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### **Acadian Identity: The Creation and Re-creation of Community**

In 1991 I was asked to give one of the "Distinguished Historian Lectures" at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, held that year in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, in 1991. The choice of subject for such occasion was, as ever, difficult to make. While for me, the subject itself was obvious, Acadian history, the selection of a particular topic of Acadian history to be examined provided considerable challenge. My choice has been to present a narrative of Acadian history which will illustrate why its study has fascinated me for 35 years and why it continues so to do. The enterprise has made me understand how extremely fortunate I have been in the way in which my professional life has developed. It has been centred on problems that have never lost their fascination for me and been concerned with the history of a people whose community attributes I find particularly sympathetic. It is a great good fortune to find that the path chosen as a young scholar is one that proves to lead through a never-ending thicket of intellectual enquiry.

I think it is important to state at the outset that my major interest in Acadian history began, not from an interest in the community itself but because Acadian history has allowed me to ask questions about a wide variety of historical problems, in particular questions about how communities form and develop over centuries. My childhood years, years which were spent in England, in Sussex, were years, when as the Beatles wrote "the Nasties were booming." The peculiar force of nationalism was born in on me as it was for all of my generation. In my own particular case, however, the impact was sharpened by the fact that my mother was

Irish, my father of Welsh descent and, although my grandfather was a military man, my father, an enlisted man in the First World War, was a pacifist during the Second. As might be expected, discussions about nationalism and patriotism were a common feature of home life. Partly because of this heritage, throughout my adult life I have tried to understand why people deliberately separate themselves into groups, why political, social and religious divisions are perceived to exist between people to such an extent that life itself can be squandered to protect the boundaries which have been invented to divide.

I realized fairly early that people always characterize new acquaintances by age and sex. Then comes the observation of a third attribute but this one varies: it is the observation of a person's affiliation to a larger group and it is an observation that says as much about the person commenting as about the stranger. This third trait can be religious affiliation, national identity, or economic status, color of skin or inherited rank. My interest has been in how this third attribute is needed by people, how identification with a community larger than immediate family is given importance by individuals. At the very beginning of my university studies I looked at divisions within Christianity in medieval Europe. When fortune led me to New Brunswick I turned to the question of the divisions of different ethnic community identities.

It was Dr. A. G. Bailey who drew me to Canada.<sup>1</sup> His address to the Royal Society of Canada on Toynbee ("Toynbee") had prompted me to write to him and he offered me the opportunity and \$700 a year (this was 1956) to study with him at the University of New Brunswick (UNB). When I arrived I wished to study the impact of Catholicism on New Brunswick history but I was persuaded instead to consider the Acadians. Here very obviously, as Dr. Bailey pointed out, was a community that kept itself separate from the larger community, where religion played an important role in its identity and, further, a community that had been rarely studied by students at UNB. Certainly I knew almost nothing about Acadians, except that some friends I had met at London University considered themselves to have an Acadian heritage. All this meant to me was that they came from French-speaking Catholic communities in New Brunswick and I was purely ignorant of what this might imply in political or social terms.

As I wrote my MA thesis, I learnt not only about the dramatic events of Acadian history in the eighteenth century but also something of New Brunswick, both English and French. My thesis was, basically, a critical bibliography of works centred upon the Acadian Deportation of 1755, although its title dignified it as historiography (Griffiths, "Acadian Deportation").<sup>2</sup> As I learnt about the Deportation (I had never even read Longfellow's epic *Evangeline* at this time) I also became aware of the way in which beliefs, about what had occurred in 1755, formed a crucial part of contemporary New Brunswick political debates. The Acadian friends I had made at London University were from Edmundston, Madawaska County. I lived on Shore Street, Fredericton, in Bliss Carman's old house, much helped by the great kindness of the Sansoms, whose boarder I was. As I began to pick up the bare bones of the history of the Deportation, I learnt something about the tensions between English and French in New Brunswick in the late 1950s.

The main outlines of the Deportation of the Acadians have never been much in dispute. The Treaty of Aix-La Chapelle, in 1748 was less a peace accord than a truce in the Anglo-French struggle for the control of North America. In 1755 war had not yet been declared, but both sides were preparing for battle and manoeuvring for advantage in the coming struggle. The colony of "Nova Scotia or Acadia," as it is called in the international treaties of the time, formed a crucial section of the boundary between English and French power in North America.<sup>3</sup> It lay as a "continental cornice" (Brebner, *New England's Outpost* 3), between the north-eastern claims of Maine and Massachusetts and the lands held by the French, not only New France but also Ile Royale (Cape Breton Island) and Ile St. Jean (Prince Edward Island). Ruled by Great Britain since the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the majority of the colony's population were Acadian, French-speaking Catholics. After the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, 1748, "Nova Scotia or Acadia" had seen a constant series of "incidents" between English and French. Forts, on both sides of the contested boundaries of the colony, were established and provisioned. In 1755, on the eve of the Seven Years' War, the authorities of Halifax set about sending the Acadians into exile. During the next eight years the majority of the Acadian population were dispossessed of their lands and goods and deported to other British colonies in North America. It was hoped at the time by those who directed the enterprise that this would see the end of

an Acadian presence in the Maritimes. Today there are some 300,000 people living in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island who consider themselves Acadian by heritage and work to hand this legacy on to future generations.

Dr. Bailey guided me to a general appreciation of the more than two hundred books and articles that, by 1956, had been published about the Acadian Deportation. His knowledge of the field was illuminated by his Quebec heritage and I was further helped in my understanding of the issues by Rene Baudry, c.s.c., at that time archivist of what was then St. Joseph's University, Memramcook, later the representative of the Public Archives of Canada in France. Between them, these scholars made me realize that understanding the arguments about what happened in 1755 in no way meant an understanding of what had actually occurred.

