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# Living Testimonies from Acadians of Îles-de-la-Madeleine

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Article abstract

The enigmas of *Acadie* and *Acadien* have long been focal points of discussion and debate in Acadian Studies, particularly in New Brunswick, where regional ideologies persist despite a collective understanding of the impact of globalization on Acadians as a cultural minority. Unfortunately, not much place has been granted to other Acadian communities in this discussion, such as the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, whose residents are among the one million individuals of Acadian heritage currently living in Quebec. Despite outward efforts by organizations such as the *Congrès mondial acadien* to promote Acadie as an inclusive community, it continues to be defined and shaped by its New Brunswick elite. The current study gives voice to those Acadians less heard – *les Madelinots* – through a qualitative analysis of data from the 2004 collection *ArtcaDit: témoignages vivants sur l'identité acadienne*. This study illustrates the ideological attachment of the Madelinots to their environment and shared past over the identity pole of language, around which much discussion of acadianité is currently centered in Acadian Studies.

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## Abstract

The enigmas of *Acadie* and *Acadien* have long been focal points of discussion and debate in Acadian Studies, particularly in New Brunswick, where regional ideologies persist despite a collective understanding of the impact of globalization on Acadians as a cultural minority. Unfortunately, not much place has been granted to other Acadian communities in this discussion, such as the Îles-de-la-Madeleine, whose residents are among the one million individuals of Acadian heritage currently living in Quebec. Despite outward efforts by organizations such as the *Congrès mondial acadien* to promote Acadie as an inclusive community, it continues to be defined and shaped by its New Brunswick elite. The current study gives voice to those Acadians less heard – the *Madelinots* – through a qualitative analysis of data from the 2004 collection *ArcaDit: témoignages vivants sur l'identité acadienne*. This study illustrates the ideological attachment of the *Madelinots* to their environment and shared past over the identity pole of language, around which much discussion of acadianité is currently centered in Acadian Studies.

## Résumé

*L'énigme de ce qu'est l'Acadie et de ce qui est acadien se trouve depuis longtemps au centre des discussions et des débats en études acadiennes, en particulier au Nouveau-Brunswick, où les idéologies régionales persistent malgré une compréhension collective de l'impact de la mondialisation sur les Acadiens en tant que minorité culturelle. Malheureusement, peu de place a été accordée aux autres communautés acadiennes dans ces discussions, comme celle des Îles-de-la-Madeleine dont la population compte parmi plus d'un million de Québécois d'héritage acadien. Malgré les efforts déployés par des organisations comme le Congrès mondial acadien pour promouvoir l'Acadie en tant que collectivité inclusive, celle-ci continue d'être définie et façonnée par son élite néo-brunswickoise. La présente étude donne la parole aux Acadiens les moins entendus – les Madelinots – grâce à une analyse qualitative des données de la collection ArcaDit : témoignages vivants sur l'identité acadienne, de 2004. Cette étude illustre l'attachement idéologique des Madelinots à leur environnement et à leur passé commun au lieu du pôle identitaire de la langue, autour duquel s'articule actuellement une grande partie des débats sur l'acadianité dans le cadre des études acadiennes.*

## Keywords

Magdalen Islands, Acadia, Acadian, identity, genealogy, language, territory, environment

## Mots clés

*Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Acadie, Acadien, identité, généalogie, langue, territoire, environnement*

## Introduction: The Problem of *Acadie*, or New Brunswick Versus the Diaspora

*Ne cherchez pas le terme « acadianité » dans le dictionnaire, il n'existe pas. On devrait plutôt utiliser l'expression « identité acadienne ». L'identité acadienne n'est pas une maladie, n'est pas facile à définir, et d'une personne à l'autre, elle revêt un caractère différent. Qu'est un Acadien, une Acadienne en 2016 ? Comment se manifeste l'identité acadienne dans nos régions respectives ?<sup>1</sup>*

Identity: an ever-elastic notion which Marie Lefebvre, in her 2007 theoretical framework of understanding Acadian identity in Québec, defines through the words initially put forth by anthropologist Louis-Jacques Dorais, “[l]a construction du rapport personnel de l'être humain avec son environnement.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, since individuals do not live isolated lives and are part of a society that shares collective objectives, self-identity is in part naturally dependent upon the structural and cultural characteristics of its society/group, or, in other words, its collective, cultural identity: “la somme de tous les traits caractérisant le mode de vie et la vision du monde d'un peuple quelconque.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, in the postmodern context in which Canadian francophone minorities currently find themselves, it is more accurate to consider identity not as owning a single shape or set of characteristics, but blended and pluralist, “éclatées en une multitude d'îlots de communautés.”<sup>4</sup>

*Le peuple acadien* is one of these Canadian francophone minority communities that cannot be labeled through a single set

1 Musée acadien, “Programmation du Ralliement acadien du Québec 2016”, 2016. [<http://www.museeacadien.com/uploads/Programmation%20Grand%20public%20-%20Copie.compressed.pdf>] (accessed September 2016).

2 Louis-Jacques Dorais, “La construction de l'identité,” in *Discours et constructions identitaires*, edited by Denise Deshaies and Diane Vincent, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2004, p. 3.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 5

4 Marie Lefebvre, “La construction et la manifestation identitaires chez les Acadiens du Québec : piste de réflexion,” in *Balises et références. Acadies, francophonies*, edited by Martin Pâquet and Stéphane Savard, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007, p. 404.

of identity characteristics. Its diaspora, also called *la grande Acadie*, is a collection of these *îlots de communautés* that extend throughout the Maritime and Atlantic Provinces, to Québec, New England, and Louisiana, with more far-reaching communities found in, for example, Alberta, Texas, Florida, Martinique, and France. In order to better understand our position regarding the term *diaspora*, we turned to Brunet, who describes the term as “[...] *un espace, avec ses lieux, ses nœuds et ses réseaux, même s’il niche dans les replis de l’espace des autres. Elle est un ensemble de communautés liées entre elle, avec des réseaux de solidarité.*”<sup>5</sup> While the concept of *Acadie* is arguably perceived less restrictively than it has in previous decades,<sup>6</sup> Québec is not automatically included in scholarly discussion about *Acadie* and the identity of its diasporic members. For example, Bernard Cyr’s 2015 publication in *Histoire Québec* (“*Des Acadiens parmi nous, un apport démographique, économique, militaire et culturel*”) defined *Acadie* as a territory located in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, the east and south-east parts of New Brunswick, and eastern Maine. Québec (or at least part of Québec) was not part of Cyr’s characterization, despite his article discussing the role Québec played in the history of the Acadian diaspora.<sup>7</sup> Today, there are over one million Québécois residents of Acadian heritage, yet, if we take the case of New Brunswick as a model to follow, being Acadian or of Acadian blood does not necessarily mean you are part of *Acadie*. *Acadie* and *Acadien* have been shown to not be mutually inclusive terms.<sup>8</sup> In New Brunswick, the term *Acadie* invokes by and large a notion of openness, community, and globalization, particularly in the south-eastern region. However, it is also very much associated with an unofficial territory, one

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5 Roger Brunet, *Le déchiffrement du Monde. Théorie et pratique de la géographie*, Paris, Belin, 2001, p. 23.

6 Christina Keppie, “Understanding the meaning of *Acadie*,” in *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 45, n° 1, 2011, p. 200-227.

7 Bernard Cyr, “Des Acadiens parmi nous, un apport démographique, économique, militaire et culturel,” in *Histoire Québec*, vol. 21, n° 1, 2015, p. 14-17.

8 Christina Keppie, “Meaning Systems of Two Identity Concepts: *Acadie* versus *Acadien*,” in *American Review of Canadian Studies*, vol. 43, n° 3, 2013, p. 315-333.

populated by native Acadian French speakers.<sup>9</sup> It is this symbolic notion of territory as determined by language that invokes what we are calling the Acadian dilemma: a lack of productive and collective dialogue by members of an Acadian *société civile*, a society without any head of state or government but representative of a cultural and linguistic minority.<sup>10</sup> Despite its shiny veneer, the communities of the Acadian diaspora are at odds with each other: “*Malgré le fait qu’on parle de notre Acadie inclusive et ouverte à ceux qui y adhèrent, il y aura toujours quelqu’un pour leur dire qu’ils ne sont pas de ‘vrais’ Acadiens, peu importe le nombre d’années qu’ils vivent ici.*”<sup>11</sup> Such is the case of the Acadian diasporic community of the *Îles-de-la-Madeleine* (or Magdalen Islands) of Québec, despite the strong cultural and historical connections they share with the Acadian community of New Brunswick.<sup>12</sup>

In the past quarter century, the term *Acadie* has been preferred over *Acadien* in certain influential organizations. On the one hand, this favouring in terminology adds symbolic value to the term *Acadie*. The flip side of the coin, however, is that the term *Acadien* and the authenticity of its meaning have been put into question. “*Les Acadiens d’Acadie ont fait le choix de se replier sur un territoire plutôt qu’une identité.*”<sup>13</sup> One example is the SNA which was originally called *la Société nationale l’Assomption* (1881) yet became *la Société nationale des Acadiens* in 1957 only to shift titles again in 1992 to become *la Société nationale de l’Acadie*, the most influential Acadian association of the entire diaspora. A second example is *la Société de l’Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick (SANB)*, formerly called *la Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick (SAANB)*, 1988-

9 *Ibid.*

10 Joseph-Yvon Thériault, *Faire société. Société civile et espaces francophones*, Ottawa, Éditions Prise de Parole, collection “Agora”, 2007, p. 384.

11 Céleste Godin, “Journée d’appréciation des Québécois,” *L’Acadie Nouvelle*, 10 octobre 2016. [[http : //www.acadienouvelle.com/chroniques/2016/10/10/journee-dappreciation-quebecois/](http://www.acadienouvelle.com/chroniques/2016/10/10/journee-dappreciation-quebecois/)] (accessed October 2016).

