

# THE ACADIANS



**CAROLINE-ISABELLE CARON**

**THE CANADIAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

**IMMIGRATION AND ETHNICITY  
IN CANADA SERIES**

**BOOKLET NO. 33**

**Editor**  
**Marlene Epp,**  
**University of Waterloo**

Copyright by  
the Canadian Historical Association  
Ottawa, 2015

Published by the  
Canadian Historical Association  
with the support of the  
Department of Canadian Heritage,  
Government of Canada

ISSN: 2292-7441 (print)  
ISBN: 978-0-88798-285-9  
ISSN: 2292-745X (online)

Cover Page Illustration  
The Forest family, Acadians from the Magdalen Islands,  
in front of their home in Lavernière,  
c1955. Author's collection.

Photographer: Ben Lechtman.  
Courtesy of the Multicultural  
History Society of Ontario

Design and Layout by Tony Di Iorio

Printed by Bradda Printing Services Inc.

# **THE ACADIANS**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the Canadian Historical Association.

Ottawa, 2015

**Caroline-Isabelle Caron**

**THE CANADIAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

**IMMIGRATION AND ETHNICITY  
IN CANADA SERIES**

**BOOKLET NO. 33**



# THE ACADIANS

Caroline-Isabelle Caron <sup>1</sup>

## Who are the Acadians?

The history of the Acadians in North America is both unique and largely unknown. To this day, history textbooks have dedicated but a few pages to them, mostly to underscore their deportation in 1755. Yet, the Acadian presence in Canada is far from negligible or anecdotal. While the Acadians' settlement was established in the early decades of the seventeenth century, their history continues well into the present day. In this booklet, the origins of this ethnic group and its history, from the first decades of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, will be explored. It will become manifest that the history of the Acadians is characterized by their sheer determination to survive as a people, despite trying circumstances as well as political and social roadblocks. But first, it is necessary to define who the Acadians are.

Even though Acadians are Francophone Canadians, they see themselves as different from the descendants of New France's French Canadians. Their immigration stream differs from the one that penetrated the St. Lawrence valley during the French Regime. Today, most Acadians live in Atlantic Canada —i.e., New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador—although some also live in the province of Québec and in the State of Maine (US). The Acadians' French is strikingly different from the French spoken elsewhere in Canada, not only because of its regional accents, but especially because of the distinctive character of its dialectic vocabulary and syntax.

The following narrative is organized chronologically. After a brief overview of the French (1604-1713) and the English (1713-63) colonial periods which ended with the Deportation, the long, protracted Acadian communities' reconstruction in the Maritimes (1763-1900) will be

---

<sup>1</sup> Caroline-Isabelle Caron is an associate professor in the Department of History at Queen's University with a specialty in 19th and 20th century Acadian and Québec cultural history.

addressed, before discussing the Acadian economic and political development until the 1960s. In conclusion, the focus will turn to the Acadians in the modern day and their ongoing challenges. This booklet also contains a list of complementary readings, including the best survey books on Acadian history.

### **The Acadians until the Deportation (1604 to 1755-63)**

As early as the late sixteenth century, the region later known as Atlantic Canada attracted France's interest. But owing to limited geographical knowledge and intense competition for fishing and the fur trade with the Souriquois (French name for Mi'Kmaq), few colonists settled there before the 1630s. The first attempted settlement in 1604 at Ile Sainte-Croix (on the eponym river that runs between present-day New Brunswick and Maine) failed. The following year, the colony of Acadia was officially born with the erection of Fort de Port-Royal, near Annapolis Royal (NE). After difficult beginnings and a brief British takeover from 1629 to 1632, the new governor, Isaac de Razilly, was the first to recruit colonists for a permanent settlement in Acadia. On 8 September 1632 he landed at LaHave (NE) where he settled a group of roughly 300 men, sailors, soldiers, journeymen, and craftsmen, and about 15 families. His goal was to create a self-reliant colony and LaHave, from where he could control the fisheries, became its capital. He also vied to stimulate the development of Port-Royal and its rural surroundings on the Dauphin River (Annapolis River, NE).

The competition to control economic resources in Acadia proved fierce. After de Razilly's death in 1635, several investors claiming its legacy shared the colony's territory and resource extraction, while acquiring rights over adjacent territories. However, it was Charles Menou d'Aulnay who officially inherited the direction and the resource management of all Acadia. He pursued de Razilly's plan while pushing it further, realizing that the colony would fail to develop without a permanent population. He recruited both single women and families, and moved the capital from LaHave to Port-Royal. Most people he sponsored —over 50 families, in addition— to a large contingent of soldiers, ploughmen, and tradesmen— originated from Poitou. Following d'Aulnay's death in 1653, his heirs and competitors recruited more colonists while continuing fish extraction and trading fur with the Souriquois. The latter, aware of the economic and military advantages their presence offered, tolerated the French in their territory.

The ruling of Acadia, which in the early seventeenth century was held distinct from New France, was riddled with problems. Competition between governors and merchants determined to rule and develop the colony was often violent. Combined with English attacks, these political uncertainties led France to consolidate its North American holdings. King Louis XIV created the Royal Government in New France in 1663, and in Acadia as early as 1670, under the Company of Western Indies' control. Even though Acadia was officially under the Government of Québec's supervisory control, the governors, whose responsibilities were ill-defined, administered the colony with some degree of autonomy vis-a-vis Québec and the motherland. But this very autonomy carried its share of problems for Acadians, given the rapid succession of governors and their frequent transfers of the capital: hence, in the space of a few years, it moved from Port-Royal (NE) to Pentagouët, Jemseg, Nasgouash, and Fort St. John (NB). Repeated piracy attacks and invasion attempts by New England brigades severely hampered the lives of the Acadian colonists, while the administrators' ineffective defense of the settlement fostered a strong sentiment of autonomy. Already by the end of the seventeenth century, they considered themselves different from both the French and the "Canadiens" of the St. Lawrence valley who tried to rule over them.

Most Acadians today descend from about 70 families, that is, some 900 people who had settled between 1632 and 1710 on present-day Nova Scotia. While the vast majority of colonists from New France came from Northern France, most Acadian families originated from the western provinces of Poitou, Saintonge, and Aunis, as did the governors and merchants who recruited them. While almost all Acadian settlers were from France, such as the Richards, Cormiers, Robichauds, Gaudets, etc., of few, however, came from the British Isles, such as the Quessys and Melansons, or Iberia, such as the Rodrigues and the Basque Bastarache.

Acadian families settled first in the Dauphin River valley, east of Port-Royal. Because the site was unoccupied, they did not have to displace the native population and this allowed them to establish peaceful relations with the Mi'kmaq. Indeed, the Acadians set roots in the marshy salines left untouched by the First Nations, in the tidal flood plain which they proceed to dry and put into culture thanks to a complex system of dykes (*levées*) affixed with drying valves called *aboiteaux*. This technology was imported from France, probably from the Loudunais region where some early settlers originated. The vast network of dykes the Acadians created inside and beyond the

marshlands before 1755, ensured the fertilization of vast meadows for the culture of wheat but also the growth of salt-hay pastures, a particularly attractive source food for cattle. At this time, Acadian agriculture ranked among the most fertile in the world, boasting near-constant, abundant crops.

A typical Acadian farm consisted of one house with one or two rooms on the first floor, a barn, outdoor latrines, a cellar, and a well. Dwellings were usually built up from the ground without foundation, the walls sided with whitewashed cob walls surmounted by a thatched roof. In addition to an enclosure to keep farm animals (chickens, sheep, pigs), the courtyard contained a fenced garden to grow legumes and root vegetables (carrots, turnips, radishes, but not potatoes), herbs (for both cooking and apothecary), and berries. The Acadians planted, among a vast array of fruit trees, the first apple trees the Annapolis valley is reputed for today.

Abundant food supply stimulated strong demographic growth. It is believed that between 1650 and 1755, the growth rate of the population increased annually by 4.5 percent. Birthrates alone explains this growth, the result of a near 100 percent marriage rate and very high fertility rates, as well as low mortality rates due to the quasi absence of epidemic diseases or famine, and easy access to arable land and drinking water. Despite tentative estimates, experts agree that the Acadian population grew from over 400 people in 1671 to more than 1400 in 1730, for a total of 10,000 to 18,000 people in 1755. English colonial authorities did not deem necessary to assess through formal census surveys the Acadian population, especially since it was located far from administrative centres. This explains the limited written record for the British period.

The colony's demographic growth led to a territorial expansion. After 1713, the children and grandchildren of Port-Royal Acadians settled around Grand-Pré, near the Minas Basin, and Beau Basin, in the Chignectou isthmus, the strip of land between Dieppe (NB) and Amherst (NE). Because these regions stood at a fair distance from the administrative centres that were attacked by New England nearly every year, Acadian farms enjoyed a relative security. This territorial expansion somewhat allowed economic diversification, including ovine and bovine raising in the Minas Basin. Feeding on the minerals contained in salt hay beyond the dyked marshlands, sheep and cow populations grew as fast as their masters'. After 1713, Acadians also

settled in large number on Île-Saint-Jean (PEI), where they initiated a market gardening production to supply the Fortress of Louisbourg built that year on Île Royale (Cap Breton Island).