Mason Wade wrote at one point that debate over the matter was over a "question (which) was essentially a national and religious one, which accounts for the bitterness which its discussion evokes" (Wade 548). English-speaking Protestants had exiled approximately 15,000 French-speaking Catholics from Nova Scotia. Certainly most of those who wrote about the issue did so with passion, linking what had occurred not only to generalities about British and French eighteenth-century imperial policies but also to what each author believed were the enduring and continuing "national characteristics" of these two Powers. A handful of the works placed the Deportation in the context of eighteenth-century North American history, but far more retold the events in order to illustrate some belief about forces behind the process of historical development. On the one hand, there were those who saw the event as part of the righteous progress of a God-fearing, Protestant, English Empire pursuing a manifest destiny to bring order to the Universe. On the other hand, there were those who described a God-guided, French and Catholic Empire, working for the good of civilization and morality. The Acadians, whether represented as simple, devout, honest rustics or conniving, sly, treacherous peasantry, were uniformly pictured by both sides as manipulated puppets, caught up into the disputes of the real people fighting the great battles between England and France.<sup>4</sup> At the conclusion of my reading I was left, in 1957, with a wish to discover for myself what sorts of people the ancestors of my lively friends of northern New Brunswick had actually been; what more could be learnt about the

origins of the Deportation, which so many saw as a quintessential example of national policies; and how the Acadian sense of identity had managed to survive such a traumatic cataclysm.

The obvious starting point was to discover where the Acadians originated. After all, in 1604 when the first French attempt at a permanent colony in North America was made, there were no such people as Acadians. Within slightly more than a hundred years a community had been created, whose people called themselves Acadian. In concert with the emergence elsewhere in North America of colonial societies with identities much different from their European roots, "Acadia or Nova Scotia" saw a community come into existence during the seventeenth century whose sense of identity was much different from that of either France or England.

In other words, my starting point for work on Acadian identity was—and remains—the conviction that community identity is created, not inherited, a developing, not a static, phenomenon. E. J. Hobsbawm, like another British academic, Ernest Gellner, has stressed "the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations" (9-10). As Gellner himself wrote, "Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent . . . political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality" (48-49).

As far as my research into Acadian identity is concerned, the impact of these ideas is not to cause me to deny that there is such a thing as national identity. It is, however, to find the explanation for Acadian distinctiveness in some encapsulation by the Acadians of a French national spirit, an idea which informs the work of Sauvageau, Michel Roy and others (Sauvageau; Roy),<sup>5</sup> less than satisfactory. A lack of belief in what can be summarized as a Platonic ideal of French nationalism, is a request in the first place, for a clear understanding of the specific characteristics of French society and French culture during the relevant time period. What was the particular French society that those who migrated to Acadia knew? Were the links between the French state and the Acadians unchanging? What did the passage of time mean for the links between the Acadian colonists and French imperialism? The undeniable heritage from France, in the identity of the Acadians, is as

complex a matter as the components of Acadian identity which were forged from the North American life of migrants.

Acadian society emerged as a result of the great transAtlantic migration of the peoples of Europe to the Americas. Those who built the Acadian society were, for the most part migrants from France but included people from England, Ireland and Scotland as well as a number of Micmac. Internationally, the colony was a concern of two European imperial systems and its development was shaped by being, at different times, the possession of both England and France. The territory which Acadians would consider as their homeland would be known in international treaties from 1632 until 1763 as "Nova Scotia or Acadia," "l'Acadie ou la Nouvelle Ecosse." Acadian settlements developed across land that became one of the most important sections of the border between New England and New France.

By 1713, when "Acadia or Nova Scotia" was transferred to Great Britain, the distinctiveness of the Acadians had been established. The community was demographically self-generating and economically self-sufficient. It had developed a particular social structure where kinship ties were strong, not only binding together families within a village but also linking the expanding settlements to one another. Its religious and cultural life was thriving. It was developing a unique set of political traditions which would serve it well until the very eve of the Deportation.

Geneviève Massignon, a French scholar, pioneered modern studies of the European ancestry of the Acadians. She was a linguist, interested in Acadian French and determined to discover what language heritage was brought from Europe by the first colonists. Her work, *Les parlers français d'Acadie: enquête linguistique*, was published in Paris in 1962. It opened with an analysis of archive material about the early expeditions to Acadia from France and continued with a survey of the registers of the Acadian population which the French had compiled during the seventeenth century. Her research, much of which has been further substantiated by more recent scholarship,<sup>6</sup> showed that at the opening of the eighteenth century more than 36% of the Acadian population came from the Loudunais area of France and more than 15% from districts such as Poitou, the Touraine and the Bordeaux area. Less than 3% could trace ancestry to Normandy and Brittany and roughly 5% had "English" ancestry (Massignon 72-75).<sup>7</sup> Approximately, 15% of the population was

made up of small numbers of migrants coming from all over France, such as 0.5% traceable to Paris or the just under 1% from the Basque country. Predictably, more than 23% of the population, while demonstrably French, could be traced to no particular area of France.<sup>8</sup> The omission of the Micmac contribution to the Acadian population pool is the most serious lacuna in Massignon's work. It is interesting that she overlooked this addition to the gene pool, considering how clearly Micmac women are identified as marriage partners in the 1686 census returns.<sup>9</sup>

This diverse population base meant that the settlements, both individually and collectively, had a rich heritage of traditions on which to build. While people from the Loudun area did make up the largest minority of the migrants, they were only a minority and did not come to dominate any particular settlement. The very gradual arrival of immigrants meant that successive new comers were assimilated into small communities with little difficulty. General European notions of Christianity, private property, political structure and community authority, combined with access to European technology, guided the overall development of the nascent Acadian society. However there was a considerable area of action in which no single set of traditions existed and where the demands of the immediate environment could be met on their own terms rather than in the light of past precedent.

