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New Brunswick

Should Acadian expulsion be considered genocide? New committee will decide

In the 1700s, thousands of Acadians were forced off their land by British settlers

Lauren Bird · CBC News · Posted: Jun 17, 2019 3:00 AM MST | Last Updated: June 17, 2019



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The population of Pointe-Sainte-Anne, an Acadian settlement in modern-day Fredericton, likely grew as a result of the Acadian Expulsion in the 1700s. (Library and Archives Canada)

The Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick is forming a committee to look at whether the expulsion of Acadians should be considered a genocide.

In the mid-1700s, about 10,000 Acadians were forced off their land by the British. They were sent to Europe, French colonies in the Caribbean and the southern United States.

Whether that qualifies as a genocide has been brought up numerous times over the years.

The lobby group made the decision to look into the controversial issue during its annual general meeting over the weekend.

"It's just an event that has been so important in our national identity or our cultural identity," said Eric Dow, of the Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick.

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Because of that, he said it's important people know how to describe it.

"The fact that we're not sure what terms are the most precise in describing these historical events, makes it so that there's still a need felt within the community to keep discussing the subject."

Getting closure

The hope is that the new committee can settle on appropriate language to describe the expulsion.

Chantal Richard, a professor in the University of New Brunswick's French department, said the time is right for an in depth look at the question.

"It's important for many people, specifically Acadians, because it may allow for some closure," said Richard, who is also an Acadian.

"And it's something that we seem to keep coming back to."



The British burning Grimross, modern day Gagetown, in 1758, just months before the destruction of St. Anne's Point. (National Gallery of Canada)

The creation of the committee comes just weeks after a national inquiry named the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women [a "Canadian genocide."](#)

"Every situation is unique," said Dow. "And if we coin these types of terms it's ... to be able to express ourselves in the most concise or precise way possible. I think that there's no harm in analyzing the question to see if the term does fit or not."

Dow says there's no timeline yet for when the committee work will start. He expects the group will be made up of experts in legal, political and historical fields, inside and outside the Acadian community.

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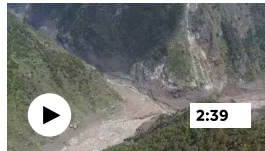
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