

Introduction

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Introduction

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF *ACADIENSIS* is devoted to papers on Atlantic Canada since 1939 presented at the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference in May 2005. While the conference covered a much broader temporal range, the number of papers on topics relating to the region's recent past was particularly noteworthy. Also worth noting is that the papers published here and many other papers presented at the conference were written by graduate students or recent graduates. This bodes well for the future of Atlantic Canada Studies as does the large attendance at the Fredericton meeting.

Where the field of Atlantic Canada Studies is heading is less clear. In "A Note on Region" prepared for the Atlantic Canada Workshop held in Halifax in 1997, Ian McKay remarked on the tremendous vitality and diversity of scholarship on Atlantic Canada.¹ This continues to be the case as young scholars take up new approaches to the past without abandoning earlier ones. In this issue, Corey Slumkoski and Stephen Henderson add more complexity to the long-standing regional critique of the liberal order with respect to transportation policy in Canada during and immediately following the Second World War. Newer directions are signaled in Marie Thompson's analysis of the impact of a 1972 CBC television program, *Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*, on the evolution of Celtic music in the region, which raises important questions about the construction of past and present cultural identities. In her exploration of immigration policy in New Brunswick in the post-war period, Heather Steel documents the deeply rooted economic and cultural contexts that shaped the approaches of both federal and provincial governments. Similarly, the studies by Nancy Janovicek on the administration of a women's shelter in Moncton and Ausra Burns on the relocation of the Mushuau Innu from Davis Inlet underscore the importance of historical context in negotiating new ways of living in Atlantic Canada. This issue also includes presentations by several Canadian scholars who were asked to reflect on the meaning of region as we move forward in the 21st century. While the written comments fail to capture the lively discussion that the panel inspired, they suggest that region as a concept still has legs – although at a political level those legs seem to be rather shaky.

The conference also served as an occasion for reflecting on two major anniversaries: the French settlement at Île Ste-Croix in 1604 and *le grand dérangement* that began in 1755. Naomi Griffiths and Maurice Basque, two of Canada's foremost scholars of Acadian history, were invited to an evening viewing and discussion of *Life After Ste-Croix*, a film produced by Ronald Rudin and directed by Leo Aristimuño that chronicled events surrounding the commemoration of the first French settlement in North America. In this issue, Michael Boudreau and Bonnie Huskins review this provocative film while Sasha Richard reviews several recent publications on Acadian history – a subject that is clearly emerging as one of the most vital components of Atlantic Canada Studies.

In the long run, this Spring 2006 issue of *Acadiensis* may be significant as much

1 Ian McKay, "A Note on 'Region' in Writing the History of Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis*, XXIX, 2 (Spring 2000), p. 89.

for its form as for its content. It is the first issue to be accessible on the Internet. While the digital revolution has not been as transformative as some of its early prophets predicted, it has changed the habits of most academic historians. Increasingly, for example, we expect to find our journal literature available online. If *Acadiensis* does not embrace the Internet, its readership will almost certainly diminish. We are also making this issue freely available to anyone with access to the Internet. In the fall of 2004, the principle of “open access” was adopted by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and over the next few years we hope to see a pan-Canadian initiative that will enable scholars to fulfil the promise of the Internet to give academics, teachers, students and the general public throughout the world access to peer-reviewed journal literature produced in this country.

In bringing *Acadiensis* into the digital age, we have benefited from the expertise of Alan Burk and his staff at the Electronic Text Centre, a division of the University of New Brunswick libraries, who work with me, the Canada Research Chair in Atlantic Canada Studies, to put the region at the forefront of the digital revolution. In addition to supporting the digitization of this issue of *Acadiensis*, we have created a searchable database of all the *Acadiensis* bibliographies and produced two e-books: Margaret Conrad, ed., *They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada*, (Fredericton, 1988), which is now out of print, and H       Destrem       and Joe Ruggieri, eds., *Rendez-Vous Immigration 2004* (Fredericton, 2005), a collection of papers on New Brunswick’s immigration policy. We have also digitized two major regional documentary collections: the Edward Winslow Letters, 1783-1785 and the McQueen Family Letters. Over the next year we plan to post a portion of the letters of Prince Edward Island proprietor John MacDonald of Glenaladale. These and other projects can be accessed on the Atlantic Canada Portal: <http://atlanticportal.hil.unb.ca>. As a regional resource, the portal is open to all scholars of Atlantic Canada interested in posting their published or unpublished research papers, course outlines and documents. The portal also supports a list-serve for Atlantic Canada Studies.

Ultimately, it is the task of historians to make sure that scholarly values honed in an earlier era make it safely through the communications revolution. To that end I have insisted that all papers be 10,000 words or less including footnotes and that the prose meet the highest standards. For many of the authors it was their first experience with the peer review process and I am grateful to the community of Atlantic Canada scholars who, with only one exception, agreed to provide detailed feedback. These papers testify to many long hours in archives and give us confidence in the continued good health of Atlantic Canada Studies and its premier journal.

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Guest Editor