12 Réginald Richard, *Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine : une société distincte ?*, Québec, Éditions des Montants, 2002, p. 276.

13 Stéphan Bujold, “La diaspora acadienne du Québec : essai de contribution à l’élargissement du champ national acadien,” in Pâquet and Savard, *op.cit.*, p. 478.

2008). Prior to la SAANB, the organization went by the current acronym *SANB* but at that time the letter *A* stood for *Acadiens* (1973-1988). A final example, while not an association or organization, is the edited volume by Jean Daigle, originally titled *Les Acadiens des Maritimes* (1980) only to be changed to *L'Acadie des Maritimes* in 1993. To this day, this volume remains a frequently cited anthology on Acadian culture.

Lefebvre's theoretical framework of 2007 used Québec as an example to determine whether or not territory is a necessary condition for the existence of *Acadie* and for the authenticity of claiming Acadian identity. This is a critical and essential step in the growth of Acadian studies: by exploring the identity references of the Québécois Acadians and how the concepts of territory and geography manifest themselves, we cultivate our understanding of the collective Acadian representation(s). For the past several decades, the question of identity has long been at the heart of the Acadian dilemma, yet has rarely been explored as a diasporic concept outside of the Maritime Provinces: "[...] *la problématique de l'identité acadienne dans la 'diaspora', c'est-à-dire l'identité des millions d'Acadiens dispersés de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique, n'a pas été souvent abordée.*"<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, this is caused by Acadia never acting as a true *société civile*, to the detriment of smaller pockets of Acadian communities around the diaspora who have fallen to the wayside of discussion of *l'Acadie actuelle*, such as Québec.<sup>15</sup> For the most part, scholarship has focused on the identity of Acadians of New Brunswick and used this discussion as a blanket in Acadian studies as a general rule of thumb.<sup>16</sup> New Brunswick is the *de facto*

14 Marie Lefebvre, "Peut-on parler d'une diaspora acadienne ? Une analyse de l'effet du milieu et de la descendance sur la construction et la manifestation identitaires des Acadiens du Québec," Master's thesis, Ottawa, University of Ottawa, 2006, p. 52.

15 See Thériault, *op. cit.*, and Christina Keppie, "The Effects of the Congrès mondial acadien 2014 on *la grande Acadie*," in *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 53, n° 2, 2016, p. 85-109, for a better understanding of Acadia as a *société civile* and New Brunswick's role in the Acadian dilemma.

16 Christina Keppie, *op. cit.*

“*principal foyer de l’acadianité.*”<sup>17</sup> The aforementioned definition of *Acadie* by Cyr is centered predominantly on the Maritime Provinces as the Acadian “territory” but can you also be Acadian outside of the Maritimes? If so, what are the founding principles guiding this diasporic identity? Literature has shown a litany of contrasting Acadian ideologies, such as a modernizing/national approach that defends the concept of language above all other condition. This ideology often limits the Acadian “territory” to New Brunswick where linguistic and social justice have been the predominant foci of the Acadian cause of recent decades.<sup>18</sup> This notion of Acadian borders, however, is mostly symbolic as it represents social relations and power more than anything: “*Le territoire naît donc des stratégies de contrôle ou de pouvoir nécessaire à la vie sociale.*”<sup>19</sup> Another popular ideology favors a genealogical approach, grounding *acadianité* in a more open and welcoming principle of culture, history, and lineage.<sup>20</sup>

Cultural minorities frequently encounter the challenge of balancing multiple ideologies as a *société civile*: “*C’est qu’elle est prise entre le traditionnel et le moderne: n’ayant le pied fermement ancré dans ni l’un ni l’autre.*”<sup>21</sup> New Brunswick Acadia has been outwardly molded as a civil society through the collective representation of (predominantly Francophone) Acadian institutions of social

17 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

18 Keppie, 2011, *op. cit.*, and Keppie, 2016, *op. cit.*

19 Lefebvre, 2007, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

20 See, among others, Adrien Bérubé, *Concevoir un manuel de géographie du Nouveau-Brunswick—et rendre la géographie utilisable*, Paris, Documentation française, 1987, 304 p.; André Magord, “Dynamiques inter-groupes au sein de la diaspora acadienne : un pas vers une nouvelle donne?”, in *L’Acadie plurielle. Dynamiques identitaires collectives et développement au sein des réalités acadiennes*, edited by André Magord, Moncton, Centre d’études acadiennes and Centre d’études acadiennes et québécoises, 2003, p. 11-19; Thériault, 2007, *op. cit.*; Mireille McLaughlin, *L’Acadie Post-Nationale: Producing Franco-Canadian Identity in the Global Economy*, PhD dissertation, Toronto, University of Toronto, 2010, 264 p.; Keppie, 2011, *op. cit.*, et 2013, *op. cit.*

21 Jasmin Cyr, “Worry pas ta brain: Pourquoi l’Acadie n’est pas en voie de disparition,” in *Astheure*, 29 May 2013. [<http://astheure.com/2013/05/29/worry-pas-ta-brain-pourquoi-lacadie-nest-pas-en-voie-de-disparition/>](accessed 1 September 2016).

governance, such as *la Société nationale de l'Acadie* (SNA) and *la Société de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick* (SANB). However, this *société civile* has, in fact, failed, for “New Brunswick Acadia has resisted in pursuing an inclusive, cooperative approach to *acadianité* (Acadian identity).” This is a direct result of the struggles Acadians of that province have encountered in recent decades in maintaining their own national identity, an identity centred around their shared religious and, most notably, linguistic heritage: “*S’ouvrir à la diaspora, c’est s’ouvrir à plus petit et plus faible que soi, pour un groupe déjà minoritaire... C’est réveiller la peur de perdre la maîtrise de son destin.*”<sup>22</sup>

In the absence of an official territory, New Brunswick takes centre stage in any formal or scholarly discussion/representation of *l’Acadie actuelle*. Its predominance in the discussion of the authenticity of Acadian identity is well documented, particularly due to the strict alignment between cultural and national identity: “[la] conscience d’appartenir à un peuple qui, sous la gouverne de l’État, a le droit et le devoir de contrôler un territoire bien délimité et de le défendre contre les étrangers si besoin est.”<sup>23</sup> As a result of the province’s sheer Acadian population and its deep-rooted adhesion to the national ideology that the community uses to affirm itself as a provincial minority, much of the discussion of the notion of *Acadie* has been limited to defining its territory (*l’Acadie*) within the Maritime Provinces, and New Brunswick especially.<sup>24</sup> In doing so, we see further consequence of how favoring the term *Acadie* over *Acadien* goes beyond the simple renaming of organizations, societies, and anthologies: it has limited true, collective discussion of *la grande Acadie* and its members. Lefebvre remarked a hesitation, a fear even among New Brunswick Acadians to open the discussion of identity beyond their borders. She identified this as a fear of weakening the social equality for which they have worked so fervently in the past century (and continue to). She further indicated

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22 Magord, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 13, in Keppie, 2016, *op. cit.*, p. 87-88.

23 Dorais, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

24 Keppie, 2011, *op. cit.*



that New Brunswick Acadians have acknowledged owning a certain desire to be at the centre of this type of discussion, guiding it even, for this very same reason: “*volonté [...] de monopoliser la définition identitaire.*”<sup>25</sup>

One heavy-hitting example of New Brunswick’s dominance over the rest of the diaspora can be seen in the well-known *Congrès mondial acadien* (CMA). Having enjoyed its sixth appearance in 2019, the CMA has acted as an ideological festivity anchored around the poles of genealogy, community, and arts and culture since its inception in 1994. The fifth congress of 2014 in particular had as its official vision to bring *Acadie* into the globalized world in a manner that represented the collective identity of the diaspora.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the nature of any festivity typically reveals the socio-political concerns of the culture it sets out to represent.<sup>27</sup> In the “case” of the CMA, it was the national/modernizing ideology of the SNA (the festivity’s overseeing governing association), that perpetrated throughout the two and a half weeks of celebrations. As a result, it has been argued that the interests of the New Brunswick Acadians and their elite were mostly served over those of *la grande Acadie*, in particular those outside of the Maritimes, despite two of the three host regions, “Québec and Maine, not belonging to the Maritimes.”<sup>28</sup> Fortunately, however, the consequences of these actions are being recognized. Recently, *Astheure* contributor René Cormier touched on the same hegemonic issue, remarking the rift it causes within the diaspora: “*Un malaise persiste toujours face à la capacité de l’Acadie de dépasser les limites de ses frontières géopolitiques, institutionnelles et organisationnelles pour travailler*

25 Lefebvre, 2007, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

26 The vision of the 2014 CMA reads as follows: “*Une diaspora acadienne fière de son héritage qui fait valoir sa vitalité et sa diversité et qui, face à l’avenir, est prête à s’engager dans le 3e millénaire dans un esprit internationalisé et solidaire.*” (www.cma2014.com)

27 Donald Mitchell, *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, 352 p.; Marie Lefebvre, *Le rôle géographique de la fête : le Congrès mondial acadien comme catalyseur identitaire et inhibiteur de frontières*, PhD dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2012, 226 p.

28 Keppie, 2016, *op. cit.*

à son épanouissement. Cette tension s'incarne dans nos relations interprovinciales et hors Atlantique."<sup>29</sup>

The current study is but a small drop of a coin in a large bucket. It is a presentation of the Acadians of the *Îles-de-la-Madeleine*, an insular community of strong Acadian descent caught living between Québec and Acadie. While not a historical account, this article does provide a brief historical background of the Madelinots before delving into more detailed explanations of their attachment to three poles around which cultural identity is built: language, territory/environment, and genealogy. A review of literature is also provided to support the findings of a qualitative analysis of ten interviews conducted on the *Îles-de-la-Madeleine* in 2004. While strong linguistic similarities still exist between the Madelinot French and the Acadian French of the Maritimes, we find that the Madelinots (shockingly perhaps) do not much discuss language as a central component of their *acadianité*. This is a great divergence in cultural identity between them and their New Brunswick neighbours, notwithstanding their deep attachments to both their Acadian genealogy and their insular territory/environment.

