

Acadian New Englander Untold Story

Acadian New Englanders are often left out of the history books. Sadly, very few are fully self-aware of their heritage unless they have taken a modern genetic test and rigorously studied their ancestry. This process could take years.

Twenty-five percent of New Englanders in the "Valley States" are of Acadian descent. Many of us have visited places such as Acadia National Park, never realizing that this place is named after our ancestry. This experience is heartbreaking. We come to recognize how small our population is today, as it was brutally halved, during the British conquest and expulsion from our native homeland and settlements.

Acadians had their own society, language, culture, and foods. Many people of Acadian descent in New England are there because of the forced expulsion. This history was purposely buried. Those responsible did not want Acadians to know their history and intended for it to be forgotten within just a few generations. This erasure continued.

Sadly, Acadians continued to be targeted by various groups thereafter. Acadians were marginalized, punished for speaking their own language, separated from their families, enslaved, and many perished. This history was downplayed and rarely told. For this reason, many of us today embark on our own journeys of discovery, which are often independent and solitary.

There are few organizations or associations in America dedicated specifically to supporting Acadians in the way that other communities have established organizations to preserve and promote their own histories and cultures. Today, Acadians make up one of the smallest populations in North America, despite their native historical roots in the region. Other Indigenous peoples and communities have received various legal protections, land rights, and representation. Acadians, on the other hand, endured generations of hardship. They were forced into logging labor, indentured servitude, and faced discrimination and hostility from protestant groups including the Ku Klux Klan.

Today, the legacy of the Acadians continues through those who know deep in their hearts and spirits who they truly are, through the memories and traditions passed down, their love of the sea, and a yearning for a spiritual story that is often absent from America's history and churches. Still, the reality that so much of this history has been kept from us is a sad, troubling, and heartbreaking reality. We realize that many of our relatives who are no longer with us will never know the full story. There are two sides to this journey. For some, the story is simply too heartbreaking, and confronting generations of loss and displacement may cause profound emotional suffering.

With today's political climate, many Acadians feel a renewed sense of uncertainty. The United States is experiencing historically high levels of immigration, both documented and undocumented, while many service members and law enforcement personnel continue carrying out responsibilities that are not only underappreciated but also are vilified and targeted. Public activist rhetoric, overseas wars, and domestic political conflict have worsened social divisions and created additional strains on an already burdened American population. We continue to face these modern challenges while doing our best to protect our communities, families, culture, and heritage. We have come to realize that much more can be done to support the American people, including communities such as the Acadians. **Are you Acadian? Has your family's history been lost through time? It is long overdue for the *Acadian* story to be told.**