

The Acadian Expulsion: a Canadian Tragedy

The British decision, in 1755, to expel allegedly disloyal Acadian (French) settlers from the Bay of Fundy region is a blot on Canada's image as a welcoming land where immigrants could make new beginnings. By 1800 many Acadians had returned to Maritime Canada, and today the experience still resonates through story, song and memorials.

To start this Maptour, navigate to the chapter page for:

Acadian Deportation and Return, 1750-1803

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Acadian Deportation and Return, 1750-1803

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Historical Atlas of Canada Online Learning Project' website. The page title is 'Acadian Deportation and Return, 1750-1803'. The main content area features a map of the Atlantic region of Canada, with a red box highlighting the 'Acadian Deportation' area. Below the map is a timeline from 1700 AD to 2000 AD. To the right of the map, there is an 'Overview' section with text describing the British decision in 1755 to expel Acadians. Below the overview, there are 'Interactive Maps' and 'Tables' sections. The 'Interactive Maps' section includes two map tour options: 'Acadian Population Distribution, 1750-1803' and 'The Acadian Deportation Experience, 1755-1785'. The 'Tables' section includes a table titled 'Acadian Population: 1763, 1800'. Below the main content, there are 'Notes' and 'More Resources' sections with links to related content.

Historical Atlas of Canada Online Learning Project - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Acadian Deportation and Return, 1750-1803

Preview: Overview of this chapter

Population Distribution

Acadian Deportation

1700 AD 1750 1800 1850 1900 1950 2000 AD

Overview

The British decision, in 1755, to expel allegedly disloyal Acadian (French) settlers from the Bay of Fundy region is a blot on Canada's image as a welcoming land where immigrants could make new beginnings. By 1800 many Acadians had returned to Maritime Canada, and today the experience still resonates through story, song and memorials. [More of](#)

Interactive Maps [★ Take a map tour of](#)

[Acadian Population Distribution, 1750-1803](#)

[The Acadian Deportation Experience, 1755-1785](#)

Tables

[Acadian Population: 1763, 1800](#)

Notes

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[Essay from the printed Atlas of](#)

More Resources

[Related resources on this site of](#)

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Internet

A Marshland Habitat



Try This:

- Open the interactive map "Acadian Population Distribution: 1750, 1803."
- Click on the "Zoom to" drop-down menu and select "Bay of Fundy."



Notice ...

- Marshlands everywhere supported settlement, but not all settlement was in marshlands.



Try This:

- Under LAYER CONTROLS, turn off the checkbox for "Small settlements, 1750" and turn on the checkbox for "Forts, 1750."



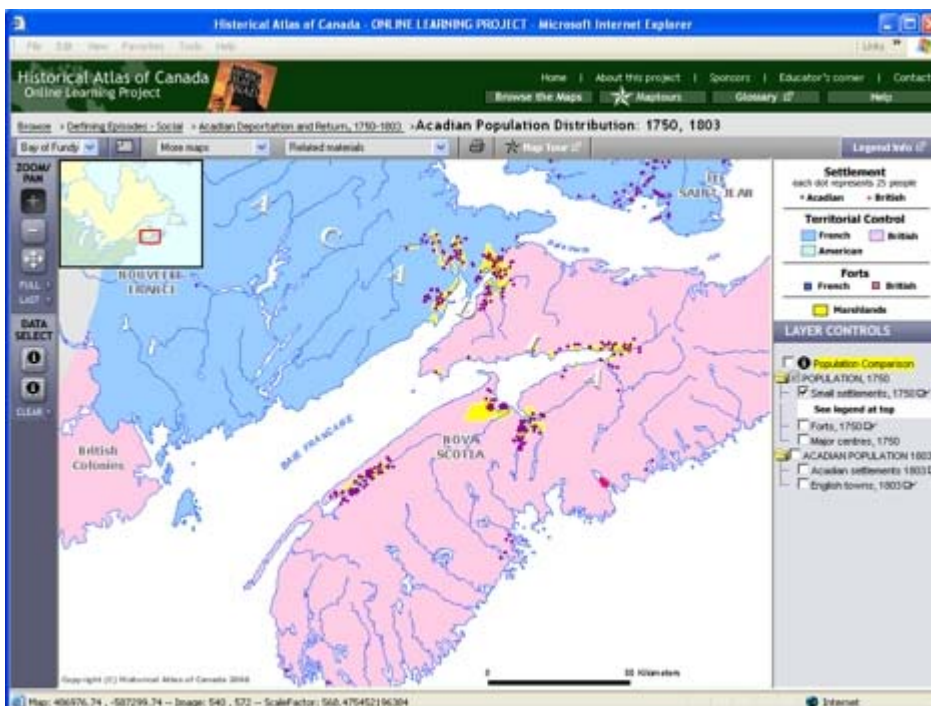
Notice ...

