“De par chez nous:”
Fiddling Traditions and Acadian Identity
on Prince Edward Island

by

Meghan Catherine Forsyth

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of Music
University of Toronto

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Doctor of Philosophy
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2011

Abstract

On a small island in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence a distinct Francophone community has persisted for nearly three hundred years despite historical traumas and the pressures exerted by a majority Anglophone environment. The factors that have contributed to the persistence of this community are a matter of some debate, yet the cultural identity of the Acadians of Prince Edward Island in the twenty-first century appears to have remained intact. Contrary to a popular discourse of identity “revival,” this distinct culture is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it something that is homogeneously pan-Acadian. While much popular and scholarly discourse on the Acadians centres on their tragic past and nationalist perspectives of Acadian identity construction, this dissertation focuses on how identity is created, perceived and expressed in a local context. Music plays a key role in articulating this local identity; it helps to create and maintain social relationships both within the community and with other cultural groups. The emergence of a distinct musical tradition has contributed substantially to the production and maintenance of cultural identity amongst these Island Acadians.

Through case studies of specific performance contexts, individual musicians and
professional groups, I examine current and ongoing processes of Acadian cultural definition and how musicians negotiate the dichotomy of traditional and modern performance contexts and forms of expression. I consider the musical alliances and exchanges that inform the experiences of these Islanders and how these intercultural encounters have influenced local musical practices and discourses about Acadian identity. My research demonstrates that contemporary cultural markers, and particularly music, are primary tools through which members of this invisible minority cultural group define and present their ethno-cultural identity both locally and to cultural outsiders.
In loving memory of my grandparents,

Dr. George Rodden McGowan (1925-2009),
for instilling in me a love of music and for his many memorable renditions of “Waltzing Matilda” and other classics on accordion

and

Mrs. Helen Mary Forsyth (1922-2008),
the best audience
Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have made this dissertation possible. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all my consultants and friends across P.E.I. and on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine who welcomed me into their homes and who shared their music, stories and insights with me. This project would not have been possible without you and I look forward to many more conversations and jams in the years to come. Special thanks to all my fellow “jammers” for many wonderful Friday nights, for teaching me so many wonderful tunes and for generously answering my questions. A special thank you to Anastasia DesRoches for your helpful advice and generosity. To Marie and Orrin Livingstone, I wish to express my gratitude for your continuous support, enthusiasm and friendship. You have gone over and beyond to ensure that I had the information I needed to complete this project. To help me get a handle on Acadian genealogy in the Région Évangéline Marie and her sister Hermine Gallant compiled a comprehensive “Genealogy of Acadian Musicians” for me, which has been an essential reference throughout this project. Thank you!

I am grateful to George Arsenault for providing constructive criticism on parts of this dissertation and for generously taking time for lengthy interviews and answering my many questions. Thank you also to Robert Richard at the Centre d’études acadiennes for his support during the archival stage of my research.

On les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, special thanks to Bernard Miousse for taking me under his wing and generously setting up interviews and musical sessions for me with his friends. I am grateful to François Miousse for giving me a place to stay and making my visit so
enjoyable. I am grateful to the members of Vishtèn (Pascal Miousse, Pastelle LeBlanc, Emmanuelle LeBlanc and Louis-Charles Vigneau) for sharing their music and insights with me. Your music continues to inspire me!

My deepest thanks to my advisors Gage Averill and Robin Elliott, and to my committee member Gordon Smith, for providing advice, insightful feedback and encouragement throughout my doctoral program and for being flexible and available despite great distances and busy schedules. Finally, thank you to Jeff Todd Titon and Jim Kippen for their thoughtful, constructive and insightful comments on the final draft of the dissertation. I would also like to thank Jim Kippen, Russell Hartenberger and Josh Pilzer for their mentorship, inspiration and generosity. I am fortunate to have been surrounded by many wonderful and supportive colleagues at the Faculty of Music. A special thank you to Carolyn Ramzy, Stephanie Conn, Graham Freeman, Catherine Gauthier Mercier and Andy Hillhouse for your friendship, support and stimulating conversation.

I could not have undertaken and completed this project without the generous financial support from the Sir Ernest MacMillan Memorial Foundation, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship program, the Faculty of Music and the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto.

Nor could I have succeeded without the unwavering support and encouragement of my wonderful family. In particular, thanks to my dad, Rick, who asked me several questions early on in this project that got the ball rolling and offered many words of wisdom along the way. A special thanks to my mum, Ginny, for your critical insight, advice and editorial feedback. Thank you for believing in me and fostering my love of music.

Lastly, thank you to my husband, Wilco, for enduring my long fieldwork trips and my lack of participation in most (ok, all) of our D.I.Y. home renovations, for creating the
numerous maps found in this dissertation, for your insights when I got stuck during the
writing process and for reminding me to keep everything in perspective. This project would
not have been possible without your love and support. Thanks, moppie.
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Figure 0.2 Detailed map of the Région Évangéline, P.E.I.

¹ All maps used in this dissertation are designed by Wilco van Eikeren (Recon Creative Design).
Chapter 1
Introduction and Methodology

On a small island in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence a distinct Francophone community has persisted for nearly three hundred years despite historical traumas and the pressures exerted by a majority Anglophone environment. The factors that have contributed to the persistence of this community are a matter of some debate, yet the cultural identity of the Acadians of Prince Edward Island in the twenty-first century appears to have remained intact. Contrary to a popular discourse of identity “revival,” this distinct culture is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it something that is homogeneously pan-Acadian. While much popular and scholarly discourse on the Acadians centres on their tragic past and nationalist perspectives of Acadian identity construction, my study focuses on how identity is created, perceived and expressed in a local context. Music plays a key role in articulating this local identity; it helps to create and maintain social relationships both within the community and with other cultural groups. The emergence of a distinct musical tradition has contributed substantially to the production and maintenance of cultural identity amongst these Island Acadians.

“J’mé souviens du passé, j’y fête le présent”

In 2008, Acadian communities across Prince Edward Island, or “P.E.I.,” Canada, recognized the 250th anniversary of the deportation of thousands of Acadians from the Island. While many tourists visited the Island to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Lucy Maud Montgomery’s fictional story “Anne of Green Gables,”2 Acadian communities across P.E.I.

set about preparing to mark *le Grand Dérangement* (the Great Upheaval), a dark chapter of Acadian history that has been described as the cornerstone of Acadian identity.³

Commemoration of *le Grand Dérangement* was launched at the peak of the 2008 tourist season under the telling theme, *J’me souviens du passé, j’y fête le présent*—“commemorating the past, celebrating the present.”⁴

Commemoration events were held throughout the Island. The anniversary began with a bilingual mass celebrated in Rustico (Fig. 1.1), the oldest Acadian and Catholic parish of the Island, followed shortly thereafter by a *Radio-Canada* televised mass to mark the national day of Acadian commemoration. Overlooking the grassy ruins of the British fort and buildings draped in Acadian flags, the anniversary was officially commemorated at Port-la-Joie-Fort-Amherst, the site of the Island’s first permanent European settlement, with speeches, the unveiling of the Acadian Odyssey Monument (Fig. 1.2), and a *tintamarre*, a parade featuring outlandish costumes and noise-making. The large, outdoor concert that followed highlighted some of the Island’s most celebrated Acadian musicians, including singer-songwriter Angèle Arsenault and the P.E.I.-based group, Vishtèn. The Lone Wolf Singers from Lennox Island, a Mi’kmaw⁵ reserve on P.E.I.’s north shore, were also featured, drawing attention to the historic links between Acadian and Mi’kmaq peoples.