Those who migrated to Acadia were not driven by any particular social or religious vision but were seeking, quite simply, improved social and economic conditions for themselves and their children. No group of migrants to this colony were explicitly seeking religious freedom. Acadian adherence to the Catholic interpretation of Christianity is a very complex question. While consistently choosing Catholic institutions for religious expression, Acadians were neither controlled by the priests in their political life nor particularly obedient to the precepts of the Church in areas of personal conduct. It should be remembered that at no time were there more than five priests to service the needs of a community dispersed over the whole of the Nova Scotia peninsula, from the Annapolis Basin to the Cumberland Basin as well as along the shore of southern Nova Scotia and into present-day New Brunswick. Usually there were no more than two priests within the colony whose interest was the Acadian community and perhaps one other, whose interest was primarily missionary work among the Micmac. During the years 1654 to 1671,

when the colony was in British hands and governed from Massachusetts, an occasional itinerant missionary was the sole sacerdotal presence. During the last years of the French regime and under the British rule from 1713-1755, the number of priests in the colony was more constant. Yet even travelling by boat, rather than through the forest, would not allow a priest much contact with the remote settlements. Most Acadians would see a priest during the year but only those within reach of Port Royal and Grand Pré could count on regular pastoral care.

The years 1654 to 1671 are only the most obvious manifestation of the influence which Massachusetts had upon Acadia.<sup>10</sup> The two colonies were linked economically by common activities, such as the exploitation of the fishery, as well as by trade—Acadian agricultural produce and furs for New England manufactured goods.<sup>11</sup> But the period of direct rule from Boston had consequences beyond the evolution of parallel and complementary traits in the two colonies. It had dealt the poorly rooted seigneurial system a blow from which it never recovered.<sup>12</sup> Landholding practices in Acadia became much closer to those of New England than those of Quebec. While seigneuries existed they had only minimal political and social impact on Acadian life.<sup>13</sup> These years of British rule also interrupted the provision of Catholic priests for the settlements and for nearly twenty years baptisms and marriages were usually lay ceremonies.

In the eyes of the authorities in Quebec city, who held a watching brief over Acadia, these years also introduced the Acadians to ideas of government that led them to argue with all sent out to rule over them. In 1679 Frontenac commented adversely on this. The governor of Acadia from 1678-1684, M. de la Vallière, had complained to him that the Acadians had no inclination to obey his orders. Frontenac speculated that this was due perhaps to their having had no officials among them for a number of years or perhaps "par quelque inclination anglaises et parlementaire, que leur inspirent la fréquentation et la commerce qu'ils ont avec ceux de Boston."<sup>14</sup> At the opening of the eighteenth century their governor, Jacques de Brouillan, for the period 1701-5, judged the Acadians "à demi des republicains, tres independents de caractère, et habitués à decider tout par eux mêmes."<sup>15</sup>

Certainly when the English attempted to assert their authority over their new colony they found the Acadians far from meek and docile



subjects. There are two points which have to be born in mind when examining the relationship between English and Acadian after 1713, when by the Treaty of Utrecht England was awarded "all Nova Scotia or Acadia with its ancient boundaries as also the city of Port Royal, now called Annapolis Royal, and all other things in those parts, which depend on the said lands and islands."<sup>16</sup> Firstly, Great Britain was coping with considerable internal confusion as the Crown changed hands, the Stuarts becoming the leaders of rebellion and the stolid Hanoverians the legitimate monarchs by Parliamentary decision. Nova Scotia was a faraway colony whose value was, at this juncture in time, more strategic than anything else. In fact until 1763 Nova Scotia's importance, in the eyes of the British, was basically naval and military. In terms of colonial development it was considered an extension of the Massachusetts sphere of influence. Secondly, Acadian actions were above all those of a people interested less in demonstrating loyalty to any outside power than in obtaining the most fortunate living conditions possible for themselves. Between 1713 and 1755 the Acadian policy was based upon the assumption that, whatever European powers might think, the land on which they lived was theirs—their home and native land.

In these circumstances, when asked to take an oath to King George by the authorities and garrison at Annapolis Royal and, at the same time, invited to emigrate to lands under their control by the French officials of Ile Royale, the Acadians sent a temporizing reply to the English and a delegation to investigate what exactly moving to French territory would mean.<sup>17</sup> Between 1714 and 1730 the Acadians established a policy that, in their eyes, would allow them to live under English rule on land abutting territory under French control. Two of the priests in the colony at this period, fathers Felix and Justinian, emphasized the spiritual and cultural dangers the Acadians ran, in remaining under English government.<sup>18</sup> But the Acadians followed their own policy and sought to obtain the right to swear an oath of allegiance to the English which would contain a provision that "they might not be obliged to carry arms."<sup>19</sup>

By 1730, the Acadians had, in their opinion, obtained their goal. Between 1727 and 1730, those in authority in Annapolis Royal accepted oaths of loyalty from Acadian communities to which were attached the three clauses granting them "le libre exercice de leur Religion," acknowledging "qu'ils ne seront nullement oblige da prendre Les armes contre qui

que ce soit, et de nulle obligation de ce qui regarde la guerre" and promising "qu'ils demeurent en Une veritable possession de leurs biens qui leur seront accorde à eux et Leurs hoirs (sic) dans La même etendue qu'ils en ont jouys cy devant et en payant Les mêmes droits accoutumes du Pays."<sup>20</sup> While the Acadians after 1730 were known throughout the English and French colonies in North America as "les français neutres" or "the Neutral French" the Lords of Trade never gave up their search for an unqualified oath from them.