- Military fortifications seem not to have shown much direct interest in the people occupying the marshlands.



Consider!

- Current population had experience elsewhere (perhaps in Europe) living in marshy conditions.
- It may have been cheaper to build dikes against the sea than to cut trees to produce farmable land.
- Survival came from the sea, not from the land.
- The far-flung empires of France and Britain were in a power struggle here.



A Half Century of Displacement



Try This:

- Keep open the map "Acadian Population Distribution: 1750, 1803."
- On the ZOOM/PAN toolbar, click on the "FULL" button to zoom out to the maximum area of the map.
- Under LAYER CONTROLS, turn on the checkboxes for "POPULATION, 1750."



Notice ...

- The label "Acadia" stretches across both French and British territory.
- Acadian population is concentrated around the Bay of Fundy, Île Saint-Jean and Île Royale.



Try This:

- Under LAYER CONTROLS, turn on the checkbox for "ACADIAN POPULATION 1803."
- Cycle back and forth between the checkboxes for "POPULATION, 1750" and "ACADIANS, 1803", the 1750 and 1803 maps, watching for changes in the places Acadians are living.
- Then turn on the checkbox for "Population Comparison" as well.



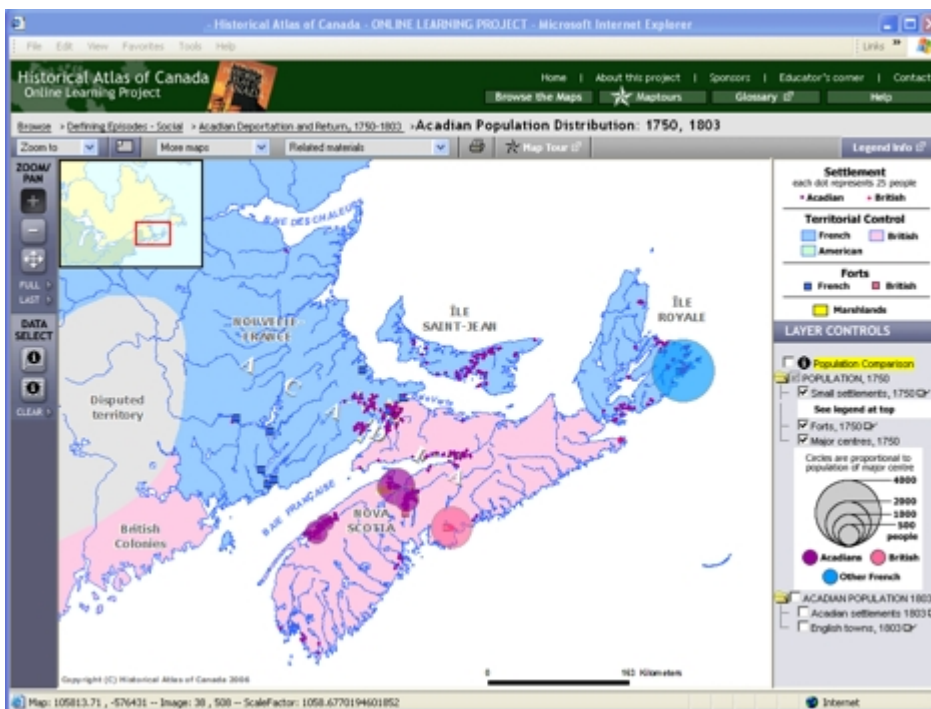
Notice ...