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⁴ All French texts are translated by the author unless noted otherwise.
⁵ “Mi’kmaq” (n. pl.) and “Mi’kmaq” (n. or adj.) are the preferred Mi’kmaq orthographic spellings. Both terms are pronounced “Migmaw.”
Figure 1.1 St. Augustine Church, South Rustico. (Photo by author)

Figure 1.2 The Acadian Odyssey Monument, Port-la-Joie-Fort-Amherst, with the City of Charlottetown in the background. (Photo courtesy of La Voix acadienne)
At least in the Island’s Acadian communities, it was hard to ignore the past. In Miscouche, the *Musée acadien de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard*—the Island’s Acadian museum—hosted a large-scale exhibition created by local Francophone artist Lucie Bellemarre featuring sculptures and paintings of particular Island Acadians who were affected by the deportations. The modeled figures were accompanied by first-person accounts of each character’s experience of exile, compiled by local historian Georges Arsenault (Fig. 1.3 and 1.4). The featured characters included, among others, eight-year-old Marie-Anne Oudy who perished in a shipwreck in the English Channel; 66-year-old Marie-Josephe Morel who died of fever in French Guiana; and 81-year-old François Blanchard who eventually returned to the Island via New Brunswick and the French islands of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon to become one of the founders of Rustico, one of the first Acadian settlements on P.E.I.

Figure 1.3 (left) Characters “Jean-Baptiste Robichaud” (front) and “Joe League and a half”; Figure 1.4 (right) Sculpture of “François Blanchard” with Julien Arsenault, after whom the sculpture was modeled. (Photos courtesy of *La Voix acadienne*)

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6 The village of Miscouche is located on Hwy 2, in Prince County.
7 The village of Rustico is located on P.E.I.’s north shore, in Queens County.
An array of media called attention to these and other events, including the launch of several books and articles pertaining to *le Grand Dérangement* and other aspects of Island Acadian history, as well as historic costumed re-enactments of Acadian life (Fig. 1.5); even the residence of the Lieutenant Governor of P.E.I. hosted an exhibit of paintings by local students representing aspects of the deportations. The numerous musical contributions to these and other gatherings, often in the form of prelude and postlude entertainment, featured local Acadian singers and fiddlers. Musicians from the *Région Évangéline*, in western P.E.I., were in high demand, and their performances at these events highlighted the distinctive flavour of the local Francophone Acadian community with an eclectic mix of locally-composed tunes, old French songs, and Cape Breton and Irish tunes played in a variety of representative local styles, the floors vibrating under the rhythmic tapping of the musicians’ feet.

Figure 1.5 “Un passé à commémorer, un présent à fêter” (“A past to commemorate, a present to celebrate”). Float in *L’Exposition agricole et le festival acadien* parade, August 2008. (Photo by author)
Local festivals and other regular summer events also sported themes commemorating *le Grand Dérangment*. For three days in July, and again in August, Acadian fiddlers and step dancers performed in festivals and shows of traditional music and dance on the Centre Expo stage in Abram’s Village against a backdrop of the Acadian flag (*Stella Maris*), the French tricolour with gold star, and the deportation theme etched out in large letters (Fig. 1.6; Acadian flag is to the left of the Canadian flag). From my perspective, it appeared that the entire Island Acadian community was actively involved in the commemoration of the tragedy and the celebration of contemporary identity.

![Figure 1.6](image-url)

*Figure 1.6 Jamboree atlantique des violoneux, July 2008, with (left to right) Rémi Arsenault, Kevin Chaisson and Anastasia DesRoches. (Photo by author)*

Links to the past are perhaps most present in linguistic and musical practices. The local *chiac* dialect, a vernacular French mixed with English, is peppered with old French words, forms of French verb conjugation and a distinct manner of pronunciation that is reminiscent of an older era. Moreover, a communal attitude toward music-making, the distinct
characteristics of local song and instrumental traditions and the ways in which some contemporary musicians have drawn inspiration from the practices of older generations, point to a strong identification with older traditions. As the 2008 events described above illustrate, the tumultuous history of the Acadians has been woven into popular (and some scholarly) discourse as the central marker of Acadian identity, a point to which I return in Chapter 2.

While Acadian cultural organisations, local enthusiasts and the media coordinated and promoted the events, however, comments from several community members led me to question to what extent this anniversary was really meaningful to the “everyday” Acadians for whom the events were supposedly conceived. How, I wondered, do the Island Acadians, or any Acadians for that matter, preserve the “deep-seated memory” described by a New Brunswick curé (priest) on the eve of the 400th anniversary of Acadie only a few years earlier, if at all? Dismissive remarks by several of my informants about the significance of the commemorative events to the local community, including one woman’s pointed exclamation that she did not wake up every morning saying “I’m Acadian today,” and other informants’ lack of knowledge about and, in some cases, indifference toward the anniversary, seemed to contradict the notion that the Island’s residents preserved a keen sense of the past.

My research suggests that it is a mistake to overemphasise the part played by historical consciousness of the Acadian story, or fail to acknowledge the complex webs of interpersonal interaction and cultural exchange that inform contemporary Acadian identity on P.E.I. Accordingly, a comprehensive understanding of Island Acadian culture must take into account

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8 Ronald Rudin, Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian’s Journey through Public Memory (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 47.
9 Within the last decade Maritime Acadians have celebrated several anniversaries. The year 2004 marked the 400th anniversary of French settlement in Acadie (1604). In 2005, Acadian communities (particularly in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick) commemorated the 250th anniversary of the 1755 deportations, while in 2008 P.E.I. Acadians commemorated the 1758 deportations. The year 2009 marked the 125th anniversary of the Acadian flag, which was adopted at the Second Acadian Convention in 1884.
not only the diverse readings of this turbulent past to which many Islanders trace their heritage, including the marginalization of the Francophone Acadians as invisible cultural and linguistic minorities on the periphery of P.E.I. and French-speaking Canada, but also the ways in which Acadians and Acadian musical traditions have responded (and continue to respond) to these challenges and the contemporary reality of the Island’s minority Francophone community.