Politically speaking, the situation of the Acadians in Nova Scotia now had within it everything necessary for a first class debacle. As far as the Acadians themselves were concerned, they had managed to bring English officials to agree to their terms. Between 1727 and 1730, the Acadians had sworn a variety of oaths of loyalty, most of which contained written provision for their neutrality and all of which had been sworn with a verbal promise of such neutrality being guaranteed. However, no mention of conditions attached to the oath were mentioned in despatches from Annapolis Royal to London in 1730 and it only slowly came to the attention of the Lords of Trade that the Acadians had extracted conditions for their allegiance from the local officials.<sup>21</sup> It was Paul Mascarene, the Huguenot who became the Lieutenant-governor of the colony during one of its most troubled periods, the 1740s, who apprised not only London but also Governor Shirley of Massachusetts of the true complexities of the situation.

By 1755 the Acadians had emerged in their own eyes as an indigenous people, living on lands to which they had a right through the work of four or more generations of their ancestors. The years since 1713 had been years of growth and expansion. They had flourished economically, their agricultural products in particular being sufficiently abundant to be exported both to Boston and to Louisbourg (Clarke 324-5). Demographically they had thrived. In 1713 there were approximately 3,000 Acadians, in 1755 their population was closer to 20,000.<sup>22</sup> As John Reid has written, they were more than farmers, although they were highly successful at that occupation. They were hunters and fishermen, merchants and politicians. Their centres of settlement had expanded and they had extended settlements not only along the Atlantic coast of what is now New Brunswick but into the river valleys on the northern shore of the Bay of Fundy, the Memramcook, the Petitcodiac and the Shepody.<sup>23</sup>

It is essential to grasp the texture of Acadian life during the years 1713 to 1755 because the qualities of existence during this period under English rule were the experience of all Acadians sent into exile who were aged 42 or younger. These decades were the foundation of a community memory of a "Golden Age" for the later generations of Acadians.<sup>24</sup> They were a period of time during which Acadians knew neither epidemics nor war as major scourges. Life was full and abundant. Children were not only born healthy but reared. They could expect to know their own grandparents and be grandparents themselves, a rare phenomenon in the eighteenth-century world. Food was varied and plentiful and included a wide variety of meats, wild and domestic, vegetables, fruits and fish. Wine and rum were imported. Cider and milk were local products. Dwellings were adequate and furnishings included imported glass, metalware and fine textiles as well as locally produced woollens and linens, home-crafted wooden furniture and household goods as well as luxurious furs for bedcoverings. Culturally the rites of Catholicism not only gave a framework to daily existence but provided a rich heritage for keeping holidays and an introduction to music and poetry. Studies in Acadian folklore have revealed an abundance of songs, dances and legends which can be traced back to these years.<sup>25</sup> Finally, during these decades the Acadians were to a very large extent in charge of their own political life. The impact of the English officials at Annapolis Royal on the day-to-day life of the Acadians was not particularly burdensome. The system of delegates channelled commands to the separate villages, providing translation and interpretation of English wishes to the general populace. The bulk of the population had only minimal contact with English authorities, either civil or military, unless they themselves wished to invoke legal procedures in the case of a boundary dispute or some such matter.<sup>26</sup> There were certainly tragedies and miseries in the lives of pre-deportation Acadians but they were as certainly lives blessed with considerable good fortune.

The good fortune ended abruptly in mid-summer 1755 when at a meeting of the Council of the colony on Monday, 28 July, the decision was taken to "send all the French Inhabitants out of the Province."<sup>27</sup> This signalled the failure of Acadian policy, one which had been founded upon their belief that they were not solely characterized by being French-speaking and Catholic, and therefore inevitably active supporters of

France. The Acadian leaders acted in the firm conviction that they lived in their homeland and that the colonial status of the territory did not mean complete subservience to a stronger power but adjustment to reasonable demands of that power. Neutrality was, in Acadian eyes, a most reasonable statement to the demands of the warring Empires and I am convinced that the majority of the Acadians did not carry arms for either France or England. After all, in the spring of 1755 the Acadian settlements had given up their guns when commanded so to do by the English. Nevertheless, that same spring, when the English successfully captured Beauséjour, the French stronghold on the border of "Acadia or Nova Scotia," some 300 young Acadian men were found, many of them armed, in the fort. As a result, the authorities at Annapolis Royal decided that an unequivocal oath of allegiance must be taken by the Acadians or they should be sent into exile.

The context, as Guy Frégault has written, was world war and he considered that the deportation ought not to be thought an act of genocide nor an act of wanton malicious persecution. It was, in his view, as an act of eighteenth-century politics, one which nine years earlier France might well have undertaken (260). It came about, above all, because "la Nouvelle-Ecosse est en guerre" (272). Certainly, the men who took the resolution were men whose backgrounds had moulded them to think of Nova Scotia as a threatened outpost of English control, the danger French and things French. There was the lieutenant-governor of the Nova Scotia, Colonel Charles Lawrence, who had been at the first taking of Louisbourg in June 1746; Benjamin Green, a man who had pursued a merchant's career in Boston and Louisbourg before settling in Halifax; John Collier, a retired army officer; William Cotterell; John Rous, Captain R.N. and chief naval officer in Nova Scotia; and Jonathan Belcher, son of Governor Belcher of Massachusetts. Two admirals recently arrived from England, Boscawen and Mostyn were also present (Brebner, *New England's Outpost* 222). They had captured two French vessels, the *Lys* and the *Alcide*, on their way to Nova Scotia, both ships carrying military supplies bound for Quebec.

It was a decision that has been endlessly debated. In terms of the eighteenth century, the forcible exile of communities while not common was not unusual. The American historian, Lawrence Henry Gipson considered the Acadian deportation a matter of "warlike measures—just as

were those involved in the driving of hundreds of Pennsylvania traders from their trading establishments in the Ohio valley in 1753 by the French" (Gipson, *Great War* 264; *British Empire*, vol. VI). In terms of English policies, the Deportation has more in common with the measures taken by London after the 1745 Stuart rebellion when thousands of Scottish Highlanders and their families were exiled to New York, the Carolinas and Georgia. Whatever judgment one makes as to the military necessity of the measures, or their morality, for the Acadian community it had two unequivocal results: it sent the majority into exile and reaction to it has colored the Acadian sense of the selves, to a greater or lesser degree, ever since.