### Acadians of Québec<sup>30</sup>

Despite *Acadie* being touted as an open and inclusive society, a large number of Maritime Acadians are ignorant of the sheer size of the Acadian population outside of the Maritimes. With the exception of France, Québec has welcomed more Acadian migrants than any other region in the world since the 1713 Paris Treaty that

29 René Cormier, "Plaidoyer pour une Acadie solidaire et visionnaire," in *Astheure*, 29 March 2015 [<http://astheure.com/2015/03/26/lettre-ames-compatriotes-acadiens-plaidoyer-pour-une-acadie-solidaire-et-visionnaire-rene-cormier-2/>] (accessed 1 September 2016).

30 This following section references Lefebvre's 2006 theoretical framework on the the ethnocultural identity of the Québécois Acadians. Data for this study was collected through random phone interviews as well as face-to-face interviews, in particular in rural areas such as the *Îles-de-la-Madeleine*. Participants from the *Îles-de-la-Madeleine* were, for the large part, not working, meaning they were either students, elderly, retired, or unemployed.

saw *Acadie* wiped from all official maps for good.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Québec, with a population today of a little more than eight million, is home to approximately one million individuals of Acadian descent.<sup>32</sup>

The identity of the Acadian population of Québec is considered from two angles, direct descendants and migrants. Acadian descendants are more commonly found along the peripheries of the Maritime Provinces, namely *les Îles-de-la-Madeleine* (henceforth IDLM) and communities of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence (Gaspésie) which Arsenault (1994) determined as being the two most important cores of Québécois Acadians. First- and second-generation Acadian migrants, on the other hand, were found more likely to settle in larger, urban areas, such as Québec, Montréal, and Gatineau. By and large, Lefebvre did not find demographic factors to be of any significance in the notion of identity among these populations. Rather, she writes that it is the nature of these populations that factors into the sense of belonging among Québécois Acadians: “[I]l existe chez les Acadiens du Québec des modalités d’identification diverses [...] [L]es Acadiens installés au Québec semblent revendiquer des identités multiples ou hybrides.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, study participants from communities composed more heavily of Acadian descendants, such as IDLM, were found to claim a stronger sense of hybrid ethnocultural identity than were Acadian migrants or Acadians living in more urban areas: “On n’aime pas ici être assimilé à tous ou encore se perdre dans la foule anonyme des ‘Québécois’ ou encore des ‘Acadiens.’”<sup>34</sup> This hybridity, a result of a sort of cultural negotiation between the Acadian past and the Québécois present, has also been attested to by Richard in his account of the historical and cultural particularities of the Madelinots:

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31 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

32 Josée Bergeron, Hélène Vézina, Louis Houde and Marc Tremblay, “La contribution des Acadiens au peuplement des régions du Québec,” in *Cahiers québécois de démographie*, vol. 37, n° 1, 2008, p. 181-204.

33 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

34 Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

*Les Madelinots dans leur histoire ont été tiraillés entre une double appartenance : l'une acadienne et l'autre québécoise. Pas tout à fait Acadiens, car disent certains « Les Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick se sont réservé cette appellation contrôlée à cause de la lutte pour leur survivance », ce qui n'est pas le cas des Îles, d'où l'impression de leur différence.*<sup>35</sup>

Among Acadian descendants of the Québec portion of the diaspora, *acadianité* is largely felt through genealogical, cultural, and historical connections, while their Québécois identity is more closely tied to notions of environment and citizenship: “*Plusieurs répondants ont d'ailleurs affirmé se sentir à la fois membre de la communauté québécoise par des liens territoriaux et de citoyenneté et de membre de la communauté ou de grande famille acadienne par des liens généalogiques, culturels et historiques.*”<sup>36</sup> The Madelinot Acadians, like other populations of the Acadian diaspora, aim to form what Falkert calls “*des ‘nous collectifs minoritaires’*,” a stark contrast from how identity is asserted on the Québec mainland, “*où un fort esprit national s’est superposé au concept fédéral.*”<sup>37</sup> The following section sets forth to illustrate how the Madelinot assert their identity as part of a collective Acadian minority. First, an overview of previous research is provided followed by a content analysis of data gathered from living testimonies that is compared and contrasted to this previous research.

### ***Les Acadiens madelinots: A Portrait***

On the IDLM, approximately 86% of Madelinot households have a recorded Acadian lineage dating as far back as the mid-eighteenth century: “[...une] Acadie québécoise plus traditionnelle et plus homogène.”<sup>38</sup> Among the first areas of Québec to be populated

35 Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 20. Results of Richard’s fieldwork in the summer of 2001 reveal that more than 60.32% of study participants consider themselves “*autant Acadien que Québécois,*” with 15.87% self-identifying as “*plus Acadien que Québécois*” and 19.05% as “*plus Québécois qu’Acadien*” (Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 95).

36 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

37 Anika Falkert, *Le français acadien des Îles-de-la-Madeleine : étude de la variation phonétique*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2010, p. 45

38 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

by Acadians, IDLM knew two waves of Acadian settlement. Initially, in 1761, a small number of Acadians settled on IDLM after joining the employment of Richard Gridley, a Boston colonel who had been granted fishing rights in the surrounding waters by the British Crown. These first Acadians joined Gridley's expedition from Île Saint-Jean (now Prince Edward Island) as a means of escaping the various deportations of 1758.<sup>39</sup> The second, larger wave of Acadians to initially settle on IDLM came a few years later, in 1792, when approximately 300 Acadians left Saint-Pierre et Miquelon following their refusal to pledge allegiance to the crown during the French Revolution. This particular group of Acadians, of whom 250 (approximately forty families) settled on IDLM, had come to Saint-Pierre and Miquelon following the deportations by way of France.<sup>40</sup> Still considering themselves neutrals and aligning with neither the British nor the French, these settlers considered this journey to IDLM a form of self-exile. Following this influx of settlers at Grave de Havre-Aubert where the colony deemed it best to organize lodgings and a chapel for a sudden population surplus, IDLM began growing in earnest (in population and as a collective community); the Acadians built their community around fishing and subsistence farming.<sup>41</sup>

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39 Pauline Carbonneau, "Installation des Acadiens aux Îles de la Madeleine," 15 March 2010 [<https://paulinecarbonneau34.wordpress.com/2010/03/15/installation-des-acadiens-aux-iles-de-la-madeleine/>] (accessed September 2010).

40 *Ibid.*

41 See Denise LeBlanc-Bantey, "Des Acadiens aux Îles-de-la-Madeleine," in *Cap-aux-Diamants*, vol. 5, n° 3, 1989, p. 31-34, and Chantale Naud, "Les Madelinots acadiens de la mer," in *Cap-aux-Diamants*, n° 77, 2004 (spring), p. 39. In more recent socio-political history, les Madelinots were considered separatists with a majority of the population voting YES in the 1995 Québec referendum. Yet, in the eyes of Madelinot artist Georges Langford, who was interviewed by *L'Acadie Nouvelle* journalist Pascal Raiche-Nogue (2015), this separatist mentality can be rationalized if one considers one of the fundamental traits of the first Acadians whose deportation was a consequence of seeking their own political independence. See Pascal Raiche-Nogue, "L'Acadie et les Îles-de-la-Madeleine : des liens tissés serrés," dans *L'Acadie Nouvelle*, 6 juillet 2015 [<http://www.acadienouvelle.com/actualites/2015/07/05/lacadie-et-les-iles-de-la-madeleine-des-liens-tisses-serres-video/>] (accessed September 2016).

The IDLM have received significant scholarly attention in terms of their history and genealogy.<sup>42</sup> Similarly to the rest of the Québécois Acadian population, there has been very little research focus on the variety of French spoken on the IDLM and even less attention given to the Acadian cultural identity of its speakers: “*On a souvent ignoré dans la littérature québécoise, le fait que le Madelinot fait partie de l’histoire acadienne.*”<sup>43</sup> These first “boat people” of modern history comprise a fairly insular community.<sup>44</sup> Enclaved between two francophone centers (mainland Québec and Acadie des Maritimes), the Madelinot Acadians are also linguistically homogeneous, having voluntarily isolated themselves from the small group of English-speaking Madelinots who live principally on l’île d’Entrée: “*Les gens de l’île d’Entrée sont donc pour l’ensemble des Madelinots, des voisins qu’on regarde de loin et que l’on croit connaître, mais qu’en définitive, on connaît plutôt mal.*”<sup>45</sup>

Of the thirty Madelinots to have participated in Lefebvre’s 2006 ethnocultural research of Québécois Acadians, an overwhelming majority had close or immediate family in both Québec and the Maritimes; yet regular contact remains limited due to the remoteness of the IDLM from the mainland. In fact, Lefebvre’s 2006 participants indicated that they are more likely to travel to the Maritimes for tourism, Acadian festivities, business, and shopping than they are for family visits alone. Falkert as well asserts that, according to her study’s participants, contact with the Maritimes is primarily of an economic nature.<sup>46</sup> When the Madelinots do travel to the Maritimes, it is principally to Prince Edward Island as there is a direct ferry route between it and the IDLM.<sup>47</sup> In fact, this ferry

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42 See, for example, Paul Hubert, *Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine et les Madelinots*, Rimouski, Imprimerie générale de Rimouski, 1926, 251 p., and Jean-Charles Fortin and Paul Larocque, *Histoire des Îles-de-la-Madeleine*, Québec, Les Éditions de l’IQRC, coll. “Les régions du Québec,” n° 15, 2003, 403 p.

43 Richard, *op. cit.* p. 95

44 LeBlanc-Bantey, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

45 Bibiane Béland, *Ethnographie de l’île d’Entrée (Îles-de-la-Madeleine)*, master’s thesis, Université de Montréal, 1987, p. 99.

