Directrice du Comité Martiniquais de Tourisme*, who spoke and answered attendees’ ques-



Pre-convention workshop attendees enjoying a game

tions on the history and culture of Martinique.

Immediately after the opening *séance plénière*, more than 300 enthusiastic congressistes attended the Welcome Luncheon. It was held overlooking the Caribbean where everyone could get a view of the beautiful tropical surroundings.



Karine Mousseau

The next three days were full days of sessions, many highlighting the theme of the convention. During the lunch breaks, members were able to visit our exhibitors who were located near AATF registration at the Hôtel Bakoua



Our beautiful welcome luncheon view

(see the exhibitor page on the AATF website [www.frenchteachers.org]),

and a raffle was organized there on Friday morning. Sessions were held in four nearby hotels, and lunches rotated between the Hôtel Carayou, the Bakoua, and the Hôtel Bambou. Members also participated in the twelfth annual *Dictée* organized by President Catherine Daniélou (See the list of winners on page 4). On Friday evening, the American Society for the French Academic Palms held a reception for its members at the Hôtel Bambou.

In addition to sessions, attendees were also able to explore the surrounding community with short excursions to



Session participants listen attentively

Le Musée de la Canne/Musée de la Pagerie, La Savane des esclaves/ le Village de la Poterie, and l’Habitation Clément. In addition, France Langue organized a series of pirate-themed Walking Tours in Fort-de-France, each followed by a reception. All money generated from the Walking Tours will be awarded to an AATF member in 2019 along with a scholarship to travel to a France Langue program.

The Saturday luncheon also served as our Awards Luncheon where those receiving special recognition for their achievements in 2018 were honored. These included our outgoing Executive Council member: Abbe Guillet (Region

The walking tour pirate



II Representative) who will finish her term on December 31, 2018. We also welcomed two new honorary members, Olivier De La Houssaye from CaribCongrès who was instrumental in the organization of this convention, and noted Martinican author Raphaël Confiant.

Among the award recipients were Cathy Kendrigan (IL) and Ann Williams (CO) who received the 2018 AATF Dorothy S. Ludwig Excellence in Teaching Awards at the secondary and post-secondary levels, respectively (see page 27). Outstanding Chapters for 2018 (see page 6) and Outstanding Chapter Officer Jon Shee, Connecticut Chapter (see page 26), were recognized. We also honored the second recipient of the Rebecca & Jean-Paul Valette AATF Legacy Award, Mary Townsend (see page 25) and the winner of the AATF / Concordia Language Villages Outstanding Administrator Award, James Knight (Malone Middle School, NY, see page 26).

On Saturday afternoon, the Assembly of Delegates met for an informational meeting. A subsequent Webinar was held, followed by online voting, to enable more chapter representatives to participate. Executive Director Jayne Abrate had to miss the Delegate As-



Musée de la Pagerie

sembly to participate in an interview on Radio Caraïbes International. Another interview took place the next day with Martinique 1ère.

On the final evening, attendees were treated to an unforgettable Barbecue Bo-Kaï organized by *le Comité Martiniquais de Tourisme* at the *Village de la Poterie*. As participants got off the buses and headed down the path to

the restaurant, they were welcomed by *Les Hommes d'Argile* holding torches. The group later performed some of their *tableaux vivants* as well. Traditional music was provided by a local band, and the entertainment even included a poetry slam. It was a perfect ending to an amazing convention.

Following the official events, another



Les Hommes d'Argile

group of 40 participants participated in the excursion to the north of the island. More than 50 people, either with the group or individually, headed off to visit neighboring Guadeloupe (see page 10).

We would like to thank the following individuals whose help was invaluable in organizing the convention: Olivier De La Houssaye, Thierry Blanc, and Krystel Le Negaret from CaribCongrès who helped arrange the hotels, the airport transfers, the venues, the transportation, the Nord Plantation and Guadeloupe excursions, and made sure things ran smoothly on site. They also organized the half-day excursions. Many commented on the outstanding guides for these visits, and the guides were equally impressed with the knowledge and curiosity of attendees. The *Comité Martiniquais de Tourisme* and the Martinique Promotion Bureau in New York again helped throughout the process with information, contacts, speakers, and a wonderful closing event. Our gratitude goes to Madame Karine Mousseau for her participation in the opening session, Muriel Wiltord and Valérie Vulcain in New York, and the whole team who welcomed us. Jorge Pardo and Michael Lo Presti of Vámonos Tours and their team did a masterful job organizing the

pre-convention seminars and working around the logistical nightmare of the World Cup final and the Tour de Martinique. David Sampère and his team from France Langue made possible the imaginative Walking Tours which showed Fort-de-France in a completely different light. Finally, our thanks to Vista Higher Learning for sponsoring the badges.

In short, the 331 participants were able to enjoy 121 sessions, including several exhibitor sessions and commission sessions, 8 exhibit booths, two raffles, and several unique excursions and activities. The AATF would like to thank the staff members who helped make the convention such a success, Lindsey Gibson and April Anthony, as well as Christy Brown who helped us throughout the process of planning and running the convention. Staff members were aided in their work by all the members of the Executive Council (see page 7) and the personnel of the four meeting hotels. The AATF would like to thank the speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors without whom the convention could not have happened.

We invite everyone to join us in 2019 as we visit Philadelphia.

Jayne Abrate

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Executive Director



Participants enjoying lunch