

Remembering Our Roots: Narratives about the Past, Present, and Future of Acadie

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Volume 39, Number 1, Spring 2010

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad39_1re02

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Publisher(s)

The Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Richard, C. (2010). Remembering Our Roots:: Narratives about the Past, Present, and Future of Acadie. *Acadiensis*, 39(1), 164–173.

Remembering Our Roots: Narratives about the Past, Present, and Future of Acadie

DONALD SAVOIE'S *I'm from Bouctouche, me: Roots matter* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) and Ronald Rudin's *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian's Journey through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) explore Acadian memory in two very distinct ways: Savoie through his autobiographical journey interspersed with historical references and Rudin through the study of commemorative events. Each raises a number of complex issues faced by Acadians today in what is still mostly an English-speaking society with a strong, centralized federal government. Both are compelling texts written in the first person in which the authors are also witnesses. Neither book is pedantic and each contains a great deal of useful information for scholars and interested readers alike.

It would be hard to find two more self-effacing and modest authors than Savoie and Rudin, yet their passion for the preservation of Acadian culture is very evident in their books when they take aim at the injustices suffered not only by Acadians but by any group or individual treated unfairly. Rudin, who is not an Acadian, is more vocal than Savoie in his condemnation of the wrongs that have been committed against Acadians. Acadians themselves have long been conditioned to avoid conflict as Savoie points out in his third chapter, when he reminds the readers of the negative reception his uncle Calixte Savoie got in 1930 when he circulated a letter encouraging Acadians to speak French while shopping in Moncton (59). The initiative backfired and Acadians were laid off from Anglophone-owned businesses as a result. Similarly, Rudin quotes directly from Michel Roy's *L'Acadie des origines à nos jours*, who claims that the "Acadian leaders did not want to challenge the powers that be so that they might be able to hold on to the crumbs they were able to take from the table" (Roy, 198, quoted in Rudin, 49).¹ Of course Roy and Savoie are referring to different time periods for Acadians; Roy points his finger at the elite of the Acadian renaissance of the 1880s who did not wish to make too many waves in the sea of English, whereas Savoie remembers his uncle as a language-rights activist in the 1930s. With the arrival of official bilingualism in New Brunswick in 1969, some might be tempted to think the tide had turned. Yet Savoie and Rudin are cautionary at best about the future of Acadie and both recognize the importance of remembering the past, even when the present seems full of promise.

Donald Savoie could certainly be considered one of Acadie's great success stories. He presently holds the Canada Research Chair in Public Administration and Governance at the Université de Moncton and is the author of approximately 40 well-known and highly praised books on governance and economics. This book, however, is a significant departure from his usual area of interest in that the author turns inward to reveal his own life story and, through it, the recent history of Acadians in New

1 See Michel Roy, *L'Acadie des origines à nos jours* (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1981).

Brunswick.² He starts by describing his roots, which are firmly planted in the small Acadian community of Saint-Maurice where he was born (just outside of Bouctouche, despite what the title professes). Though Savoie describes his rise through the ranks – from Saint-Maurice to places such as Oxford, Ottawa, and Moncton – as a path filled with luck, this is one case where his modesty is unconvincing (ix, 119, 131-2). Intellectual curiosity, a fearless approach to rethinking governance and economics, and hard work were undoubtedly the true reasons for Savoie’s success.

The first chapter goes further back than his birth, however, or even that of his parents. It is significant that Savoie feels the need to start his memoir in 1604, the year that marked the first French settlement in North America. His historical recounting of the arrival and forced departure of Acadians serves as a reminder that the deportation of Acadians was horrific and unnecessary (28-31). Savoie traces his own ancestors during the expulsion years, most of whom were deported. A few escaped the British troops by fleeing north to the Miramichi River – helped, as were many Acadian families, by their Mi’kmaw allies (28). The author also shows how Acadians began to rebuild their society during the period known as the renaissance acadienne (from about the 1860s to the mid-1900s), refusing to dwell on the negative consequences of the expulsion (33). In fact, he is struck by the “celebrations” of the bicentennial of the Acadian deportation in a passage Ronald Rudin would surely find interesting: “We were celebrating the expulsion of my ancestors, and to this day I am still struggling to understand why we would celebrate such a sad event. . . . The only possible explanation is that when the hamlet assembled on 15 August 1955, having pooled some of its limited resources for the event, it was celebrating our survival” (35).