By and large, Acadians did not partake in the fisheries nor the fur trade. Fishermen and merchants came directly from France without wintering in the colony. After 1713, their activities gravitated mostly around Louisbourg where very few Acadians lived. In fact, the Acadian economy was foremost a subsistence economy, sedentary and rural. Had the land not been so fertile, it would have left no trace. But since the Acadians produced a copious surplus in grain and cattle which they exchanged for what they did not produce themselves, they generated some paper trail that now benefits historians. Regardless of the political regime in place, in trade as in other fields, they always conducted business on their own accord, either with the French, the Mi'kmaq, or New England merchants who held them as "friendly enemies". Indeed, it is the New England archives that provide the evidence for Acadian wealth. There were few artisans in Acadia outside Port-Royal. Acadians had to purchase a vast variety of products, from fine china and tableware, to shoes, tools, tobacco, and textiles, not to mention wine, rum, and even soap. While rum, spices, and molasses came from the West Indies, most of their ceramic and china were from France, transiting through Louisbourg.

Good trade relations with merchants from both empires did not stop New England's troops from taking Port-Royal in October 1710 after a one-week siege, the last of a long series of attacks across the Bay of Fundy. From then on, Massachusetts took political control of Acadia on behalf of Great Britain.

After its Conquest, which was sealed by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Acadia disappear as a polity. France kept New France and the St Lawrence Gulf's Islands. The new colonial authorities acquired Acadia, which they renamed Nova Scotia, while the French troops retreated to present-day New Brunswick. According to the terms of the Treaty, France was to surrender Acadia to Great Britain, "in its totality within its former borders". However, the Treaty did not specify what these former borders were. For France, they were limited to the Nova Scotian peninsula. For Great Britain, Acadia extended to New Brunswick as well. This difference in opinion, among other factors, led to the Seven Years' War forty years later.

The colonial transfer hardly changed anything for the Acadians on a day-to-day basis. Used to an ineffective administration caused by a high rate of turnover, or absent, governors, they continued to lead quiet and largely autonomous lives on their land. Nevertheless, in the 1710s and 1720s, and again the 1740s, some of them participated in joined resistance against British troops. These incidents were often at the hands of young men who took part in the numerous and well organised Aboriginal ambushes or raids. On other occasions, Acadians (coming from what would later be New Brunswick) participated, willingly or forcibly, in French attacks. However, at all times—even during the Deportation— these were isolated skirmishes, although they caused the colonial authorities to fear their subjects, and most of all a handful of priests crisscrossing the territory.

Few priests lived in French Acadia, particularly after 1713. The French colonists were far more interested in the fur trade and especially the fisheries, than the settlers they recruited. Between 1670 and 1710, priests spent more time among the Mi'kmaq than the Acadians. Yet, before 1710, the latter could have hoped to run into an itinerant priest at least once a year for a marriage, a baptism, or a funeral; after 1713, they would hardly encounter a priest once or twice in their lifetime! They considered themselves good Catholics, but not “churchy”. In keeping with Catholic dogma, they celebrated between themselves rituals such as White masses on Sundays (known today as the Liturgy of the Word), but they also had their superstitious practices, according to the descriptive accounts left by some itinerant priests in the early eighteenth century. Clearly, the Acadians were no more submitted to Rome than they were to political authorities.

Abbot Jean-Louis Le Loutre was one of those priests. Between 1738 and 1755, Le Loutre was one of the three clergymen officially responsible for conducting pastoral services among the Catholic population in the colony. For the Halifax authorities, he was nothing but an agitator determined to foment uprisings among his Acadian and Aboriginal flocks. For the French troops, Le Loutre was key in their attempt to raise a fifth brigade among Aboriginals, and if possible, Acadians too. What the latter thought of him remains unknown, but the British authorities without hesitation blamed him personally for several incidents of armed resistance they had to repress in the 1740s and 1750s, particularly the Battle of Beauséjour, an event that will be discussed later. After the battle, he managed to escape while attempting to sail back to France,

but his ship was captured. He was held prisoner at Jersey Island until his return to France in 1763.

Acadian relations with the British colonial authorities started to deteriorate progressively after 1713, but more quickly in the 1740s. The Colonial Office and the military officers who controlled the territory were greatly distrustful of their new subjects, both French-speaking and Catholic. For the local authorities, all Acadians were traitors and potential rebels. During the first years of the new regime, they failed to convince them to pay allegiance to the British Crown. Most Acadians refused to take up arms against the French or the Aborigines which an unconditional oath would have obliged them to. This refusal and their consent to a conditional oath only incurred the disapproval of the English colonial authorities and the outright opposition of the Colonial Office. Hence, by virtue of the British law, they were in effect unlawful. If their stated neutrality in the conflicts between great European powers earned them the nickname "Neutrals" by the governors of Nova Scotia, it did not earn them the latter's trust either. Quite the opposite.

Between 1740 and 1754, as threats of war between France and the United Kingdom became increasingly palpable, mounting tension ensued in Nova Scotia. While hostilities escalated and Acadians still declared their neutrality, some of them who lived in French-controlled territory took part in ambushes against British troops. Several times a year, Acadian communities deputed a representative to Annapolis Royal or Halifax to reassert their neutral position and their refusal to pledge an unconditional oath. But this very reluctance to accept British authority, combined with the strange habit of pledging their neutrality, their growing population, their involvement in incidents of armed resistances, and their friendly relations with the Aborigines, all these factors made them extremely suspicious in the eyes of the authorities.

In 1754, when hostilities erupted between New France and New England (two years before France and England officially declared war against each other), Lieutenant-Governor Charles Lawrence became convinced the Acadians were about to take up arms against the English. In the spring of 1755, he confiscated their arms and canoes. The Battle of Beauséjour (3-6 July 1755) between English and French troops, which the Acadians of the region joined, would force the hand of the authorities. On 28 July 1755, Lawrence decided to put an end to the problem by expelling the Acadians from the land. While this political

and military decision was in line with eighteenth-century military tactics, its scope was without precedent.

Between the end of August 1755 and the fall of 1763, about 1,800 British soldiers systematically crisscrossed present-day Nova Scotia (starting with Grand-Pré), New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island to capture Acadians, seize their lands and their livestock, and burn their houses. General Robert Monckton supervised the Deportation, keeping a detailed ledger account of his troops' confiscated or destroyed properties. One of his assistants, John Winslow, also held a detailed journal of these events. In this account, while soldiers were to avoid separating nuclear families, they were also instructed to keep apart adult brothers and cousins in order to break down Acadian social cohesion. Indeed, the goal of the deportation was not to exterminate but to dismantle Acadian society and force the French Neutrals to assimilate as British subjects of North America, and withdraw their loyalty to the French Crown. All the same, the Great Upheaval turned into a horrible experience for the Acadians.

Acadians were forcibly put on board of ships heading to the Thirteen American Colonies (the future United States), the Caribbean or, between 1760 and 1763, England with only what they could carry in their arms. Since their economy relied on barter more than currency, most had hardly more than a few personal belongings and clothes on their backs. The voyage to the Thirteenth Colonies was long; at best it lasted two weeks, but could take up to two months. Running out of drinking water and food, the travelers' conditions proved horrendously difficult: they became easily prey to infectious diseases such as yellow fever and typhus. Anywhere between 8,000 and 10,000 Acadians were deported; at least one third of the contingent did not survive the journey. Nearly 700 of them perished in the *Violet's* and *Duke William's* shipwrecks.

With the exception of William Shirley, Governor of Massachusetts, who was consulted during the preparations, the governments of the Thirteen Colonies were not informed of Lawrence's final decision. Because they were left unprepared to handle hundreds of Acadians — most of them sick and penniless —, they welcomed them with great reluctance and suspicion. The way the Acadians were treated varied from colony to colony. The more generous, such as Maryland and Pennsylvania, took them as indentured servants; Massachusetts controlled their whereabouts and placed their children in Protestant families; Georgia

forced them to work alongside African slaves on plantations; Virginia and North Carolina refused outright to allow the Acadians to land. In Virginia, 1,500 among them spent the 1755-1756 winter on board of the ships that had carried them, in horrifying conditions. In the spring, the survivors were deported to England and put in prisoner camps in the port cities of Falmouth, Portsmouth, and Bristol. It is the children and grandchildren of these prisoners, transferred to France in 1765, who sailed off to Louisiana in 1785 to become today's Cajuns (the Cadians). However, between 1755 and 1763, no less than 2,000 other Acadians sought refuge in wooded areas among Aborigines or in refugee camps on the Miramichi River (present-day New Brunswick). Countless number of them died of cold and hunger. Others still escaped the Deportation due to sheer chance, as was the case of several families at Île Saint-Jean (Prince Edward Island).

The Acadian Deportation and the ensuing exile remained a horrible experience. Those who survived found themselves among strangers speaking a foreign language and practicing Protestantism. Most municipalities that took them on regarded them at best as indigents to rescue, at worst as enemy prisoners. Whatever the case, these farmers who had been accustomed to self-government were now penniless and landless, most unemployed, facing strict and unfamiliar regulations, often discriminatory toward Catholics. Most of the exiled Acadians never saw again the land where they were born.

