

WERE THE BRITISH JUSTIFIED IN EXPELLING THE ACADIANS?

Imagine that you are forced to leave your community. Your home is being destroyed, and all the people you know are going to be scattered far and wide. Oceans will separate you from your family and friends. Finding them again would be very difficult, if not impossible. This is what happened during the **Acadian Expulsion**. Between 1755 and 1763, thousands of Acadians were violently removed from their homes, had their property destroyed, and were forced onto ships headed to unfamiliar lands. Today, historians continue to debate the British actions—was the Expulsion a necessary action for the British to gain control of the land, or was it unnecessary and cruel?

ACADIA UNDER BRITISH RULE

The Acadians were the French-speaking people of Acadia. As you learned in Chapter 1, Acadia had been a French colony. In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht sliced off part of Acadia (mainland Nova Scotia) and gave it to the British. The treaty allowed Acadians to relocate to other lands in New France. The Acadians, however, did not want to leave their established farms, like the one shown in **Figure 2.24**. What were some of the reasons the land was so important to the Acadians? The British did not want to increase the French population in the surrounding colonies. This would have made the British more vulnerable to future attacks.

AN UNEASY PEACE

In 1730, the British and the Acadians finally came to an agreement. The British allowed the Acadians to practise Catholicism, and the Acadians signed an oath declaring their loyalty to the British King, George II. As part of the agreement, the British agreed that the Acadians would not have to fight with the British against France. Thereafter, they became known as “the neutral French.” The peace, however, was an uneasy one.



Acadian Expulsion the historical event in which thousands of Acadians were forced from their homeland in Acadia by the British

FIGURE 2.24 *Early Acadia* was painted by Claude Picard in 1986 to show Acadian farming. **Analyze:** How does Picard show that Acadians valued their land?

