

Section C

Unit 2

CANADIAN LITERATURE

French Canadian Literature

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INTRODUCTION

Location and Span of Canadian Francophone Diaspora

What is French Canadian Studies?

French Canadian Studies mean studies which are focused on French Canada and its related areas.

Why it is important to undertake French Canadian Studies?

It is precisely because Canada is officially bi-lingual and multicultural at the same time. Canadian Studies will never be complete unless the French Canadian Studies are properly incorporated in them. A comprehensive understanding of French Canada is mandatory to acquire a holistic view of Canada and the Canadian Studies. A complete understanding of Canada can never be achieved without comprehending and appreciating its Francophone dimensions, however divergent they may be. It is like pursuing European studies only through English spectacles.

Besides, the presence of French elements have brought in significant socio-cultural inputs which are unique and have enriched further the culture of North America which would have been otherwise dominated only by the Anglophone mono-culture.

Besides, in India, scholars and researchers of Canadian studies tend to source their research and academic material on Canada only from English Canadian sources. Such a perspective makes Canadian studies heavily tilted towards

English Canadian studies. A fairly reasonable knowledge of French Canada will help not only to counter balance this skewed vision but also to provide a broader understanding of Canadian society.

Is learning French mandatory for pursuing Canadian Studies?

No, it is not mandatory. There are a number of good source materials such as books and web sites in English on French Canada. Many Quebec or New Brunswick Francophone web sites have also an English version.

If language were a problem, then, Indian scholars/researchers would never have managed to undertake Chinese, Japanese, Continental European or Latin American Studies. However, a working knowledge of French will be always an advantage in delving into a Francophone society and culture.

What is French Canada?

Present day Canada has two founding people - the French and the English. In Canada wherever French is the mother tongue or spoken/used and wherever French speaking Canadians reside form, loosely speaking, a geographical space called French Canada. This is essentially understood in opposition to English Canada where English is the mother tongue or the main medium of communication. The immigrants arriving in these two linguistic spaces also gradually adopt either English or French as their language of communication. Based on this linguistic divide, Canada is divided into French Canada and English Canada. Terms such as - Francophone (for French speaking) and Anglophone (for the English speaking) are also used in the academic and intellectual circles.

Where can the **French Canadians** be found and what is their percentage?

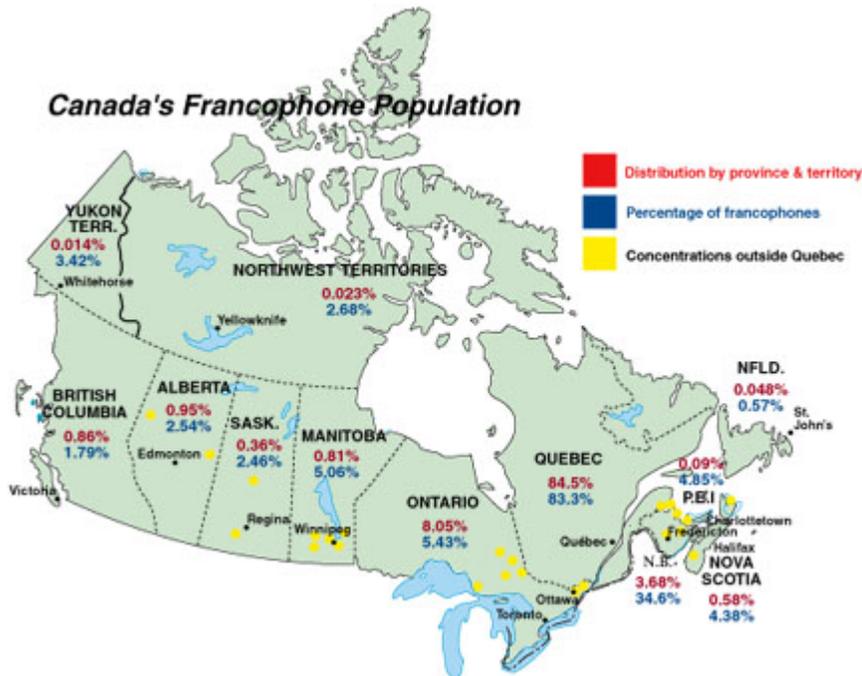
Canada has ten provinces and three territories. All the provinces are located on the southern side of the country along the US border and all the territories, sparsely populated, are situated in the North. The following are the provinces starting from the Atlantic (East) coast side - Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland & Labrador. These four are called the Maritime Provinces or the Maritimes. The reason for this is they are located on the huge water front on the Atlantic and also along the estuary of the St. Lawrence River. Central Canada has two provinces - Quebec and Ontario. Travelling towards the West, Canada has the following three provinces - Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. They are also designated as the Prairies, for they are flat, barring the Rockies, with large grassy extents with prairie like features. The tenth province, British Columbia, is on the extreme Western side of Canada, located right on the Pacific Ocean. The three territories from the East are Nunavut, North West Territories and the Yukon Territory.

The total population of Canada is 31,241,030¹. Out of which the French native speakers are 6,817,655 or about 22% of the total population of Canada. Roughly speaking, a quarter of the Canadians are French Canadians and though unevenly distributed, they are spread across Canada. The population of the French Canadians and their percentage found in the Canadian provinces and territories is shown in this table:

¹ All statistics are as per the 2006 Census ,source : Statistics Canada : <http://www.statcan.ca/>

| Sl no. | Province/ Territory | Total Population 2006 | English | French | % of French of the total provincial/territorial population |
|--------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1 | Newfoundland and Labrador | 500,610 | 488,405 | 1,885 | Less than 1% |
| 2 | Prince Edward Island | 134,205 | 125,265 | 5,345 | About 4% |
| 3 | Nova Scotia | 903,090 | 832,105 | 32,540 | About 4% |
| 4 | New Brunswick | 719,650 | 463,190 | 232,980 | About 33% |
| 5 | Quebec | 7,435,900 | 575,560 | 5,877,660 | About 79% |
| 6 | Ontario | 12,028,895 | 8,230,705 | 488,815 | About 4.5% |
| 7 | Manitoba | 1,133,515 | 838,415 | 43,960 | About 4% |
| 8 | Saskatchewan | 953,845 | 811,730 | 16,055 | About 2% |
| 9 | Alberta | 3,256,360 | 2,576,665 | 61,225 | About 2% |
| 10 | British Columbia | 4,074,385 | 2,875,775 | 54,740 | About 1.5% |
| 11 | Nunavut | 29,325 | 7,765 | 370 | Less than 1% |
| 12 | Northwest Territories | 41,055 | 31,545 | 970 | Less than 1% |

| | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|--------|--------|-------|--------------|
| 13 | Yukon Territory | 30,195 | 25,655 | 1,105 | Less than 1% |
|----|-----------------|--------|--------|-------|--------------|



Map indicating the concentration of Canadian Francophone Population.

