

Reflection on our Acadian identity (1)

**James
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It is hard to put one's finger on just when or where I became interested about my Acadian history and heritage. Some of those feelings go back to when I was a young boy. Most of the feelings I have are of a personal nature, a sense of where I belong, who I am, why I do things the way I do. I know I am not unique in this interest, many people the world over search out their ancestors for many different reasons. Someone told me once that genealogy is the world's second most popular hobby, next to stamp collecting and ahead of coin collecting. I personally like the Latter-Day Saints' wording; they call it «Family History Research», for without the history, all we have are names, dates and places. There is

so so much more to the story.

One thing that was a direct influence was that I was from a French-Acadian family, but nobody could speak French. My family would visit my grandparents in Summerside where French was spoken; we would visit my mom's Uncle Georges in Mont-Carmel, bringing my grandmother along. They all spoke French there. My father's parents also spoke French. In fact, my paternal grandfather John B., as he was called, spoke and wrote both English and French fluently despite only finishing Grade 2 or 3. My maternal grandfather only learned English in the late 1930's and early 1940's. His young daughters would read to him from their schoolbooks. I did not find this lack of French language skills unique or strange. We were «French» but spoke English. We were like the relatives whom Georges Arsenault spoke about : «we were French but did not speak the language». Where we lived at the time of my youth, it would have been better to speak Ukrainian or Inuit. There was no French language training in the schools I went to. There was no opportunity to learn even the basics of grammar and pronunciation. There was no one with whom to practise conversational French.

Our family were Acadian Islanders, and my parents somehow sought out other misplaced Islanders

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La rédaction : cet article est le 2^e sous la rubrique touchant à l'identité et à la nationalité acadiennes : voir Gordon Lavoie, *Réflexion sur notre identité acadienne*, *La Petite Souvenance*, no 17, p. 37.)