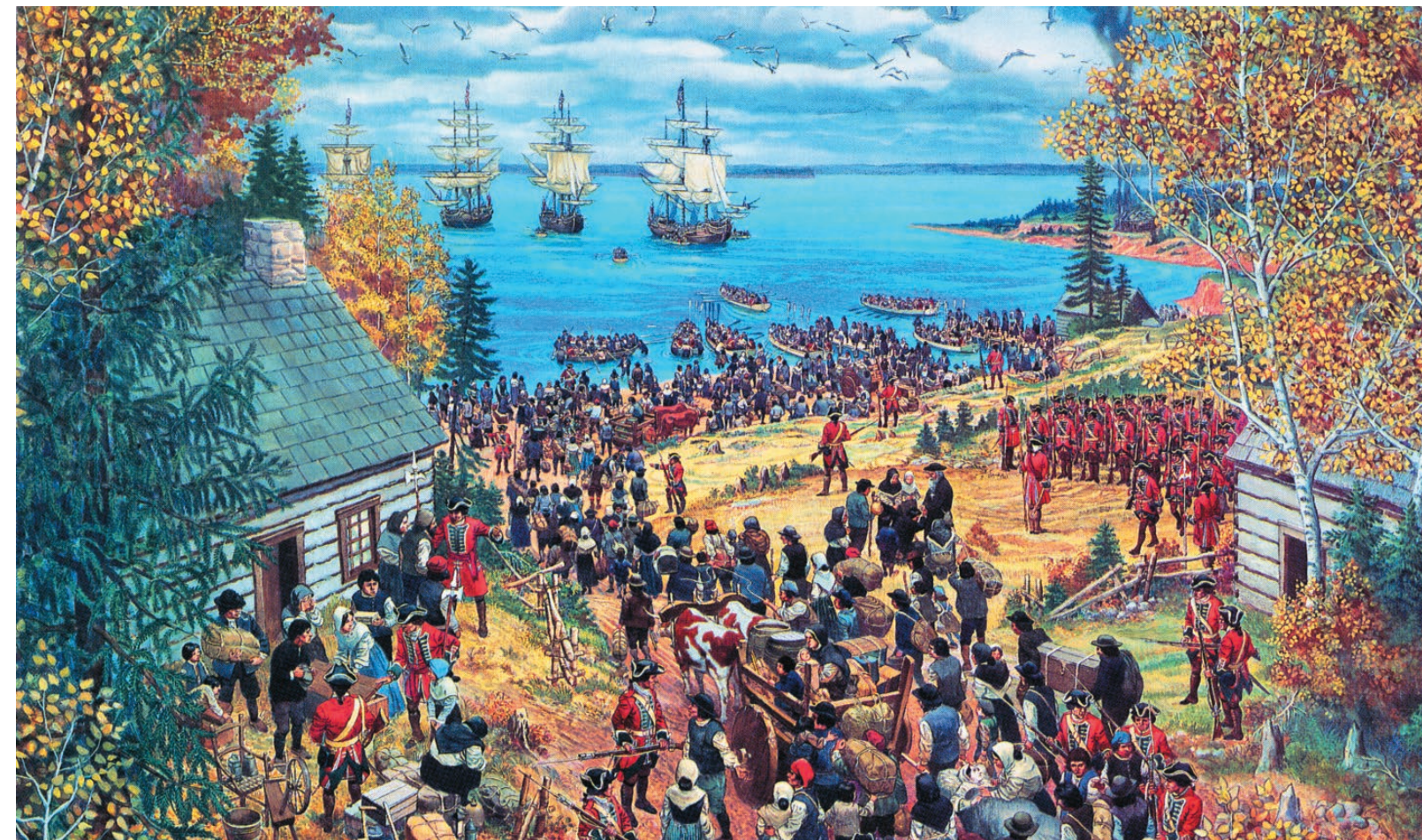


FIGURE 2.25 Parks Canada hired artist Lewis Parker to paint *The Expulsion of the Acadians* in 2011. Parks Canada provided him with historical information to help get the details accurate. **Analyze:** Based on the details in this painting, do you think the Acadians had any other choice but to leave? Why, or why not?

THE EXPULSION

As time went on, tensions grew between the Acadians and the British, just as they had grown between the French and the British in the rest of North America. France and Britain were on the verge of war. In 1755, Governor Charles Lawrence demanded that the Acadians sign an oath of allegiance. This meant that if Britain and France went to war, the Acadians would have to fight the French. The Acadians refused. In 1755, Britain ordered the expulsion of the Acadians.

Examine **Figure 2.25**, which depicts a scene from the Expulsion. What does this painting tell you about the experience of the Acadians? During the Expulsion, the Acadians were rounded up and deported. As many as 10 000 people were forced onto ships and sent to Europe or to distant British colonies in what is known as present-day United States.

Some Acadians managed to escape into the forest and find refuge with French or First Nations communities in the area. Others died of exposure or starvation while hiding. Nearly one-third of the people who were forced onto ships died before they reached their destination. In the terror and confusion, families were separated, and some never found each other again. After the Acadians were forcibly removed from their communities, the British burned down their homes and destroyed their farms so that the Acadians would have no reason to return. The Expulsion lasted for eight years, ending in 1763. What other factors might have led the British to decide to expel the Acadians from their homeland?

How might different groups have reacted to the Expulsion?



THE NEED FOR MORE LAND

The British population in North America was growing quickly in the 1700s. British settlers needed land—lots of land—so they could spread out and build more farms. The Ohio River Valley was inviting, but conflicts with the French and First Nations made it dangerous. Where else could British settlers go? The British hoped that Acadia offered a solution.

As it turned out, few British settlers wanted to accept Britain’s offer to settle in Acadia. One reason was that the Acadians were already living on the best farmland. The photo in **Figure 2.26** shows an area of Acadia called Grand Pré, which is now a World Heritage site. Why might a site like this be a World Heritage site? Some historians have argued that the Acadian Expulsion was a way for the British to claim Acadian farmland. By developing a very effective system of dikes to drain the saltwater marshes, the Acadians had created some of the most fertile and desirable farmland in North America.

Read **Figure 2.27**, which is a letter written by British Chief Surveyor Charles Morris to his superiors. In his letter, Morris hints at another reason why the British might have wanted to expel the Acadians. At the time, Catholics and Protestants did not get along. The British in North America were mostly Protestants. Sharing Acadia with French-speaking Catholics would not have been an attractive option for British settlers.

“Without their removal, I am sure it would be impossible any large number of Protestants can ever be settled in the Country... [The Catholic Acadians need to] be rooted out, and the most effectual way is to destroy all these [Acadian] settlements by burning down all their houses, cutting the dikes, and destroying all the grain now growing.”

— Charles Morris, British chief surveyor

FIGURE 2.26 In 2012, the United Nations declared the area of Grand Pré in Acadia to be Canada’s 16th World Heritage site. **Analyze:** What does the photo tell you about why the British might have wanted to settle on this land?

FIGURE 2.27 In 1753, Morris wrote this letter to his superiors about the difficulty of attracting British settlers to Acadia. **Analyze:** How might his prejudice have influenced the decision to expel the Acadians?

“My king [the King of France] and your king together distribute these lands [amongst themselves]; it is because of that they are now at peace, but for me, I can make neither alliance or peace with you.”

— Mi’kmaq First Nations

FIGURE 2.28 This excerpt is from a letter written in 1749 by the Mi’kmaq to Governor Cornwallis. It was originally translated into French by Father Maillard so that Cornwallis could read it. **Analyze:** What does this excerpt tell you about the perspective of the Mi’kmaq on British settlement?