Source : <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/Magazine/Ja94/alacarte.asp>

based on 1991 census

A careful look at the above table and the map will reveal that the concentration of the Francophone population is rather more on the East coast of Canada. This is precisely because the French settlers came from France, from the East across the Atlantic Ocean.

The following chart shows the Francophone population in Canadian provinces and territories in decreasing order:

| Sl no. | Province/ Territory | Total Population 2006 | English | French | % of French of the total provincial/territorial population |
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In Quebec, the Francophones are an absolute majority, though it has some important pockets of Anglophone population. The west side (West Mount) of the city of Montreal is a good example of such an Anglophone pocket.

Beyond Quebec, New Brunswick has a sizable portion of Francophones (about 33%); as a result New Brunswick is the only bilingual province of Canada. Ontario also has about 500 000 Francophones in important pockets where French is used extensively.

It is interesting to note that though in the three Prairie Provinces and in British Columbia, the English Canadians are a majority, there are a few important Francophone pockets in these 4 provinces and in absolute number, Francophones add up to 175,000 individuals in these provinces.

Are **French Canadians** really different from their English counter parts? If yes, to what degree?

Yes, they are very different from the English Canadians. They are probably as different as the Tamils compared to the Bengalis in India though they share the same country. Given below are some of the salient differences between the French and English Canadians:

| French Canadians | English Canadians |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.Catholic | Protestant |
| 2.Speak French | Speak English |

| | |
|--|---|
| | |
| 3. Hail from France | Hail from England, Scotland, Ireland |
| 4. Believe Jacques Cartier discovered Canada in 1534 | Believe John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto) of Italian origin discovered Canada in 1497 |
| 5. Do not identify them at all with the British Crown. | Still loyal to British Crown |
| 6. Partially emotional to France and its intellectual traditions. | No emotional attachment with France or its intellectual traditions |
| 7. Were traditional rivals in Europe | Were traditional rivals in Europe |
| 8. Sought sovereignty from English Canada | No such tendency |
| 9. Evolved mainly out of an agrarian society. | Embraced trade, commerce and industrialization as early as in the 17 th century. |
| 10. Established New France from the beginning of the 17 th century. Evolved out of the New France | Established New England (on current East Coast of the USA). Gradually moved to Canada through Nova Scotia and |

| | |
|--|---|
| system. | Ontario. Evolved out of the New England system |
| 11.Independent till 1759 | Conquered New France in 1759 |
| 12.Historically, French Canada never could really flourish from the demographic point of view | English Canada has been demographically always far greater in number. |
| 13.Still bitter about their defeat in 1713(In Acadia)1759 (In Quebec) in the hands of British | They have the sentiments of the conquerors. |
| 14. Bitter also about losing the entire French North America i.e. Acadia (in the Maritime Canada), Quebec (in Canada) and the Louisiana (in the Southern USA) in the 18 th century. | The sentiments of the conquerors who overpowered the French. |
| 15. Quebeckers celebrate 24 th June the St.Jean | Observe 1 st July every year as Canada Day. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Baptist day as their “national” festival.</p> <p>For the Acadians, 15th August is their “national” festival day.</p> | |
| <p>16. About 7 million Francophones</p> | <p>About 325 million Anglophones/Hispanophones in Canada and USA put together</p> |
| <p>17. Linguistic and demographic minority in Canada.</p> <p>Complete minority situation (except in Quebec)</p> | <p>Linguistic and demographic majority in Canada</p> <p>Absolute majority in North America</p> |
| <p>18. Often torn between the North American reality and existence and the deep rooted French values and traditions.</p> | <p>No such dilemma.</p> |
| <p>19. Victims of a sort of a colonial/neo-colonial syndrome.</p> | <p>No such crisis</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>20. Quiet Revolution (1960) in Quebec ushered in a new era of social and intellectual awareness. Led to significant socio-economic, educational, cultural, intellectual reforms.</p> | <p>Nothing of the sort</p> |
| <p>21. Over a span of about 450 years, have developed their own myths, legends, folklores and literary traditions. They have also developed their own Francophone institutions.</p> | <p>Same with the English Canadians with some distinct differences.</p> |
| <p>22. Maintained the French Civil law all along its history in Quebec, even after English conquest in 1759.</p> | <p>Absence of any such thing.</p> |

It is important to note these differences between the French and English Canadians as they play a very crucial role in understanding both these ethnic groups. For these reasons, French Canadians do not perceive the World the way the English Canadians do.

These divides have also deeply influenced the French Canadian culture, literature and society at large.

For people in India, it may not be difficult to understand the bitterness of the minority French Canadian psyche which is often so close to the various majority-minority, coloniser-colonised divides that we have known in the long checkered history of India.

What are the specific traits of the French Canadian literature & culture?

First and foremost, we need to note and appreciate that the French Canadian literature and culture are manifested in French and not in English. Since, it is manifested through a language which is different than English, its specificities lie in the fact that it heralds an entirely different set of world view than the usual Anglophone Canadian or American way of looking at things.

Among its components, it may be noted that it is deeply rooted in the French Canadian moorings i.e. in their French origin and rooted, at the same time, in North America. This dilemma is the very basis of all cultural, literary and artistic expression and creation by the French Canadian artists, writers and intellectuals of North America. In fact, what makes this French Canadian culture so unique is precisely this contradiction- they are French but not French of France; they are North American but with a strong French flavour,

they are North American but do not speak English; they should have merged and disappeared by now among the 325 million strong Anglophones but they did not; they should have embraced Americanism but they did not. In spite of great changes across the time and terrible upheavals, they try and remain what they are - Francophone and different. This is what makes the French Canadians stand out in the crowd, make them “distinct” from the rest of the Canadians or Americans.