The fate of the deported populations is well known, thanks to the trail of documents they left in the American colonial archives, especially the missives and petition letters they sent to the colonial governments. It is also known that the Acadians themselves quickly reestablished contact with their families deported far away: contemporary observers reported the vast correspondence Acadians maintained to seek news of their kin and reinforce family connections. Although only a few of them have survived to this day, these letters allowed the Acadians to keep alive the very social relations that Charles Lawrence wanted to suppress in 1755.

When the Seven Years' War came to an end in 1763, all French territories in North America (with the exception of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon) went to the British Crown. If the French Canadians could remain in the St Lawrence River valley without fear, the Acadians were still *personae non grata* in Nova Scotia. To be sure, most of the Acadians who had returned to the land during the war were either made prisoners or deported anew. Yet, with the end of the hostilities, Nova

Scotia economy suffered from severe labor shortages. The Anglo-Protestant population was rather weak and the new colonists from New England were still very few. Most of all, they did not know the territory and did not have good relations with the Mi'kmaqs. Businessman Charles Robin, a British Francophone from the Anglo-Norman Islands, sent a circular letter to the Acadians who lived in the Thirteen Colonies to invite them back to Nova Scotia, promising them employment in the fisheries. Robin's letter, sent without authorization from the government of Halifax, caught the authorities by surprise when hundreds of Acadian families landed the following year. In 1764, Halifax reluctantly granted the Acadians permission to come back to the colony, but only under strict conditions.

### **The slow reconstruction of Acadian communities (1763-1900)**

The Acadians who came back to the Maritimes were in poor straits. The so-called "Return" era, extending from 1764 to 1810, saw the deported, their children, and grandchildren heading to the present-day Maritimes, but also the St. Lawrence valley between Montréal and Gaspésie. From then on, the Acadians were a stateless people: nothing was left of Acadia as a polity. The lands they had cultivated since the seventeenth century had been redistributed to Anglo-Protestant settlers from New England or Europe. Their aboriginal allies had been forced into submission, their political and territorial sovereignty annihilated. In 1764, the government of Nova Scotia authorized them to settle in specified areas of present-day New Brunswick and in non-arable regions of present-day Nova Scotia. Before 1810, the British authorities did not allow the Acadians to own the land set aside for them, granting them only an occupancy permit. Adult men had also to keep a safe-conduct on them attesting that they had pledged an unconditional allegiance oath, under pain of being arrested.

Aside from a few Acadians who managed to resettle on their lands in the Pubnico area (at the southern tip of Nova Scotia), those who came back to the Maritimes between 1764 and 1810 started from scratch, often on uncleared lands and less fertile soils. While the first Acadians were foremost agriculturalists, their descendants ought to embrace various occupations.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Acadian professions diversified greatly. To be sure, the Acadians developed several types of economic activities, depending on the dominant resources of the

regions they occupied. After turning to subsistence farming in the north of what became in 1784 New Brunswick, they quickly got involved in the wood industry. Further east on the Acadian peninsula, on the St. Lawrence Gulf, in the Magdalen Islands, in Cape Breton, and Baie Sainte-Marie (a strip of land in the Bay of Fundy, NS), their economy focused essentially on fisheries which developed according to regional specialties. In Argyle and Yarmouth counties (near Pubnico), swordfish and tuna fishing coexisted along with the thriving shipbuilding industry. Prince Edward Island was the only region where Acadians could farm as did their ancestors. Nevertheless, many took instead to fishing lobsters and oysters. All the same, for most of the century the Acadian communities were generally poorer than Anglo-Protestant ones of similar size. The reason is quite simple: for the first two thirds of the nineteenth century, Acadians had to build completely new communities, found villages on uncleared lands, and create entire new local economies. By contrast, Anglo-Protestant colonists had settled on old Acadian lands — already cleared and very fertile — while benefiting from subsidies in kind: grain, cattle, and farm implements. Furthermore, the rapidly changing political structures in the Maritimes between 1763 and 1830 rarely played in favour of minority groups, whether they were Acadians, Blacks or Aboriginals. New Brunswick was born in 1784 to meet the demands of the Loyalists who escaped from the American Revolution the previous year. From 1784 to 1820, Cape Breton had a colonial status of its own. St. Johns Island — the old Île-Saint-Jean — also became a separate colony as early as 1764 and took the name of Prince Edward Island in 1799. The Crown confiscated all colonial lands and redistributed them to British landowners. Hence, the Acadians of the Island became the tenants of the lands they had themselves cultivated for generations, and had to contend with the agents of absentee landlords. Regardless of their origins, all colonists dealt with the corruption and injustice that characterized most agents, an issue that would only be solved with the Island's entry into the Confederation in 1873.

By the end of the eighteenth century, some 2,000 Acadians headed back to the Maritimes. Despite its many hardships, the Acadian population grew rapidly in the following century. The statistical data, albeit rare, are sufficiently reliable. During his visitation of the Maritimes in 1803, Mgr. Pierre Denault, Bishop of Québec, held a Catholic census. Since at this time there were only but a few non-Acadian Catholics in the visited regions, the results provide a fair assessment of the Acadian population.

Denault listed 8,408 Catholics in 1803, that is, 3,729 from New Brunswick, 3,927 from Nova Scotia, and 742 from Prince Edward Island. In the first federal census of 1871, 86,980 Acadians lived in the Maritimes, a ten-fold increase since the turn of the century. There were 44,907 in New Brunswick and 32,833 in Nova Scotia. Lastly, the 1881 census recorded 10,751 Acadians residing in PEI. This vigorous expansion owed entirely to natural growth.

During the “Return” era, access to linguistic, religious, political, and educational rights proved an arduous process that called for the repealing of discriminatory policies and laws against the Maritimes’ non-Protestant and non-British populations. Access to these rights did not follow a linear progression, and nor were they granted equally throughout the Canadian Atlantic provinces. Furthermore, men gained these rights far in advance of their wives, sisters, and mothers. In reality, this process still endures today, as will be seen later. Thus, between 1758 and 1783, Catholics, that is all Acadians, were not normally allowed to own land in the Maritimes. After 1764, they could only hold lands set aside for them as tenants. In fact, until 1804 they could not legally reside outside of these lands. Once the number of Catholic immigrants (Irish and Scots) reached sufficient proportion to justify it, land ownership was extended to all Catholics. However, from 1766 to 1786, the Acadians could not run their schools or teach to their children. Nearing the nineteenth century, the rights of Catholics gradually expanded everywhere across the British Empire. Hence, Catholic adult, male landowners acquired the right to vote in Nova Scotia in 1789, and in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island in 1810. Soon after, in 1830, Catholics could also be elected in these three colonies. Yet, while Catholic men earned some rights, their wives, mothers, and sisters lost some too: women’s vote was officially abolished in Prince Edward Island in 1836, in New Brunswick in 1843, and in Nova Scotia in 1851.

The Acadians felt very quickly the need to create institutions apt to support their growing population. As their rights were still limited at the turn of the nineteenth century, they turned to the Catholic Church. However, in 1782, there were only three Catholic priests for all of the Maritime Provinces. Between 1781 and 1801, the Bishop of Québec authorized them to found seven parishes with the permission of the British authority: three in New Brunswick, three in Nova Scotia, and one in Prince Edward Island. Things started to take a different turn after the French Revolution. Thus, when the Catholic Church fell under the

control of the revolutionary state, many Catholic priests fled to Great Britain. About forty priests, known as “réfractaires” (refractory or non-juring), headed for the Saint Lawrence valley and the Maritimes; from 1796, the Acadians had sent petition letters to colonial governments and to London to bring these priests to their communities. As missionaries, they formed the foundation of the Acadian reconstruction. Between 1790 and the 1840s, they built dozens of parish churches, brought over nuns to found convents, created schools, and played a leadership role in communities whose members were mostly illiterate. At the request of the colonial authorities, the missionaries convinced Acadians to take the three required oaths — known as the “Test Oath” — and obey colonial governments.

One of the most studied of these refractory priests was Jean-Mandé Sigogne (1763-1844). In 1791, he refused to pledge allegiance to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy that obliged the priests of the new revolutionary regime to renounce papal authority. After going into hiding, he escaped to England in 1792. In January 1799 he was recruited to minister to the needs of the Acadians of Baie Sainte-Marie and the surroundings of Argyle who, for ten years, had petitioned for a permanent priest to provide pastoral care. Arriving in Halifax in the spring of 1799, he proceeded to quickly acquaint himself to the Acadians in both places (at a distance of 100 km from each other) to assert his authority and save souls. The state of the Acadians’ moral and linguistic ignorance in these regions appalled him. Until his death in 1844, he built schools, churches, and parsonages in the entire southwest area of Nova Scotia. He undertook the literacy of his flock, not without some resistance from the Acadians who resented his long litany of criticisms toward them. As justice of the peace, he dealt with moral and legal cases from all over the region with an iron fist. Most of all, he acted as a mediator between the Halifax authorities and his parishioners, cajoling the former while convincing the latter to submit to colonial demands. Like all the other refractory priests settled among Acadians, Sigogne transformed these small indigent yet independent-minded communities into good subjects yearning for some degree of prosperity.