- Bar graphs show decreases in settled areas and increases in unsettled areas over the half century.



Consider!


- The distribution of people has vastly changed over this half period.
- This was an area of conflict and substantial civil disruption.



The Importance of Names



Try This:

- **Keep open** the map "Acadian Population Distribution: 1750, 1803."
- Under LAYER CONTROLS, **turn off** the checkbox for "Population Comparison."
- Under LAYER CONTROLS, **turn on** the checkboxes for "POPULATION, 1750."
- **Click on the tag icon**  following "Small settlements, 1750" to **turn on the place names**.




Notice ...

- French-sounding names predominate, and many of them are quite unlike familiar French.
- English names (shown in red) are scarce even in territory under British control.



Try This:

- Under LAYER CONTROLS, **turn on** the checkboxes for "ACADIAN POPULATION, 1803."
- **Click on the tag icons**  following "Acadian settlements, 1803" and "English towns, 1803" to **turn on their labels**.



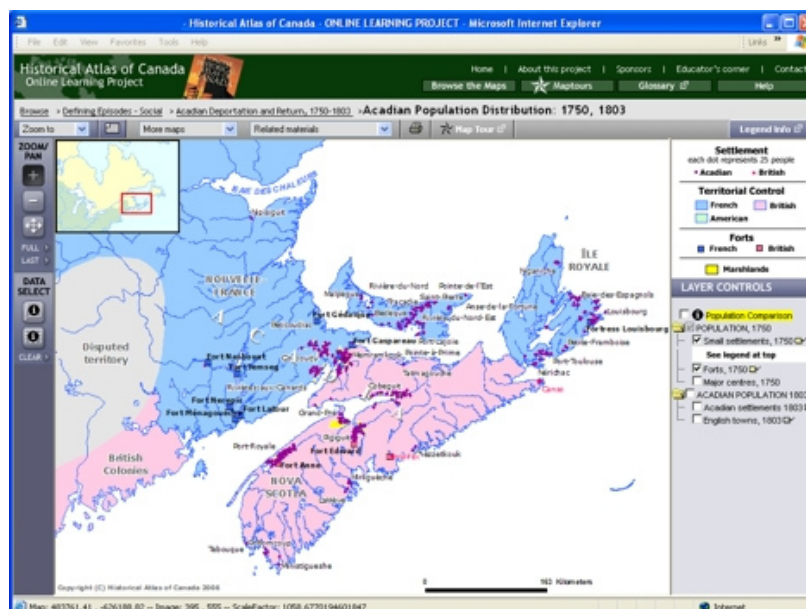
Notice ...

- The label "Acadia," used in 1750, is gone in 1803.
- The map is entirely "British pink."
- The two large islands and various water bodies bear English names. (The Latin, "Nova Scotia," survives!)
- French names persist in the villages and outlying areas.



Consider!

- It was French people who gave place names to this region, previously occupied by Native peoples.
- Through its place names, this area demonstrates defiance.
- The ancestors of the Rankins and Natalie McMaster had yet to come to Cape Breton Island.
- Place-naming tells a great deal about society and identity in a region.



French Defenders



Try This:

- Keep open the map "Acadian Population Distribution: 1750, 1803."
- Under LAYER CONTROLS, turn on the checkboxes for "POPULATION 1750."
- On the ZOOM/PAN toolbar, click on the zoom in button and use it and the pan tool to zoom in to "Île Saint-Jean" and "Île Royale."