46 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

47 Naturally, in wintertime when the ferry service is suspended, contact between

service, which ignores la Gaspésie (the other Québécois region with a strong presence of Acadian descendants), is actually partially responsible for this Acadian-Québécois hybrid identity:

*Chose curieuse que les Îles fassent partie de la région de la Gaspésie et que pour la visiter, il faille traverser l'Île-du-Prince-Edouard et le Nouveau-Brunswick avant d'atteindre sa propre région. Comment peut-on se sentir faire partie d'un pays comme le Québec et être associé à la région de la Gaspésie, alors que les transports renvoient les Madelinots ailleurs, dans les Maritimes ?<sup>48</sup>*

Of those who do travel back and forth, *L'Acadie Nouvelle* journalist Pascal Raiche-Nogue (2015) identifies these as primarily artists and musicians who feel very much welcomed on the Maritime mainland: “*Plusieurs Madelinots, comme Maxime Arseneau, affectionnent le Nouveau-Brunswick et l'Île-du-Prince-Edouard. 'À Souris, on est chez nous. Moi, à Moncton, je suis chez nous,' dit-il.*”<sup>49</sup> Artists and musicians, as this current text will soon illustrate, play an integral role in transmitting the local, affirmed Acadian identity of the IDLM.

Despite some travel and access restrictions, there is a strong cultural connection between the IDLM and the Maritimes that endures. *L'Acadie des Maritimes* acts as part of the “*territoires d'appartenance*” for all Québécois Acadians, the Madelinots in particular,<sup>50</sup> as the Maritimes are the territorial roots of the collective Acadian past: “*Les habitants des Îles-de-la-Madeleine revendiquent leur appartenance au groupe acadien à travers ce passé commun.*”<sup>51</sup> Acadians have always celebrated and based their festivities around their collective past. Yet, the more isolated regions of the

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the communities is reduced even further. Thus, the French-speaking Madelinots not only reside relatively separately from the English-speaking Madelinot minority, infrequent travel to and from the Québec and Maritime mainland has kept this community quite homogeneous.

48 Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 99-100.

49 Pascal Raiche-Nogue, *loc. cit.*

50 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

51 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

Acadian diaspora (such as the IDLM) are able to benefit from their linguistic homogeneity when organizing their local celebrations: in the absence of a national ideology (such as is seen on the Québec mainland and in New Brunswick Acadia), there is less of a chance of the festivity unveiling any sort of ideological dichotomy:

*[...] dans les milieux du Golfe, elle (l'identité acadienne au Québec) ne semble pas menacée, puisque ces milieux forment en quelque sorte une composante territoriale de l'Acadie. L'Acadie y est assez vivace et liée aux possibilités du milieu, notamment à la forte présence acadienne. Aussi, l'acadianité est perçue aux Îles-de-la-Madeleine et dans la Baie-des-Chaleurs comme une véritable valeur touristique [...].*<sup>52</sup>

In early July 2016, Québécois Acadians visited the IDLM in high numbers, gathering for the second *Ralliement acadien du Québec*. Local artists and musicians were a prominent fixture during the three days of celebrations, demonstrating their attachment to their local insular environment.<sup>53</sup> While these family-oriented, traditional forms of cultural display attracted participants/attendees of all ages, the second day of festivities centered on conferences and discussions with various Acadians organizations of Québec and the Maritimes (for example, *la Société historique Machaut*, *le Réseau acadien historique et patrimoine*, *le Musée acadien du Québec*, and *la Société nationale de l'Acadie*). A free-to-all, round table discussion on identity was featured on this second day of the *Ralliement*. Carbonneau (2016) identifies this event as unquestionably the most critical aspect of the event, considering the Acadian dilemma and the difficulty in defining the concept of *acadianité*. Even outside the New Brunswick Acadian heartland (or perhaps it is more accurate to say “especially outside the New Brunswick Acadian heartland”), the dilemma is being acknowledged:

52 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

53 Pauline Carbonneau, “Ralliement acadien du Québec 2016-07-06,” 2016 [https://paulinecarbonneau34.wordpress.com/2016/08/17/ralliement-acadien-du-quebec-2016-07-06/] (accessed September 2016).



*En 2016, l'identité acadienne se manifeste par une prise de conscience de faire avancer la cause, plutôt de s'attarder à porter un caractère nostalgique sur le passé. Cependant, l'identité acadienne revêt un caractère différent dans chacune de nos régions. La grande question est de savoir si l'on peut endosser l'appartenance à la cause acadienne tout en endossant <sup>54</sup> notre identité régionale. La majorité des participants pensent que oui [...].*

In addition to the common past shared by Madelinots and Maritime Acadians, their common language acts and is validated as a cultural unifier. Not only do the Madelinots see their identity historically tied to the Maritimes, they acknowledge their linguistic ties as well, often referencing the similarities in their local vernacular that are not found as frequently in the French varieties spoken on the Québec mainland: “*Quand les gens des Îles écoutent les Acadiens du Nouveau-Brunswick, de la Nouvelle-Écosse et de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard, ils se reconnaissent dans une langue que les Québécois ne connaissent pas.*”<sup>55</sup>

Despite the relative linguistic homogeneity and isolation of the French-speaking Madelinots, this “*isolement volontaire*” or “*vie à l'écart*,”<sup>56</sup> their endogenous validation of Acadian French has been simultaneously subjected to a pressure to conform to a Québécois linguistic norm, in spite of limited exposure to other Acadian and Québécois French varieties. Anika Falkert's fieldwork on the IDLM (published in 2010) is the one study to delve into the linguistic features of Madelinot French. There exists no other corpus of Madelinot French used for linguistic analysis; what erroneous linguistic studies do exist have focused on lexical particularities of the spoken variety. What Falkert concluded was that despite Madelinot French being the most well-preserved of all Acadian varieties, it is currently undergoing a slow linguistic “*désacadianisation*” as several features typically categorized as Acadian are diminishing in frequency; some have altogether disappeared. The following paragraphs will attempt to summarize these findings.<sup>57</sup>

54 *Loc. cit.*

55 Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

56 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

57 Falkert's 2003 documentation of Madelinot French was made possible through

Approximately 80% of Falkert's eighty-eight questionnaire informants self-identified as monolingual French, and about one fifth of informants self-identified as French-English bilingual.<sup>58</sup> Complimenting findings by both Lefebvre (2006) and Richard (2002), Falkert's participants also revealed the existence of a Québécois-Acadian hybrid identity, as 22.7% of her informants self-identified as both *Acadien/ne* and *Québécois*.<sup>59</sup>

In terms of their attitudes towards their own spoken linguistic variety, Falkert noticed a high level of validation<sup>60</sup>; the community did not stigmatize their use of Madelinot vernacular. In fact, over 77% believe that they speak good French, in particular the elder informants. Additionally, they readily approved of the Acadian French spoken by other communities, a validation that has contrasted with the self-judgments of Maritime Acadians for several generations. Informants did acknowledge the presence of

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the analysis of two sets of data. Firstly, a questionnaire (distributed to eighty-eight residents of the IDLM) touched on topics of self-identification, judgments on the quality of spoken vernacular versus the perceived norm and the linguistic aesthetics of neighboring French varieties.

Most of Falkert's informants were women yet were all equally distributed between two age groups: +/- 40 yrs. The second methodology involved a phonetic variation study of twenty-two informants, equally distributed between men and women who had spent the majority of their lives on the IDLM working in the various sectors of the fishing industry. Age was far less equally distributed among the participants of the phonetic variation study. Ranging between fourteen and ninety-two years of age, Falkert recorded interviews with sixteen retirees, four students, and two working artists.

58 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 38. The overall low level of bilingualism, combined with the issues of insularity have made the IDLM a somewhat tourist deterrent, so much so that English language classes are now being provided to employees of their tourism sector, currently sustained primarily by French-speaking visitors of the Québec mainland or the Maritimes.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 58. Despite this, more participants did, however, claim only a single identity. According to Figure 1 (*ibid.*), 31.9% of participants self-identified as *Acadien/ne* while 34.1% self-identified as *Québécois/e*. Age also played a factor in self-identification as older participants were far more likely to assert an Acadian-only identity than were younger participants (40.9%: 22.7%). Falkert (p. 60) attributes this phenomenon to 1) the influence and use of Québécois media and 2) the exodus pull felt by the younger generation(s) toward the urban centers of the Québec mainland for educational advancement.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 68-69.

an exogenous norm, that of the Quebec mainland. However, they do not see this perceived norm as vastly superior to their own; with even only 45.4% of informants ranking Québécois French as *un bon français*: “[...] *la présence d’une norme exogène, d’un “standard” suprarégional, n’empêche pas la prise de conscience de la valeur de la norme endogène.*”<sup>61</sup> They described Québécois French as *joli, sympa*, and *élégant*, but also *exagéré*. Similar adjectives were attributed to their own Madelinot French (*compagnard, joli, sympa*), further validating of their own vernacular alongside the exogenous norm all the while maintaining slightly negative judgments for the latter (“*exagéré*”), a common trend found among speakers of regional varieties in regards to their superposed norm or standard.<sup>62</sup> One could even say that the Madelinots culturally distance themselves from the national image of Québécois identity by validating their vernacular as a product of the historical connections they hold with the Acadians of the Maritimes: “[...] *on observe une forte résistance de la population à l’assimilation au français québécois. Le parler local bénéficie, dans son image, d’une revalorisation récente qui est liée à une prise de conscience des racines acadiennes.*” Québécois French symbolizes the cultural “Other” on the IDLM and Falkert’s informants were found to more likely point out lexical and phonological differences between Madelinot French and Québécois French (varieties) as a way of distinguishing themselves from the mainland Québécois than they were with the Maritimes and their varieties of Acadian French.

Turning now to the results gleaned from the phonetic variation study portion of Falkert’s research, Acadian morphosyntactic and phonological features of Madelinot French are slowly

61 *Ibid.*, p. 69-70. Note that Québécois French is rated as *un bon français* rather than *le bon français*, further suggesting that a linguistic norm does not supersede the validity of a regional one. Over one quarter of informants rated *le français du Radio-Canada* as *un bon français*, which is not a really surprising fact given the value of community radio: “*un outil de référence, l’oreille du grand public*” (Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 70, 81).