The other important element which makes the French Canadians different from the rest of the Canadians is the diasporic element. Apart from Quebec and New Brunswick, the French Canadians are present in pockets or in islands located within Anglophone oceans all across Canada. There are even very small village communities inhabited by French Canadians who are extremely conscious of their identity and unique nature.

What role does the Internet plays in disseminating information regarding the **French Canadians or French Canadian Studies?**

The Internet has become indispensable for the dissemination of French Canadian Studies. It is also a tool which helps the French Canadians to network among themselves and reach out to the world at the same time.

Being diasporic in nature, the Internet has provided an excellent networking and communication medium as well as platform to the French Canadians. There are hundreds of web sites either hosted by this community or by others on them. These sites range from the blog sites (<http://acadietoujours.blogspot.com/>) to more serious ones like hosted by

International Association of Quebec Studies (http://www.aieq.qc.ca/frame_aieq_en.html English version exists) or *International Association of Acadian Studies* (<http://www2.umoncton.ca/cfdocs/aiea/index.cfmor>), *The Acadian National Society* (<http://www.snacadie.org/>), *Acadian Professional Artists Association of New Brunswick* (www.aaapnb.ca) or *Quebec Writers Union* (<http://www.uneq.qc.ca/>) or *French Canadian Association of Ontario* (<http://www.acfoottawa.ca/fr/>) etc . There are also a number of websites, academic in nature, hosted by several universities. Many universities in Canada and outside offer specialized teaching and research programmes on French Canadian studies and have web sites or a portion of them devoted to such programmes.

These websites represent associations, lobby groups and sectorial organizations at local, regional, provincial and territorial levels. They are extremely important as they help to restrict the isolation of this minority community, to get in touch with each other within the province, Canada or even outside Canada, especially to engage the larger Global Francophone community which amounts today to more than 100 million spread all over the world. Besides, they also help the intellectual and researcher's community to discover the unique nature of the French Canadians. Some of these sites are so meticulously constructed that any visitor will find them extremely informative and engaging. Though most of these sites are in French, many offer an English version as well.

Discovering the French Canadians

For the benefit of the readers, the following write up will be divided into three geographical regions - the Francophones of the Maritimes, of Central Canada i.e. Quebec and Ontario and the Prairies, i.e. from Manitoba till the British Columbia.

In each section, an effort will be made to introduce the French Canadians of each region. The history, literature, society, economy and some recent trends will be briefly discussed followed by a short sitography and bibliography.

History of the French Canadians in the Maritimes

In the Maritimes, the French Canadians are known as the **Acadians**; the region is known as **Acadie** (in French) or Acadia which is spread mainly over Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and in some parts of Quebec. The Acadians therefore provide a fine example of French Canadian diaspora whose presence is scattered over three Canadian provinces, some far flung areas of Quebec towards the East, some portion of Maine, USA and even in today's Louisiana, southern USA where a large number of Acadians were deported. It is indeed a trans-provincial and trans-national community. Please note the word *Acadian(s)* means only the French Canadians of the Canadian Maritimes and their descendents all across the globe in specific cases.



Location of Acadia

Source :

<http://student.britannica.com/eb/art/print?id=54629&articleTypeId=0>



Current map of the Acadian region showing the French pockets along the Gulf of St. Lawrence. (Note : *Nouvelle Ecosse* is Nova Scotia and *Terre Neuve* is Newfoundland)

Source : frontenac.ameriques.free.fr/acadie_en_images.php

The following observation made by Antonine Maillet, the famous Acadian author, sums up the Acadian ethos and existence in the following manner:

“The Acadians are a people and a group of people is stronger than a Country. A Country is an institution but the people are stronger than an institution because the people have a soul, they have dreams and they form a living entity.”

Source : <http://cyberacadie.com/>

The history of the Acadia can be divided into the following periods:

- Early History of Acadia (1604-1755)
- The Great Upheaval(1755-1763)
- Quietly Spreading Roots(1763-1867)
- Acadian Renaissance (1867-1960)
- Contemporary Acadia (1960 till date)

Early History Acadia (1604-1755)

Acadia was established by the French explorers in 1604 overlooking the Bay of Fundy in what is today's Nova Scotia. This settlement was largely under French rule between 1604 and 1713 when the British finally conquered it. Its capital was Port-Royal on the South-Western part of the Nova Scotia peninsula. This settlement or the string of settlements formed an ambitious French Colonial Empire of North America, stretching from the Maritimes to the Quebec in North-West and also into the New England (part of USA today) in the East and South.

According to the experts, the name *Acadie* or Acadia is the result of two influences. The first assumption is that, the Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazano (1486-1528), called this piece of land in Greek as *Arcadia* (the land of plenty) in 1524 when he discovered it during the reign of Francis I , the King of France. In fact, Verrazano found the entire Delaware, Maryland and Virginia stretch of today's USA so beautiful that he thought about the mythical beauty

of the *Arcadia* of ancient Greece. The second assumption is based on a local Amerindian tribe Micmac term *Algatig* meaning a camping site.

Though a few fishermen from Normandy and Brittany explored the shores of Nova Scotia and Labrador following the exploration of Verrazzano, no settlement took shape until the beginning of the 17th century. Jacques Cartier, a French explorer, led three expeditions between 1534 and 1541 to the New World but he, instead of exploring the coasts of Nova Scotia, went into the St. Lawrence River.

The actual beginning of the Acadian settlement started in the early part of the 17th century when, at the early stage of the settlement, three French explorers Samuel de Champlain, Pierre Du Gua, Sieur De Monts, Jean de Biencourt and François Gravé Du Pont- explored in 1603 the Acadian coast i.e. the coast of New Brunswick and the Nova Scotia with the objective of founding a permanent settlement. After a while, Samuel de Champlain sailed along the St. Lawrence to found the city of Quebec in 1608.

