

nearly annihilated an entire people. From our island alone there were thousands of Acadians who were deported, and a great many of them died en route to an unwanted destination. Some managed to survive either by seeking refuge in northern New Brunswick or by going into hiding on the Island, and we can never forget that many of those founding families would never return to this beautiful island they called home since the early 1770s.

I had the opportunity to attend a very significant event in the Belfast-Pownal Bay district this summer when the Belfast Historical Society, along with the Caledonian Club of Prince Edward Island, recognized the contribution of Acadian people to this province, and particularly to that area of the province, an area that I travel through every day going back and forth. For present-day Islanders we might forget that at one time that area between Pinette to Belfast was actually a French parish - the parish of St. - I can't read my own writing - St. Pointe de la Pointe Prime, Point Prim Parish.

My French is not so good, but think about it. These farms in the Belfast-Pownal Bay area were actually carved out of the virgin forest by the French settlers. They put their heart and their soul and their blood and sweat and tears into developing this farmland. They built homes for their families. They developed agricultural crops. They built fishing boats. They settled this part of the province, and other parts of the province, but this is one in particular. So the French parish was, through the deportation, really annihilated. It was written off, later to be settled by, of course, Scottish and Irish families who came to Prince Edward Island.

But it was great that it was the Caledonian Club of Prince Edward Island and the Belfast Historical Society that led this recognition, along with the St. Thomas Aquinas Society and others, to recognize the contribution that French people made to this province.

Now at that celebration there were many people who made contributions. I'm thinking of Vernon Gaudet from Tignish, obviously of French descent, who floated down a large granite stone on which a plaque was mounted at the provincial park,

so that forever and a day we will remember the little French cemetery beside the church that, in fact, this area was settled and populated by the French settlers, by these Acadians who were deported from Prince Edward Island.

We should never forget the plight of the Acadians, and it's important for us, on this 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to remember the great contribution Acadians have made. It is tangible proof that governments have not always been supportive of the Acadian community and their culture. When Canada was founded, linguistic duality and the contribution of our founding peoples was recognized, and while this is a historic moment, government policies and government services were not as eager to embrace this. But the reality was that Canada became a bilingual and bi-cultural country, and that is now at the centre of how we define our country. This vision of Canada which was articulated in the 1960s has defined federal official languages policy in the last 40 years.

While there's much that I don't agree with that Prime Minister Trudeau was responsible for, I would give him credit in terms of his contribution to bilingual policy in the country. The federal government decided that Anglophones and Francophones should receive government services in their language, and we have worked hard on Prince Edward Island to expand services in the French language in this province, to encourage that vision towards bilingual services, so that whether you're Acadian or Francophone or English or Scottish or whatever, that you can have services in your native tongue. I think most governments in all stripes of the (Indistinct) and across the country now live by this realization, and today, we are committed to supporting and enhancing the development of Acadian and Francophone communities.

Our policies have been changed in the area of French language services in the 1980s with the right to French education, and later on, with the *French Language Services Act*. Today, the Acadian and Francophone culture is vibrant here on Prince Edward Island.

The community spirit is strong and dynamic, and I believe we've made great strides in

committing to support the Acadian and Francophone community and maintaining, for future generations, linguistic duality on this territory, and this undeniably contributes to the enhancement of Island society. So I know others want to speak to this resolution, and I'm pleased to move it in the hope that other members will join the government in recognizing the great contribution of Acadian people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Speaker:** The hon. Member for Evangeline-Miscouche, to second the motion.

**Mr. Arsenault:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to second this resolution. This is an excellent way to acknowledge the wrongdoings that were imposed on the Acadians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and I thank the Premier for moving this resolution.

In July 1755 Governor Charles Lawrence and his Halifax council summoned Acadian representatives to come before them. The Acadians were asked again to sign an oath of allegiance that included taking up arms against British enemies. When the Acadians refused, the council ordered that all French-speaking residents of the English colony be expelled. Acadian neutrality had been accepted in the past, but this time, for a variety of reasons, the British carried out their threats.

Acadians refused to take sides and sign the oath of allegiance to England. For one thing, the new war between France and England wasn't going that well for the English, and they had just been stung by a bad defeat in the Ohio Valley. Also, Lawrence and his council were mostly military men, so in their eyes, people could either be allies or enemies, but not neutral. Another sore point was the good relationship that the Acadians enjoyed with the Mi'kmaq, who were hostile to the English, and the English also looked enviously at the fertile land occupied by the Acadians and wanted it for themselves.

The Acadians were scattered along this coast and many made the trip inland to what is now called Louisiana. At least 10,000 Acadians from the Maritime