FIGURE 2.29 In this 1934 painting, *The Founding of Halifax, 1749*, C.W. Jefferys shows the initial settlement at Halifax. **Analyze:** Why would British soldiers have to guard settlers as they built their homes?



THREATS TO BRITISH SECURITY

In the years leading up to the Expulsion, the British felt threatened by First Nations who were fighting to defend their lands against British settlement. They also felt threatened by the Acadians and the French, whom they did not trust.

FIRST NATIONS RESISTANCE

As you learned in Chapter 1, the Treaty of Utrecht gave land that was occupied by First Nations peoples to the British. The British viewed the land as belonging to them. The Mi’kmaq and Maliseet peoples (who were part of the Wabanaki Confederacy) were allies of the French, and they opposed British settlement on their land. They viewed the British occupation of Acadia as illegal.

In 1749, the British increased their presence in the region by building the fortress at Halifax and bringing in 2500 British settlers to begin farming. Since the Mi’kmaq and the Maliseet viewed the land as their own, how might they have reacted to such a scene? Read the quote in **Figure 2.28** by Mi’kmaq First Nations to Edward Cornwallis, the British governor of Nova Scotia and founder of Halifax. How might this letter have affected the relationship between the British and the Mi’kmaq?

The British tried to negotiate with the Mi’kmaq and Maliseet, but these First Nations just wanted the British to leave. The British and First Nations started to attack one another, hoping to drive each other away. During these attacks, the Mi’kmaq abducted more than a thousand British settlers, many of them children. To protect the settlers, British soldiers needed to increase their presence. Look at **Figure 2.29**, which shows British settlers building a community in Halifax while guarded by British soldiers. Cornwallis offered a reward to British settlers and soldiers for killing Mi’kmaq people—men, women, or children.

ACADIAN RESISTANCE

In the 1700s, the Acadians were viewed differently by different people. This is emphasized in **Figure 2.30**, in which a historian describes three different perspectives of the Acadians in 1748. What does the quote tell you about the Acadians' position in the mid-1700s?

The Acadians and the Mi'kmaq had close ties. There was much intermarriage and much cooperation between them. Even before the Expulsion, some Acadians resented the British presence just as much as their First Nations neighbours did, so they joined the First Nations in raids on British settlements.

Joseph Broussard (**Figure 2.31**) was one of the most active leaders of the Acadian resistance. Broussard's legendary acts earned the secret admiration of many Acadians. In 1751, Broussard led 60 Mi'kmaq and Acadian militia to attack the town of Dartmouth before dawn, when everyone was asleep. Broussard's forces killed 20 British villagers and burned down 36 homes. The attack became known as the Dartmouth Massacre. How would the British have viewed Broussard after this surprise attack? Broussard also helped lead a group of First Nations warriors and Acadian and French soldiers to defend Fort Beauséjour. **Figure 2.32** shows the historic remains of the fort today. The French built this fort in 1751 on land that both the French and the British had claimed. Do the actions of the Acadians at Fort Beauséjour support or challenge the French and British perspectives in **Figure 2.30**?



FIGURE 2.32 Fort Beauséjour National Historic Site of Canada is located in present-day New Brunswick. **Analyze:** Why do you think the remains of this fort are considered historically significant?

“In 1748, the Acadians considered themselves Acadian, the French considered them unreliable allies, and the English, unsatisfactory citizens.”

— Naomi Griffiths, historian

FIGURE 2.30 Griffiths wrote this comment in 1973 about the Acadians in 1748. **Analyze:** Why might the French have perceived the Acadians as “unreliable”?



FIGURE 2.31 Herb Roe created this oil painting of Joseph Broussard in 2009. **Analyze:** Based on what you read about Broussard, from whose perspective did the artist create this painting: the Acadians, the British, or First Nations?

THE FRENCH THREAT

Competition from the fur trade and the increasing number of French forts in the West made the British concerned about what the French would do in the East. They also suspected that France was actively encouraging Mi'kmaq and Acadian resistance to the British presence in Acadia. Read **Figure 2.33**, which is a letter written in secret by Jean-Louis Le Loutre, a French missionary in Acadia, to the French military in France.

According to this letter, was the British suspicion justified?

The British grew concerned about the number and location of the forts France was building on nearby French territories and in the disputed territory near Nova Scotia. The British thought that the Treaty of Utrecht gave Britain all the disputed territory shown on the map in **Figure 2.34**. The French disagreed. They built forts throughout these lands. Some of their forts were very close to Acadia.

“As we cannot openly oppose the English ventures, I think that we cannot do better than to incite the Indians to continue warring on the English; my plan is to persuade the Indians to send word to the English that they will not permit new [British] settlements to be made in Acadia.... I shall do my best to make it look to the English as if this plan comes from the Indians and that I have no part in it.”