62 Nancy Niedzielski and Dennis Preston, *Folk Linguistics*, revised edition, Berlin/New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 2003, p. 43-44.

disappearing from use yet at different rates from each other: “[...] *une désacadianisation plus avancée au niveau morphosyntaxique qu’au niveau phonétique.*”<sup>63</sup> Falkert identified seven morphological features traditionally categorized as features of Acadian French, five of which did not appear in her corpus of data.<sup>64</sup> Contrarily, all of the nine traditionally phonetic features of Acadian French were present in the corpus of data, although the “*ouïsme*” and the palatalization of /k/ and /g/ were identified only marginally. Informants were also aware of their phonetic similarities with Acadian French, as Informant FA03 revealed through the following excerpt: “[*On ressemble*] = *fins aux Acadiens pure laine. oui. parce que :. de un:/ juste par l’accent. Juste l’accent la prononciation des mots et:/ et le reste : on est plus du côté acadien. que du côté québécois.*”<sup>65</sup>

**Table 1**  
**Linguistic features of Acadian French on les**  
**Îles-de-la-Madeleine** (reproduced from Falkert)<sup>66</sup>

Trait	Français acadien (exemples)	Équivalents en français standard	Niveau			
			I	II	III	M
<b>Morphosyntaxique</b>						
- 3 <sup>e</sup> pers. pluriel	<i>ils parlont</i>	<i>ils parlent</i>	+	+	+	+
- pronom démonstr.	<i>c’ti-là; c’telle-là</i>	<i>celui-là; celle-là</i>	+	+	+	--
- ordre de mots	<i>assez (2 pos.)</i>	<i>très, suffisamment</i>	+	+	+	+
- 1 <sup>e</sup> pers. pluriel	<i>je parlons</i>	<i>on parle / nous parlons</i>	--	+	+	--
- subjonctif passé	<i>qu’al aidit</i>	<i>qu’elle aide</i>	--	+	+	--
- passé simple	<i>ils coupirent</i>	<i>ils ont coupé</i>	--	--	+	--
- négation	<i>point</i>	<i>(ne) pas</i>	--	--	+	--

63 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

64 See Table 1, reproduced from Falkert (*op. cit.*, p. 253).

65 *Ibid.*, p. 55-56.

66 Reproduced from Falkert (*op. cit.*, p. 253)

Phonétique						
- palatalization /tʃ/ < /k/; /dʒ/ < /g/	<i>quinze</i> [tʃɛz]; <i>gueule</i> [dʒœl]	<i>quinze</i> [kɛz]; <i>gueule</i> [gœl]	+	+	+	+
- « ouïsme » /u/ < /ɔ/	<i>bonne</i> [bɔn]	<i>bonne</i> [bɔn]	+	+	+	+
- opposition /e/≠ /ɛ/	<i>mère</i> [me:r]; <i>mer</i> [mɛ:r]	<i>mère, mer</i> [mɛr]	+	+	+	+
- oppositions de durée vocalique	<i>vitre</i> [vi:t]; <i>vite</i> [vit]	<i>vitre</i> [vi(t)r]; <i>vite</i> [vit]	--	+	+	+
- alternations de voyelles nasales	<i>nom</i> [nɛ̃v]; [nan]	<i>nom</i> [nɔ̃]	--	+	+	+
- ouverture de /ɛ/	<i>hiver</i> [ivar]	<i>hiver</i> [ivɛr]	--	+	+	+
- diphthongaison de voyelles orales	<i>clou</i> [klɔ̃v]	<i>clou</i> [klu]	--	--	+	+
- spirantisation de /ʃ/ , /ʒ/	<i>chanter</i> [hãte]	<i>chanter</i> [ʃãte]	--	+	+	+
- réalisation de /ɛ:/	<i>messe</i> [mɛ:s]	<i>Messe</i> [mes]	--	+	+	+

Falkert then categorized her findings in relation Karin Flikeid's three degrees of *acadianité* (levels of linguistic conservatism) which she established in her 1997 book chapter, "Structural aspects and current sociolinguistic situation of Acadian French." As all Acadian phonetic features were present in her corpus, even though two only marginally, Falkert identified Madelinot French as a phonetically conservative variety of Acadian French (Flikeid's Level III). Morphosyntactically, however, Falkert views Madelinot French as a Level I, given that only two features were found in the corpus: "a somewhat greater degree of standardization and non-transmission of traditional Acadian features."<sup>67</sup> It is not uncommon to see a shift in a spoken variety towards standardization to occur at different speeds, especially when the variety in question is spoken by a relatively insular and isolated community: "*La principale*

67 Karin Flikeid, "Structural aspects and current sociolinguistic situation of Acadian French," in *French and Creole in Louisiana*, edited by Albert Valdman, New York, Plenum Press, 1997, p. 265.

*caractéristique de toute langue vernaculaire est sa variabilité à plusieurs niveaux.*"<sup>68</sup>

One might ask if Madelinot French is in fact a variety of Québécois French, given the shift toward a Québécois norm, especially morphosyntactically.<sup>69</sup> The answer is most certainly yes, as both phonetic and morphosyntactic features of Acadian French are in co-existence. This is especially true among older speakers, whose speech was more conservative (through a higher frequency and in the presence of more overall Acadian features) than was the speech of Falkert's younger informants: "*Ce n'est pas la présence ou l'absence, mais la fréquence et la coexistence de certains traits [...].*"<sup>70</sup> In fact, this co-existence of both Acadian and standard Québécois linguistic features in Madelinot French, combined with the validation of both their local vernacular and Québécois French as "*un bon français,*" provides complete justification for French-speaking Madelinots to exhibit a sense of double belonging or hybrid identity that is referred to by Falkert (2010), Richard (2002), and Lefebvre (2006). The *désacadianisation* of Madelinot French is occurring rather slowly without any indication of causing any sort of cultural identity crisis that has been documented in other Acadian communities, in particular New Brunswick and Nova Scotia: "*Du fait que les Madelinots sont fiers de leur parler et n'estiment pas nécessairement utile de 'parler comme les Québécois' pour bien parler, la désacadianisation est retardée par rapport à celle des autres communautés acadiennes de la province.*"<sup>71</sup>

68 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

69 We do not address the issue of lexical shift in this discussion.

70 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 265. Readers should keep in mind, however, that the number of older (retired) participants greatly outnumbered the number of younger (student) participants.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 273. If this *désacadianisation* was occurring at a more rapid pace or if there was proof of French-speaking Madelinots to be concerned with the potential loss of their Acadian culture, we would assume that the IDLM would see more scholarly attention.

## Living Testimonies

In an effort to open further the discussion of a collective *acadianité* throughout the diaspora, this project continues the path set by Falkert (2010) and Lefebvre (2006) by examining the perceptions of Acadian identity held by French-speaking Madelinots. According to Falkert, Madelinot identity is constructed around the poles of shared territory ("*les Îles*," "*notre petite place*"), history ("*nous sommes tous des déportés*"), and language.<sup>72</sup> These are the same identity poles around which New Brunswick Acadian identity is built, represented, and discussed. This project looks for evidence of these three poles in data originating from the ArtCADIE project.

ArtCADIE, a play on words combining *art* and *Acadie* into a single word, is an elaborate, fine art exhibit conceptualized, organized, and realized (primarily) by the *Musée acadien du Québec* (located in Bonaventure in Gaspésie, Québec) to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the Acadians in North America in 2004.<sup>73</sup> The Museum holds as its mission to educate or to make known the Acadian connection and importance within the Province of Québec, and to help maintain and promote both the heritage and culture of the roughly one million Québécois of Acadian heritage. Conceptualized to be installed and presented at a wide range of cultural institutions and public places as a traveling exhibition, ArtCADIE is fully English-French bilingual in its visual text displays, including a section that introduces visitors to Acadian history and geography from 1604 to 2004. A multi-faceted display of Acadian culture and fine art, ArtCADIE exhibits the works of fourteen professional artists from Acadian regions of the three Canadian Maritime Provinces (New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia) and eighteen from the IDLM and Gaspésie, two Québécois regions with high Acadian populations. These artists were invited to contribute a project of their own

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72 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

73 This prestigious undertaking was also supported by the *Festival acadien de Caraquet*, le *Musée de la Mer aux Îles-de-la-Madeleine*, and *Célébrations Canada*.

creation (for example, painting or sculpture) inspired by the theme *Visions de l'espace acadien*.<sup>74</sup> Photographs, poetry, and descriptions about the artists and their works are also part of the exhibition. In addition, a set of audio narratives, edited into a single seventy-two-minute audio text, is played over the sound system, complementing these works of arts in an impressive and collective *témoignage*, or testimony, of (Canadian) Acadian culture, history, and way of life. Now twelve years into its existence, the exhibit has been on display in various Acadian regions since its unveiling, including overseas in Paris and Nantes, as well as most recently the Acadian Archives at the University of Maine at Fort Kent as part of a pre-opening celebration of the 2014 *Congrès mondial acadien*.