Initially De Monts founded the settlement in the Sainte-Croix island (currently Dotchet Island, Maine) with about 80 men, close to the current state of Maine in USA in 1604 under the authority of King Henry IV . This was the first French colony in North America. The first governor of Acadia was Pierre Du Gua, Sieur De Monts. He was a protestant and has been granted a ten year monopoly of the fur trade in Acadia. Later, Gravé Du Pont decided to move to a more hospitable place, following a disastrous winter of 1604-1605 during which 36 men perished in scurvy, to Port Royal (currently Annapolis Royal in Nova Scotia)

on the French bay (currently the Bay of Fundy), on the coast of Nova Scotia which will serve as the capital of Acadia for the next century and a half. However the young colony was deprived of the royal favour as the French King Henry IV found the fur business generated in Acadia was rather insufficient. This led in 1607 to an exodus of the French settlers from Port Royal. The next batch of French settlers came back to Port Royal in 1610. During this period, they developed alliances with two local first nation people - Micmacs and the Maliseets .



Map of the Acadian region beginning XVIIth Century

At this point the French came back with two Jesuit fathers to Port Royal whose objective was to convert the Indians. This vexed the Protestants who financed the colony. This Jesuit-Protestant dispute led to a great deal of difficulty in this young colony.

A section of the unhappy French settlers moved to Maine to found their own colony but the British already vexed by the French intrusion in the Maine, killed

them and subsequently attacked Port Royal in 1613 under the leadership of captain Samuel Argall of the Virginia. This is an important date as it denotes the beginning of a very long conflict between the British and the French in Acadia.

In 1621 King James granted Acadia and Canada to Sir William Alexander, count of Sterling in Scotland. In 1629, 100 Scottish settled in Grandville. Meanwhile Cardinal Richelieu a powerful minister of the Louis XIII formed a Company called the Company of New France or Hundred Associates to develop and colonise New France. He had also defeated the Huguenots (Protestants) in La Rochelle in France. This enraged further the British who were Protestants. In 1628 another British, David Kirke attacked Acadian French settlements to revenge the Protestant defeat in the hands of Richelieu. In the following years (1637-1650), Acadia saw some bitter in fighting between La Tour and d'Aulnay - two French nobles both claiming Acadia which made the colony even more weak and vulnerable.

British once again attacked and occupied Acadia 1654 till 1670 when it came back to France once again.

Between 1670 and 1710, Acadia remained in the hands of the French. The new governor Grandfontaine had only 30 soldiers and 60 settlers to restore the erstwhile French colony along with the remaining French settlers. During this period, the Acadians strengthened their position by starting to cultivate the region. Instead of clearing the forest, they developed the unique technique of making dykes near the sea and then cultivating the land. This earned them the

name of “Water clearers” rhyming with “Forest clearers” in Canada. However, much to its woe, Acadia was unable to attract sufficient number of French settlers - a factor which went against colonising and populating the French North America. The following chart shows the feeble demographic development of Acadia:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>New -France</u> | <u>Acadia</u> | <u>American Colonies</u> |
|-------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| 1608 | 28 | 10 | 100 |
| 1640 | 220 | 200 | 28,000 |
| 1680 | 9,700 | 800 | 155,000 |
| 1710 | 16,000 | 1,700 | 357,000 |
| 1750 | 55,000 | 15,000 | 1,200,000 |

Source : <http://cyberacadie.com/index.php?/L-Acadie-d-hier/L-Acadie-zone-frontiere.html>

In spite of the constant attacks on Port Royal in 1704, 1707 and 1710, the Acadians could continue to live in Acadia thanks to a closed knit society in which help was rather easily available. The Acadian Church meanwhile consolidated its position in this young colony and looked after well the needs of the French settlers in Acadia.

During the French regime in Acadia, the French wanted to secure exclusive fishing and hunting rights for the French settlers in Acadia. This was unacceptable to the British settlers in New England. They wanted to get rid of

the French at any cost. In 1710, Acadia capitulated once again to the British. From 1710 to 1749, Acadia remained in British hands. In 1713 the infamous Treaty of Utrecht was signed and France lost forever Acadia to the British. Another major blow was to found the town of Halifax in 1749 (earlier known as Chédabouctou). 2,000 British settlers were brought in and the policy to turn the colony into a full fledged British colony took a definite shape by way of systematically cleansing Nova Scotia of the French settlers.

In a ping pong like situation, Acadia was tossed between France and England more than 7 times.

The Great Upheaval(1755-1763)

This is one of the saddest chapters in the history of Acadia. The students and researchers of Canadian Studies need to study this period carefully to be sensitized about the extent of the Franco-British conflict and the havoc that it created for the Acadians.

One of the clauses of the Treaty was that the French settlers should leave by one year Nova Scotia. In other words, the British Government did not allow the French Acadians to stay any more in Nova Scotia. Besides, the British asked repeatedly the Acadians to become loyal to the British crown to which they refused constantly. In a calculated move, the capital was shifted from Port Royal (rechristened as Annapolis Royal) to Halifax with a majority of British settlers. Moreover, during the 7 year war between France and England, French Acadians sided with the French. This enraged the British even more. All this led to the forcible deportation of Acadians by the British.

Out of about 10,000 Acadians, three fourth have been forcibly deported to the British colonies(today's USA); many have been just dumped in the prisons of Halifax or London. Some fled to the forests of New Brunswick or to Quebec. Some were sent to as far as the Falkland Islands in the South Pacific.

Here it should be also mentioned that three years after the Acadians of Nova Scotia were deported, the same fate awaited the Acadians of Ile Saint-Jean (Prince Edward Island). In 1758, more than 3,000 French speaking islanders were rounded up and sent back to France. More than half never made it as they were victims of shipwreck and disease. Another 2,000 fled to Northern New Brunswick and elsewhere. The less known, the Great Upheaval also devastated the Acadian society of the Ile Saint-Jean(Prince Edward Island) which was as traumatic as the deportation of fellow Acadians in Nova Scotia. This is considered to be the largest tragedy in the history of this tiny island. Today Francophones are concentrated more towards the west end of the island.