— Jean-Louis Le Loutre, French missionary

FIGURE 2.33 Le Loutre wrote this letter to the French military headquarters in Paris, France, in 1749. **Analyze:** Why might the French want to encourage resistance but hide their own involvement?

FIGURE 2.34 This map shows the forts in Nova Scotia (Acadia) and surrounding area in 1751. **Analyze:** How does the number of British forts compare with the number of French forts?

Forts in Nova Scotia (Acadia) and Surrounding Area, 1751



THE ACADIAN GRAND YOUTH RALLY

After the Acadian Expulsion, the Acadian culture seemed doomed to disappear. However, the Acadian culture did survive through the efforts of Acadians who were dedicated to saving it.

The Youth Acadian Commission (YAC) is the youth arm of Société Nationale de l'Acadie (SNA), the organization that represents Acadian people on the global stage. The YAC is made up of young Acadians from all over Canada. They work together to build an interactive, global community of Acadian youth (**Figure 2.35**). By promoting the Acadian culture and French language among Acadian youth, they hope to strengthen the Acadian community.

Once every five years, the YAC holds a large gathering called the Grand Youth Rally so that Acadian youth can connect in person. The 2014 Grand Youth Rally was held in the town of Pohénégamook, Québec. About 300 Acadian and French youth from around the world travelled to the five-day event.



FIGURE 2.35 The Grand Youth Rally is meant to inspire youth like these to embrace their Acadian and French heritage.

They came from Atlantic Canada, Québec, Maine, and Louisiana, as well as France and Belgium. By taking part in a variety of artistic, cultural, and political activities—mostly in French—the youth were encouraged to think about the importance of the French language and to think about their futures. Talking about their shared past and speaking their

shared language helped the participants develop the bonds of community.

On social media, Céleste Godin calls herself a *Patriote Acadienne*. She is the youth advisor and interim vice-president of the SNA. She says that the Grand Youth Rally offers participants “a profound and unforgettable experience ... [so that]

they can develop strong ties between themselves ... that will allow them to take their place in today’s Acadia.”

“[THE GRAND YOUTH RALLY ALLOWS ACADIAN YOUTH TO] DEVELOP STRONG TIES BETWEEN THEMSELVES ... THAT WILL ALLOW THEM TO TAKE THEIR PLACE IN TODAY’S ACADIA.”

A CALL TO ACTION

1. Why would the expulsion of the Acadians be historically significant to Acadian youth? Is it historically significant to all Canadians? Should it be? Explain why, or why not.
2. What are some ways you could connect to a cultural community?

THE AFTERMATH OF THE EXPULSION

The Acadians who were deported had difficulty settling in the British colonies where they were sent. The most successful settlement was in New Orleans, Louisiana. The people who lived there were French-speaking Catholics. By 1785, nearly 2600 of the Acadians who had been deported from Acadia ended up in New Orleans. There, the locals began referring to them as Cajuns. In 1764, the British allowed the Acadians to return to Acadia.

Nearly 3000 Acadians returned to their homeland. By then, however, their land had been given to British settlers. Many of the returnees settled in what is now known as New Brunswick. Why would so many Acadians return to a place where they had been treated so badly and where many British settlers still lived?

THE STORY OF EVANGELINE

The story of the Expulsion was told and retold over generations. It has become part of the Acadian identity. In 1847, American Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the epic poem *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie*. The poem tells the tale of a fictional Acadian who spends her life searching for her lost love, Gabriel. The poem became very popular. Since then, the fictional Evangeline has been brought to life in countless paintings, statues, plays, and movies. What do these representations, like the statue of Evangeline in **Figure 2.36**, tell us about the popularity and importance of the story of Evangeline to the Acadians?

Does the Expulsion mark a turning point toward progress or decline?



FIGURE 2.36 This statue of Evangeline was erected in Grand-Pré in 1920, in front of the Memorial Church that was built to memorialize the Expulsion. **Analyze:** Why do you think Evangeline is depicted in this way and in front of a Catholic church?

CHECK-IN

1. **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** Why was the expulsion of the Acadians a historically significant event? To justify your answer, explain who it affected and if they were affected in a deep and lasting way.
2. **CAUSE AND CONSEQUENCE** List the causes of the Acadian Expulsion. Include conflicts, tensions, circumstances, and actions that influenced the course of events. What do you think was the trigger cause? Use evidence to help you explain your choice.
3. **CONTINUITY AND CHANGE** The British made drastic changes to create the colony that they wanted in Acadia. What might have been the benefits to the British, the French, First Nations, Acadians, and Canada today if the British had allowed the Acadians to continue living in Acadia?
4. **EVALUATE AND DRAW CONCLUSIONS** Consider the question on page 64: Were the British justified in expelling the Acadians? Work with a partner to determine an answer to this question, using evidence presented in the chapter.