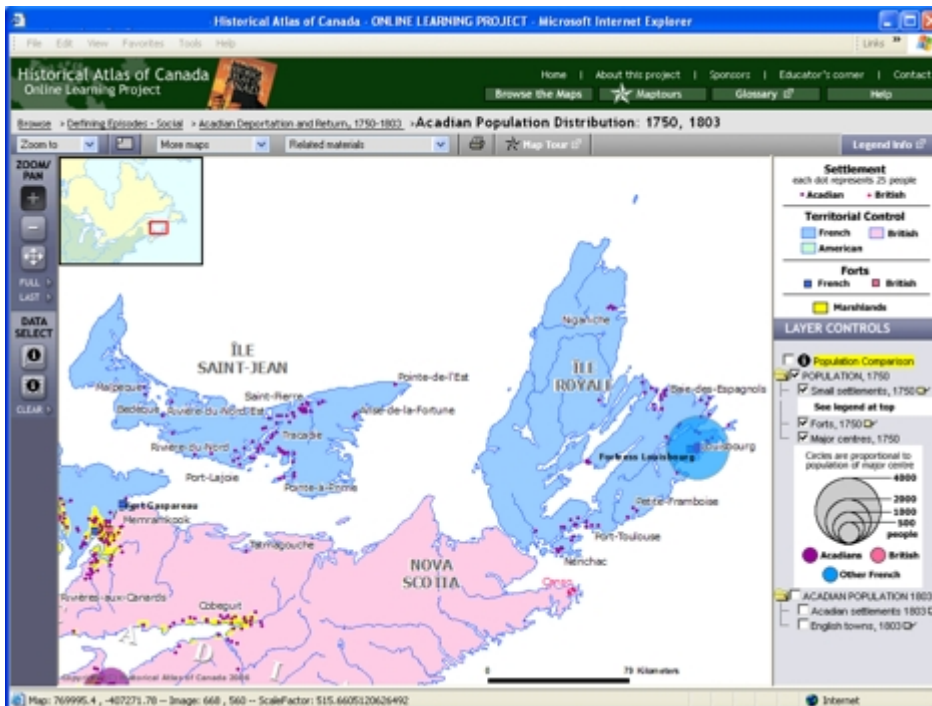
Notice ...

- A huge population of "Other French" is concentrated at Louisbourg, shown as a fortified site.



Consider!

- The Acadians were a small minority of the population recorded at the Fortress of Louisbourg.
- Louisbourg was the military heart of Acadia.



The Expulsion



Try This:

- Open the interactive map "The Acadian Deportation Experience, 1755-1785."
- On the **DATA SELECT** toolbar, click on the **Table** tool, and drag a rectangle over some of the pink flowing arrows on the map.



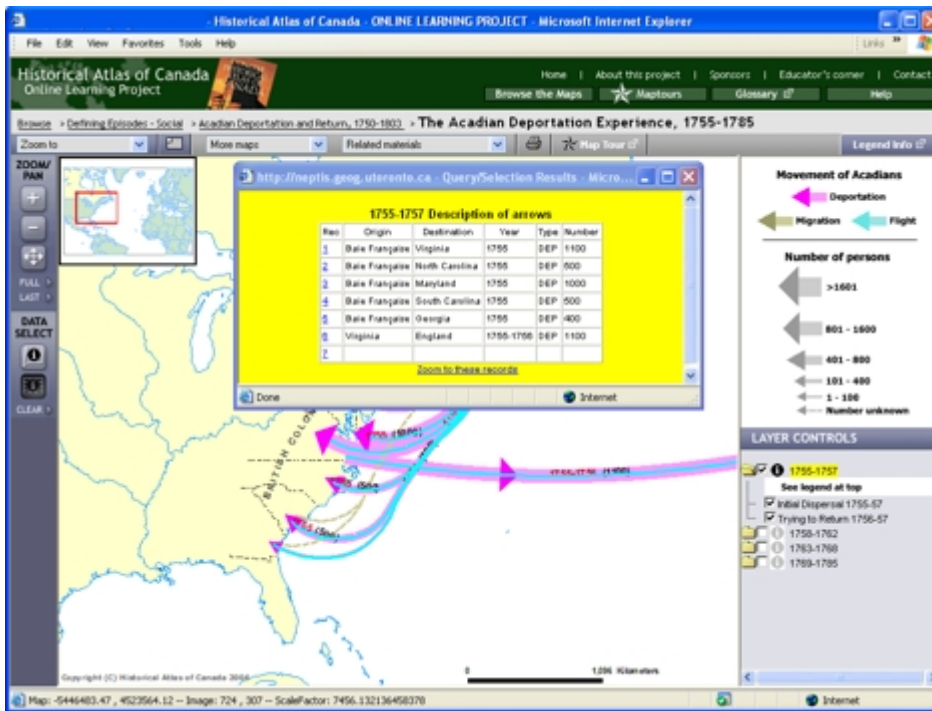
Notice ...