Savoie’s tongue-in-cheek description of the small community of Saint-Maurice would not lead most people to want to live there: “It is impossible to grow anything of commercial value in Saint-Maurice, and the village is hidden away in the middle of a forest – and not a good forest at that” (37). Essentially, Acadians went there because no one else wanted the land and they had a better chance of living there undisturbed. Yet the author’s deep sense of belonging is evident, despite the deprecating manner in which he describes this place. The reader cannot help but envy the simplicity of life in this Acadie, where no one was a stranger and, as in Longfellow’s *Evangeline*, there were no locks on the doors: “In fact, I don’t believe that we even had a key to it” (38). In this sense, Savoie creates his own golden age myth of a rural Acadie that had a strong sense of community and “appartenance.”³

Everything changed in the 1960s, as the Savoie household moved to Moncton. He learned, for instance, that he should knock on people’s doors rather than walk in as he had always done in Saint-Maurice. More importantly, the Robichaud years had begun. Louis J. Robichaud, a young lawyer from Saint-Antoine, just a short drive from Saint-Maurice, won a surprise victory as premier of New Brunswick in 1960 and began to rock the boat of *bonne entente* between Acadians and the dominant English-speaking population.⁴ Acadians had learned throughout their history that being discreet, yet

2 Savoie’s book is one of the finalists for the Prix littéraire France-Acadie 2010. The winner will be announced at the beginning of September.

3 The word “appartenance” is Savoie’s own, untranslated word meaning “belonging” (56).

4 See chap. 4, appropriately entitled “Université de Moncton: All Hell Breaks Loose” (esp. 93-4).

persistent, was the best way to tread the dangerous waters of the Maritime Provinces. As Acadie passed from French to British and back numerous times, Acadians developed a unique negotiating skill, at least partly learned from the Mi'kmaq, in order to maintain their position. Yet the prevailing mood in Acadie, specifically in the booming university city that was Moncton in the 1960s, was no longer that of patient submission. Oddly enough, although Savoie's tone is that of admiration approaching reverence for Robichaud as an almost heroic figure for Acadians, he is much less categorical when it comes to describing his own (and his brother Claude's) brushes with the opponents of official bilingualism. He is proud of his brother's calm as he spoke at Moncton City Hall before the infamous Mayor Leonard Jones, asking to be heard in French, yet he is ambivalent about others who stirred up the linguistic waters but who were not from the area: "The impetus for change came from away, not from Moncton Acadians" (107). Savoie does not oppose the ideals for which these students stood; however, he points to the fact that it was easier for them to take on this fight knowing that they would not have to stay in Moncton and deal with the inevitable fallout resulting from their actions (107).

Perhaps Savoie's preference for diplomatic approaches to linguistic and cultural conflicts was what made his own personal experiences with the Anglophone world more positive than negative. Leaving Moncton behind, he pursued his studies at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton where he explored, in his master's thesis, "unrest on university campuses in the 1960s, with an emphasis on the Université de Moncton" (119). Not surprisingly, Savoie's scholarly mind was already approaching his own personal experiences in Moncton with a certain detachment and analytical purpose. Afterwards, he spent several years in Ottawa developing a better understanding of politics from the inside out. As part of an effort to decentralize the Department of Regional Economic Expansion (DREE), the federal government set up one of its offices in Moncton and Savoie was named its chief of staff. By then Savoie had married, and his wife Linda supported his desire to pursue a doctoral degree once the agency was up and running (130). Savoie's superior at DREE agreed to partly fund his studies on the condition that he would return to the government for at least two years after receiving his degree. Savoie agreed wholeheartedly (131) and he eventually obtained his doctoral degree from Oxford. With his usual modesty, the author maintains that "entrance requirements were not quite as demanding in the 1970s as they are today," but the reader cannot help but marvel at the path of the boy who learned to read in a one-room schoolhouse with no electricity or running water in Saint-Maurice, New Brunswick (131-2, 38). Along with flattering descriptions of Oxford and London, Savoie illustrates the challenges that awaited him at this prestigious university. For one, he quickly learned that in order to excel in his doctoral studies at Oxford, he would have to master the English language (138). He spent countless hours learning the English language over and above his demanding coursework and, for the first two years, worked thirteen hours per day for five days a week and nine to ten hours per day on the remaining two days (139). Savoie might have been "born under a lucky star," as his mother liked to say, but it took more than luck to make it in this environment (Preface, ix).