Between 1795 and 1815, the bishops of Québec visited the Maritimes on five occasions to assess the needs of the Acadians but also the Irish immigrants. The growing number of Catholics prompted Rome to allow for the creation of dioceses in the Maritimes, that of: Nova Scotia in 1763, Charlottetown in 1829, and New Brunswick in 1842. However, to

circumvent the steep anti-Acadian sentiment among the colonial authorities, the appointed bishops were Anglophones of Irish origins, who in turn recruited English-speaking Irish priests to serve in Acadian parishes.

It is noteworthy that, especially after 1867, the Catholic Church followed a similar development that prevailed at the time in Québec. Religious orders of men and women (either recruited in France directly or from Québec) settled in the Acadian regions and founded educational institutions. Nuns opened convents for young girls while male religious created classical colleges for boys. Although these orders favoured all-Francophone schools, they met with resistance. Hence, when in 1864 Father Camille Lefèbvre, from the Holy Cross Order, opened the Collège Saint-Joseph in Memramcook (NB), Mrg. John Sweeney, Bishop of St. Johns, forced him to make it a bilingual institution. When the College obtained accreditation to issue post-secondary degrees in 1868, and then its university charter in 1888, the teaching was still bilingual and remained such until the mid-twentieth century.

French and bilingual secondary and post-secondary schools were crucial for the Acadians' development; necessary tools for economic growth, alphabetization and literacy could ease access to political positions and prevent the marginalization of these minority communities in Anglo-Protestant-dominated provinces. But from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, Maritime governments issued school acts to curtail or prohibit French or Catholic education in public schools, even forbidding members of religious orders to teach children. Since the Acadians were Catholic, and because very few French laypeople were educated before the 1870s, these prohibitions directly hampered their access to basic education. Inevitably, the least educated populations were the poorest, held precarious and low-paid jobs, and were more often than not tenants rather than landowners. Therefore, the Acadians were a marginalized people not solely because of discriminatory laws, but because they did not have the cultural means to defend themselves. However, from the 1860s they acquired — not without some difficulty — both basic and advanced education, while the creation of the classical colleges (such as Collège Saint-Joseph in Memramcook (NB) and the Collège Saint-Anne founded in 1890 at Pointe-de-l'Église (NS)) propelled the rise of educated Acadian elites from the middle class, pursuing liberal professions. These individuals, whether laymen or clergymen, advanced the cause of the Acadians, created newspapers, and ran in provincial and federal elections.

Simon d'Entremont, who won in the riding of Argyle (NS) in 1836, was the first elected politician to a legislative assembly in the future Canada. Born at West Pubnico in 1788, he learned to write in French and English thanks to Jean-Mandé Sigogne's close mentorship. Although defeated in the 1840 elections, he remained a regional leader until his death in 1886, first as justice of the peace, then as customs officer. If men such as Simon d'Entremont remained exceptional figures until the 1860s and 1870s, a new generation of Acadian politicians educated in classical colleges were elected to the Maritimes' legislative assemblies, and even, after Confederation, to the House of Commons. Elected Acadians were always fewer in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island than in New Brunswick. Because in this province the Acadian population was larger and concentrated in several ridings in the north and north east, it gained significant political weight.

The rise of this political elite went hand in hand with the economic development of the Acadian regions after Confederation. A class of Acadian businessmen emerged from wealthier and better educated than average families. A few started businesses in the economic sectors most familiar to Acadians. Hence, the region saw the creation of lobster and fish canneries, cheese factories, and food cooperatives. While the Maritimes witnessed a wide cooperative movement across the linguistic communities, it was among Acadians where it enjoyed the greatest success. These cooperatives allowed for a certain degree of autonomy toward the big commercial fisheries and food distributors, by lowering the processing costs of fishing and farm products as well as that of families' food supply, and also by maximizing and redistributing profits. The creation of *Caisses populaires* (a form of credit union) kept these profits in the regions and in the hands of Acadians. The first one, the *Banque des fermiers* located in Rustico (PEI), was in operation between 1864 and 1894. While it granted the loans that the big Charlottetown banks had refused to farmers of the region, it financed the local economy. Soon, many Acadian communities had their own *Caisse*.

In 1871, Acadians made 15.7 percent of New Brunswick population (around 45,000 people) and 8.5 percent of Nova Scotia's (almost 33, 000). In 1881, they formed a little less than ten percent of Prince Edward Island's population (close to 10,000). Combined to its alphabetization rates, which surpassed 50 percent in most counties where it thrived, the greater economic growth that the Acadian population enjoyed allowed its leaders to found many newspapers across the Maritimes. Started in 1887 by Valentin Landry, the most

prominent was without doubt *L'Évangeline*. First located at Weymouth, then Digby (NS), this weekly moved in 1905 to Moncton (NB) where more than half of its readership lived, in great part because of the rapid growth of the Acadian population in the economic capital of the province. The paper, whose main goal was the promotion and defense of Acadian interest in all sectors, went daily in 1931. *L'Évangeline*, the *Courrier des Provinces Maritimes* (1885-1903), and the *Moniteur acadien* (1867-1929) played a key role in the cultural movement at the end of the nineteenth century.

In much greater number around 1880, the Acadian elites launched cultural and political movement, presently known as the Acadian Renaissance. The first National Acadian Convention, held at the Collège Saint-Joseph at Memramcook (NB) in July 1881, aimed to galvanize them. Its organizers, mostly priests, followed the model provided by Québec's Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society, at whose annual meeting they had been invited the previous year. The delegates, who came from the Maritimes' Acadian parishes and from eastern Québec, agreed that to survive the Acadian people needed to form an entirely separate nation. This required robust and dynamic economic institutions, a thriving agricultural sector, literature and newspapers, and a national church. It also ought to adopt national symbols worthy of all great nations, but apt to reflect its loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. The Acadians' national day was designated on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on 15 August. Created on this occasion, the *Société nationale de l'Assomption* (SNA) was to organize the annual national conventions and present Acadian demands to the various levels of government. The second National Convention, held in 1884 at Miscouche (PEI), continued the discussions whereby the delegates decided on a national flag (a French three-color flag crowned by Mary's star), a national anthem (*Ave Maris Stella*), and a motto ("Strength through unity"). Because the majority of the participants at these meetings were priests, they put pressure on the Catholic hierarchy to have an Acadian bishop appointed in the Maritimes. The first seven conferences (between 1881 and 1917) focused on the problems that hampered the national Acadian development and education; access to farmland, commerce and industry; the development of literature and history; and Acadian emigration to the United States. The end of the nineteenth century was poised to promise the Acadians a world of prosperity and solidarity.

## The long twentieth century

Throughout the twentieth century, two contradictory forces determined the advancement of the Acadians' rights and their place in the Maritimes' economic and linguistic sphere. The first trend was the gradual achievement of the national conventions' objectives, foremost with respect to the economy, but also to educational and cultural institutions, especially the creation of newspapers. In the course of the twentieth century, the Acadians obtained the political recognition of their rights to education and services in French, as well as the recognition of equal status with their Anglo-Protestant neighbours. However, these gains were hard fought and were attributed unevenly across the Maritimes. Hence, the second major trend that affected Acadian development was the progressive confinement of the latter to the provincial borders and the fraying of the national solidarity movement that had characterized the first national conventions. By the 1960s, the differences were so manifest that it became virtually impossible to speak of a common Acadian reality in the Maritimes. These differences were not only political, but also demographic, linguistic, and even cultural. While today the Acadians of New Brunswick share the same rights as the Anglophones, access services in French, and enjoy a dynamic cultural life comparable to that of Québec, the Acadians of Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia still fight to maintain the very same rights recognized by the Canadian Charter of Rights. Following an astounding demographic growth up to the 1960s, the Acadians saw a worrisome decline of their population outside of New Brunswick.

There were many roadblocks in the way to education and civil rights. The turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought important changes for the Acadians' access to education, as well as other Catholics in the Maritimes. In the name of modernization, all three provincial governments set up, modified, and reformed their respective school systems. These programmes all shared the same features: they were public, officially non-confessional, and basically Anglophone. Consequently, sometimes in a roundabout way, schools became hardly accessible or even forbidden to Catholics.

In 1871, the New Brunswick government adopted the Common Schools Act. From then on, former public schools run by the Church were brought under provincial control. The official objective pursued by the new public school system was to boost school attendance and improve

the state of the educational institutions in the province. However, these modernizing efforts also aimed at forbidding both the teaching of Catechism in provincial schools and the wearing of religious habits in educational institutions. The fierce Catholic opposition that ensued took the government by surprise. The Acadians' resistance to these measures, including the refusal to pay school taxes and even a violent uprising in Caraquet (NB), eventually led to a compromise in 1875 thanks, in great part, to federal intervention: professed teachers kept wearing their religious habits, the teaching of catechism was allowed outside of regular classes, and communication and teaching in French were tolerated in elementary schools. However, and even though some institutions were officially bilingual, most of the teaching in New Brunswick elementary schools was done in English. Furthermore, the fact that the textbooks were all in English did little to improve the young Acadians' linguistic skills which, in comparison to the Anglophones, accounted for their inferior alphabetization rates. As late as the 1920s, only 7 percent of the children in the Francophone counties completed grade six, and only 3 percent reached grade nine. The Acadians' poor schooling threatened to compound the economic vulnerability of their communities, despite growing prosperity.