- A table opens, recording the origin, destination, and numbers of the thousands of Acadians who were deported from the Bay of Fundy (Baie française) region to the British colonies to the south.
- Small numbers of Acadians fled to New France (Canada.)



Consider!

- French people sent to English places must have experienced severe culture shock.
- The Acadians were pushed out, not pulled elsewhere by their own choice. See Notes - "Text from the printed Atlas" for a further explanation of the experience.



The Homing Instinct



Try This:

- Keep open the map for "The Acadian Deportation Experience, 1755-1785."
- Close the data box and click on "CLEAR" to erase the highlighted flowlines.
- Under LAYER CONTROLS, turn off the checkbox for "Initial Dispersal, 1755-1757" and turn on the checkbox for "Trying to Return 1756-57."
- On the DATA SELECT toolbar, click on the Identify tool, and then click on an arrow on the map to pop up its information.



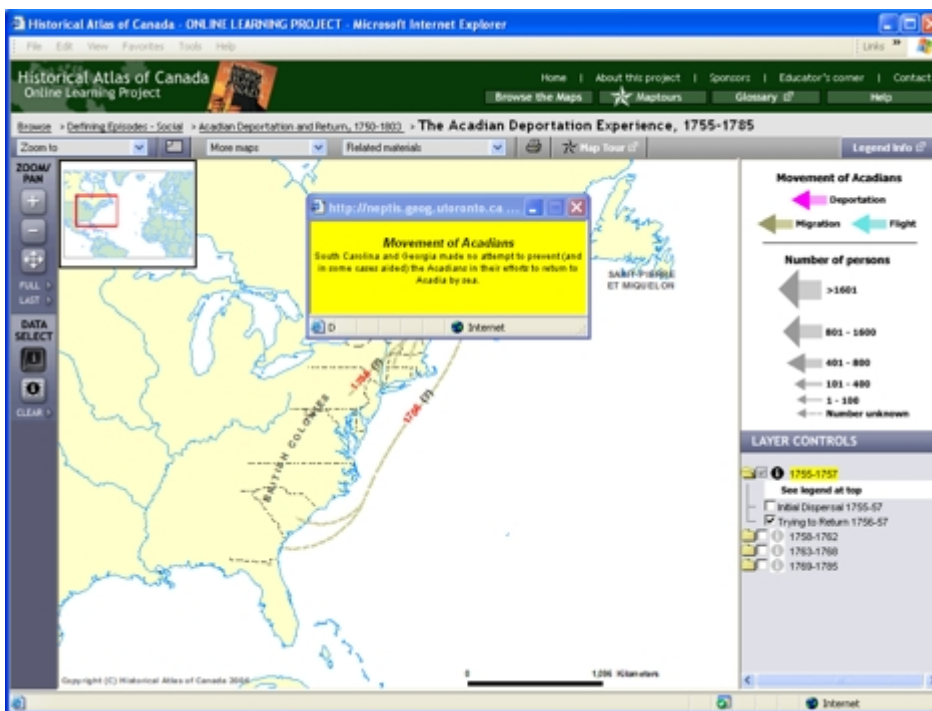
Notice ...