The British soldiers burning Acadian houses during the Great Upheaval around 1755

Source : frontenac.ameriques.free.fr/acadie_en_images.php

This was a heart rending process in which families were separated, parents and children got separated in the process and sent to different destinations. All institutions set up by the French Acadians were systematically dismantled. In the colonial history of the World, this has been one of the darkest chapters, especially where one European power tried to completely annihilate the members of its rival power. This has been also one of the very first cases of a “systematic ethnic cleansing”. Anybody trying to study and understand the Acadian psyche needs to study this period of Great Deportation carefully.



Acadians waiting to be deported around 1755.

Source : www.cbc.ca/acadian/timeline.html

Today, the maritime Acadians are proud of their Acadian heritage and celebrate the “Great Upheaval” stating it is an event which shaped their history and strengthened further their kinship and commitment to protect their identity and culture even more. They particularly draw the attention to the fact that the Acadians, instead of getting annihilated, fought back by way of persisting and in many cases succeeded in making a come back to live on which is itself a big success story of survival.

The Fall of Louisbourg Fortress (1758)

The other factor which went against the Acadians during this period was the Seven Year War (1756-1763) which involved almost all the major European powers. This war was described as the first “World War” by Winston Churchill as all the major European powers and their colonies engaged themselves in a bitter combat leaving more than 10 million people dead. At the end of this war, France lost almost all its important North American colonies and Britain emerged as the single most powerful European colonial power all over the world.

In Ile Roayale (currently Cape Breton Island) in the northern part of Nova Scotia, a fortress and a fortified town were built by the French at Louisbourg to protect her colonial interests in North America. They started building it since 1719 and soon it became a well inhabited commercial town and an important hub of commercial activities in New France. In 1758, the British troops lay siege to it, forcing it to fall the same year. This was a major blow for the French in the region; this was followed by the fall of Quebec in 1759 which

ended France's colonial aspirations in North America. The fall of Louisbourg in 1758 was indeed the last nail in the coffin for the Acadians who were already hounded and deported by the British since 1755. The British hatred was so much towards this French fortress that no sooner it was conquered, than the British decided to raze it to the ground.

In 1961, Canada decided to rebuild a quarter of what used be the Louisbourg of the 18th century. It was a Herculean task but a sheer delight for those who painstakingly reconstructed it. Today, some portion of this great fortress stands reconstructed on the coast of Atlantic Ocean as a Canadian national historic site.



A view of the reconstructed fortress at Louisbourg, Nova Scotia.

Source : <http://gildartphoto.com/weblog/2006/10/01/louisbourg-fortress>

Quietly Spreading Roots(1763-1867)

By the time peace returned in 1763, the Acadians were deported to both sides of the Atlantic, leading to a great turmoil in terms of survival and relocation which turned out to be a nightmarish exercise.

During the next century, the British strengthened their position over the Maritimes. They created new provinces such as Prince Edward Island (*Ile Saint Jean* during the French regime) in 1769 and New Brunswick in 1784. French speaking Acadians, deported and with no surviving institution, were kept out of the “development” of the Maritimes. This was also the period when the British settlers gradually got their new identity by becoming “Canadians” - a very important development for the future nation. Acadians during this period quietly tried re-group and re-organise themselves. They emerged from the USA, Quebec and many from the woods. Their main objective was to recreate all the lost and broken institutions. Here the Catholic Church played once again a constructive role by re-organising and consolidating small Acadian Francophone parishes. The story of the survival of the Acadians deserves a close look by the scholars of India. They represented the faceless Canadians of the epoch with no economic power, no newspaper, no school, no doctors, no priests or advocates. Since they were Catholics , they did not have voting power till 1810 and could not become members of the legislative council till 1830.It is especially interesting to note how a lost ethnic group, instead of disappearing

completely, survived the colonial ravages only to come back, fewer in numbers but with greater commitments.

The Acadians of the Prince Edward Island also started to come back and resettle the island from 1863 onwards. In many places, since the British settlers took away their land, they went elsewhere and started new Acadian communities. Around 1830, there were 6 Acadian schools and by 1854, the number rose to 13². This is just to indicate that though the island became British with a steady stream of English speaking settlers, the Islander Acadians never lost hope.

Acadian Renaissance (1867-1960)

We Indians are not unfamiliar with the term “Renaissance”. The birth, growth and development of the European Renaissance in the 16th Century have been studied for long in the Indian academic institutions. The Bengal Renaissance at the turn of the 18th and 19th century has also been a subject of academic discussion for long in India.

However, the Acadian renaissance is quite different from these. Acadians rose out of the ruins of the Great Upheaval as the mythical bird Phoenix. They rose slowly from nowhere. After the defeat of 1713 and the Great Deportation of 1755-63, the land which they claimed to be theirs was forever lost and going back and reclaiming what was lost, was next to impossible, especially with the British settlers who meanwhile changed completely the demographic profile of the region.

² *Acadian and Francophone Community Profile of Prince Edward Island*, 2nd Edition, La Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes (FCFA) du Canada, 450 Rideau Street, Office 300, Ottawa(Ontario) K1N 5Z4 ,March 2004.

However, the French Acadians did exactly that. Their renaissance went unnoticed by the world which was busy appreciating the phenomenal growth of Canada in late 19th and 20th century.

In this new context, the term Acadia started acquiring a wider meaning. Prior to 19th century, Acadia meant more of today's Nova Scotia which was the main theatre of French settlement. In the changed context, starting 19th century till date, Acadia means all the three Maritime Provinces and also a few pockets of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has therefore now a trans-provincial connotation.

We have already observed that following the debacle of the Great Upheaval of 1755-63, the Acadians started regrouping. The single most important element of the Acadian renaissance was rebuilding its lost institutions and building also the new ones. Among these are the French language schools, colleges, universities, newspapers, magazines, institutions, associations and so on whose main mandate was to develop, defend and safe guard Acadian French traditions and interests. The ethnic battle shifted from physical battle grounds to the psychological combat zones. The uprooted Acadians tried to forge an Acadian cultural and linguistic forefront with renewed vigour. Needless to say, the task was an extremely difficult one.