Savoie points out that when he and his young family returned to Canada, some of his superiors at DREE were less than happy with his Oxford thesis and its criticisms of government policies (150-1). This section of the book will appeal most to those

who are interested in the rise and fall of government policies, particularly those pertaining to regional economic development in Atlantic Canada, and it is told from the author's point of view as an agent of change himself. With a frustration that never succumbs to cynicism, Savoie proposes that there is a clear "bias towards Ontario and Quebec" in the federal government and that voices falling outside those boundaries are not easily heard (155). With the help of friends such as Roméo LeBlanc in Ottawa, he managed to increase the profile of the Maritimes and, when possible, the area where he grew up.⁵ But there were considerable challenges to doing so, as any gain in the Maritimes was viewed as taking away from Ottawa and Québec.

Savoie saves the best for last – at least for those readers who are looking for a more up-close-and-personal autobiography. For all his impressive appointments, his efforts to improve the political and academic profile of the Maritimes and of Acadians, and his highly praised books, reports, and other research, Savoie is most endearing for his genuine desire to improve the lives of others. There is a great deal of wisdom in this book, often masked by an unassuming narrative. As a scholar, he expresses his purpose best when he describes attending a dinner where advances in mathematics were being discussed: "This was a new world for me as I discovered that one could work on a particular problem knowing that it could not be solved in a lifetime. The purpose was to advance knowledge so that the next generation of scholars would have a better chance of solving the problem" (241). This anecdote reveals how Savoie views his own career: though he perhaps has not – or not yet – achieved all that he would have wished to achieve, he has contributed to advances in regional economic development in very significant and palpable ways throughout his career.

Savoie ends his memoir with a reflection on how Acadians have progressed in the decades he has witnessed. The Robichaud era is presented as a time of great hope and change, but the author is more cynical towards the generation that followed; this latter generation is, in his words, one of "state-sponsored Acadians" – Acadians who depend too heavily on government sponsorship to express their national and cultural identity (248). Savoie points to individual involvement and increased tolerance of diversity as essential to the survival of this identity (248-9, 251). He also suggests that the new Acadie has a clear advantage in the global economy: "Acadians have never been protected by borders, and they have had to improvise to survive virtually from the very beginning. This should serve us well as everyone seeks to adapt to this new world" (254).

A conversation between Ronald Rudin and Donald Savoie would surely be a riveting and passionate discussion. Rudin, a professor in the Department of History at Concordia University, explores in his book, among other things, the evolution of Acadian identity through commemorative, often government-sponsored events such as the celebrations around the first French colony at Île-Ste-Croix and the expulsion of 1755. With his rather unconventional methods, Rudin is not only an observer in these historical events but also a participant; rather than limit his role to collecting and analysing documentation, he chose to attend many important commemorative events to experience firsthand their effect on those present and their conception of Acadie.

⁵ An example of this is the agreement worked out by LeBlanc and Savoie with Mitel, a large telecommunications equipment manufacturing company, to locate two plants in Bouctouche (160-3).

He also invites readers to take their own journey through the distant, and not-so-distant past, by offering a great deal of visual and audio-visual material (such as interviews) on a website, which readers can consult periodically using cues provided in the book or at their own pace.⁶

Rudin tells the story of a people trying to come to grips with different versions of founding myths and other collective narratives through commemorative events. Within these stories there are, of course, sub-plots – at least when they are told from the point of view of the Europeans. An entirely different version emerges, however, when a voice is given to the First Nations participants. For the Passamaquoddy, the Penobscot, the Maliseet, and the Mi'kmaq still living on this land, these commemorative events were hardly seen as something to celebrate; in fact, they “agreed to participate only if the word ‘celebrate’ were changed to ‘commemorate’” (11). Rudin strives to give each voice its due and tries to strike a balance, even though we often sense that he tends to sympathize most with those who have the greatest difficulty being heard.

As early as the prologue, the reader is well aware that there will be no black and white telling of Acadian history here, and that internally, as well as externally, there are dissonant voices. Rudin seeks to “explore the stories that were told, along the way trying to understand why some aspects of the past were being remembered while others were forgotten” (7). Yet more often than not, he gets tangled up in trying to understand the complexities of organizing ceremonies on various scales. This happens through no fault of his, but because of the inevitable government bureaucracy and ideological twists and turns involved. Along the way, he discovers a significant gap between the vision of Acadian leaders or official organizations and that of “ordinary Acadians,” with much of this gap due to the varying interpretations of which parts of the past of l'Acadie should be remembered and which should be forgotten (10). By unravelling this complex and fascinating tale, he leads the reader to an insider's understanding of popular and official takes on the trials and tribulations of Acadians.