Hence, the economy was the greatest challenge the Acadians faced at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ethnic communities in Atlantic Canada all shared the same pressing problem: the exodus of their population. In the 1920s they lost more than 122,000 people: a good number of them were Acadians. By the end of the nineteenth century, new processing industrial methods profoundly transformed the Maritimes' economy. Agricultural and fishing techniques equally changed, and to meet competition, they required greater specialization and significant capital. The Acadians had to adapt to these transformations, especially in the inter-war years. Many moved to urban centres or left the Maritimes. Traditional elites, particularly among the clergy, grew concerned. To fend off the problem, the Catholic Church promulgated a programme of internal colonization to prompt the Acadians to clear new areas in New Brunswick, rather than leave the Province. Just as this had been the case at the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of emigrants headed for Massachusetts and other parts of New England. These were young men and women who left to find work and save enough money in the hope of returning home someday. But the religious elite feared that the Acadians living in the United States would fall prey to American culture,

speak English, and lean toward Protestantism. They dreaded urbanization for similar reasons. Urban life affected the Acadians' economic and social relations with the Anglophones, through closer contact with them. If less spectacular than their emigration to New England or even elsewhere in Canada, the rural exodus that took them to Moncton, Yarmouth, or Amherst eased, however, their integration into an industrial and Anglophone society. This process also took place through exogamous marriages. While at the onset of the twentieth century these represented only 6 percent of rural marriages, they rose to 28 percent in town.

The economy and access to education ranked among the *Société de l'Assomption's* chief concerns. Between 1900 and 1937, the SNA kept running the Acadian national conventions fairly regularly. Given the provincial governments' discriminatory policy toward the Acadians' rights, in 1900 at Arichat (NE) the delegates agreed upon the urgency to have an Acadian Catholic bishop appointed in the Maritimes to defend Acadian culture against external influence and pressure. This objective was reached in 1912 when Alfred Édouard LeBlanc, a native from Nova Scotia, became Bishop of Yarmouth (NS). It can be said that on that very occasion, the Francophone representatives of the Catholic Church in the Maritimes had created a national Acadian church capable to advocate for its people's interests. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Acadian reconstruction was over and the Renaissance achieved.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Acadian press ranked high on the cultural scene and flourished. Newspapers appeared everywhere to meet local communities' interests and concerns. *Le Moniteur Acadien* and *L'Évangéline* were hard at work to promote the Acadian Renaissance in the second half of the nineteenth century, but less so to reach readership outside of New Brunswick. This is why Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island's Acadian communities developed a press in their own image. Although most weeklies lasted only a few years, others survived to this day. This is the case for the *Petit Courrier*, the present-day *Courrier de la Nouvelle Écosse*, founded in 1937 by Désiré d'Éon at Digby in order to link all Acadian communities dispersed across the province and help coordinate their political demands.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Acadian elites also started to study the history of their people. This endeavor came to fruition in 1921 at the Eighth National Convention entitled, "Le Congrès du Souvenir" (The Memory Conference). Then, a monument dedicated to the Deportation

was unveiled at Grand-Pré on a land the SNA had newly acquired, and where a commemorative church was also erected. On the same occasion, it was decided that a revision of Canadian history textbooks be undertaken to correct the erroneous interpretations tainting Acadian history, most of all the Deportation. A history commission was created under the auspices of historian Placide Gaudet, Archivist of the Dominion. For his part, Senator Pascal Poirier, a prolific author of critical historical studies (starting with his *Origines des Acadiens*, in 1874), published in 1928 *Le parler franco-acadien et ses origines*. Poirier's publications advocated for the Acadians' linguistic and ethnic identity. Similarly, Philias Bourgeois, Placide Gaudet, Pierre-Marie Dagnaud, and Antoine Bernard (an Acadian from Gaspésie) contributed important studies on Acadian history while redressing the common views of the past.

Oral tradition and folklore have long constituted the better part of the Acadian cultural heritage. According to several studies conducted in the twentieth century, the weak alphabetization rates explain the importance of storytelling and songs. The first Acadian sound recordings and transcriptions of folk traditions date from the first decades of the century. Folklorist Helen Creighton thus visited numerous Acadian villages in an attempt to preserve traditional knowledge that folklorists believed to be on the verge of extinction. For his part, priest and composer André-T. Bourque published in 1911 *Chez les anciens Acadiens, causeries du grand-père Antoine*. Also, between 1938 and 1941, no less than 87 articles appeared in *La Voix d'Évangéline* on Acadia's popular songs. Joseph-Thomas LeBlanc collected more than 1,300 song versions belonging to Acadian oral tradition which, in turn, inspired nearly 2,000 studies; one of them, *The Romancero of Canada* (1937), written by French Canadian folklorist Marius Barbeau, was the most widely disseminated outside of Québec. LeBlanc's publications, but also the correspondence he carried on with both researchers and the general public, established his reputation as a leading expert in Acadian folklore. Another substantial work, *Chanson d'Acadie*, (comprising 11 volumes) was published from 1942 by Fathers Anselme Chiasson and Daniel Boudreau.

Despite significant accomplishments, the differences exhibited between the provincial jurisdictions foreshadowed the end of the Acadian national unity. In the middle of the twentieth century, diverging economic, legal, and, educational contexts hardly made for a cohesive Acadian reality. From province to province, the Acadian communities in

the Maritimes lived increasingly in changing environments, mostly because of demographic forces. In the mid-century, the Francophone population in the Maritimes kept swelling, taking advantage of the high Acadian birth rates. In 1931, more than 206,000 people identified themselves as being of “Francophone ancestry”; in 1941, they were more than 245,000. The most significant demographic increase occurred in New Brunswick. But the threat of assimilation remained a serious problem. According to the 1941 census, the number of people declaring to be Acadians who did not speak French revealed an assimilation rate of 37 percent in Nova Scotia, and 28 percent in Prince Edward Island, although the rate was the lowest in New Brunswick, at less than 4 percent.

On the economic front, however, some of the most positive outcomes came out of the Great Depression that affected head-on the Maritime Provinces. As soon as 1929, the Antigonish Movement (primarily providing relief to Anglophone communities severely hit by the crash) founded a series of cooperatives in Nova Scotia. In New Brunswick, it was Abbot Livain-J.-Chiasson who led the Acadian cooperative movement. The social role these institutions played spawned the creation of study groups and provided political and economic information sessions that aimed to improve the lot of the Acadian population. Other cooperatives specializing in food, fish, agricultural production, and processing were created at this time. For instance, tapping into the fashion trend for “hooked” rugs that appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, women launched artisanal cooperatives. Traditionally made out of rags and discarded wool strings to insulate floors during the winter, these hooked rugs were soon marketed in New York as highly prized art works. For instance, Elizabeth LeFort, from Chéticamp (NS), created hooked rugs that today adorn the walls of the Vatican, Buckingham Palace, and the White House. Another positive consequence derived from the economic hardships of the time was the expansion of the Acadian Caisses Populaires (credit unions) born in the nineteenth century, for they offered more advantageous loan and savings interest rates than regular banks, while keeping Acadian money in the local communities. A federation of Acadian Caisses Populaires of New Brunswick was set up in Caraquet in 1946 to support both the fast-growing economy and Acadian population.

On other fronts, however, economic woes magnified ongoing problems and social inequalities everywhere in the Maritimes. In New Brunswick’s Francophone counties, only 40 percent of schoolchildren completed

their fifth grade, by contrast to 75 percent in Anglophone counties. Consequently, access to education became again the focus of Acadian political demands. After World War II, Acadian nationalism was aroused. In the summer of 1955, most particularly, the Bicentennial commemoration of the Deportation proved an auspicious moment to rekindle Acadian solidarity across the Maritimes' communities. Dormant since the 1930s, the SNA was reactivated for a national convention whose events, spread all over the Atlantic Canada (with the participation of Montréal), culminated with grandiose festivities, such as parades, historical character shows, and open-air masses, from Moncton to Chéticamp and Miscouche.

Despite the trying circumstances, in the long run, access to education in French occurred progressively in New Brunswick in the course of the twentieth century, from elementary to secondary school. Following the McFarlane Commission (1932), the number of rural secondary schools increased significantly, while the use of bilingual textbooks was promoted at the end of the elementary cycle. Nevertheless, the regional school tax system created serious problems: social inequalities impacted the quality of education, which varied from county to county, especially in Acadian communities. The Byrne commission (1960) contributed enormously toward the democratization of the school system. The provincial government took back control of elementary and secondary education, and the equal-opportunity programme introduced by Robichaud (who will be discussed later) was extended to education. In 1968, the number of school districts was reduced from 400 to 33; in the unilingual districts, the government allowed Acadians to take greater control of Francophone schools. The Acadians from Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island did not succeed to the same degree in obtaining similar recognition or equitable funding for French-language education, although they won some noteworthy victories during the decade.