1836 is an important landmark for the Acadian revival as two Acadians, Simon d'Entremont and Frédéric Robichaud were elected to the provincial assembly in Nova Scotia. The first Acadian member of the provincial assembly, Armand Landry, was elected in New Brunswick in 1846. This is a very significant

political achievement for the Acadians who were voiceless. In fact till 1810, the Catholics were kept away from holding any public office.

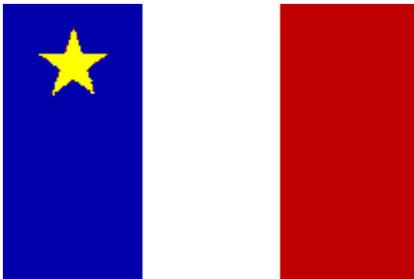
In 1867, the first Acadian French language newspaper *Le Moniteur Acadien* was launched at Shediac, NB by Israel J.D. Landry. Incidentally, this was also the year of Canadian confederation. Within a short span of time, it became the voice of Acadia defending Acadian rights.

In 1868, the Saint.Joseph Hospital Sisters (a Francophone religious group) found the first hospital for lepers at Tracadie, NB in Acadia. In 1871 New Brunswick passed the Common School Act in which religious teaching was banned in the schools. This vexed the Catholic schools as they wanted to teach religion in the schools. Here we need to understand that the Catholic religious teaching was meant more to protect the Francophone Acadian identity than anything else. The Catholic schools did not want to embrace Protestant school system which was being imposed by the English Canadians. A compromise was reached when religious teaching was allowed beyond the school hours. In the Prince Edward Island, the *Asociation des instituteus acadiens* (*The Acadian Teachers Association*) was created to promote education in French. Since their life revolved around agriculture, the Acadians of the Prince Edward Island created Agriculture Associations in around 1898, cooperatives in 1903 and Acadian Credit Unions in the 1930s.

In 1881, the First Acadian National Convention was held at Memramcook in NB. It was decided here to hold an Acadian National Day on 15th August every year which falls on the feast of the Assumption. This picturesque village in South

Eastern NB is known to be the *Berceau de l'Acadie* or the Acadian Cradle. It is precisely because from here the Acadian renaissance took a definite shape. The seminary College Saint Joseph, founded in 1864, was behind this exercise which is one of the founding Colleges of the future Université de Moncton- the Francophone Acadian University at Moncton, the capital of New Brunswick.

The National Assumption Society was also founded. In 1884, the Acadian nationalism got a boost when a group of Francophone Clergy, Socio-Professional and Secular Elite met to decide on Acadian national symbols. In the same year, the Second Acadian National Convention at Miscouche in Prince Edward Island adopted the Acadian national anthem - *Ave Maris Stella* and the tricoloured Acadian National flag with a star.



The Acadian Flag which represents Francophones of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. This is reminiscent of the French flag. The yellow star represents Our Lady of Assumption, the patron Saint of the Acadians.

Source : www.inglewoodcarecentre.com/.../ca-acadia.gif

1885 was an important year as the first Acadian senator Pascal Poirier was included in the MacDonald government. In 1890 the nomination of the first Acadian judge was made. For the following years, the Acadian National

Convention became a regular affair and was being held simultaneously in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. This forum is somehow comparable to the Indian National Congress which had its first convention in Bombay in 1885. This Acadian National Convention held at different places of Acadia helped to bring forth the aspirations of the Acadian people.

The turn of the century and the beginning of the 20th century saw a flurry of activities for launching new French language newspapers, magazines such as *Le Courrier des Provinces Maritimes* at Bathurst (1885), New Brunswick, *L'Évangéline* at Digby, Nova Scotia (1887), *L'Impartial* (1895) at Prince Edward Island and *Le Madawaska* (1913) at Edmundston, NB. Along with this, new schools were also found to spread education in French. All this led to the creation of a new awareness among the new generation of Acadians scattered in the Maritimes. If we look at the geographical boundaries of the Maritimes, we notice often that the this area comprise of a number of small islands and fractured coast line - a geographical pattern which does not help to bind an already diasporic people like the Acadians.

The years 1917 and 1919 both are important for the Acadians. The Prince Edward Island is the first Canadian province to be headed by an Acadian premier in 1917, Aubin-Edmond Arsenault who held the post for 2 years. In 1919, Saint Thomas Society of Aquin, an Acadian cultural association was founded in Prince Edward Island. "Courage and perseverance" is the slogan of this society which till date is the main body for the Acadians in the Prince Edward Island.

The Acadians therefore went on to build institution after institution to protect their interest in an English Canadian dominated region. On the economic front, the most important event took place in 1936 when the first *Caisse Populaire Acadienne* (A Cooperative Saving Scheme) came into being at Petit-Rocher. This Cooperative savings scheme snowballed into a movement and in 1946 the Federation of the *caisses populaires acadienne* was formed. This is an important land mark as this helped to start a niche banking programme for the Acadians. In 1955, the Acadians observe the Bicentenary of the Great Deportation. People come out at 6 pm to ring bells in unison across Acadia.

Contemporary Acadia (1960 till date)

Contemporary Acadia or the Francophones of the Maritimes are much better organised. After a long struggle, they succeeded in founding their own institutions such as schools, colleges, hospitals, newspapers, magazines, cooperatives, political parties, cultural organizations, pressure groups etc.

In 1960, the Acadian Louis-J Robichaud became the Premier of New Brunswick. At the age of 34, he was the youngest premier of Canada. Along with him, 15 Acadians were elected in the provincial assembly of the NB and 6 became ministers. This is also an important recognition of the Acadian aspiration and their legitimate accession to the political power. Robichaud was in power for 10 years and undertook several reform programmes to modernize New Brunswick. Among others, his government undertook important reform at the school level education. Robichaud's reforms led to significant changes in the Acadian society which for the first time started looking towards the future and

coming out of its shell. This period also coincides with the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and the famous May 1968 student agitation in France. In a way, the 10 years of Robichaud government heralded a new and modern Acadia.

Another major event which helped to usher in this new era in the Acadian history was the foundation of the Université de Moncton (1963), the first Francophone University of the Maritimes with three campuses at Moncton, Edmundston and Shippagan. After the initial years of struggle, this university has found its legitimate place in the Acadia.