"Le Grand Dérangement," "the Deportation," "the Exile"—by whatever name it was an event that broke apart the first Acadian community but it did not destroy the Acadian identity.<sup>28</sup> The strength of Acadian reaction to their exile is extraordinary. The deportation was not planned as an extermination measure aimed at individual death but it was planned as a destruction of a community, the death of an Acadian identity. The official plan intended as a destination for all exiles another British colony in North America.<sup>29</sup> In the circular which was despatched to inform the governors of these colonies of Nova Scotia's actions Lieutenant-Governor Lawrence stated that "it was judged a necessary and the only practicable measure to divide them [the Acadians] among the Colonies where they may be of some use, as most of them are strong healthy people; and as they cannot easily collect themselves together again it will be out of their power to do any mischief and they may become profitable and it is possible, in time faithful subjects."<sup>30</sup> The plans drawn up were specifically elaborated so that the inhabitants of particular villages would be sent to different destinations, in order to make the assimilation of the exiles into their new communities the easier.<sup>31</sup>

The actual events of the Deportation meant the organization and provisioning of ships and their escorts. Lawrence instructed that "the inhabitants shall have on board with them one pound of Flour and half a pound of Bread pr. Day for each person, and a pound of beef pr. week to each. . . ." <sup>32</sup> The gathering and embarkation of the people, disposal of all property that could not be carried into exile and the destruction of the villages left behind was the work of the senior officers sent to each settlement. The vessels were hired for the most part in Boston,<sup>33</sup> the

escort ships provided by the British Navy.<sup>34</sup> Officers and soldiery were despatched to the Acadian settlements with instructions to gather together the inhabitants as quietly and efficiently as possible and to see to their boarding the ships with all despatch as soon as these arrived.<sup>35</sup> Within a year of the decision to deport, barely 2,000 Acadians could be found where once the population had been almost ten times as great. Much of the grain had gone unharvested and when English settlers arrived at Grand Pré in 1760 they "found at the skirts of the forest huge heaps of bones of sheep and cattle that huddled together to die of cold and starvation after the hands that used to minister to their wants had been withdrawn" (Calnek 80-83).

In this year, 1760, the Acadians who were still alive were scattered across the Atlantic world.<sup>36</sup> In Nova Scotia itself and along the Atlantic coast of what would be New Brunswick there were perhaps some 1,500.<sup>37</sup> From Massachusetts to Georgia pockets of Acadians existed, amounting to some 3,000. Perhaps 500 reached Louisiana via Georgia and South Carolina and another 1,500, England. A French survey made in 1763 reported approximately 300 Acadians in Santo Domingo and some 1,500 in Quebec. Some 1,000 or so had also reached France. In total I would estimate there were 10,000 Acadians alive in 1760, of whom many were young children born in exile. The death toll on board the ships had been no greater than for any other contemporary venture but in some cases it reached 50% and in most cases 30% of those embarked.<sup>38</sup> Once landed, epidemics of smallpox and cholera struck the exiles, who had little experience of, and therefore little immunity to, these diseases. Once more, the death rate was high. For those Acadians who were sent first to Virginia and then on to England, death from smallpox took a third of the group (Griffiths, *Acadians of the British Seaports* 67-84). For many Acadians, exile was immediately lethal.<sup>39</sup>

For those who survived the voyage and the consequent epidemics, exile meant first of all, an attempt to persuade the local authorities to consider them as a community of people with right to government aid.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, it meant continued travelling and for many it meant the rest of their lives in a new land with little heritage of Acadian customs in their daily lives. For some few it meant an Acadian tradition established in Louisiana or a return to Nova Scotia and the re-creation of an Acadian community in what are today the Maritime provinces of Canada.

The rebuilding of the Acadian community in Atlantic Canada was accomplished slowly. The circumstances were very different from pre-deportation days. The official aspect of the Acadian exile was ended in 1764 when they were given the right to own land again in Nova Scotia provided they swore an unequivocal oath of loyalty to England.<sup>41</sup> The territory was now indisputably part of the British Empire and the Acadians were no more than a minority in a mixture of peoples. Not only was the community of German Protestants now firmly established and Halifax well and truly developing, but planters from New England had been granted the former Acadian lands.<sup>42</sup> The new Acadian settlements would be centred in different places from the original villages they had built and would not form a series of solid, expanding communities, clearly anchored in a homeland, but a disconnected archipelago of survivors in an expanding sea of English-speaking peoples.

*In some ways the circumstances of the Acadians as a people in 1764 were even more perilous than they had been nine years earlier. They were no longer the dominant community within the Maritimes, colonizing new land at their will, their settlements linked to one another by recent intermarriage, politically strong enough to argue with the imperial authorities whose charge, in the eyes of international lawyers, they were. But despite every effort which had been made by the authorities between 1755 and 1763 to ensure that no Acadians remained in Nova Scotia, the colony had never been entirely without them.<sup>43</sup> Some had remained within reach of Halifax, basically tolerated because of their usefulness as field-labor, house-servants and guides. Others had fled to the outermost limits of British control, the northern reaches of the St. John river and the northern Atlantic coast of present-day New Brunswick, particularly around the estuary of the Miramichi. It was estimated that those who came forward to take the proffered oath of loyalty in 1764 represented a population of 1,500 within the peninsula of Nova Scotia.<sup>44</sup> They were scattered in groups of 10 to 20 families throughout the colony. In the nineteenth century major settlements of Acadians developed around Cheticamp on Cape Breton Island, Isle Madame, and Baie Saint Marie in Nova Scotia. In New Brunswick the centres would be Madawaska County in the north, scattered villages along the Atlantic coast of the province and the valley of the Memramcook. On Prince Edward Island Acadians basically gathered in the north-eastern corner.*