In Nova Scotia, the provincial government long resisted the idea of French being taught in the public school system. It was allowed only from 1902, and even then in limited form for only reading and French grammar books were either in French or bilingual; after grade four, education in English was mandatory with textbooks exclusively in English. The avowed objective was to use French as both a learning tool of English and an assimilation device into the dominant culture. Thanks to a series petitions, by the end of the 1930s French could be used during the elementary school six-year cycle; English was then used only

7 percent of the class time for the teaching of mathematics and science. Furthermore, the history textbook could be in French. Although the other textbooks remained in English, parents and teachers agreed that French would be the prime language in elementary school. But because the provincial exams were only written in the language of Shakespeare, most parents transitioned their children into English secondary schools to ensure their academic success. Already the erosion of French in the province had heralded the sharp decline in the number of native speakers: in 1931, only 32 percent of Nova Scotia's Acadians identified French as their mother tongue. This is why in 1939, the SNA negotiated with Nova Scotia's educational leaders to reach, in certain schools, 90 percent of French education for the six elementary years. In 1956, the provincial government centralized and consolidated the rural districts, and granted subsidies to build regional schools. The consolidation of Acadian schools had a positive influence on secondary school attendance among the entire population of Nova Scotia.

At this time, Prince Edward Island also consolidated its school districts. Despite some efforts to promote bilingualism, the Anglicization of the province's educational system remained endemic. In 1936, only 45 of the 479 school districts were designated as Francophone when a hundred or so of them had a significant Acadian population. Rural schools were particularly disadvantaged. In 1944, 85 percent of them could only offer one single room to accommodate students in all levels. Furthermore, Francophone schools had to use English textbooks. The illiteracy rates among French-speaking people was then twice as high as among Anglophones. The Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin was founded in 1919 by the Island's Association des instituteurs acadiens and by the SNA to boost and encourage Francophone culture in the province.

Things moved faster in New Brunswick. The network of colleges founded by the Eudist Fathers and other congregations kept growing throughout the century. The Collège du Sacré-Coeur in Caraquet was relocated to Bathurst in 1916; in 1946, the Collège Saint-Louis opened its doors in Edmundston. With the creation in 1943 of a baccalaureate programme at Collège Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur at Memramcook, women had now access to postsecondary education. After lengthy negotiations, the Collège Saint-Joseph at Memramcook, the Collège du Sacré-Coeur at Bathurst, and the Collège Saint-Louis at Edmundston, in addition to several women's colleges, amalgamated in 1963 to form the largest Acadian university of the Maritime provinces.

On the cusp on the 1960s, the diversification of Acadian society and the differences between provincial communities could not be denied. This provincial fragmentation reverberated on Acadian representative organizations. In the mid-twentieth century, provincial organizations increasingly took the leadership role in defending Acadian rights. As mentioned, the creation of the Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin fulfilled that need in Prince Edward Island. So did the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), established in 1967. After being accused of focusing too much on New Brunswick, the Société Nationale de l'Assomption shifted its attention to interprovincial matters and, in 1957, renamed itself Société nationale des Acadiens. To fill the gap, the Société des Acadiens du Nouveau Brunswick was founded in 1973.

The Acadians' linguistic, social, and political situation changed again in the 1960s, sometimes for the better, often for the worst. Assimilation remained a serious problem in Atlantic Canada, especially outside of New Brunswick. Even though the Acadians had formed more than 35 percent of New Brunswick's population in the middle of the twentieth century, they too started to decline in number as they now account for only 33 percent of the population. However, this demographic trend owed more to the flux of emigration to Québec and western Canada, rather than sheer linguistic assimilation.

By contrast, Nova Scotia saw a sharp decline of its Acadian population over the last 50 years; here again though, interprovincial migration proved to be the main culprit. Between 1996 and 2001, about 10,200 Francophones left Nova Scotia. Today, 35,000 people, that is, less than five percent of the population, claim French as their mother tongue. The situation is worse in Prince Edward Island: there, only 4,000 of the less than 5,000 people whose mother tongue is also French still speak the language fluently. The French retention rate is 58.2 percent in Nova Scotia, and 49.8 percent in Prince Edward Island.

Since the 1960s, the Acadians of New Brunswick compose 85 percent of the Francophone population in Atlantic Canada and form the majority of Acadians in its midst. The Acadian communities of New Brunswick experienced a Quiet Revolution, similar to the one in Québec. Secularization, urbanization, and industrialization have reenergized the Acadian collective identity with renewed affirmation. In the post-war years, notably after 1960, it became increasingly necessary in the Maritimes, as everywhere else in Canada, to petition both provincial and federal governments to protect minority rights, especially as the

Federal government became increasingly aware of its obligation in this matter. In 1960, Louis-J. Robichaud was elected Premier of New Brunswick. The first Acadian to ever been elected to that function in the Maritimes, Robichaud served with 15 other elected Acadians, hence making half the New Brunswick's Cabinet Acadian, a historical precedent. During his six years in power, Robichaud promoted the modernization of the province and the inclusion of Francophones in the civil service. He supported the creation of the University of Moncton in 1963. His most worthy contribution for the expansion of Acadian culture was the New Brunswick Official Language Act in 1969. He also introduced a broad social reform programme that created universal access to education, health care, and legal services. These changes, however, were met with some resistance from a conservative but influential minority of Anglophones who saw in this equal opportunity programme a covert Acadian takeover of the province. This naturally fed social tensions in bilingual communities, especially in Moncton. Objectively, these fears were unfounded. The reality was that between 1900 and 1960, the assimilation rates increased everywhere in the Maritimes. In 1951, 93.7 percent of people of French origins in New Brunswick identified French as their mother tongue; in 1960, this figure had declined by three percent. The following year, in both Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, only 45 percent of people of French origins declared French as their mother tongue.

In the mid-twentieth century, large-scale festivities celebrated the Bicentennial of the Deportation. On 15 August 1955, this occasion marked the first revival of an old New Brunswick custom, the 'national' *Grand Tintamarre*, whereby people gathered in the open to produce noise, play various instruments, bang on pots and pans, and blow their horns. On that day, church bells rang to the four winds to assert the continuous presence of the Acadians and their renewed strength. The revived tradition still exists today and has spread everywhere in the Maritime provinces. In 2009, 40,000 people participated in the Acadian Tintamarre Festival of Caraquet (NB).

In 1982, the publication of the daily *L'Évangéline* was interrupted and replaced in 1984 by *L'Acadie nouvelle de Caraquet*, currently the most influential newspaper in Acadia. The introduction of radio and television broadcasting swept the nation in the after-war period. In 1954, Radio-Canada started to broadcast in Moncton, while a television station was created there in 1959. Radio stations also appeared in Edmundston in 1944 (CJEM) and in Caraquet in 1977 (CJVA). Along with a host of other

commercial and community stations created elsewhere in the province, these media kept the cultural and political life both dynamic and thriving.

Taking advantage of these favourable conditions, the Acadian youth of New Brunswick voiced their new political power from the early 1960s onwards. Their activism was already noticeable in 1966 at the *Ralliement de la Jeunesse Acadienne* (Acadian Youth Rally). Some university students, embracing a neo-nationalist ideology, demanded greater autonomy for their people. The *Parti Acadien*, founded in 1972, aimed at the creation of an Acadian province in the North of New Brunswick. Although it never got great support, this political party revealed the Acadians' deep-seated quest for the recognition, respect, and protection of their rights. In response to this movement, two parallel school systems came into being in 1974. Before the law and within the Ministry of Education, Francophone and Anglophone schools were held separate but enjoyed equal status. In 1978 a Law Faculty was created at the University of Moncton which also taught Common Law in French (a rarity in the Commonwealth), a source of legal empowerment for the Acadian communities. Finally, in 1981, the Legislative Assembly voted the Act Recognizing the Equality of the Two Official Linguistic Communities in the province, making New Brunswick the only officially bilingual province in Canada. These measures were embedded by amendment into the Canadian Constitution in 1993.

During the entire period, the fight for equality and linguistic recognition remained a prime target for all Acadian communities, particularly outside of New Brunswick. Since 1975, the *Fédération des Francophones hors Québec* — which became in 1991 the *Fédérations des Communautés Francophones Acadiennes du Canada* — acted in effect as a network of political solidarity for these communities, while being an important lobby for the recognition of their linguistic rights. With the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that guaranteed and extended its protection to Francophone communities, both federal and provincial agencies took over the Church's support of yesteryears. With the secularization of society, colleges, universities, and hospitals passed under state jurisdiction, while cultural institutions and the media remained spaces of solidarity.

Despite these improvements, unemployment and seasonal work remained — and are still — ongoing concerns for the Acadians. Fisheries, agriculture, and sylviculture experienced challenging times

since the 1980s. Everywhere in the Maritimes, unemployment has affected far more Francophone than Anglophone populations. The traditional Acadian economy, heavily dependent on the natural resource sector, accounts for this gap. Greater difficulty to access higher education also explains it, in addition to a lower standard of living that on average characterizes the Francophone regions. The Acadians unanimously decry the reforms to the unemployment insurance that the government of Stephen Harper introduced in the 2010s, since they directly affect a significant number of seasonal workers among them.