With that in mind, I focus this dissertation on contemporary musical practices and how identity is mediated and inculcated through musical performance. Thus, while I spend some time looking at the history of the tradition, this historical background is intended to provide the context for an exploration of emergent processes of identity construction and cultural revitalisation. I examine how musicians negotiate the dichotomy of traditional and modern forms of expression, and how they continue to draw upon elements of older practices to articulate a localised sense of identity. I also consider the ways in which P.E.I. Acadians have responded and continue to respond to trends in the global traditional music community. Through case studies of contemporary performance contexts, individual musicians and professional groups, I look at the movement of musical traditions from customary, private settings, such as the home or local Parish hall, to public presentation in the context of concert stages, touring and recordings.

This is also a study of community, and I examine the notion of community on several levels. In Chapter 2, I map the socio-musical history of the Island’s Acadian community, while Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the musical practices of one Francophone Acadian community in western P.E.I. Following Burt Feintuch’s suggestion that “community” is a moral tie that binds people together beyond our most personal relationships, I utilise his proposition that “moral community” is a useful way to focus on and understand the integrity
of social relationships in group settings.\textsuperscript{10} For example, in Chapter 4, I examine how “moral community” is sustained through case studies of two musical contexts: the Friday Night Acadian Jam and the phenomenon of kitchen parties.

In Chapter 5 I examine the creation of new “communities.” I argue that musicians have been key players in creating cultural and socio-economic alliances with other cultural groups regionally, nationally and globally. I demonstrate that a common perception of shared history and related musical practices has promoted a local discourse of “pan-Acadian” identity\textsuperscript{11} between the Francophone Acadian communities of P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Québec). Through a case study of one musical group, I examine how musicians connect themselves to larger networks of musicians and “imagined” global musical communities, and demonstrate how, by tying into these different communities, they express different social identities. At the same time as I am focused on the way music functions in and through communities, I consider the individual agency of musicians in shaping the tradition, including idiosyncratic styles and the recent resurgence of tune composition in the region.

Finally, this is a study based on, and about, local knowledge. In his contribution to \textit{Senses of Place}, Edward Casey writes that “local knowledge is at one with lived experience if it is indeed true that this knowledge is of the localities in which the knowing subject lives. To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the places one is in.”\textsuperscript{12} The people who participated in and shaped my study have much to say about their identities as Acadians,

\begin{itemize}
\item As I discuss in Chapter 5, this local discourse of “pan” identity does not in fact link to broader Acadian communities in eastern Canada and abroad. As such, the local use of the “pan” label does not correspond to the academic definition of “pan-movements.” C.f. Espiritu (1993), Nakanishi and Lai (2003), Sommers (1991) and Hawkins (2007).
\item Edward Casey, “How to Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Period of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena,” in \textit{Senses of Place}, eds. Steven Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe: School of Advanced Research Press, 1996), 18.
\end{itemize}
their music, relationships and the places in which they live. This “inside knowledge” is the basis of prominent discourse in the community about the relationship of music and Acadian identity, in particular, and I have had many memorable conversations with Islanders on these and other topics. The present work is grounded in these local stories and lived experiences of music-making. By considering this inside knowledge, I seek to understand the ways in which Island Acadians perceive and talk about their communities, local culture and music, and what this discourse says about the ways in which Acadian identity is constructed in the twenty-first century.

**Prince Edward Island**

Nestled in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence on Canada’s east coast, between the other Maritime Provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, P.E.I. is Canada’s smallest province. The Island is 5,656 square kilometres (2,184 square miles)—224 kilometres long and between six and sixty-four kilometres wide (139 miles long and between four and forty miles wide)—and is joined to mainland New Brunswick by the thirteen kilometre (eight mile)-long Confederation Bridge. The total population of the province is 135,851, the majority of whom are of British ancestry (mainly of Scottish origin, but also a large portion are of Irish descent). A 2001 census analysis revealed that close to forty-five percent of Islanders live in rural communities and small towns, compared to the Canadian average of just over twenty percent. Unsurprisingly, the Island has followed a similar trend as the rest of Canada, with

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14 Throughout the dissertation subheadings appear in bold face, while sub-subheadings are italicised.
population growth in rural areas declining, while urban areas are growing.\textsuperscript{16} 

The Island’s pastoral landscape is characterised by gently rolling hills, vast stretches of white and red sand beaches and red sandstone cliffs. Agriculture, fisheries and tourism are the Island’s primary industries, with tourism drawing over a million visitors each year.\textsuperscript{17} Numerous sites and pastimes dedicated to “Anne of Green Gables,” world-renowned golf courses and a variety of other leisure activities top the Island’s tourist activities; in recent years, there is an emerging emphasis on culinary travel and eco-tourism. MacDonald and Jolliffe note that twenty-two percent of tourist activities on the Island were related to aspects of Acadian culture in the year 2000.\textsuperscript{18}

P.E.I. boasts a rich and diverse cultural scene with numerous historical sites, artisans and galleries, award-winning writers, dance, theatre and, of course, music. The Island’s music scene supports a wide range of musical interests from jazz and classical to pop, country, alternative rock and traditional music genres. There is significant community and institutional support for local music from various sources, including Music P.E.I., University of Prince Edward Island, the Confederation Centre for the Arts and myriad music festivals throughout the year.

\textit{The Boat or the Bridge? P.E.I.’s “fixed link” debate}

Following the heated “fixed link” debate that spanned the 1980s, the Confederation Bridge (referred to locally as “the Bridge”) opened to traffic in the spring of 1997, connecting

the Island to the mainland (Fig. 1.8). Island scholar Godfrey Baldacchino characterises the issue of the bridge as “the most keenly debated and most traumatic event in the modern history of P.E.I.” Unsurprisingly, the debate centred on the varying views of farmers, fishers, tourism operators and Island residents of how year-round access via a fixed link to the mainland would affect Islanders’ lifestyles and livelihoods. While proponents of the link argued that the bridge would enhance transportation infrastructure and increase tourism, critics argued that the ease of access to the mainland would be detrimental to the Island’s unique way of life and small business sector; moreover, there were safety and environmental concerns about the effect of the structure on marine life and seabird nesting in the area, as well as potential threats to shipping in the Northumberland Strait. The issue was eventually resolved by a plebiscite in January 1988, in which nearly sixty per cent of the voters cast their ballots in favour of a fixed link. Ian Johnston maintains that the debate over the bridge mega-project had waxed and waned for most of the past century. He argues that, given its obscure wording and lack of any specifics about the hypothetical structure, this plebiscite was a vote “in principle” and that it was, at its core, a federal political issue; he contends that authority in matters of design, construction and maintenance of the link rested solely with the federal government, with little consideration for the position of the province or Island residents.