The basis of the present-day population of Acadians in the Maritimes is a mix of those who escaped exile and those who found their way back to that part of the world which they had considered their own. From the moment they left the coasts of Nova Scotia, the Acadians made every effort to return. Even those who arrived in Quebec impelled Bishop Pontbriand to write: "Le sort des Acadiens m'afflige; à en juger par ceux qui sont ici, ils ne veulent pas demeurer parmi nous."<sup>45</sup> From the Carolinas and Georgia, from Massachusetts and Quebec, from England and France, individually and in groups they came back.<sup>46</sup> By 1800, there were 8000 Acadians in Nova Scotia. Today, they are the French-speaking peoples of the Maritimes numbering 300,000. In 1981 Statistics Canada reported that they made up 5% of the population of Prince Edward Island, 4.2% of Nova Scotia and 32.6% of the population of New Brunswick.

The nineteenth century witnessed the growth and elaboration of an Acadian sense of identity. What was it? how did it evolve? What support systems brought this about? What major impediments were encountered? During the past 20 years there has been a great deal of scholarship on these questions from collective works, such as that edited by Jean Daigle, *Les Acadiens des Maritimes*, to monographs such as Jean-Paul Haute-coeur's: *L'Acadie du discours*. Acadian development in the last two and a half centuries is as rich and complex, if perhaps less dramatic, than it was before 1755. The strongest link between the two eras is the Acadian sense of their own community and the right which this confers on them to participate fully in decisions about how that community shall live. However other people regarded them, or continue to regard them, the Acadians have shown an unfaltering belief in their own reality.

There are three major factors which I think should be taken into account when recent Acadian history is considered. Firstly, as is the case with any group identity, the components of the Acadian sense of identity altered over the decades, as experience and conditions altered and changing political circumstances demanded new responses to old challenges. Secondly, the institutions of the Catholic Church, as opposed to belief in the Catholic faith, were much less helpful for Acadian survival than has generally been supposed. Finally, those who consider themselves part of an Acadian community have found this identification a shield and buckler against the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."



Stating that the Acadian sense of identity altered at need does not imply that it does not have an essential core but does imply that that core is bound up with a shrewd appraisal of what must be emphasized in the panoply of Acadian culture at any one time. This flexibility had been shown during the Deportation when the Acadian petitions to various governments took into consideration who was being addressed.<sup>47</sup> Those presented in Massachusetts emphasized that the Acadians had always helped New Englanders wrecked on their shores. As one such petition noted, the Acadian situation "was such as to give them frequent opportunities for relieving English Fishermen, and others of that Nation for which they had always entertained the most friendly sentiments."<sup>48</sup> To the authorities of Pennsylvania, the Acadians emphasized that they had always been loyal to the English except when it was required that they take an oath of allegiance "without the exemption which, during the course of near fifty years, had been granted to us and to our fathers, of not being obliged to bear arms . . . as it was contrary to our inclination and judgment, we thought ourselves engaged in duty absolutely to refuse."<sup>49</sup> In England petitions to the British government emphasized that the Acadians had, on the whole, kept to their oath not to bear arms against British despite much pressure from the French.<sup>50</sup> In France they had kept a deep attachment to things French.<sup>51</sup> In the petitions to the government of Spain, the devotion of the Acadians to Catholicism and the institution of monarchy was stressed. In pleading for funds to leave France for Louisiana the Acadians argued that in supporting this enterprise "His Most Catholic Majesty will have the satisfaction of having gathered under his government the remnants of an unfortunate people who sacrificed everything for their religion and for the love of their King."<sup>52</sup> None of these petitions told all the truth, none truly falsified events, all presented a credible version of events of Acadian history.

In the same way, during the 1880s and 1890s the presentation of the Deportation stressed the essential neutrality of the Acadians towards the British and, therefore, the needlessness of their exile. The dominant Acadian tradition was that of the vanquishing victim, the conquest of the unjustly treated, beaten but undefeated.<sup>53</sup> What is particularly interesting about this concept is that it contains no festering anger against the perpetrators of the Deportation just a sense of righteousness. It is by no means the sole tradition, frustration and hostility to the English certainly existed.

Nevertheless, as the adoption as a national symbol of Longfellow's poem "Evangeline" shows, the Acadian interpretation of their past during the nineteenth century was one not merely of survival but of a moral victory taken from the jaws of defeat.<sup>54</sup> In the years immediately after Confederation the idea of the Acadians as a people whose traditions were different from those of Quebec was, more often than not, defended on the simple ground that Acadian history was not the same as that of Quebec. Thus, in the same way as Acadian petitioners had selected specific events from their past for the purposes of argument with authorities in exile, so their descendants in the nineteenth century emphasized that part of their heritage which separated them from the French migrants to the St. Lawrence Valley.

Today one of the most important leaders of Acadian intellectual life is Leon Thériault, a professor in the Department of History at the Université de Moncton. In his work, Acadian history is reinterpreted once more and this time with great simplicity: his argument is based on the existence of a people, the Acadians, who wish to live in the Maritimes according to cultural norms that are not those of the majority.<sup>55</sup> He battles the belief that he considers Anglophone New Brunswickers promulgate, the belief that Acadians are a simple minority granted, through generosity, certain simple privileges. For Thériault, the Acadians have traditions within the Maritimes as long and as strong as any other people. Political life must develop in ways which will allow respect for diverse cultures, a respect that is not tolerance but acceptance of difference.