The dichotomy between popular and official versions of the past is reflected in the structure of the book: the first part outlines the beginnings of Acadie, which is the story most often promoted by government and non-government organizations, while the second part tells the tale of its biggest trauma – the expulsion – still a raw wound for many Acadians. In the first part, Rudin begins by retracing the event commemorated in 2004: the establishment of the crucial first French settlement in Acadie on Île-Ste-Croix in 1604. On this small, inconspicuous island that sits on the border between New Brunswick and Maine, the first group of French explorers and settlers spent a miserable and deadly winter. Until practically the eve of that commemorative year, very few were familiar with this story (even among Acadians). Although the tercentenary had been celebrated back in 1904, it was not unusual to see a great deal of confusion around the location of the first settlement in Acadie – most often wrongly assumed to be Port-Royal – and this was also the case for the 1904 events. To muddy the waters even further, in 1904 the word “Acadian” was rarely used as English organizers preferred to call it “European” to make it less threatening to the English-speaking majority (17). Rudin notes that “neither First Nations people

6 See Ronald Rudin, “Remembering Acadie,” <http://rememberingacadie.concordia.ca>.

nor Acadians were given much opportunity to have their voices heard, even though it was their forebears whose paths had crossed three hundred years earlier” (29). In fact, only two French-speakers are invited to participate in the proceedings of 1904, and they are both from Québec. Not a single Acadian voice was heard (34).

Rudin also shows how Samuel de Champlain, a Catholic, and Pierre Dugua, sieur De Monts, a Protestant, both of whom led the group of Frenchmen that settled at Île-Ste-Croix in 1604, were marginalized by different groups wishing to express a different founding identity. At the celebrations marking Champlain’s founding of Quebec City in 1908, the Québécois took great liberties with history – rewriting it as they planned a re-enactment – which took attention away from the small 1604 settlement at Île-Ste-Croix and minimized DeMonts’ role. In contrast, the 1904 celebrations were labelled the “DeMonts Tercentenary” (17). Others in 1904, says Rudin, chose to promote the idea of religious tolerance and diversity through Champlain and De Monts as the “Catholic and Protestant ‘founders’ of Canada” (35). And since the importance of active involvement in commemorative events by First Nations people was not recognized in 1904, Native people were portrayed stereotypically by non-Natives in costumes during a re-enactment of the landing of the De Monts-Champlain party in Saint John (38-9).

Rudin maintains that Acadians were marginalized as well in the 1904 celebrations – that in the ceremonies as well as in local newspapers of the time they were not really portrayed as significant players in New Brunswick (41). The dissociation of Acadians from their French ancestors in 1904 as well as in the more recent 2004 celebrations is a theme that surfaces often throughout this book. Despite the fact that they were not consulted or even invited to their own birthday, however, Acadians at the time were in fact busy rebuilding their culture using tools of their own making. The first convention nationale acadienne, for example, was held in 1881 where, as Rudin points out, the first symbols of a national identity were chosen (48). Yet Acadie remained fragile, and caution was used at these conventions nationales so as not to offend the English majority (49). Moreover, as Rudin notes, the significant role of the Société Nationale l’Assomption (SNA) in putting the pieces of Acadie back together began to fade as the 20th century unfolded. This was due mostly to a shift in priorities – from reinforcing a nationalist rhetoric based on the past to a stronger interest in economic and social stability. The SNA no longer filled such an important need for Acadians and the more practically minded Société Mutuelle l’Assomption had begun to take its place; this latter organization was primarily a mutual insurance company, even though its early leaders were frequently also leaders of the SNA.⁷

Rudin maintains, however, that la Société nationale l’Assomption did make a bit of a comeback in 1955 when there was strong momentum to mark the 200th anniversary of the expulsion of the Acadians (50-1). This can partially be explained by the social circumstances, which had changed somewhat between 1904 and 1955 as many Acadians began to assume more prominent roles within the province (especially in urban areas). But according to Rudin’s observations, the bicentennial celebrations

7 See Maurice Basque, *La Société nationale de l’Acadie : au coeur de la réussite d’un peuple* (Lévis, PQ: Éditions de la francophonie, 2006), 265, 69-71, as well as Jean-Paul Hauteceur, “L’Acadie : idéologies et société” (PhD diss., l’Université Laval, 1972), 124-5.

were also symptomatic of a need to relive the trauma of the expulsion (233). This resonates with Savoie's bewilderment at the paradox that manifested itself in the celebration of such a seemingly negative event. It is during this commemoration of a tragic past that the first tintamarre takes place in the streets of English-speaking Moncton. According to the author, approximately 5,000 Acadians were, for once, encouraged by the clergy to make as much noise as possible using instruments, voices, and anything else of which they could think (210-12). Perhaps, in their own subtle way, Acadians were reminding non-Acadians of the rarely discussed expulsion and perhaps the constant resurfacing of this memory is also an indirect reminder to those who would prefer to forget.