The best summary of this debate and subsequent impact of the link I have found is by

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20 Ibid.
21 The bridge is open year-round, 24 hours a day, and the crossing takes approximately ten minutes. Tolls are collected upon leaving the Island; in 2011, the toll is $43.25 (for a 2-axle vehicle). Baldacchino suggests that having a toll results in less socio-economic impact on the Island than were it not in place. Baldacchino, “Fixed Links,” 333.
Baldacchino, in which he outlines the impact of the Bridge based on the limited available measurable data and offers his own speculation about the cultural, environmental and economic state of the province since 1997. He characterises the effect of the bridge on Island tourism as a double-edged sword, noting that, while the Bridge has made the Island more accessible and encouraged a significant increase in tourism, it has had the adverse affect of rendering P.E.I. less exclusive. According to tourism statistics for the province, tourist numbers in the first summer following the Bridge completion (1997) rose by fifty-seven percent compared to the previous season; Baldacchino observes that the numbers have since dipped to pre-Bridge levels, although he cautions against assuming that this is due to what he calls “an erosion of the bridge’s ‘novelty effect,’” noting that there is (as yet) a lack of scientific research to support such a stance.23

Since the building of the Bridge, there have been increases in the import and export of goods, the frequency of travel off and to P.E.I. by vehicle and, correspondingly, an increase in off-Island shopping. The arrival of “big box” retailers on P.E.I. since 1997 who were lured by provincial incentives, has had both positive and adverse effects on local business; on the one hand, there has been an increase in local retail sales. On the other hand, there has been a marked loss of smaller, locally-owned stores.24 While there is clearly more need for research on environmental and economical factors, Baldacchino sums up the situation by saying that the Bridge “has not (so far) had the significant impact that many feared, or hoped, it would have on PEI society and economy.”25

While Baldacchino provides an interesting overview of the Bridge’s effect on Island

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23 Baldacchino, 330.
24 Ibid., 331.
25 Ibid., 332.
tourism, he does not explicitly mention its impact on the Island’s cultural scene. Based on my conversations with Island musicians, it is clear that the ease of access the Bridge facilitates has increased engagement in mainland cultural activities. Several of my informants have regular musical gigs in the Moncton area, while for others the Bridge enables more flexibility in schedules and, particularly in the winter months, a more reliable means of travel to various gigs, dances and festivals. Jennifer Bernard notes that the increase in tourism has been keenly felt across P.E.I., with tourism contributing proportionately more to the provincial economy than any other province in Canada; according to her, and in addition to more access to off-Island gigs, Island musicians profit significantly from the increase in tourist-related work. That being said, the majority of Islanders with whom I spoke unequivocally maintained a preference for taking “the Boat” that crosses between Wood Islands, P.E.I., and Pictou, Nova Scotia. This preference was frequently imbued with nostalgia for the period before Bridge travel was possible and childhood memories of ferrying to Nova Scotia. Most Islanders described their fondness for the relaxing and enjoyable social experience of the seventy-five minute crossing; as one musician commented, “you always know someone on the ferry.”

When the federal government renewed its contribution agreement in 2005, Transport Canada initially proposed a reduction in funding that would limit ferry operation to high tourism months and reduce the fleet to one vessel. This suggestion sparked such vehement protests on P.E.I. and in Nova Scotia that the proposal was temporarily shelved for the 2010 operating season, and Transport Canada later extended its agreement to 2014. The decision to take the Bridge or the Boat is often a practical one, however. The ferry is the most direct

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route from eastern P.E.I. to Nova Scotia; thus, it is useful for traveling to places like Halifax or Cape Breton, whereas it is more practical to take the Bridge for travel to destinations in New Brunswick or Québec.

From a marketing perspective, the ferry offers a chance to promote local musicians, culture and events. It is a familiar onboard sight to see musicians take out their instruments to rehearse, jam with others and, in some instances, leave their instrument cases open for others to play. From the first week in July to the end of August, Northumberland Ferries Limited (the ferry operator) hosts “Music on Deck,” featuring a program of traditional musicians from Nova Scotia and eastern P.E.I. In 2010, P.E.I.’s Festival of Small Halls presented a “floating hall” as part of the “Music on Deck” program and eastern P.E.I.’s Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival offered a pre-festival showcase to promote the festival. Moreover, individual musicians and groups often have CDs for sale, a clever addition to the standard marketing campaign, particularly during the winter months when there are fewer tourist-oriented gigs.28

Thus, the Bridge and the Boat have influenced not only the Island economy but also Island music and musicians, both in terms of their ability to connect physically with other places and to expose their music to other people.

28 Many thanks to Colette Cheverie, Caroline Gaudet, Virginia McGowan, Marie and Orrin Livingstone, Ward MacDonald, Paula Arsenault, Tim Chaisson, Andrea Beaton and Karine Gallant for their insights on this topic.
The Island Acadians

There are an estimated three million people worldwide with Acadian heritage, approximately 300,000 of whom live in Atlantic Canada. As this dissertation demonstrates, cultural, regional and musical identities are rarely fixed and are often multi-faceted. The question of what it means to be Acadian is complex and seems to differ from person to person and community to community. The traditional parameters that define Acadian identity—French language, Catholicism, community and an ancestral homeland of Acadie—are constantly shifting. There are various interpretations and definitions of the term “Acadian” that inhibit an accurate population count; this difficulty becomes apparent in an analysis of

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census data. Rather than associating “Acadian” with ethnic identification, some Acadians and non-Acadians define an Acadian as a native French-speaking person in Maritime Canada. According to several Acadians who participated in my study, a considerable number of Francophone Canadians living in the Maritimes who are of Acadian descent list “French” as their ethnic background instead of “Acadian.” Thus, the census figures neither take into account the population of non-Acadian Francophones or anglicized Acadians on P.E.I., nor do they account for individual interpretations of ethnicity. Moreover, the census figures do not account for the roughly 13,000 Acadians on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine who identify as Acadian and, to varying extents, Québécois, or, for that matter, other Acadian descendants in the province of Québec who comprise a significant portion of Canada’s Acadian population.

While only approximately four percent of P.E.I.’s population identify as Francophone, nearly twenty-three percent of Islanders list their origins as “French” or “Acadian.” Of this small Francophone population, approximately 2,250 people reside in the Région Évangéline, located in western P.E.I. These numbers prompt questions of linguistic and cultural retention that I begin to explore in Chapter 2 and continue to examine in later sections of the dissertation; for example, what were the circumstances that led the majority of the Island’s Francophone population to reside in the Région Évangéline? How have the resulting social and economic conditions shaped the Island Acadian community as a whole? How has the retention of French language and culture in some areas, specifically a localised Acadian culture, furthered alliances between P.E.I. and other cultural groups regionally, nationally and globally? How can we account for the discrepancy between Acadian descent and French (as

30 That is, Acadians for whom English is their mother tongue and the language spoken in the home.
31 It is estimated that more than a million people in the province (fifteen percent) are of Acadian origin. Québec, Institut de la statistique, Profils des régions, accessed 10 October 2009, [http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/regions](http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/regions)
mother tongue) language retention, or the number of anglicized Acadians on P.E.I.?