In this acceptance of difference the second factor of Acadian development over the last two centuries comes clearly to the fore: that of religious belief. There is no doubt that the majority of Acadians have always found in Catholicism the rhetoric for their experience of the numinous. What is also clear is that Acadian relations with the institutions of Catholicism have often been less than completely cordial. In the years after 1764 those priests from Quebec who worked among the Acadians in New Brunswick and around Cheticamp complained bitterly of their general attitude. In the words of one such worker in the vineyard, the Acadians "se glorifient . . . partout d'avoir tout quitte pour leur religion et partout . . . un grande nombre . . . ignorans . . . que le foy ne sauve point sans les oeuvres."<sup>56</sup> During the last years of the eighteenth century, the Acadians never hesitated to argue with their spiritual

advisors, not only over moral questions but also over the timing of the celebration of Mass and possibilities of divorce.<sup>57</sup>

During these same years the arguments between Acadians and the priests in Baie Sainte Marie were equally sharp. Recent work by Gerald Boudreau has shown that the Irish and Scottish Catholics had little tolerance for the provision of French-speaking priests to the Acadians.<sup>58</sup> It is not until the arrival of Father Mande Sigogne in 1799 that much support was given to those trying to establish their spiritual life in the language of their ancestors. In fact, throughout the nineteenth century the disputes between Acadian congregations and Irish and Scottish priests were constant. The lack of communication between hierarchy and communicant was not helped by the fact that between 1817 and 1912 none of the 19 bishops and archbishops appointed to Maritime dioceses were French-speaking or of Acadian descent.<sup>59</sup>

Bringing forward the existence of difficulties between the Catholic hierarchy and Acadian does not deny the reality of the strength that the Acadians drew, and draw, from their faith. Parish priests and varying religious orders, both male and female, gave time, energy and money for the organization of Acadian educational establishments such as the Collège St. Joseph in Memramcook, the establishment of hospitals with French-speaking professionals, the foundation of self-help financial institutions, the provision of libraries, the support of Acadian artists, singers, writers, and poets.<sup>60</sup> Without the dedication of committed, both priests and religious, the Acadians would not have been able to bring about the growth of their own social and political institutions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Finally, however, it is the third factor which has ensured the survival of a recognizable Acadian identity: the belief of those who consider themselves of Acadian heritage that such a heritage is a value to be lived, developed and given to a new generation. There are many who doubt the possibility of success. A French scholar has suggested that the Acadian community is not more than decorative lace on the business suit of North America, with a half life of another generation.<sup>61</sup> The loss of French as mother tongue among the Acadians is documented on a yearly basis. Yet it seems to me that there is enough action among Acadians at the end of the twentieth century, a critical mass of individual efforts, for the Acadian community to continue.

For, in the final analysis it is the beliefs and actions of individuals that create the community, not the reverse. As Donald Kelly has written, "The collectivity is, after all, precisely that: a bringing together of individuals" (Kelley 8). It is my hope, in the book I am now writing, tentatively entitled *From migrant to Acadian*, that I will be able to present the lives of those who built the Acadian community in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in such a way as to illustrate this thesis, that community identity is an artefact, a creation of mind and spirit. It is built upon past experience and present evaluation of past experience. It is shaped by present desires for the future. It is often encapsulated in simplistic myths that create history as much as reveal its complex reality. And an understanding of how community identity originates and develops might help us to understand the worst excesses of late-twentieth-century nationalism. As I struggle to find the elusive ground in Acadian history, the meeting point of individual and collective experience, I am encouraged by the reality of the intelligence and vision of those who, at any given time, have called themselves Acadian.

## NOTES

1. An excellent introduction to this significant Canadian thinker is his own autobiographical paper, "Retrospective Thoughts."
2. A very good treatment of this particular topic is the article by Barnes.
3. On the strategic importance of Nova Scotia at this time see, in particular, Stanley.
4. For a taste of this debate the reader is invited to peruse, for the first point of view, the relevant chapters of Parkman and for the second Lauvrière. The most wooden of Acadians also appear in the otherwise accomplished monograph of Brebner, *New England's Outpost*. A selection of writings about the issue has been brought together in Griffiths, *Acadian Deportation: Deliberate Perfidy of Cruel Necessity?*
5. See also Robichaud 139-46.
6. The Acadian interest in genealogy is intense. Work being done at the Centre d'études acadiennes in Moncton will, when published, rival the work on the Quebec population by the Institut National d'Études Démographiques at the Université de Montréal. Readers interested in this subject should consult the bibliographies on Acadian matters published by the Centre d'études acadiennes.
7. Massignon, *op. cit.* I, 72-75; English included Scots and Irish.
8. On this see Choquette.
9. On this see Griffiths, "Mating and Marriage."