It is the content of a select number of these audio narratives that is analyzed in this present study. In the early months of 2004, Mario Forest, Communications Officer for *le Musée acadien du Québec*, toured the Acadian-concentrated regions of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Québec where he conducted interviews with selected participants willing to partake in the ArtCADIE project. The interviews covered a set of topics pertaining to the identification and characterization of Acadian identity. Such topics included Acadian pride, survival as a minority, the meanings of *Acadie* and being *Acadien*, the challenges and visions for Acadia of the future, and opinions concerning the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations happening throughout the many regions that year. These interviews were also published separately as an audio CD, titled "*ArtcaDIT: témoignages sur l'identité acadienne*."<sup>75</sup> This title also plays on the words for "Acadia" (*Acadie*), "art" (*art*), and "say" or "tell" (*dit*) to give the notion of Acadian identity being narrated, so to speak, through the works of artists.<sup>76</sup>

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74 [www.museeacadien.com](http://www.museeacadien.com)

75 These interviews are also available for purchase both online and in person at the Musée acadien du Québec.

76 Following some initial communication and on behalf of *le Musée acadien du Québec*, Mario Forest generously gifted me a copy of ArtcaDIT for the purpose of transcribing the interviews for scholarly analysis and publication, as no transcription work or textual representation of the interviews were necessary for the



Of the fifty-seven total interviews we were able to transcribe from the ArcaDIT corpus, ten were conducted with participants from the IDLM. It is these ten interviews that comprise the data of this current project. Table 2 provides a demographic breakdown of the eleven participants that composed the Madelinot interviews, accounting for the gender and professional age group of each participant. It should be noted that one of the interviews involves two participants, a husband and wife, simultaneously partaking in the discussion with Monsieur Forest, explaining why Table 1 indicates the number of participants as eleven rather than ten.

Regarding professional age group, it was decided, for this study, to create two separate groups of participants: G1 which represents all four identified high school and university students interviewed and G2 for the remaining seven participants. Among this second group, the majority identified their profession as either an artist or working within the realm of education. A few others were, by the sound of their voice and manner of participation, quite elderly and past retirement. However, since this age/profession-related information was neither specified throughout all ten interviews nor provided in my exchanges with *le Musée*, the only clear-cut age/professional separation to be made was between students and non-students. Another way of looking at the two professional age groups is as the next generation of Acadian leaders or spokespeople (G1) and Acadia's current spokespeople (G2). Actual ages were not provided.

The key objective focuses on elucidating the associations the participants have formed with their identity as Acadians. Therefore, we look primarily at how participants responded to the question, "*Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, être un/e Acadien/ne?*" Throughout all the ArcaDIT interviews, this question was the one with which Monsieur Forest began each discussion with the participants. We

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conceptualization of the ArtCADIE exhibit. The ArtcaDIT CD provides the real names of all the interviewed participants, some of whom also participated in the artistic creations of the exhibit (a list of the participating artists can be found on the Musée's website). Given this, their same names will be used in this study.

will then look for complementary explanations and justifications to this particular question through the responses given to Monsieur Forest's various subsequent questions.

**Table 2**  
**Madelinot participants**

PROFESSIONAL AGE GROUP	Number of participants
G1	4
G2	7
(ASSUMED) GENDER	
F	7
M	4
Total	11

### **The three poles of Madelinot Acadian identity**

Strikingly, the most obvious pattern found in the transcripts of these eleven participants is the absence of discussion concerning the importance of language in their cultural identity. In fact, throughout the whole of the ten interviews, the concept of language came up only twice in direct response to Monsieur Forest's initial question, "*Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, être un/e Acadien/ne?*" Hélène Chevarie (F2), a painter, photographer, and jeweler from Pointe-aux-Loups, begins by acknowledging the French origins of the Acadians in her response to the meaning of *Acadien/ne*, but quickly emphasized that Acadians are "*une grande famille*," a big family that carries tenacious dreams of their future:

*je peux commencer par dire qu'une Acadienne / ben c'est pour moi dans ma tête une Francophone qui s'est implantée dans les maritimes si on reste à la base neutre / ben francophone / francophone au fond ceux qui sont d'origine qui sont partis de la France à un moment donné et qui et y en a qui sont partis de Chéticamp / c'est un peu / pis sont implantés aux Îles de la Madeleine mais les Acadiens c'est une grande famille [...] j'ai*

*l'impression que c'est eux qui portent la culture acadienne et qui portent l'espoir et forment une grande famille maintenant / c'est comme ça que je vois ça maintenant des porteurs de rêves / parce que la volonté la ténacité.*

In a manner that illustrates the importance of Acadian identity and the insular environment in the cultural arts, Madame Chevarie goes on to describe the tenacity and endurance of Acadians. Here, she compares Acadians to *ammophila arenaria*, “a grass species specially adapted to growing on sand dunes” (Invasive Species Compendium 2016). This comparison creates a beautiful, vivid image of Acadians.

*Ammophila arenaria* is known to withstand and even thrive in areas of active sand movement, suggesting that Acadians, too, have shown themselves to be successful in withstanding a tumultuous past and an evolving present, rooted in a shared French heritage:

*c'est avec l'espérance qu'on pouvait s'enraciner / l'Acadien je le vois un peu / ça me fait penser aux dunes / l'Acadien qui se fixe comme des ammophiles dans le sable pour résister à l'érosion / y sont dans un milieu en perpétuel mouvement / les dunes c'est toujours en mouvement / ça fait l'Acadien je le vois comme ça parce qu'il est éparpillé mais il est bien enraciné / y peut être bien loin mais au fond ses racines [...].*

As a matter of fact, language is not actually part of Madame Chevarie's perception of an Acadian at all. Her use of the term “*francophone*” at the beginning of her response is actually meant to be understood as an individual who shares the Acadian genealogical tree, rather than a speaker of (Acadian) French.

Only one other participant brought the matter of language into their discussion of what it means to be Acadian. Berthe Vigneault (F2), who works for the *Corporation des Acadiens des Îles-de-la-Madeleine*, identifies herself and Acadians as Francophones but makes a clear distinction between Madelinot Acadians, who have never needed to fight for services or linguistic rights, and other Acadian communities, most notably New Brunswick Acadians, who are famous for their struggle for linguistic and social equality in the face of an Anglophone majority:

*mais ici on est comme choyé un peu parce qu'on a pas eu à se battre ici pour préserver notre langue / pour préserver nos écoles / avoir des services dans les hôpitaux / comme je regarde dans les autres communautés francophones acadiennes y sont toujours y ont toujours / aah / un dossier à défendre pour qu'y soient reconnus comme Acadiennes / nous ici personne nous dérange dans notre acadianité / on est Acadiens / on est français [...] on est entouré de francophones / on n'a pas eu à se battre [...].*

A third participant in our study, Geneviève Vigneault (F2), did address the issue of language and the fear of assimilation during the interview. However, she did so after being spontaneously asked by Monsieur Forest on the subject of “*Acadiens d'adoption*” and their efforts to fight assimilation to English. This is the only time within the whole of the Madelinot interviews that Monsieur Forest addresses such an issue and therefore we cannot give Madame Vigneault's answer much credibility. Her response does, however, compliment Berthe Vigneault's in that she also acknowledges how, as Québécois, they have not had the same linguistic struggles as other Acadians: “*ici on a pas à se battre pour garder le français parce qu'on est au Québec [...] notre peur c'est d'être trop influencé par eux-autres de perdre notre accent / pour moi parce que j'en ai un qui est assez fort [...].*”

In her study of the phonetic variation of Madelinot French, Falkert identified language as one of the three poles around which Madelinot *acadianité* is constructed and discussed the phenomenon of *désacadianisation* of the Madelinot vernacular.<sup>77</sup> Language has always been a key component to the discussion of identity, in particular in the case of cultural/linguistic minorities: “[...] *le contenu linguistique fait le plus souvent partie intégrale de l'identité. C'est le fait a moins de l'identité acadienne.*”<sup>78</sup> For many decades now, language has been the primary tool used by the Maritime Acadians in fighting for social equality against the English-speaking majority. While there is reason to argue for a French-English bilingual identity as characteristic of Acadians from certain parts of the Maritimes,

77 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

78 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

for Québécois Acadians, however, it's a francophone identity that dominates; those who do affirm a bilingual identity in Québec tend to be first generation migrants.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, as previously stated in this article, there is very little literature that speaks to the perceived cultural threat of this phenomenon and with only two participants addressing the issue of language in manners that do not in fact voice any symbolic value of speaking French on the IDLM, this particular collection of data does not support Falkert's assertion. In fact, Lefebvre also consulted the ArtcaDIT data in 2006 but conducted no thorough analysis of it. She concluded, however, along the same lines as this analysis has shown. Without any real emphasis on language in the absence of an "enemy to defend," the concept of *Acadie* and the Acadian identity by the Madelinots refers largely to a shared pride in both a shared environment and past, as the following pages will illustrate.<sup>80</sup>

While exodus towards the Québec mainland is on the rise among the younger generation, those who do remain on the IDLM play a central role in the survival as well as the evolution of the Madelinot Acadian identity. In Pascal Raiche-Nogue's 2015 article published in *L'Acadie Nouvelle*, these people, especially those who become artists of some form, are recognized as the culture's "guardians." Fortunately, in her linguistic analysis of Madelinot French, Falkert did not limit Madelinot *acadianité* as a simple linguistic construction. The second pole of identity construction, the local environment ("*notre petite place*"), holds great value to

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79 *Idem.*

80 While language shift has yet to make an impact on Madelinot Acadian identity, both Falkert and Lefebvre acknowledge that exodus towards larger urban centers in both Québec and the Maritime Provinces is a common occurrence for young adults living on the IDLM. This occurs largely because on the IDLM, there is no university, only a CEGEP:

*Dans les milieux de l'Acadie du Golfe, l'effet de génération se perçoit différemment. Ici, ce sont les plus âgés qui s'impliqueraient le plus, les jeunes s'en allant souvent dans les milieux urbains pour poursuivre leurs études et travailler, malgré le fait que ceux qui demeurent sont dynamiques et constituent un pilier de l'épanouissement du fait acadien. Tous, dans tous les milieux, semblent cependant assez positifs face à l'avenir du fait acadien chez eux (Lefebvre, 2006, op. cit., p. 85).*

Madelinot Acadians. In fact, Lefebvre finds one's environment to represent the greatest sense of belonging for Québécois Acadians: "*Le local occupe certes la place la plus importante dans l'appartenance des Acadiens du Québec.*"<sup>81</sup> The responses of several participants reflect the importance of island life in the local *acadianité*. For example, Madame Chevarie, who transitioned in her definition of an Acadian from a Francophone to one who is like a species of grass commonly found in the local sand dunes, continued with her analogy of Acadians as being deeply rooted and tied to their physical environment:

*mais c'est quelque chose de rassurant / c'est peut-être ça le mot / c'est rassurant on / on / qu'on soit en Afrique ou n'importe où c'est rassurant de savoir qu'on a un lieu comme ça où on peut se retrouver [...] c'est sûr que l'environnement physique peut influencer un peu.*

To quote Richard, "[l]'identité madelinienne, quand elle tente de se définir, n'échappe pas à ce caractère insulaire."<sup>82</sup> This insular influence takes shape in many forms, such as in art, as was evoked by Madame Chevarie in describing the dune grasses as a metaphor for Acadian tenacity. Art is one of the many acts through which the Acadian environment/territory is claimed by the Madelinots. Lefebvre explains how such an act is a necessary step in mobilizing a community: "[...] il est impératif que l'identité acadienne revendiquée par les Acadiens du Québec soit transposée en actes, qu'elle génère des éléments expressifs, qu'elle donne lieu à une mobilisation communautaire et à des comportements qui alimentent l'Acadie et la font vivre au quotidien."<sup>83</sup> To illustrate, it is through his artistic manifestation that Dominic Lefrançois (M1) expresses his Acadian identity, which he describes as simply having a strong connection to the sea, wind, and nature in general:

81 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

82 Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

83 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

*être un Acadien / euh / ça signifie surtout / ben pour moi personnellement c'est / c'est sûr que ça a un lien assez profond avec la mer / un lien avec les grandes espaces avec l'histoire aussi / pis tout ça c'est sûr / mais je pense que c'est ça / d'être attiré par les grandes espaces pis la mer entre autre le vent la nature [...] en plus ici aux Îles c'est particulier / on est insulaire / et c'est ça / c'est le lien qui rapproche le plus le fait d'être acadien.*

On *Arrimage* (the website for la *Corporation culturelle des Îles-de-la-Madeleine*), Monsieur Lefrançois himself describes how insularity is key to his multidisciplinary approach to art that involves sculpture, painting, and music: “*Mon approche multidisciplinaire me permet d’aborder mon travail autant avec la peinture et la sculpture qu’avec la performance. La musique jazz, mes voyages autours du monde et l’insularité [...] se combinent dans ma recherche artistique.*”<sup>84</sup>

This connection between identity and music on the IDLM has been reported on in the recent past. Local artist Georges Langford, interviewed by Pascal Raiche-Nogue (2015), stated that it is fairly accurate to assume that each local family has a musician among them, many of whose songs focus on the IDLM and the sea. As reported by Raiche-Nogue, Monsieur Langford never questioned his Acadian identity, nor that of the IDLM: “*Pour moi, les Îles en faisaient partie, c’était automatique parce qu’on avait les mêmes noms de famille, on parlait la même langue, on avait la même religion, même si on ne la pratiquait pas toujours.*”<sup>85</sup>

With the presence of musicians and artists naturally comes the availability of cultural products and a larger virtual community. Local Acadian music is widely streamed and played on the media in the Gulf regions. Local Acadian literature is also readily available as Québec publishing houses assure a wide distribution throughout the province. “*L’Acadie virtuelle*” continues to grow as well with an increasing number of online forums and organizations that allow for shared discussions and cultural (product) promotion. Despite this easy access to cultural products (virtually or physically), Lefebvre

84 Arrimage, 2013.

85 Raiche-Nogue, *loc. cit.*

is quick to point out that access does not necessarily bring with it cultural practices. The cultural products and what they represent must be valued in order for cultural practices to emerge: “*Pour être mise en acte, l’identité doit être valorisée et passée à travers un filtre de valorisations, lesquelles donnent lieu à des pratiques [...]. [S]i l’on juge l’acadianité et les ressources culturelles acadiennes importantes, l’identité suscitera des pratiques.*”<sup>86</sup> On the IDLM, cultural products are highly valued and remain a central component to the success of Acadian festivities, as was seen during both the second *Ralliement Acadien du Québec* held in July 2016 as well as the *Congrès mondial acadien* (whose 2014 edition was partially hosted by the Témiscouata region of Québec). In fact, results of Lefebvre’s 2006 ethnocultural study revealed that over 90% of Québécois Acadians of the Gulf regions value accessibility and the use of Acadian cultural products; they are one of their primary and most effective means of transmitting their Acadian culture to younger generations. This value associated with cultural products increases with proximity to the Maritime Provinces, where lay the roots of the Acadian collective past. It is clear that the Madelinots have made their celebrations, festivities, and dedication to the fine arts an Acadian cultural practice. In fact, one could consider their virtual presence of Acadian cultural products to be one of the pivotal contributors to the Madelinot Acadian identity. In the age of virtual living and technology, *Acadie* is able to reach beyond its imaginary and power-related borders to connect, through art, music, and ancestry organizations managed online, with members of *la grande Acadie*. The Madelinots live in *l’Acadie virtuelle* rather than in *l’Acadie actuelle*, perhaps. In finishing his interview with Pascal Raiche-Nogue, Georges Langford reiterated as much: “*Je pense que l’Acadie, c’est justement ça. C’est très virtuel l’Acadie. Et c’est peut-être sa chance actuellement. Y a-t-il quelque chose aujourd’hui de plus actuel que du virtuel?*”<sup>87</sup> Out of necessity caused by their environment that is threatened not by linguistic assimilation but

86 Marie Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

87 Raiche-Nogue, *loc. cit.*



by the social power of New Brunswick Acadia, the Madelinots form a community that shares a very strong local sense of *acadianité*, purposefully reflected in their artistic interpretations.

The second of Falkert's three poles is definitely echoed in the ArtcaDIT interviews. "*Les Îles... notre petite place*" heavily shapes the values of the interviewed Madelinot Acadians and how they live their lives. As history teacher Julie LeBlanc (F2) describes, to be Acadian is synonymous with being near the sea: "*Je vois mes Îles quand je dis Acadie / je vois la mer aussi / pour moi l'Acadie c'est plus un synonyme de ça / la mer.*" One could say that it is impossible to separate Madelinot *acadianité* from the environment. Berthe Vigneau (F2), of the *Corporation des Acadiens des Îles-de-la-Madeleine*, described *acadianité* as being ubiquitous with cooking on the IDLM: "*[...] c'est le fait qu'on est des insulaires / mais là je pourrais pas faire la différence entre ma cuisine acadienne et le fait d'être insulaire.*" Finally, Fanny Arsenault (F1), a student, identifies an Acadian as one who is in contact with their surroundings, mainly the sea:

*Les Acadiens / ben j'pense que c'est des gens qui sont proches des éléments / les éléments de la /de la nature/ la mer / pour moi la mer / j'ai vécu avec la mer pis chu [...] aussi près des rivages donc on fait de la pêche / l'agriculture / c'est des gens proches de la terre les Acadiens [...] j'les vois comme ça c'est un peuple qui est beaucoup plus en contact avec la terre les éléments qui l'entourent.*

While the uniqueness of the IDLM undoubtedly plays an important role in Madelinot Acadian identity, participants also provided positive support of Falkert's third identity pole around: history ("*nous sommes tous des déportés*").<sup>88</sup> Previously, this article provided evidence of a shared history as a source of pride among Madelinots and a reason for the existence of a dual or hybrid Acadian-Québécois identity.<sup>89</sup> In fact, of all the Acadian migrants and descendants interviewed by Lefebvre, more than 60% affirmed that

88 Falkert, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

89 Falkert, *op. cit.*, and Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

while *Acadie* is currently perceived as existing within principally the Maritime Provinces, the presence of *Acadiens* throughout the diaspora also assures their presence in *Acadie*, making the notion of *Acadie* less about territory and more symbolically tied to genealogy: “[...] *maintenant elle fait référence à une histoire, à une identité, à des sentiments...ce qui renvoie à la proposition d’une Acadie généalogique.*”<sup>90</sup> Echoed by Richard: “[...] *la capacité de situer quelqu’un dans le lignage est sans doute la marque par excellence de l’identité madelinienne. “Est Madelinot, celui dont on connaît la généalogie.”*”<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, while Richard’s full study of the Madelinot identity does touch on the similarity between the French dialects of IDLM and the Maritimes, he stops from including it in one of the Madelinot poles, emphasizing, rather, the importance of their insular environment along with shared genealogy: “[...] *le caractère de Madelinots revêt d’une part l’attachement au territoire (le fait d’y être né et d’y habiter depuis un certain temps) ou encore l’attachement à la lignée parentale (avoir des parents qui en portent le statut.)*”<sup>92</sup>

Out of the eleven participants of ArtcaDIT, eight made clear associations with their shared history, shared lineage, and a resulting community solidarity and sense of family that is central to being Acadian on IDLM (Table 3). Furthermore, note the use by four participants (Alexandre Landry, Berthe Vigneault, Hélène Chevarie, and Julie LeBlanc) of the term “*grande*” in discussing the importance of family as a means of expressing the historical and genealogical connections throughout the diaspora and its centrality to their Acadian identity.

Granted, there are limitations to the results of this short, qualitative study. Ten interviews (with a total of eleven participants) do not provide data that can amount to unquestionable conclusions. However, patterns did emerge that allows this study to partially support Falkert’s three asserted poles of Madelinot *acadianité*.