Island Acadians occupy a significant position as an ethnic, linguistic and cultural minority. At least until the late twentieth century, they were also an economic and religious minority on the periphery of P.E.I., the Maritimes and Canada more broadly. Accordingly, the social and musical histories of the P.E.I. Acadian community have been shaped by the region’s colonial history, as well as the Acadians’ exchange with other ethnic and cultural groups in the area and neighbouring communities. These relationships shape Acadians’ contemporary perceptions of themselves, their communities and their ideas of what it means to be Acadian in the twenty-first century.

**Music and identity**

Music is a primary means by which Acadians express this identity. And yet, Acadian music is clearly more than a tool for expressing pre-formed conceptions of self and social group. Through their choices about “their” musical style, their musical tastes, and (musical and social) alliances to other groups, performers and audiences participate in defining and enacting who they are as individuals and collectives. Georgina Born stresses this complex relationship between music and identity when she writes that,

> There is a need to acknowledge that music can variably both construct new identities and reflect existing ones...Socio-cultural identities are not simply constructed in music; they are “prior” identities that come to be embodied dynamically in musical cultures, which then also form the reproduction of those identities—no passive process of reflection.\(^\text{32}\)

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Similarly, Peter Manuel acknowledges that “music can be at once a product of and an active influence upon the formation of social identity in general.” In his study of modern flamenco, Manuel examines how new, revitalised forms of flamenco express and shape an emergent, modern Andalusian identity. These new forms of cultural expression challenge long-held ideas about class and gypsy communities, at the same time as subsequent developments such as professionalization, new performance contexts and flamenco’s national and international recognition demonstrate the practitioners’ abilities to adapt to changes in their social environment. As Manuel explains, “musical style as well as text can function not merely as passive reflections of broader sociocultural phenomena that shape them, but also as active contributors to the process of cultural change.” This example resonates with the experiences of many Island Acadian musicians and groups whose musical choices and participation in new performance contexts demonstrate novel approaches to the tradition and new definitions of Island Acadian musical identity.

Music also contributes to identity formation as what Tim Rice describes as “a symbol of difference from an ‘other.’” In her work on Fulbe fiddling in West Africa, Jacqueline Cogdell Djedje explains that the fiddle itself is a symbol of ethnicity and a source of pride that helps performers and observers recall their culture and reassert a distinct ethnic identity as Fulbe residing in Senegal. Acadian identity is similarly constructed through, not outside of,

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34 Ibid., 48.
a system of “oppositions and relativities.” As invisible minorities living among a hegemonic Anglophone majority, Acadians are engaged in symbolically articulating a distinct identity in relation to other cultural groups. My dissertation demonstrates that cultural markers, and particularly music, are primary tools through which members of this invisible minority cultural group define and present their ethnocultural identity both locally and to cultural outsiders.

Traditional Music in Atlantic Canada

There is a paucity of research on contemporary Acadian music. Previous studies of Acadian history and culture have focused predominantly on mainland Acadian populations in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, paying little attention to smaller Acadian communities on P.E.I., Newfoundland, les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, “satellite communities” in Ontario, mainland Québec and elsewhere in the global Acadian diaspora. The two main overviews of Acadian music in the Maritimes by Father Anselme Chiasson and Roger Cormier, respectively, make only passing reference to Acadian music on P.E.I.; these and others have focused primarily on vocal traditions and all but neglect the role of instrumental music, particularly fiddling, in Acadian musical life. This lack of research on Acadian instrumental traditions contrasts sharply with the substantial body of literature on instrumental traditions in other parts of the Maritimes, particularly on neighbouring Cape Breton Island, which I discuss below.

39 Other folklorists who have examined Maritime Acadian music include Donald Deschênes (1986), Ronald Labelle (1988) and Geneviève Massignon (1962; 1994).
Island historian and folklorist Georges Arsenault is considered a leading authority on P.E.I. Acadian history and traditions. His ongoing research focuses mainly on the historiography of Island Acadian song traditions, particularly unaccompanied folk songs (such as ballads), and he has published numerous books and articles, largely for a popular audience, on topics ranging from season festivities to particular communities, historical figures and singers. I draw upon his expertise frequently in subsequent chapters, both from our interviews and his published work.

My study complements three recent theses written on various aspects of Acadian music. Shawn Pitre offers an historical comparison of the Maritime Acadian and Louisiana Cajun music, language and culture based on an examination of common cultural and geographical roots, and the cultural and physical environments in which each group has lived since the eighteenth century deportations of the Acadians from eastern Canada. A particularly strong point of the thesis is that Pitre offers a detailed, comparative history of Acadian and Cajun language politics, as well as a chronological overview of Acadian history with an emphasis on Acadian folksong;\(^{40}\) it is primarily with regard to these points that I refer to his work in my dissertation. Focused as it is on comparing the two regions, a limitation of the study is his attempt to offer a general reading of Acadian music in eastern Canada (including P.E.I.). The result is that Acadian culture is examined and portrayed as fairly homogeneous, which is obviously not the author’s intention. Moreover, some of the points Pitre makes with regard to Acadian music contradict the research findings I present here from the P.E.I. context; among others, his suggestion that there is an inherent “bittersweet aesthetic” in Acadian music does not resonate with my (and many of my informants’) experience(s) of

\(^{40}\) The historical and cultural connection between Acadians and Cajuns is discussed in Chapter 5.
P.E.I. Acadian song and instrumental music.

According to Jeanette Gallant, this notion of an Acadian aesthetic has a long history in Acadie and was introduced by missionaries and early Acadian folksong collectors in the mid twentieth century. In her doctoral dissertation, Gallant interrogates how folksong and folksong scholarship in the 1970s contributed to an emerging sense of Acadian nationalism. Her work is historically-focused and deals predominantly with Acadian song in New Brunswick. Our studies are complementary in that we are examining related questions of Acadian nation- and identity-building, but from different historical points and in different locales; while Gallant examines the processes of nation-building from early Acadian folksong scholarship through its “Golden Age” in the 1970s in much depth, my study is focused on current musical practices and processes of identity construction on P.E.I. which, as I argue in Chapter 3, are rooted in this history of nation-building in mainland Acadian communities.