It is quite possible that this apparent obsession with a tragic event as a defining moment is what led many Acadian leaders, says Rudin, to try to steer the attention away from the expulsion of 1755 and focus it instead on a new founding myth. This is what promoters tried to sell to the public during the 400th-anniversary celebrations (70-2). The idea was to instil a new sense of pride and identity by providing "Acadians with a story about their beginnings that was unambiguously their own" (70). The old *Société nationale l'Assomption* had by then been transformed into *la Société nationale de l'Acadie*, and although it played an important part in this attempt to socially engineer this change in focus, there was limited success in this endeavour as Acadians "did not rally to the idea that an island where their forebears had spent only a single winter should be viewed as the site of their beginning as a people" (73). Despite this lack of success, Rudin maintains that the intentions were noble as the new Acadian elite, distancing themselves from the elite formed around the conventions *nationales acadiennes* of the previous century, "sought to create a definition of the Acadian 'nation' that emphasized its modernity and marginalized its legacy of trauma and victimization" (71). Some Acadian intellectuals in the Maritime Provinces envisioned a new Acadie – one not based on a tragic past but firmly planted in the present.⁸ This was problematic for the Acadian diaspora, among others, who had more difficulty relating to an identity rooted in the region rather than in the event that led to their dispersal over the globe. It was also problematic for Acadians living elsewhere who did not recognize or relate to this new version of Acadie.

Rudin also explores the world of government funding, echoing Savoie's sentiments about a federal government blind to the regions as well as Savoie's cynicism about "state-sponsored" Acadians. But what is most revealing about Rudin's comprehensive review of government documentation (made available to him through the Access to Information Act) is the fact that, from the beginning, very little about the 400th anniversary of the first Acadian settlement was actually about Acadie (109, 113). There appears to have been a great deal of selective memory among bureaucrats who chose to take the focus away from Acadie and place it on Canada as a whole or even just on the relationship between Canada and France. Though \$10 million was committed to the celebrations in Atlantic Canada, the organizers had a difficult time actually seeing any of the money until literally the eve of the events, which caused a

8 Two good examples of these Acadian intellectuals are Maurice Basque, historian and director of the Institut d'études acadiennes de l'Université de Moncton, and Joseph Yvon Thériault, a sociologist who spoke at the Congrès Mondial Acadien of 2004.

great deal of uncertainty and frustration (86). In comparison, \$18.8 million was sent to France for the project CANADA-FRANCE 1604-2004, much of which was used for a highly technical exhibit about Canada staged in Paris (87). This exhibit ran for nine months and then was dismantled permanently, leaving no trace of its existence behind. The goal was to show to Europeans a modern, technological Canada, but Rudin remarks that the exhibit was widely criticized by many as depending too heavily on technology at the expense of content. The fact that the technology was not always reliable did not help matters (261-2). Furthermore, Rudin notes that there were few references to Acadie in the exhibit and that it left him with “the unavoidable impression that the history-related projects had more to do with Quebec than *Acadie*” (88). To make things worse, because of the intention to show Canada as a technologically advanced country, there are little or no references to the past. This is a good example of how bureaucrats can take an event and remove any semblance of meaning from it.

The events that took place in New Brunswick to mark the 400th anniversary were on a much more humble scale. In fact, the one ceremony that was most significant to the attendees, and to Rudin himself, did not cost anything. This was the sunrise ceremony conducted by the Passamaquoddy, who welcomed the day and purified Acadians, Anglophones, and First Nations people alike in a simple but moving gesture of togetherness that can be viewed by readers on Rudin’s website (www.rememberingacadie.concordia.ca). Similarly, Jean Gaudet, without any government funding, took the initiative to organize a pilgrimage (“un pèlerinage historique”), which took Acadians through various historical sites and ended in Grand-Pré. Essentially, they would retrace the steps (but in reverse) of dispossessed Acadians who escaped deportation by fleeing from Grand-Pré to Miramichi and other areas in northern New Brunswick, and symbolically reclaim the land that had been taken from them. Rudin points out that “the Sunrise Ceremony and the Gaudet processions captured the imagination in a way that carefully orchestrated spectacles could not” (273). There is a solemn and intimate tone to these ceremonies that is notably absent from official commemorations, and toward the latter Rudin shows a certain growing cynicism as the book unfolds.