The 60s saw large scale student protests across the World. In Acadia too, the students of the Université de Moncton took to the streets who wanted to liberate themselves from the shackles of an archaic social structure.

The Acadian cultural life started also to open up and taking new directions during this period. Acadian folklore has been always an important component of the Acadian cultural life. The new generation of singers such as Édith Butler, Angèle Arseneault, Donat Lacroix, Calixte Duguay, Georges Langford and Raymond Breau sang these folklores bringing them close to the younger Acadians of the 60s when more and more Acadian choirs became popular, museums were founded, Acadian traditional art and craft got a boost, new forms of Acadian sculpture and paintings also came into being. In short, this was a period of intense Acadian awakening.

The political will of the Acadians to carry on their struggle for recognition and equity had a big boost in 1972 when the *Parti Acadien* (Acadian Party) came into being. The party demanded a division of New Brunswick to form an

Acadian province. The same year the first Acadian Publishing house was founded. In 1973 two important bodies came into being *Société des Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick (SANB)*- Acadian Society of New Brunswick and the *Fédération des Francophones de Terre-Neuve et du Labrador* (Newfound land and Labrador Federation of Francophones). This is quite significant as this was the first ever organised step to bring the Francophones of this province within the ambit of the larger Acadian struggle.

During more recent times, Acadia gradually became an important platform for the World Francophone movement. In September 1999, the VIIth Francophone Summit was held at Moncton in which 52 Francophone Heads of State participated. 400th Centenary of the foundation of the first Acadian settlement in Ile Saint Croix was celebrated and in 2005, the 250th centenary of the Great Deportation was observed.

Current Demographic Distribution of the Acadians in the Maritimes

Currently New Brunswick has the largest concentration of the Acadians. The North Eastern counties of Victoria, Madawaska, Restigouche, Gloucester, Northumberland, Kent and Westmorland in NB have the maximum francophone concentration. In Prince Edward Island, the Acadians are mainly located on the Eastern side i.e. in the Prince country or in the Evangeline region of the island. In Nova Scotia, the Acadians are found on the opposite ends of the peninsula, i.e. in the Eastern end in Inverness and Richmond counties in Cape Breton Island and in Digby and Yarmouth counties on the Western side. Besides, there

are several Francophone pockets in the Maritimes surrounded by the Anglophone communities.

Acadian Language, Literature and Culture

Language:

The Acadian French is a dialect of French language spoken by the Acadians of the Maritimes, some far flung areas of Quebec and the St. Jean River area in Maine, USA. This particular dialect has preserved a great deal of archaism of the Old French that was used during the time of Rabelais and Moliere. This dialect originated mainly in the North Western parts of France from where the French settlers came to Acadia.

Chiac or *chiaque* is another dialect used by the young Acadians living in the Moncton region. It uses the French syntax interspersed with English words. *Chiac* is not like Acadian French which uses both the French syntax and vocabulary in French. Many feel that it is a corrupt version of French and therefore kind of scorned at. However, some Acadians feel it gives them a sense of identity and some Acadian artists sing and write in *Chiac* which is a derivative of Shediak, a town in NB. It is some how comparable to Joul spoken in the Montreal region of Quebec.

Another offshoot of Acadian French is *Cajun* - a dialect used by the Acadians who were deported to Louisiana , USA. The term *Cajun* has been coined out of the term Acadian in an anglicized manner.

It may be also noted that French language is the single most important component of Acadian identity. Ever since 17th century, Acadians tried to

remain “French” through French language, therefore, building and preserving French language institutions is one of the most important concerns and objectives of the Acadian community of the Maritimes.

Literature:

Acadian literature is the product of a struggle of the French speaking Acadians whose main objective is to put together a fragmented identity which is often due to a mixed geographical existence but the result of a similar type of humiliation suffered in the hands of the British. It is also the sum total of the deep stress and strain the community has undergone since the beginning of the 17th century. The majority of the Acadian writers hail from New Brunswick which also has incidentally the largest Francophone concentration. The development of Acadian literature can be divided into the following stages:

French origins, A Century of uprooting, Acadian origins, Expansion and Stagnation, Recovering and Contesting and the Post-Nationalist Period ³.

Acadian literature is written in all the important genres such as novel, children and adolescent literature, literature by women, essays, short fictions, short stories, poetry, plays and so on.

The myth and legend of Evangeline is a very important landmark in the cultural and literary history of Acadia. According to this myth, Evangeline a young Acadian girl was estranged from Gabriel, her betrothed during the Great Upheaval. According to one version, Evangeline settles down in Philadelphia and starts working among the poor. There one day, he finds Gabriel, amongst

³ Raoul Boudreau & Marguerite Maillet: *Acadian Literature* : in *Acadia of the Maritimes* : (Ed.) Jean Daigle: Chair d'études acadiennes: Université de Moncton: Moncton :New Brunswick: 1996 : 859 p. :ISBN 2-921166-08-9

the other patients, who finally die in her arms. In another version, she remains in Acadia and keeps desperately looking for Gabriel but in vain. Many years later, a sick man, Gabriel comes ashore only to die in the arms of Evangeline. This epic narrative has been the most powerful single piece of Acadian myth and literary saga to move generations of Acadians and others to tears. This can be compared to the legendary Romeo and Juliette in Europe and Laila and Majnu or Heer and Ranjha in the Indian subcontinent. Evangeline depicts and symbolizes the torture and humiliation undergone by the Acadian people during the Great Upheaval. Millions of people feel emotionally attached to this unique legend. It is also a story of eternal hope and longing for roots and father/mother land.

In English, this epic poem known as *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* was composed by the famous American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1847. It has also been translated into French and has 75 pages. This French translation is available in the following address : <http://www.umoncton.ca/maum/longfellow.html>. Set to music in 1971 by Michel Conte, the generations of Acadian singers have sung this ballad , amongst them are- Isabelle Pierre, Marie-Jo Thériou, Lyne Williams and more recently Annie Blanchard.

The cultural impact of the Evangeline saga is so powerful and so moving that it binds all the Acadians of all geographical boundaries and of all generations even today.