Mylène Ouellette examines the impact of step dancing on Acadian instrumental music in the Région Évangéline of P.E.I. In particular, she looks at the inscription of a regional dance step, the “shuffle,” in the discourse surrounding traditional Acadian fiddle music in the region. She suggests that this “shuffle” manifests as a specific rhythmic feature in the piano accompaniment and fiddling, a technique in which certain notes are not, or not fully, sounded, giving the impression that the weak beat is accented. Ouellette describes the “shuffle” as a specific musical and kinaesthetic articulation that is associated with an older style of Acadian performance and demonstrates how the “shuffle” step informed the piano accompaniment of

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41 I return to this question of an Acadian-Cajun aesthetic in Chapter 5.
Barachois member Helen Bergeron and, further, the fiddle style of Barachois’ fiddler Louise Arsenault. My study takes Ouellette’s preliminary analysis a step further in that, in Chapter 3, I examine the “shuffle” as an older regional style in the Région Évangéline that has re-entered popular discourse about music and Acadian identity on P.E.I. Unlike Ouellette’s inference that this style is representative of contemporary performance practice in the region, however, I suggest that while Barachois popularised a particular idea of Acadian style, their interpretation of the “shuffle” does not reflect the playing styles of most other musicians in the community. The discourse surrounding the “shuffle,” in particular that style’s association with past traditions and its relation to contemporary fiddling on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, has helped to advance the notion of a distinct Island Acadian identity.

A fourth thesis, by Jennifer Bernard, offers an anthropological perspective on cultural tourism and Acadian cultural performance in the Région Évangéline. While she provides an overview of tourism in the region and examines the development of cultural shows aimed at tourists, the music itself is not addressed. In Chapter 3 and 4, I look at some of the tourist developments, past and present, in the Région Évangéline and on P.E.I. more generally from a musical perspective. In particular, I investigate the musical and linguistic choices of the performers, modes of (re)presentation and the ways in which these choices feed into broader narratives of identity in the Acadian community.

Some music scholars perceive the study of Acadian music to be in its early stages. Focused research on individual Acadian communities throughout eastern Canada is needed in

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44 Bernard, “Expressions of Identity.”
45 In addition to these studies, there are several collections of Acadian folksong and instrumental music from western P.E.I. housed at the Centre d’études acadiennes, including the aforementioned collection of Georges Arsenault (1970s) and that of Réginald Porter (1965), while collections of (mainly instrumental) music from western P.E.I. by Luc Lacourcière and Simone Voyer, both from 1958, are held at the Archives de folklore et d’ethnologie de l’Université Laval, Québec.
46 Pitre, 22.
order to better understand the cultural traditions of the Acadian people and the contemporary manifestations of their musics. In this first in-depth ethnomusicological study of the P.E.I. Acadian community, I aim to illuminate previously overlooked narratives about Canadian cultural identity from communities and individuals on the margins of Canada. Moreover, I attempt to fill in some of these gaps in our knowledge of Canada’s cultural history by examining the contemporary musical scene of the Island Acadians and their vibrant instrumental traditions (focusing on the fiddle) that remain central to Island Acadian musical identity.

The two main studies of music on P.E.I. have focused chiefly on the Island’s dominant Scottish traditions. Jim Hornby’s 1982 thesis is the first attempt to document fiddling on P.E.I. In particular, it focuses on the formation and influence of the P.E.I. Fiddlers’ Society in the mid-1970s. Hornby offers a thorough historical narrative of the Island’s Scottish fiddle tradition, examining important changes in the Island community and their effect on fiddling, such as the advent of radio broadcasting (in particular the period of 1923-1958). He looks at the influence of Scottish fiddling from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, on P.E.I. fiddlers from the mid-1930s to the early 1980s, one product of which was the formation of P.E.I. Fiddlers’ Society and a renewed interest in maintaining traditional music on the Island. This link between P.E.I. and Cape Breton, as well as Hornby’s detailed historical contextualisation of the Society’s formation, are the most significant contributions of his thesis. There were few Acadians who participated in these early years of the P.E.I. Fiddlers’ Society and, accordingly, Hornby includes only passing references to the Acadian community. Nonetheless, as I discuss in subsequent chapters, the P.E.I.-Cape Breton connection has both

directly and indirectly influenced the Island’s Acadian musical practices and Hornby’s study thus provides a useful backdrop for my work.48

Ken Perlman’s tune book, *The Fiddle Music of Prince Edward Island: Celtic and Acadian Tunes in Living Tradition*, includes an impressive collection of 480 fiddle transcriptions, based on his field recordings of fifty-eight fiddlers from across P.E.I. in 1991-92. Written for a lay audience, the introduction of the book provides an overview of “old-time fiddling” (a term sometimes used in reference to the playing of older generation fiddlers in the Scottish tradition) and accompaniment on P.E.I., common repertoire, transmission, the relationship between old-time fiddling and dancing and a musical introduction to the rhythmic, melodic and modal organisation of the fiddle tunes. As in Hornby’s study, Perlman’s emphasis is on the Island’s dominant Scottish tradition; Perlman offers a brief description of regional and individual styles in West Prince County and East Prince County (including what he calls the “Evangeline Coast”), however, and players from these “Acadian” regions are represented in his overview.

Instead of the standard skeletal (“prescriptive”) transcriptions of tunes presented in many tune books, Perlman offers detailed (“descriptive”) transcriptions based on specific performances by individual players; as such, the transcriptions include stylistic features such as ornamentation, double stops and slurs, as well as melodic idiosyncrasies.49 This approach offers a unique glimpse into the Island’s traditional fiddle music in the early 1990s.

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particular as a number of the fiddlers included in the collection have passed away.

Nevertheless, the drawbacks of the descriptive approach reflect the arguments articulated by Charles Seeger (1958; 1977) and, later, George List (1974) and Nazir Jairazbhoy (1977), as to the uses and limitations of musical transcription. Although the author states early in his introduction that the versions included in the book are not definitive versions of the tunes, the descriptive approach nevertheless results in certain renditions being objectified, ironically contradicting the emphasis on “living tradition” in the collection’s title. Based on my (and several informants’) aural analyses of other live and recorded versions of the same tunes by the same fiddlers, it appears that some of the versions represented in the book are, to varying degrees, curiously atypical of those fiddlers’ renditions. Several prominent musicians with whom I spoke maintain that, given their extensive experience of certain fiddlers’ repertoires (in most cases they are, or were, neighbours or family members of the fiddlers in question), they believe that the transcriptions do not represent the typical style or interpretation that they are accustomed to hearing from particular fiddlers. Neither these informants nor I can offer reasons for this discrepancy at this time, except for the fact that players’ influences, playing styles and, in some cases, “standard” versions of tunes continuously change.

