

ABOUT ACADIAN HERITAGE

In 1604, a courageous band of explorers led by Pierre Dugua de Mons and Samuel de Champlain attempted to establish the first permanent French colony in the New World on St. Croix Island. (near St. Stephen, NB, about an hour's drive from Saint John, NB).

Thus began the great Acadian adventure in New Brunswick – a story of triumph over tragedy. And through their difficult historical journey, the Acadian's "joie de vivre" (joy of life) has sustained them. They still celebrate their indomitable spirit today in kitchen parties filled with fiddle music, traditional cuisine, lively dance and storytelling. Welcome to New Brunswick's Acadie!

The name **Acadia** is derived from the Italian word "**arcadie**" chosen by explorer Giovanni de Verrazzano to describe the "**beauty of the trees**" of the Atlantic coastal region near Delaware. In the 16th century, cartographers gave the name Arcadia to the now Maritime Provinces. The letter "r" eventually disappeared, leaving the present name of Acadia.

Although French explorer Jacques Cartier visited Acadia and claimed it for France in 1534, the area was not settled by Europeans until the arrival of Pierre de Monts and Samuel de Champlain in 1604. It was on June 24, 1604, that de Monts and Champlain sailed to the mouth of a mighty river which they named St. John after St. John the Baptist. The two French explorers and their colonists moved on to winter on Isle St. Croix in the St. Croix River near the New Brunswick/ Maine Border. They were not prepared for the climate's harsh winter, and 36 settlers died of scurvy that year. In the spring, the remaining settlers moved to Port-Royal, located in what is now Nova Scotia.

From its first days, Acadia found itself embroiled in a bitter struggle between the French and the English, who both claimed the land as their own. In 1629, the English government moved in Scottish settlers and changed the settlement's name to "Nova Scotia". The colony was returned to France in 1632 with the signing of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

Charles de LaTour, self-appointed Governor of Acadia, was at this time establishing a fort and trading post at the mouth of the St. John River and protecting it against attack from rival Charles d'Aulnay. In 1645, while LaTour was in Boston seeking aid from the English, the fort was attacked by d'Aulnay. Lady LaTour bravely defended the fort, and legend has it that soon after d'Aulnay forced her to watch the execution of her men, she died of a broken heart.

Disputes between the French and the English continued, with many forts being built and captured, and many treaties being signed and broken. In 1713, with the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, Acadia passed a final time into British hands. In 1755, the British decided to put a final end to the struggle by deporting the Acadians. It is estimated that three-quarters of the Acadian population was uprooted between 1755 and 1762. Many Acadians died from hunger or disease.

The English population grew substantially in 1783 as British Loyalists, fleeing the American Revolution, began settling in the area. The Province of New Brunswick was also created at this time. Acadians struggled to survive, as they were given very few rights. Francophone schools were rare, and the Catholic Church was the only French institution. There was not even a French newspaper, yet Acadians managed to keep their heritage alive, mostly through the oral tradition of stories, legends and songs. The translation of the poem "Evangeline" by American poet H.W. Longfellow, contributed to Acadian pride being re-established.

Today, the Province of New Brunswick has numerous francophone schools, a university, hospitals, newspapers, radio and television stations, as well as many recognised Acadian artists, authors and singer/songwriters. Moncton sculptor Claude Roussel's work entitled "Progression" can be found in front of Saint John City Hall. World-famous Acadian author Antonine Maillet sought inspiration in Acadian legends and folklore. Singers, such as Edith Butler, have taken traditional Acadian songs to national fame. Acadians have not only persevered amidst hardship, they have flourished.

In Saint John, Acadians meet, learn, and celebrate their heritage at the Centre Communautaire Samuel-de-Champlain. Every year, the Festival de la Baie Française is celebrated in June and Acadian Day at the New Brunswick museum in August.

Day trips throughout the province include a visit to the **Village Historique Acadien** in Caraquet, where life centuries ago is portrayed and celebrated! Or watch as the fictitious characters come alive before your very eyes at **Le Pays de la Sagouine** in Bouctouche, a place born in the imagination of internationally-renowned novelist Antonine Maillet.

And there are more annual festivals and unique experiences you won't want to miss. Join in the fun, Acadian style!