In Nova Scotia, the Société Saint-Pierre, founded in 1947 to fight against the Acadians' underrepresentation in politics, has remained an important player for the Acadian heritage in the province, after having advocated for the population's full political rights. On the latter issue, the Société has been relayed by the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) founded in 1967. FANE is today the Acadians' official mouth-piece and lobby group in the province. It has encouraged greater communication between various Acadian communities scattered throughout the province, especially since the 1970s, thanks to a more effective distribution of the *Courrier de la Nouvelle-Écosse*. As early as 1976, it also created training programmes to stimulate the economic and organizational development of Acadian communities in remote areas. If the Official Language Act of 1969 institutionalized bilingualism within all federal services everywhere in Canada, changes were hardly felt in the province. Despite substantial improvements, Federal services in French still present serious flaws. As for provincial services, they are all but impossible to get in French outside Halifax.

Furthermore, access to education in French proved more difficult in Nova Scotia than in New Brunswick. In 1974, a Royal commission on education recommended important modifications to the Education Act in order to guarantee access to French programmes in communities where at least ten percent of the population spoke the language. The provincial government ignored these recommendations, although it created in the Ministry of Education an Assistant Director position for the planning of Acadian schools. At last in 1981, amendments to the Education Act officially recognized Acadian schools. Three years later, the government granted the Francophones the right to officially run Acadian schools. This was a real challenge, given the necessity to prove that the children enrolled in these schools were speaking French at home, after decades of chronic assimilation. However, the creation of French immersion schools in the 1970s managed to draw attention —

even among Anglophones— on the intrinsic difficulties of French education in the province. Between 1981 and 1989, the enrollment figures in the French immersion schools increased from 865 to 4300. Since 1996, the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP) has controlled the French school administration and French curriculum in the province. After strenuous negotiations with the Nova Scotia government and a series of judicial actions, the CSAP finally gained control of all Acadian elementary and secondary schools, with the assurance of being granted the same funding as for the Anglophone schools. In 2015, the CSAP was running 22 French-speaking Acadian schools.

In Prince Edward Island, the situation was far more precarious. In 1966, barely half of all Acadian students in secondary schools could either speak or understand French in that province. The 1971 School Act made schooling mandatory and free for all linguistic communities of the Island. Although the law did not single out Acadian schools, it mentioned French programmes. In the wake of the centralization and consolidation of educational institutions, a large number of small Acadian schools were shut down; for instance, in the Prince County, 17 Acadian schools numbering 1,118 students in 1969, ceased to exist in 1971. Nearing the end of the 1970s, only one designated Acadian school remained on the Island. In the following decades, some amendments made to the Education Act somewhat re-energized French education. Hence, they recognized the Acadians the right to French education if the numbers justified it. Today, there are six French schools in the province. Although the Legislative Assembly became officially bilingual in 1968, French has made very little inroad within the government. A case in point is the limited services in French offered by the justice system.

All the same, the Acadians of the Island did not lose pride in their origins. To commemorate the distinct history of these people, the Acadian Museum of Prince Edward Island opened its doors in 1964 at Mascouche, the location of the second National Acadian Convention. While undergoing several transformations over the years, since 1996 it has been part of the Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation. The Acadians of the Island vie to preserve their culture through an array of institutions and annual events, such as the weekly *La Voix acadienne*, the creation of a satellite campus of the Collège Acadie/Université Sainte-Anne, and the Acadian Festival in the Évangéline region. The Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin has maintained its cultural vocation in the community and, with the network organization of the Réseau des Acadiens de l'Isle, continues to promote the French

language. But the struggle has not abated. A weak population, high assimilation rates, and the economic isolation of the Evangéline region have all but contributed to the decline of the Acadian vitality in the province. Proof of this decline was the tearing down in 2008 of a heritage monument, the Abraham-Village Church, for lack of renovation funds. With it, it was a visible pillar of the Acadian presence in the Island that disappeared; henceforth, the parishioners had to fall back for their worship on the nearby parish hall.

Access to postsecondary education has always been a challenge for Acadians everywhere in the Maritimes. Institutions have suffered from chronic underfunding while the Francophone population has not been sufficiently robust to support them, especially during the first half of the twentieth century. As noted before, upon their arrival from France in 1890, the Eudist Fathers founded the Collège Saint-Anne but, although it received university status in 1892, it did not bear the title until 1977. Women admitted there only in 1961 and ten years later, the College secularized. In Prince Edward Island, there was no Francophone postsecondary institution before 1990, when a satellite of Acadia College (NS) was established.

On balance, the institutional and cultural consolidation best characterized the twentieth century, thanks to the interprovincial solidarity emanating from the national conventions. The enhanced cultural collaboration between the different communities contributed to the appointment of the first Acadian bishop in 1912, to the proliferation of Acadian colleges, and a greater number of Francophone priests in the Acadian parishes. In the ensuing period, urbanization and emigration trends deeply molded these communities, but also the “provincialization” of Acadian institutions, rights, and local identities. Today, it is no longer possible to speak of a single Acadian narrative. The Acadian realities have diverged so much from province to province that, with its fractured history, the Acadian nation has become plural. With this realization, and the need to represent all Acadians in the world, the Société nationale des Acadiens was renamed Société nationale de l’Acadie in 1992. Since then, aiming to represent the complex diversity of this people on the international scene, it has become an official NGO and obtained consultative status with the Organisation internationale de la francophonie in 2005. For many Acadians, despite or because of the great diversity of this people, the last 50 years have heralded a new Acadian “golden age”. The recognition of an Acadia outside of the Maritimes is a good indication of this openness.

## The Acadians facing the future

A number of Acadian communities exist outside of the Maritimes, a plurality that Société nationale de l'Acadie most welcomes. In addition to the four Atlantic Provinces' Acadian associations, the SNA comprises seven associate societies from France, Québec, Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, the Magdalen Islands, Maine, Louisiana, in addition to others in the Atlantic Seaboard. However, with the exception of the thriving Acadian communities in the Magdalen Islands and in Gaspésie, the survival of the other communities is more precarious.

Newfoundland and Labrador's Francophones are often called Franco-Acadians. This population originates from several sources: the first French settlers who remained in the territory after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, those who came from the French Islands of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, in addition to the Acadians who either sought refuge from the Deportation or were in search of economic opportunities later in the twentieth century. Newfoundland and Labrador's Franco-Acadians, hovering around 2,000 people, barely compose 0.4 percent of the population. In some areas, the assimilation rates claim 50 percent every generation and, with a very high incidence of mixed marriages, accounts for the dramatic decline of the population.

Arguably, the most well-known Acadian community world-wide is that of Louisiana: its lively music and flavourful cuisine are famous. Acadiana, the French region of the state of Louisiana, comprises 22 parishes forming the Cajuns' ancestral communities. Descendants of the Acadian refugees who arrived in the Spanish dominated area between 1765 and 1785, the Cadians were victims of aggressive assimilation policies under the American government. At last, things started to change in 1971 when the State Legislature of Louisiana officially recognized the distinctive character of Cajun culture and the Acadian communities. The Erath Museum, opened in 1990, was dedicated to them. As in the rest of Louisiana, the Cadian population suffered terribly from the devastation caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. A vast effort of reconstruction and redevelopment is still needed, particularly in the Bayou, the traditional stronghold of the Cajuns that was severely eroded in 2005. That year, the Société nationale de l'Acadie extended financial aid to the Vermilion parish to help rebuild educational programmes in the French language, notably because of the population displacement the hurricanes had caused.

Texas also has a noticeable Cajun population. According to the census of 2000, 552,959 individuals declared to be Francophone, among whom 15,276 identified themselves as Cajuns or Acadians. Estimates indicate that nearly 375,000 people in Texas today are the descendants of Acadians.

The descendants of Acadians in the United States, in France, or elsewhere, who have lost their culture and language in their daily lives feel close to their roots nonetheless. Indeed, every five years, they ardently exhibit their pride at the Congrès mondial acadien (World Acadian Congress). Thousands of Acadians and descendants of Acadians gather on that occasion to celebrate the survival of this people many times threatened to disappear. The first CMA was held in Moncton in 1994 and stimulated the creation or rekindling of a dozen family associations of Acadian descent: the most important of them, the Leblancs of America, assembled then more than 3,000. The following three CMA meetings celebrated the solidarity between the Acadian regions of the Atlantic Provinces and Louisiana, and the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration of the arrival of the first Francophone settlers in Nova Scotia territory in 2004. In 2014, the CMA's theme was "L'Acadie des terres et forêts" (Acadia of lands and forests). Located in Madawaska, a borderland region covering the north west of New Brunswick and the adjacent areas of Québec and Maine (US), the meeting was the first to be held simultaneously in two countries, and the first to acknowledge that Acadian cultural communities exist outside of the Atlantic Provinces and Louisiana.