90 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

91 Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

92 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

**Table 3**  
**Shared genealogy in Madelinot Acadian identity**

Name of Participant	Code	Interview Excerpt
Alexandre Landry	M1	« [...] faire partie d'une grande famille [...] être solidaire [...] on est tous dérivé des Acadiens [...] la déportation pis le fait d'avoir tenus le coup / le fait d'être solidaire [...] »
André Vigneault	M2	« [...] on a des / on a des racines qui est pas pareil / on a un passé qui est pas pareil des Québécois »
Geneviève Vigneault	F2	« C'est un peuple qui se tient / tient beaucoup / on aime garder nos traditions / patrimoine on aime ça [...] tu deviens pas Acadien à cinquante ans / t'es né Acadien / t'as des souches des souches / t'as des valeurs / c'est dans le sang et dans le cœur »
Berthe Vigneault	F2	« [...] c'est vraiment dans mes coutumes [...] dans nos traditions que nos parents nous ont transmises [...] pis aussi la famille / l'importance de la famille nous-autres ici aux Iles-de-la-Madeleine j'pense que c'est encore très très fréquent / nous on a des grandes réunions de familles [...] »
Hélène Chevarie	F2	« je peux commencer par dire qu'une Acadienne / ben c'est pour moi dans ma tête une Francophone qui s'est implantée dans les maritimes / si on reste à la base neutre / ben francophone / francophone / au fond ceux qui sont d'origine / qui sont partis de la France à un moment donné / et qui / et y en a qui sont partis de Chéticamp / c'est un peu / pis sont implantés aux Iles de la Madeleine / mais les Acadiens c'est une grande famille. »
Julie LeBlanc	F1	« ben pour moi être une Acadienne / appartenir à une grande famille / c'est vraiment ça qui est plus gros pour moi / c'est d'être partie d'une grande famille des Acadiens / pis être une Acadienne c'est pas tellement / je réfère pas tellement à la déportation / je me réfère plutôt à après la déportation quand les Acadiens se sont mis ensemble et se sont affirmés / sont venus pour faire une communauté. »
Odette LeBlanc	F2	« parce que c'est nos ancêtres / veut veut pas on a / nos ancêtres ont été déportés / et tout ça l'histoire [...] »

Raynald Déraspe	M2	« <i>c'était des familles dont les ancêtres étaient venus aux Iles ou quoi dans les environs après que l'Acadie [...] après la déportation des Acadiens / donc à ce moment-là y arrivaient de France / c'était des familles françaises [...] moi j'dirais donc que / j'sais pas / les Acadiens c'est des gens qui ont des coutumes / qu'y ont gardé conservé au fils des ans / au fils des générations / pis en étant mariés entre eux / la communauté des Iles / ben y se sont / y ont gardé plus vives / toutes ces coutumes-là / et en étant proches / aussi y ont développé une grande solidarité entre eux [...] »</i>
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The local, insular environment of IDLM and the strong Madelinot solidarity in sharing a common past with the Maritimes (a past that eventually led them to this insularity) is expressed in a variety of ways, such as art, cooking and music. However, the concept of language clearly did not hold nearly the same importance to the participants as did the poles of local environment and shared history. This brings us, however, to the obvious limitations of this study. These ten interviews are part of the ArtcaDIT corpus and by association, the ArtCADIE fine art exhibition. Given that ArtCADIE was composed of the artworks of fourteen professional artists from the Maritimes and eighteen from Québec, it is natural, then, that the same artists whose interviews made up the ArtcaDIT corpus discussed their art and their associations with Monsieur Forest, their interviewer. For these participants, their art is their language; it is their mode of communication. Fortunately, Monsieur Forest did interview individuals who were not recognized or self-described artists so to allow for more accurate representation of how Acadians from the diaspora view the question “*Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, être un/e Acadien/ne ?*” Nevertheless, given the responses discussed in this study and knowing the context of the original ArtCADIE project, we can anticipate a certain sway in the direction of *notre petite place* as a strong identity association among the interviewees that may not be as prominent with a wider set of data. A sample focusing on a larger pool of participants of a variety of professions would also assist in ascertaining the surprising lack of discussion surrounding the role of language.

## Conclusion

New Brunswick Acadians are a minority in their province and in order to combat acculturation as a result of long-term contact with the English-speaking majority they use language as 1) a pole to rally around and 2) a major means of cultural defense (“*le défendre contre les étrangers*”).<sup>93</sup> In spite of the affirmation of similarities between traditional Acadian French and Madelinot French,<sup>94</sup> it would appear that the Madelinots recognize their local environment and shared past with Maritime Acadians as much more defining components of their Acadian identity than they do their shared linguistic features. The fact that this slow “*désacadianisation*” of their vernacular has not (yet) surfaced in the literature as a (perceived) threat to their Acadian identity only emphasizes the importance of the poles of heritage and territory/environment as the umbrella under which all the multifaceted Acadian identity by-products have emerged and evolved (such as the various dialects of Acadian French). Despite some “*désacadianisation*” of Madelinot French on a mainly morphosyntactic level, Madelinot Acadians appear to have no immediate need for such a “defense.” At least not yet.

Scholarship should not delay and wait for further *désacadianisation* or for any similar form of acculturation in the Acadian diaspora. The relations maintained between Maritime Acadians and Québécois Acadians need to be studied in order to understand, for example, the influence of territory and language in the Acadian community “membership” spectrum. Following the line of questioning put forth by Lefebvre in 2007, does identity among Québécois Acadians evolve, transform, and manifest differently than it does in New Brunswick’s Acadian *foyer* and in the rest of the diaspora? It would appear so, for on the IDLM, Acadian identity is very much shaped by their notion of territory/environment, “*notre petite place*.”<sup>95</sup> If we are to take the results of the study by Keppie (2013) as precedent, Madelinots would likely not all agree to being

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93 Dorais, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

94 Falkert, *op. cit.*

95 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

part of *l'Acadie actuelle* despite a strong self-identification as either *Acadien* or a *Québécois-Acadien* hybrid (although the current study was unable to determine this). Sixty percent (60%) of surveyed Québécois Acadians by Lefebvre have indicated that *Acadie* is found in the Maritimes, a perspective shared to an even higher degree among New Brunswick French-speakers.<sup>96</sup> Identifying this tendency by Québécois Acadians to associate the Acadian territory within the realm of the Maritime Provinces in spite of a difference in perspective regarding the meaning of *Acadien* offers insight into the impact of New Brunswick's hegemonic discourse as *le foyer de l'Acadie* and the trend that has seen the term *Acadie* take precedent over *Acadien* in both organizations and scholarship.

Coincidentally, the annual general assembly of *la Société nationale de l'Acadie* was held on the IDLM in 2015 under the theme "*une fierté partagée*," or "a shared pride." In the press release following the meeting, SNA president René Cormier stressed the need to promote *Acadie* and the identity of the Acadians as inclusive and free of its complexes:

*La Société Nationale de l'Acadie a aujourd'hui le devoir de redoubler d'ardeur pour aider le peuple acadien à actualiser sa vision de l'Acadie afin que celle-ci soit ancrée dans son histoire bien sûr, mais arrimée à la nouvelle réalité d'une Acadie contemporaine, entreprenante, inclusive et décomplexée. Une Acadie qui s'appuie sur sa jeunesse, sur l'inclusion et l'intégration des nouveaux arrivants et sur ses leaders de toutes les régions et de tous les secteurs. Inspirée par son propre parcours, la SNA doit plus que jamais ancrer ses actions dans une réelle conscience de son rôle d'organisme rassembleur.*<sup>97</sup>

While the press release did not elaborate on how the SNA, as *Acadie's* head organization would approach this task of essentially combatting the long-standing Acadian dilemma, the importance of studying the identity of Acadians beyond New Brunswick and

96 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, and Keppie, 2011, *op. cit.*

97 Société nationale de l'Acadie, 2015 [<http://snacadie.org/index.php/component/acymailing/archive/view/mailid-196?key=M139bg8j&subid=3853-u6REo4w8P7j01U&tmpl=component>].

the Maritimes remains a vital component in Acadian studies: not only to deepen our understanding of the social complexities of the diaspora, but also to find ways to promote and engage *l'Acadie* and *les Acadiens* on the international scene in a manner that is, to use the words of Monsieur Cormier, “*contemporaine, entreprenante.*” This includes strengthening our discussions in scholarly circles regarding all members of the diaspora, such as the IDLM.

The Madelinots have found somewhat of a temporary safe zone in claiming a dual identity. However, this has not played favorably into the cultural rhetoric of the New Brunswick Acadian *foyer*, whose ideologies concerning the meaning of *Acadie* and *Acadien* have made it so IDLM are practically ignored as an integral member of the diaspora. We have seen how even the most celebrated Acadian festivity, the *Congrès mondial acadien*, has advanced primarily the New Brunswick Acadian cause in both economics and scholarly reflection, despite its mission and vision of inclusion and cooperation.<sup>98</sup>

*[L]e rapport à l'acadianité dont le Nouveau-Brunswick se réserve les entrées et les sorties, est-il disponible pour devenir un mode d'expression des Madelinots. Quelques Madelinots m'ont confirmé que dans leurs relations avec le milieu acadien, il leur était difficile d'être « reconnus comme des vrais Acadiens. » Donc un seul choix, c'est de se dire à la fois Acadien et à la fois Québécois [...].*<sup>99</sup>

While Madelinot Acadian identity can be characterized as being very much localized, the community constitutes a unique group of people who also strongly relate (even virtually) to their society of origin that connects them to other Acadian communities within *la grande Acadie*. *Acadie* is more “*une manière de vivre, une manière d'être et donc que l'Acadie peut vivre partout.*”<sup>100</sup> It is, unfortunately, true that Maritime Acadians have often reacted with ambivalence toward their Québécois Acadian cousins. However, the Madelinot

98 Keppie, 2016, *op. cit.*

99 Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

100 Lefebvre, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

Acadians of ArtcaDIT, as part of *la grande Acadie*, strongly affirm their diasporic Acadian identity through art, their attachment to the environment, and their love of family as a means of defense against those who may more often than not dismiss them rather than include them as part of the solution to the Acadian dilemma. As Falkert explains, “[s]i cette ouverture n’a pas définitivement mis un terme aux rapports marqués par l’ambiguïté et la prudence, cette revendication (du côté des Madelinots) et cette reconnaissance (du côté des Provinces maritimes) rendent compte des représentations identitaires [...]”<sup>101</sup>

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