10. On this see Rawlyk and Daigle.
11. de Meulles to de Seignelay, 1686: Archives Nationales (hereinafter A.N.), Paris. Cor. Gen. Acadie, C11D reports on the four or five English vessels which each year came to Port Royal, buying and exchanging goods for furs.
12. On this see Griffiths, *Contexts of Acadian History* 20.
13. Clark and St. Père present an analysis of the theory of the system but both admit no practical consequences for the Acadians.
14. Frontenac to the Minister, 8 Nov. 1679, printed in *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec* (1926-7): 111.
15. Brouillan au ministre, 6 Oct. 1702, A.N. C11D 4.
16. Utrecht, Circular, "Lords of Trade to Nicholson, with Proclamation of Peace and copy of Treaty of Utrecht, May 8th, Whitehall, 1713"; National Archives of Canada; N.S.A: 4.
17. Letter, Doucette to the Secretary of State, Annapolis Royal, National Archives of Canada, 8 Nov. 1717, N.S.A. 7.
18. The efforts are related at length in Rumilly t.1, pp. 208, 217.
19. Correspondence on this issue is voluminous. Some of it is printed in Akins, *Papers* and other documents in Anon. (Casgrain).
20. Anon. (Casgrain), *Documents Inédits*, 1888, I. 178; Archives of the West Indies, vol. 29.
21. There is no doubt that the Acadians had extracted these conditions from those who actually administered the oath to them. Not only do the Acadians assert this to have been the case in many of the petitions, which they drew up while in exile, but Mascarene substantiates this in a letter to Governor Shirley of Massachusetts in 1746. This is published in Akins, *Selections* 158-60.
22. Arguments over Acadian population figures have yet to reach any consensus. These figures represent a high estimate and my argument for them is given in *Contexts of Acadian History*, ch. III. Lauvrière in *Tragedie d'un pueple* t.1, p. 511, using estimates of the contemporary abbe de l'Isle-Dieu that were based on reports of the abbe Le Loutre, suggested that there were 14,000 Acadians in 1755; Winzerling ix, using figures from French government officials composed after 1753, estimated the population at 18,000. Clark 211-2, considered that the population was somewhere between 10,000 and 18,000. In the maps produced for Harris, Plate 30, Daigle has opted for a population of 13,000.
23. On colonization in this area see Surette.
24. On this see Griffiths, "Golden Age" 21-34.
25. On this the best works to begin are those of Dupont; Jolicoeur and Arsenault.
26. The idea that the priests were the sole authority for settling disputes disappears immediately on a reading of the *Original Minutes of His Majesty's Council at Annapolis Royal, 1720-1739*, Nova Scotia Archives III, Halifax, NS, 1908.
27. Printed in Akins, *Papers* 247. Halifax, NS: Council Minutes, vol. 187.
28. Moody has had a considerable impact on my thinking about what the Acadian deportation actually did to the Acadian community and, while not responsible for my conclusions, needs to be given credit for making me reconsider my ideas.

29. Specifically NOT Louisiana, which in 1755 was a Spanish colony.
30. "Circular letter from Governor Lawrence to the Governors on the Continent, *Report Concerning Canadian Archives for the Year 1905*, 3 vols. (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1906) 2: App. B, 15-16.
31. Primary documents on this aspect of Acadian history are to be found in the 1905 *Report of the Public Archives of Canada*, II. One of the best brief narratives is in Doughty, *Acadian Contexts of Acadian History*, ch. IV.
32. National Archives of Canada, Northcliffe Collection, vol. VII, printed in *Report, Public Archives of Canada* (1926) 80-83.
33. The financial reports of this part of the operation, in particular the logbooks of the various ships' captains, are printed in Akins, *Selections*.
34. Savage Mostyn to Admiralty, 1st of April 1755, Admiralty Records, Secretary's Department, Public Records Office, Kew, ADM I, 480.
35. Instructions printed in Northcliffe Collection, *Public Archives of Canada Report*, (1926) 80-83.
36. For a representation of their whereabouts see the maps "Acadian Deportation and Return" by Daigle and Leblanc in Harris, Plate 30.
37. My estimates are precisely that and are slightly lower than those used by Daigle for his work in the *Historical Atlas*.
38. On this see Griffiths, *Contexts of Acadian History*, ch. IV.
39. For example, the "Edward Cornwallis" shipped out of Grand Pré with 417 Acadians on board and arrived in Columbia, SC, with "210 dead and 207 in health," "Report of the Edward Cornwallis," Andrew Sinclair, Master, 17 Nov. 1755, Council Records, State Archives, Columbia, SC, 480.
40. On this see Griffiths, "Petitions" 215-23.
41. The oath was lengthy and spelled out the new circumstances of Acadian life, requiring an Acadian to "defend (His Britannick Majesty) to the utmost of my power against all Traitorous Conspiracies and all Attempts whatsoever against his Person, Crown and Dignity." Printed in full in Griffiths, "Acadians," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* IV, xxvii.
42. On this see Brebner, *Neutral Yankees* and Conrad.
43. *Censuses of Canada, 1665-1871 Statistics of Canada*, vol. IV (Ottawa, 1876) xxviii.
44. "Early descriptions of Nova Scotia," *Reports* (Halifax, NS: Nova Scotia Archives, 1943) App. B. Pt. II 32.
45. Pontbriand à Belair, 23rd Juillet, 1756: Archives de l'Archevêque de Québec, Lettres II 620.
46. Information about this is scattered in many works: Theriault's essay "L'Acadie, 1763-1978, synthèse historique" in Daigle 49-94 is a good introduction. The works of Bernard provide a good overview.
47. On this see Griffiths, "Petitions" 215-23.
48. Petition, Boston, 14 May 1756, Hutchinson Papers, vol. 23, Massachusetts Archives.
49. Petition of the Neutrals, Philadelphia, 2 April 1757, printed in Roth 377.
50. On this see Griffiths, "Acadians in Exile."

51. Duc de Nivernois to Louis XV, 4 March 1763, printed in *Reports II*, Public Archives of Canada (1905) 150.
52. Peyroux to Terrio, Paris, August 1783, Correspondence Politique Espagne, printed in Winzerling 95.
53. The records of the three Conventions have been partially printed in Robidoux.
54. On this see Griffiths, "Longfellow's Evangeline" 28-41.
55. Thériault's major work is *La Question du pouvoir en Acadie*.
56. 27 juin 1777, Evêques 2, I, 164, Archives de l'Archevêque de Québec.
57. Brun has made a considerable study of this question: see *De Grand-Pré à Kouchibouguac* and *Pionnier de la Nouvelle Acadie*.
58. Paper by Gerald Boudreau, "Doleances et indolence clericales envers un peuple delaisse," Université Ste. Anne, N.E., in press.
59. Unpublished paper, Neil Boucher, "Le Bon Dieu parle française," Université Ste. Anne, N.E.
60. On such work see Pichette, *Les religieuses, Pionnières en Acadie*.
61. Cited in Griffiths, "Perceptions of Acadians" 99.

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