

time they cleared and worked the land and established homes, families, parishes, communities, alongside the Mi'kmaq. They created a life for themselves in this new world and they did so believing in better things to come.

We, the people of Prince Edward Island, can never forget how the deportation affected thousands of our own, thousands. We must never forget how it destroyed families and effectively wiped entire communities off the map. One can only imagine how this forced expulsion permeated the collective consciousness of the Acadian people. But from suffering comes resilience and strength of character. And from adversity, values like courage and perseverance take root.

Aujourd'hui et tout au long de l'année, nous commémorons le 250^e anniversaire de la déportation des Acadiens et Acadiennes de l'Île. Cependant, nous célébrons également la vitalité de la communauté acadienne et francophone, sa culture et son patrimoine.

Today and throughout the year, we will be commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Deportation of Island Acadians. But we'll also be celebrating the vitality of the Acadian and Francophone community, its culture and heritage.

Madame la Présidente, nous ne pouvons répéter assez souvent que la communauté acadienne et francophone fait partie intégrante du tissu social de notre province.

Madam Speaker, it cannot be said enough that the Acadian and Francophone community is an integral part of the social fabric of our province.

Nos ancêtres – peu importe leurs origines ou leur langue – représentent les nombreux fils qui, une fois tissés ensemble, ont formé un tissu social don't nous pouvons être fiers.

Our ancestors - whatever their origin or language may be - represent the many threads that once woven together, create this social fabric of which we can proud.

Aujourd'hui, la communauté acadienne et francophone se trouve principalement dans six régions, d'un bout à l'autre de l'Île: Prince-Ouest, Evangéline, Summerside, Rustico, le Grand Charlottetown et Kings-Est.

Today, the Acadian and Francophone

community can be found mainly in six regions, from one end of the Island to the other: West Prince, Evangeline, Summerside, Rustico, Greater Charlottetown and Eastern Kings.

Individuals who have French as a first language represent close to 5% of the population and almost a quarter of the entire Island population is of Acadian descent. Our province, as a whole, has embraced the French language with 40% of our schools offering French immersion programs. In fact, PEI can boast of having the third most bilingual population in the country. That is the social fabric we celebrate.

I referenced earlier the Acadian culture and heritage. It would be remiss of me if I didn't acknowledge the Acadian Museum in Miscouche. The museum plays a leadership role in preserving and proudly displaying the history of Island Acadians. The Acadian Museum was first opened in 1964. The original building made way for a brand new construction that was officially opened in April 1992. The museum embraces its mission: to acquire, preserve, study, and interpret artifacts relating to the Island's Acadian heritage from 1720 to the present.

The museum's popularity as well as its collection have grown over the years, along with its involvement in fostering pride in the Acadian culture and heritage. The museum does more than catalogue artifacts and put on exhibits. Among other events, it routinely hosts public lectures that generate significant interest. The museum truly lives up to its objectives of raising awareness of the Acadian culture and heritage among Islanders. In doing so, it also plays a notable role in not only the survival but the full development and enhancement of the Acadian and Francophone community of PEI.

For all those interested in learning more about their Acadian ancestry, the museum's genealogy centre contains a wealth of information on Acadian families. The museum's permanent collection features six major paintings by artist Claude Picard that depict the adoption of the Acadian national symbols.

It was actually in Miscouche that the second Acadian National Convention was held in 1884. Delegates from across the Maritimes attended. It was during this

historic conference, right here on PEI, that the Acadian national symbols were chosen: the Acadian flag, anthem, emblem and motto.

Cette année, de juin à décembre, le Musée acadien présentera une exposition commémorant le 250^e anniversaire de la déportation des Acadiens et Acadiennes de l'Île. L'exposition mettra en vedette des costumes et des cartes historiques. L'une des cartes historiques affichera les peuplements acadiens selon les données du recensement de 1752, le dernier recensement avant la Déportation.

This year, from June to December, the Acadian Museum will present an exhibit commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Deportation of Island Acadians. This exhibit will include historical costumes and maps, one of which will feature the location of Acadian settlements on the Island based on the 1752 census. This was the last census on record, prior to the Deportation.

L'exposition mettra également en vedette des artefacts datant du dix-huitième siècle, des peuplements de Port La Joye et de Havre Saint-Pierre. Georges Arsenault qui est avec nous aujourd'hui, un historien insulaire bien connu et Lucie Bellemare, une artiste locale, ont contribué leurs talents et leurs expertises à l'élaboration de l'exposition.

The exhibit will also feature artifacts of the eighteenth century from the Port La Joye and Havre Saint-Pierre settlements. Georges Arsenault a well known Island historian who is with us here today and Lucie Bellemare, a local artist, have contributed their talents and expertise to the development of the exhibit.

Another example of an institution that takes history and heritage very seriously is the Farmer's Bank located in Rustico, within my own riding. While the Evangeline region is sometimes referred to as the heart of the Acadian and Francophone community, Rustico can be considered the cradle of l'Acadie on PEI.

Rustico was one of the first Acadian communities established after the Treaty of Paris, in 1763, when Acadians started trickling back to the Island. In fact, Rustico is the oldest Acadian community continuously inhabited by Acadians on Prince Edward Island. According to the 1798