My informants also talked about Perlman’s discussion of fiddlers’ senses of pitch, which Perlman argues “do not entirely coincide with those employed by the tempered scale.” This inclination, he explains, is evident in some tunes in which a fiddler might

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intentionally play the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> notes “at a pitch that is half-way between its major-scale and minor-scale values, yielding what is known as a neutral third,” and a slightly raised fourth scale degree. According to Perlman’s transcriptions identify pitches that are “somewhat flatter” or sharper than the equal-tempered scale with an upwards or downwards pointing arrow. There seem to be two interrelated issues with regard to fiddlers’ pitch sensibilities: tune modality and generational differences with regard to the musical aesthetic. First, the presence of neutral 3<sup>rd</sup>, lowered 7<sup>th</sup> and raised 4<sup>th</sup> in P.E.I. fiddling denote modal tunes or, in some cases, the tendency of some (mainly older) fiddlers to re-interpret major or minor tunes in alternative modes. I believe any examination of modality must be based on individual fiddlers’ playing, as the tendency toward playing in alternative (and, sometimes, what we might consider to be fairly obscure) modes may reflect a variety of influences, including a fiddler’s exposure to bagpipe intonation (bagpipes use a scale that is neither major nor minor, in particular the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> notes are altered) and pipe tunes, particularly those adopted from the Cape Breton tradition.

Second, the prevalence of recordings and a shift from traditional music in the home to the concert stage has, in many ways, standardised elements such as pitch, both on P.E.I. and in other fiddle-based cultures around the world. Contemporary P.E.I. fiddlers are almost always accompanied by keyboard or guitar, therefore the “tempered scale” to which Perlman refers serves as a basic tonal reference point for most fiddlers. Increasingly, modal tunes are less

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52 Ibid.
53 Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg also point this out with regard to Cape Breton fiddling in Kate Dunlay and David Greenberg, *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton: The DunGreen Collection* (Toronto: DunGreen Music, 1996).
54 I return to this issue of modality in Chapter 3 with regard to the preservation of modal tunes in the Acadian fiddling repertoire and, in particular, the retention of “mixed-modal” tunes. In Chapter 4 I consider the issue of mode with regard to new tune compositions that are perceived as being composed in an “old” style.
common and while “fuzzy intonation,” as one of my informants described notes that do not fall within the major or minor scale, might be tolerated in informal gatherings, many younger generation fiddlers, in particular, are keenly aware of their tuning and intonation. After emphasising that the “feel” of the music was paramount, a fiddler told me that the overall “feel” aside, “no one wants to listen to a fiddler playing out of tune.” Thus, although the author writes as though this issue of modality is a generalised phenomenon on P.E.I., it is perhaps more accurate to state that it is a musical feature associated with the practices of amateur, older generation musicians. Nonetheless, several fiddlers of various ages (young and old) with whom I spoke indicated that it was a matter of intonation and putting the fingers in the right place, as opposed to “too high” or “too low,” thus suggesting that it has less to do with intention and more to do with skill level. Although it warrants further consideration, this question of pitch sensibilities is beyond the scope of the present work. The above critiques aside, and if one remembers that this collection is but a glimpse into the tradition in the early 1990s (and assuming that one actually reads the introduction, which of course is not always the primary intent of those using such books), it is a useful and important reference for general information about Island fiddle repertoire and local variations of widely played fiddle tunes.

Although there is little scholarship on Acadian fiddle traditions in the Maritimes, my work adds to a growing body of scholarship on traditional instrumental music in North America. The late 1970s and 1980s saw a surge in research on fiddling in Canada and the

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56 Name withheld, interview with author, 2009.
United States, beginning with Linda Burman-Hall’s survey of fiddling in the American South. In Canada, a number of scholars wrote articles and dissertations on Canadian fiddle music, many of which examined regional fiddling styles with a focus on delineating stylistic and contextual differences, mirroring a parallel trend in American fiddle scholarship.58 Among these are general overviews of fiddling in Canada by George Proctor (1985), Roy Gibbons (1981) and Dorothy and Homer Hogan (1977), although the most comprehensive survey of fiddling in Canada to date is that by Anne Lederman ([1992] 2009).59 Following George Proctor’s 1963 overview of “old-time fiddling” in Ontario, regional studies from this early wave of fiddle scholarship include Earl Spielman’s comparative study of Cape Breton and Texas fiddles styles (1972); Anne Lederman’s 1986 study of Native and Métis fiddling in Manitoba, which focuses on repertoire and tune structure; David Ennis’ overview of fiddling in the Ottawa Valley (1986); Roy Gibbons’ survey of fiddling in Prince George, British Columbia (1982); the aforementioned study of P.E.I. fiddling by Jim Hornby (1982); and several studies of Cape Breton fiddling.

While these studies laid an important groundwork for future considerations of music in these regions, Colin Quigley notes that they neglected to consider “the individual’s dynamic role in bringing influences together in the framework of their own values, experiences, and aspirations.”60 Also in the 1980s, a small number of biographical studies were published about individual musicians, many of which sought to delineate regional styles, including Quigley’s own 1987 study of Newfoundland fiddler Émile Benoit, which was later published as the

60 Quigley, Music from the Heart, 252.
monograph *Music from the Heart: Compositions of a Folk Fiddler* (1995). In this richly detailed ethnography, Quigley explores the life and music of the iconic fiddler and composer and describes his own experience of knowing and working with Benoit. In particular, he focuses on the generative processes behind Benoit’s compositions, showing how the fiddler moves from small musical fragments to completed tunes. At the same time as he is concerned with Benoit’s compositional methods, the author illuminates broader narratives about Newfoundland society at different points in Benoit’s life.⁶¹

Although creative processes and individuality are not a main focus of my study, the stories and experiences of particular individuals are at the heart of this work. Inspired by Quigley’s approach, in Chapter 3 I present the “musical life stories”⁶² of three fiddlers, each of which sheds light on broader socio-musical trends in the Acadian community at various points in time. Thus, at the same time as I am concerned with how music functions at the group level, I attempt to tell that story through the voices of individual participants in the music community.

Similarly, in her excellent 2006 study of old-time fiddle and step dancing competitions in Ontario, Sherry Johnson looks at both a particular music community and at the role of individuals within that community. She examines “how the concept of tradition is understood, articulated and enacted within the Ontario fiddle contest community and used strategically by participants to construct [personal and collective identities].”⁶³ While markers of generation

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⁶¹ For other examples of biographical studies of fiddlers in Canada, see Bégin (1981); Ornstein (1985); and Russell (1982). More recent regional studies of fiddling in Canada include Copeland’s 2006 volume on fiddling in New Brunswick, Brian Cherwick’s thesis on Ukrainian fiddling in western Canada (1999), and Christina Smith (2007) and Evelyn Osborne’s studies of fiddling in Newfoundland (2003).