- A trickle of deported Acadians underwent further migration, seeking to return to the Bay of Fundy region.



Consider!

- The instinct among Acadians to "go home" was strong.



Discovering New Orleans



Try This:

- Keep open the map "The Acadian Deportation Experience, 1755-1785."
- Under LAYER CONTROLS, turn on the checkbox for "1763-68" and then turn off all the checkboxes except "Further wanderings 1763-68."
- Make sure your view includes both Québec City and New Orleans.



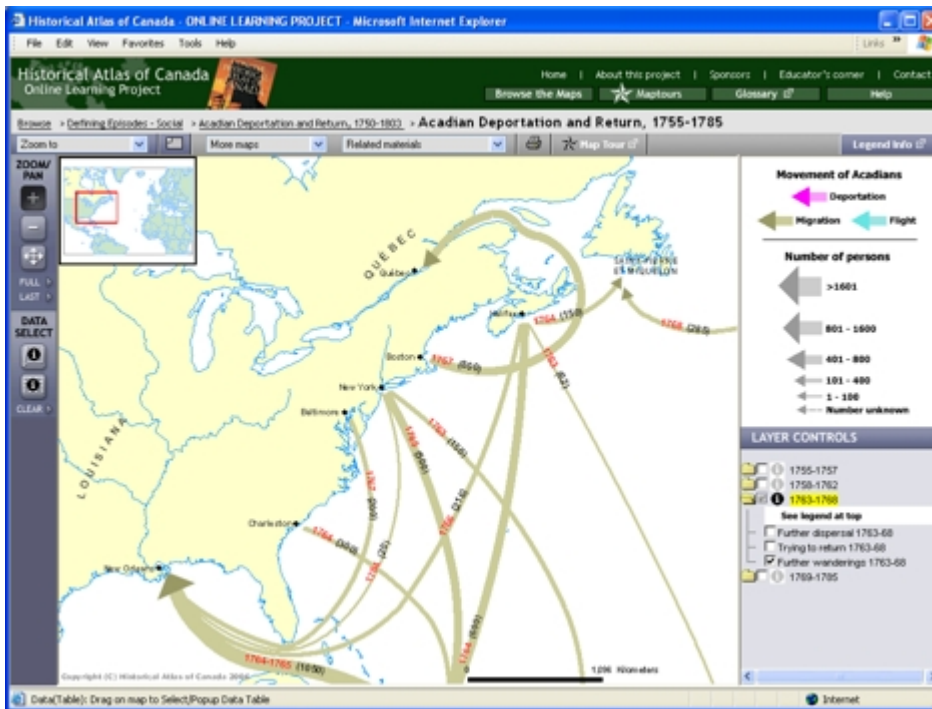
Notice ...

- "Nouvelle-France" is now called "Québec."
- Wanderings extended throughout the Atlantic Ocean and West Indies.
- Many wandering Acadians converged on New Orleans.



Consider!

- French settlements in the St. Lawrence valley may have lost some of their appeal for Acadian refugees.
- Acadians were getting advice on a place that held promise of being culturally receptive.
- Once uprooted, displaced people have trouble putting down roots in a new locale, and are easily displaced again.



Some Accounting



Try This:

- Click on the "Related Materials" drop-down menu and select "Table - Acadian population: 1763, 1800."



Notice ...

- The recorded population of Acadians appears to have nearly doubled in less than forty years.
- Few Acadians remained in what had become (in 1783) the United States.



Consider!

- Precise population numbers are impossible to know in the 18th century.
- 1763 was the height of the Acadian dispersal. By 1800 Acadians had found their way into the French-speaking world or vacant areas where they could once again express their Frenchness.

These are just a few of the questions that these maps and data can address. If you have ideas for other questions, please use our Feedback page to send them in, and they may be posted on the website in the future.