Modern Acadia is diverse. The political and demographic challenges it encounters vary enormously, depending on the country, the province, and even the region. The Acadians have nevertheless succeeded in recreating and renewing a collective identity rooted in the upheavals of the past. The vitality of the Acadian culture continues to thrive in the work and creations of entrepreneurs, journalists, authors, and artists, some of whom enjoy a great reputation not only in the Francophone world, but far beyond.

## SUGGESTED READINGS:

### **Acadian History Surveys:**

ARSENAULT, Georges. *Les Acadiens de L'Île: 1720-1980*. Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1987.

BASQUE, Maurice, Nicole BARRIAU, and Stéphanie CÔTÉ. *Acadie de l'Atlantique*. Moncton: Centre d'études acadiennes, 1999.

DAIGLE, Jean (ed.). *L'Acadie des Maritimes: études thématiques des débuts à nos jours*. Moncton: Centre d'études acadiennes, Université de Moncton, 1993.

LANDRY, Nicolas and LANG, Nicole, *Histoire de l'Acadie*, 2<sup>e</sup> édition.

Sillery (PQ): Septentrion, 2014.

ROSS, Sally and J. Alphonse DEVEAU. *Les Acadiens de la Nouvelle-Ecosse: hier et aujourd'hui*. Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1995.

### **Popular History of Acadia:**

COMEAU, Phil, Warren A. PERRIN, and Mary Broussard PERRIN, eds.

*L'Acadie Hier et Aujourd'hui. L'histoire d'un peuple*. Moncton/Erath (LA): La Grande Marée/Andrepoint Publishing, 2014.

PARATTE, Henri-Dominique. *Acadians*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1998.

### **Acadia until the Deportation:**

CORMIER, Yves. *Les aboiteaux en Acadie: hier et aujourd'hui*. Moncton: Chaire d'études acadiennes, Université de Moncton, 1990.

FARAGHER, John Mack. *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from Their American Homeland*.

New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2005.

GRIFFITHS, N.E.S. *From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755*. Montréal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.

GRIFFITHS, N.E.S. *L'Acadie de 1686 à 1784: contexte d'une histoire*.

Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1997.

ROSS, Sally. *Les digues et les aboiteaux: les Acadiens transforment les marais salés en prés fertiles*. Grand-Pré (NS): Société Promotion Grand-Pré, 2002.

### **Acadian Renaissance:**

ANDREW, Sheila M. *The Development of Elites in Acadian New Brunswick, 1861-1881*. Montréal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.

BIDDISCOMBE, Perry. "‘Le Tricolore et l'étoile’: The Origin of the Acadian National Flag, 1867-1912", *Acadiensis*, 20.1 (1990), 120-147.

COUTURIER, Jacques and Phyllis LeBLANC, eds. *Économie et société en Acadie, 1850-1950. Nouvelles études d'histoire acadienne*. Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1996.

### **Modern Acadia :**

ALI-KHODJA, Mourad and Annette BOUDREAU, eds. *Lectures de l'Acadie. Une anthologie de textes en sciences humaines et sociales, 1960-1994*. Montréal: Fidès, 2009.

BASQUE, Maurice and Isabel McKEE-ALLAIN, eds. *Les femmes en Acadie*. Moncton: Centre d'Études acadiennes, 2000.

CLERMONT, Ghislain et Janine GALLANT, eds. *La Modernité en Acadie*. Moncton: Chaire d'Études acadiennes/Université de Moncton, 2005.

DE FINNEY, James, Hélène DESTREMPES, and Jean MORENCY eds. *L'Acadie des origines: mythes et figurations d'un parcours littéraire et historique*. Sudbury (ON): Éditions Prises de parole, 2011.

LANDRY, Michelle. *L'Acadie politique. Histoire sociopolitique de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick*. Québec: PUL, 2015.

MAGORD, André, ed. *Les Franco-Terreneuviens de la péninsule de Port-au-Port. Évolution d'une identité franco-canadienne*. Moncton: Chair d'études acadiennes / Université de Moncton, 2002.

MAGORD, André, Maurice BASQUE, and Amélie GIROUX, eds. *L'Acadie plurielle: dynamiques identitaires collectives et développement au sein des réalités acadiennes*. Moncton: Centre d'études acadiennes/Institut d'Études Acadiennes et Québécoises de l'Université de Poitiers, 2003.

THÉRIAULT, J. Yvon. *L'identité à l'épreuve de la modernité: écrits politiques sur l'Acadie et les francophonies canadiennes minoritaires*. Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1995.

# IMMIGRATION AND ETHNICITY IN CANADA

**Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada Series (previously titled Canada's Ethnic Groups Series) is a series of booklets designed to provide secondary and undergraduate students, historians and general readers with concise histories of particular aspects of immigration and ethnicity in Canada.**

**Many of these readable accounts trace the origins, the development, and the contemporary situation of particular ethnocultural communities in Canada. The booklets include maps and tables suitable for overhead projection, as well as suggestions for further reading.**

**They are available in both French and English and additional booklets are in the planning stages. The series is published by the Canadian Historical Association in collaboration with the Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada.**

1. J.K. Bumsted, *The Scots in Canada/Les Écossais au Canada*
2. David Higgs, *The Portuguese in Canada/Les Portugais au Canada*
3. W. Peter Ward, *The Japanese in Canada/Les Japonais au Canada*
4. D.H. Avery & J.K. Fedorowicz, *The Poles in Canada/Les Polonais au Canada*
5. Hugh Johnston, *The East Indians in Canada/Les Indiens asiatiques au Canada*
6. James W. St. G. Walker, *The West Indians in Canada/Les Antillais au Canada*
7. Bernard L. Vigod, *The Jews in Canada/Les Juifs au Canada*
8. Varpu Lindstrom-Best, *The Finns in Canada/Les Finlandais au Canada*
9. Jin Tan & Patricia Roy, *The Chinese in Canada/Les Chinois au Canada*
10. O.W. Gerus and J.E. Rea, *The Ukrainians in Canada/Les Ukrainiens au Canada*
11. K.M. McLaughlin, *The Germans in Canada/Les Allemands au Canada*
12. David A. Wilson, *The Irish in Canada/Les Irlandais au Canada*
13. J.I. Little, *Ethno-Cultural Transition and Regional Identity in the Eastern Townships of Quebec/Évolution ethnoculturelle et identité régionale des Cantons de l'est*
14. Bruno Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada/Les Italiens au Canada*
15. Reg Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy since Confederation/ La politique canadienne d'immigration depuis la confédération*

16. Marilyn Barber, *Immigrant Domestic Servants in Canada/Les domestiques immigrantes au Canada*
17. Howard Palmer, *Ethnicity and Politics in Canada since Confederation/Les enjeux ethniques dans la politique canadienne depuis la Confédération*
18. Michael D. Behiels, *Quebec and the Question of Immigration: From Ethnocentrism to Ethnic Pluralism, 1900-1985/Le Québec et la question de l'immigration: de l'ethnocentrisme au pluralisme ethnique, 1900-1985*
19. John Herd Thompson, *Ethnic Minorities during Two World Wars/ Les minorités ethniques pendant les guerres mondiales*
20. Cornelius J. Jaenen, *The Belgians in Canada/Les Belges au Canada*
21. Yves Frenette, *The Anglo-Normans in Eastern Canada/ Les Anglo-Normands dans l'est du Canada*
22. Franca Iacovetta, *The Writing of English Canadian Immigrant History/Les immigrants dans l'historiographie anglo-canadienne*
23. Martin Pâquet, *Toward a Quebec Ministry of Immigration, 1945 to 1968/Vers un ministère québécois de l'Immigration, 1945-1968*
24. Marcel Martel, *French Canada: An Account of its Creation and Breakup, 1850-1967/Le Canada français : récit de sa formulation et de son éclatement, 1850-1967*
25. Roberto Perin, *The Immigrants' Church: The third force in Canadian Catholicism, 1880-1920/L'Église des immigrants : les allophones au sein du catholicisme canadien, 1880-1920*
26. Frank Cosentino, *Afros, Aboriginals and Amateur Sport in Pre World War One Canada/ Les Noirs, les autochtones et le sport amateur dans le Canada d'avant la Première Guerre mondiale*
27. Carmela Patrias, *The Hungarians in Canada/Les Hongrois au Canada*
28. Louis-Jacques Dorais, *The Cambodians, Laotians and Vietnamese in Canada/Les Cambodgiens, Laotiens et Vietnamiens au Canada*
29. Royden Loewen, *Ethnic Farm Culture in Western Canada/ Traits de culture des agriculteurs allophones dans l'ouest du Canada*
30. Mark G. McGowan, *Creating Canadian Historical Memory: The Case of the Famine Migration of 1847/ Produire la mémoire historique canadienne : le cas des migrations de la Famine de 1847*
31. John Zucchi, *History of Ethnic Enclaves in Canada/Une histoire sur les enclaves ethniques au Canada*
32. Alexander Freund. *Oral History and Ethnic History / L'histoire orale et l'histoire des groupes ethniques*

Canadian  
Historical  
Association



Société  
historique  
du Canada

1201-130 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4

Tel. 613 233-7885 - Fax 613 565-5445

Email: [cha-shc@cha-shc.ca](mailto:cha-shc@cha-shc.ca) Website: [www.cha-shc.ca](http://www.cha-shc.ca)