For a quick panorama view of Acadian literature, let us start with Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) which has today more than 6,000 Francophones but through mixed marriages, a quarter of the Prince Edward Islanders have Acadian roots. In spite of being a small Acadian community, it has always tried to retain and portray its identity through literary and exploratory writings. Leah Maddix is the most noted Acadian song composer and poet in this Island. Angèle Arsenault is another song composer and folk poet of the Island. Antoinette Gallant ventures beyond the folk poetry in P.E.I. and in her book, *Little Jack an' de Tax-man and Other Acadian Stories from Prince Edward Island*. (Published by Fernwood, PEI: Elaine Harrison and Associates, 1979,) she tried to capture the stories and traditions in the local dialect. Jean Halliday MacKay, in her book “*The Home Place: Life in Rural Prince Edward Island in the 1920s and 30s*” (Acorn Press, published in 1999) tries to capture what was oral into written to retain the cultural traditions of P.E.I.

Georges Arsenault, an islander Acadian from P.E.I. is a noted historian and a folklorist. He has written extensively on the history of the Acadians in P.E.I. His publication *The Island Acadians, 1720-1980* (Ragweed Press, 1989) is an important account of Acadian history of the P.E.I.. Another publication by him, *Acadian Legends, Folktales, and Songs from Prince Edward Island* (Acorn Press, 2002, ISBN 1-894838-02-5) makes an important contribution towards the Acadian folk culture of the P.E.I.

Though Acadian literature is yet to become a major literary player in the literary world, the case of Antonine Maillet, a very famous Acadian writer from

New Brunswick, deserves special attention. She has become the icon of Acadian literature, winning several literary prizes and her works have been published also from France. She has also been widely translated in English and other languages. Her novel *Pélagie-La-Charette*(1979) was awarded Prix Goncourt, one of the most prestigious literary prizes of France. This novel is also a unique creation depicting the Acadian struggle and renaissance, selling more than one million copies. Some of her titles translated into English are: *The Tale of Don l'Original* (French title: *Don l'Original* 1972- Eng.tr.1978), *La Sagouine* (1971- Eng.tr.1979), *Pélagie*: (French title *Pelagie-La-Charette* : 1979 Eng.tr.1982), *The Devil is Loose!* (French title : *Crache à Pic* 1984 Eng.tr. 1986). These titles are available with Northwest Passages, Kamloops, BC, e.mail : info@nwpassages.com

Following is a list of Acadian creative writers. Unfortunately not many are translated in English.

Antonine Maillet (1929- Novelist and playwright)

Marguerite Maillet (Author, Editor, Historian of Acadian History)

Hermenegilde Chiasson (1946- Poet, Playwright)

Laurier Melanson

Régis Brun

Ulysse Laundry (Poet)

Raymond LeBlanc(Poet)

Michel Roy (Author, Historian)

Leonard Forest (Poet)

Jeanne Ducluzeau
Melvin Gallant
Christiane St.Pierre
Gerard Leblanc
Romeo Savoie
Rose Despres
Helene Harbec
Guy Arsenault (Poet)
Raymon-Guy LeBlanc
Martin Pitre (Poet)
Louis Comeau
Daniel Dugas (Poet)
Rino Morin Rossignol (Poet)
Maurice Raymond
Robwert Pichette
Georges Bourgeois
Frederic Gary Comeau
Serge-Patrice Thibodeau
Michel Roy
Leon Theriault
Regis Brun
Jean Peronnet
Denise Paquette

Martine Jacquot

France Daigle

Leah Maddix (song composer and poet)

Angèle Arsenault (song composer and folk poet)

Antoinette Gallant (folk poet)

Jean Halliday MacKay (Folk tradition compiler)

Georges Arsenault (Literary historian)

Marie-Colombe Robichaud (1943- Short Story Writer , Playwright & Compiler)

Culture

Acadian culture, like all other cultures, is the joint manifestation of several disciplines such as arts, dance, music, plays and festivals. The Acadian diaspora does not leave any stone unturned to keep its culture going. There are a number of singers, musicians, artists, theatre groups who perform regularly in three Acadian provinces. Following are some of the prominent musicians and singers from the Acadian region: Marcel Aymar(singer), Julie Doiron(singer, song composer), Angèle Arseneault (singer, song composer), Édith Butler (Singer, composer), Donat Lacroix, Jean-Francois Breau (singer),Calixte Duguay, Georges Langford, Raymond Breau,Cayouche (country singer, composer) Pasty Gallant (singer, actress), Carolyne Jomphe (country singer, composer), Natasha St-Pier (singer),Wilfred Le Bouthillier(singer), Marie-Jo Thério (singer, composer), Zachary Ricahrd (singer, composer), Marc Savoy (singer),Aliza Weller (Bourdeau) (singer, composer,guitarist), Jesse Daigle

(singer, composer), Michael Doucet (singer, composer), Roch Voisine(singer, composer), Michelle Boudreau (singer, composer).

Sitography :

<http://frontenac.ameriques.free.fr>

<http://www.statcan.ca/>

www.acadian-cajun.com/acadmap.htm

<http://www.cyberacadie.com/acadhist.htm>

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/lwjones/acadhist.htm>

<http://www.cbc.ca/acadian/index.html> Web site in English on Acadia

<http://acadietoujours.blogspot.com/> Web site in English on Acadia

<http://fcfa.ca/home/index.cfm> Federations des Communautés Francophones et Acadienne du Canada/ Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities of Canada

<http://www.snacadie.org/> Societe nationale de l'Acadie/The National Society of Acadia

<http://www.cma2009.ca/index.php?lang=fr> Address of the French site of the Congres mondial acadien /Acadian World Congress 2009

<http://www.cma2009.ca/index.php> English the Congres mondial acadien /Acadian World Congress 2009

<http://www.ssta.org/ssta/index.cfm> Societe Saint-Thomas-D'Aquin, Acadian Society of the Prince Edward Island

<http://franco.ca/atlas/francophonie/> Francophonie Atlas of Canada

<http://www.acadievacances.com/fr/default.asp> On Acadian Tourism French &
English

http://www.acadianmemorial.org/ensemble_ronnie/default.htm In English

Dr. Abhijit Karkun