At the heart of this obvious cleavage, says Rudin, is an ideological war that, while more subtle than in 1904 when Acadians and First Nations people were not even invited to the party, is still based on the same principles. Government agencies remain unwilling to talk about Acadie or the expulsion for fear of stirring up controversy (260). Some Acadians are also hesitant to speak too loudly, conditioned for centuries to stay quiet and keep to themselves. Rudin shows a few reactions to the Royal Proclamation offered to Acadians in recognition of their suffering. It is worth noting that the Royal Proclamation was the result of an initiative undertaken by Louisiana lawyer Warren Perrin and a Bloc Québécois MP Stéphane Bergeron. The only official organization representing Acadians, the Société nationale de l’Acadie, reacted angrily when they were not consulted before this motion to obtain a full apology by the British Crown to the Acadians was put forth for debate in the House of Commons. Perhaps they feared that it would do them more harm than good, but it is also possible that they would have taken a more diplomatic approach or perhaps they were simply insulted because Acadians themselves had been overlooked once again (238). Rudin shows how some rejected this highly diluted official reference to the past while others

saw it as a pointless exercise, preferring to turn the page and move on (234-5). Still others rejected the view of Acadians as passive sheep being herded onto ships, and presented yet another version, one often represented by Beausoleil Broussard, the Acadian fighter who stood up to the British. To them, this proclamation was empty and insulting since it presented them as passive victims (227-30).

In the end, Rudin observes that few Acadians were present at Île-Ste-Croix since they did not seem to feel any attachment to this island. The absence of Acadians was also no doubt partly due to the fact that the celebrations at Île-Ste-Croix were largely organized by a group of English-speaking locals who formed a committee under the direction of Norma Stewart. They were celebrating Canada's founding and felt that drawing attention to Île-Ste-Croix as the first settlement might boost the local economy. Though many speak with a sense of historical pride (a sampling is available on the website), they did not initially envision celebrations specifically for or about Acadians or First Nations people. The Passamaquoddy themselves, when finally consulted, were not eager to celebrate this anniversary, which marked the beginning of a friendship that did not serve them well; they were only willing to take part if the word "celebration" was replaced by "commemoration." With all of these parties arguing, it was difficult to secure government funding and, as a result, the 400th-anniversary celebrations at Île-Ste-Croix did not have the expected grandeur (109-21).

Indeed, it is difficult not to be distrustful of funding agencies that spend millions of dollars on projects which have little or no impact on Canadians while holding out until the last minute to provide much less generous funding to these very same Canadians wishing to commemorate an event that happened in North America. It is even more difficult to understand the reluctance on the part of the Canadian government to refuse official recognition of the Passamaquoddy people who straddle the border between Canada and the United States, who enjoy full status as a tribe within the United States, and who figured prominently in the 2004 commemoration on Île-Ste-Croix. Perhaps this book is as much about recognition of individuals and groups slighted in the past, and forgiveness of those who slighted them, as it is about remembering and forgetting.

Both Savoie and Rudin have the merit of offering us new insights on Acadie's very recent history as well as directions for the future. Savoie shares, for instance, his memories of Acadie as it was embodied in the small hamlet of Saint-Maurice, the excitement as he comes of age during the revolutionary Robichaud years, and his belief that Acadians' ability to improvise provides them with a distinct advantage in the new global economy. Rudin, for his part, shows the various forces at play in building a cultural identity, either by design and with an ulterior motive or through a natural emotional response by the individuals who are part of that particular culture. His book provides an up-close-and-personal perspective on commemorative events as well as a trenchant critique of government programs and agendas vis-à-vis commemoration. Both authors' views, though, merge on many points; most notably, both drive home the idea that collective identity is more about intimate feelings of belonging and of connecting with people than about government sponsorship. Both books also reveal a great deal about the numerous ways in which Acadie has evolved over the last few decades as Acadians have struggled to come to terms with their traumatic past and how the Robichaud years and other state actions, such as the adoption of official bilingualism and, more recently, the mixed results of government-

sponsored nationalism, have contributed to various degrees to creating a new identity for Acadians.

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