⁶³ Sherry Johnson, “Negotiating Tradition in Ontario Fiddle Contests” (Ph.D. diss., York University, 2006), iv.
and class affect how fiddlers variously interpret and use the past within the contest community, participants “live a fluid and constructed tradition, whether or not they conceive of it as such consciously.”\textsuperscript{64} Rather than prescribing a particular performance style, the memory of the style of their antecedents serves as a reminder of the history of the fiddling tradition, “a shared foundation, upon which [the participants] build their own styles and careers.”\textsuperscript{65} As I discuss in Chapter 3, the stylistic parameters of Island Acadian fiddling are quite flexible, resulting in more of a stylistic continuum with much room for individual expression, rather than a bounded set of stylistic elements. That said, some individuals and groups draw upon older practices both in performance and discursively as a way of expressing a localized Acadian identity that distinguishes their culture from other Acadians, other Francophones and other fiddle traditions in Canada. There are further interesting parallels and differences between our studies, particularly with regard to the dichotomy of tradition and modernity and the role of individual creativity within the tradition, to which I return in subsequent chapters.

As noted above, there are important historical and contemporary musical links between P.E.I. and Cape Breton fiddling traditions. Cape Breton fiddling has received by far the most attention in the literature on fiddling in Canada; this interest seems to have emerged in response to an increase in the popular and commercial interests in Cape Breton fiddling over the last twenty years. In the Acadian context, the influence of early radio broadcasts by popular fiddlers such as Winston “Scotty” Fitzgerald and Angus Chisholm shaped the local repertoire and some stylistic elements. Thus, it is not surprising that several themes that emerge in the numerous articles, books and theses on Cape Breton fiddling correspond to

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 495.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 502.
similar trends in the P.E.I. fiddle context; among these, the themes of change within the tradition, transmission and commodification are most relevant to my study.

In her 1985 dissertation, the first major academic study of Cape Breton fiddling, Virginia Garrison examines the notion of change in the Cape Breton tradition in the context of the transmission of fiddle repertoire and style. She emphasises that although it is possible to maintain the “traditional” teaching and learning practices with the same intent and effect in the context of a group class, the techniques of transmission exist in different forms than in the past. This results in a marked lack of “community” in the learning environment, which leads to more formalized and distant interpersonal relationships (particularly between teacher and student). Garrison concludes her work with a pessimistic view of the state of the tradition, asserting that the move toward non-traditional teaching and learning practices threaten the continuity of traditional Cape Breton fiddling. This issue of transmission is one that seems to emerge in numerous traditional music contexts as older methods are supplanted by demands for formal instruction, tune books and the circulation of recordings. We will see later how such changes are negotiated in the Island Acadian community and, in particular, the role that community music gatherings play in sustaining links to older forms of musical transmission at the same time as they balance the demands of modern lifestyles. More recent work to consider the evolution of the Cape Breton tradition includes Elizabeth Doherty’s 1996 study of Cape Breton fiddling from a stylistic perspective and Glenn Graham’s social history of the tradition in his 2006 book *The Cape Breton Fiddle: Making and Maintaining Tradition*.

The topic of commercialization has become increasingly prominent in the discourse

surrounding east coast fiddling. Ian McKinnon’s 1989 study was the first to consider the commercial recordings made by Cape Breton fiddlers, in which he examines the recording industry and interest of recording companies in east coast fiddling, the factors that motivate fiddlers to record commercially, the use of recordings by fiddlers as learning tools and the impact of commodification on the music. He concludes that “commercial recordings have become an important extension of the [traditional] aural learning process” in Cape Breton as well as other fiddle cultures.\(^\text{67}\) As is to be expected, much has happened in the way of commodification of Cape Breton fiddling since McKinnon published his study (which includes a lengthy discography); two prominent fiddlers, Natalie MacMaster and Ashley MacIsaac, and groups such as the Rankins and The Barra MacNeils, have been signed by major record labels and achieved wide commercial (and financial) success, while there are numerous fiddlers who have recorded on independent labels. Jeff Hennessey examines this commercial phenomenon in his study of the intersection of Cape Breton fiddling with popular culture in the wake of the Cape Breton fiddle sensation in the transnational Celtic music revival. Specifically, he examines Cape Breton fiddle music as a form of groove-based popular music\(^\text{68}\) comprising both a “social groove” and a musical groove. His analysis of Cape Breton fiddle music (here referring to both the fiddle and accompaniment) as a form of groove music demonstrates that this music “retains common metrical processes in groove-based musics involving metrical state and groove state progressions.”\(^\text{69}\)

In his article in *Ethnomusicology*, Burt Feintuch considers the social and economic

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\(^{67}\) Ian McKinnon, “Fiddling to Fortune: The Role of Commercial Recordings made by Cape Breton Fiddlers in the Music Tradition of Cape Breton Island” (M.A. thesis, Memorial University, 1989), iii.

\(^{68}\) Jeff Hennessey broadly defines musical groove as “an acoustical repeating of a rhythmic idea that forms the metrical underpinning for a piece of groove music.” Jeff Hennessey, “Fiddle Grooves: Identity, Representation, and the Sound of Cape Breton Fiddle Music in Popular Culture” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2008), i.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 210.
factors that contribute to the thriving music scene on Cape Breton Island. In particular, he illustrates the impact of fiddling on economic development in the region, primarily with regard to the development of a tourism industry built around the traditional music culture. Music, he writes, is the “primary emblem of identity” in Cape Breton and “its performance is almost certainly the primary enactment of that identity.”

In addition, Feintuch argues that musical performance has emerged as a way of celebrating and enacting a sense of historical and cultural grounding that was lost with the decline of Gaelic language in the region. Thus, for many Cape Bretoners music represents a kind of cultural continuity. At the same as the islanders hold on to their cultural roots and local identity, the tradition thrives because of the ability of the musical community to embrace the change that comes with music being a primary economic resource.

Feintuch’s reading of this relationship between musical traditions, social identity and the economy resonates with my work, although the significance of Acadian music on P.E.I.’s development of tourism is not on the same large scale as in the Cape Breton context. I examine the development of a local seasonal industry built on cultural rural tourism in the Acadian community, with traditional music at its core, and demonstrate that cultural performances in such contexts have contributed to larger processes of Acadian cultural definition on P.E.I. and discourses around local identity and music. In addition, I will show that Acadian musicians on P.E.I. play an active role in cultivating cultural and economic alliances with other cultural groups, particularly with Acadians on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Québec.

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71 Ibid., 99.
This review of the literature, both scholarly and popular, demonstrates that my study complements a large body of literature from the fields of ethnomusicology, anthropology and folklore studies on cultural revival, community, creativity, transmission, socio-musical networks and alliances. While it might appear somewhat unconventional, I have chosen to include reviews of the relevant literature in the respective chapters in which the themes are addressed, rather than provide a long literature review in this opening chapter that would serve to disconnect that literature from the various themes that I explore.

**Background and motivations for the study**

There is a popular saying that no matter how long you live on P.E.I., you will never become an Islander. I am neither Acadian nor an Islander. It is of little surprise, then, that my interest in, and perhaps motivation(s) for, pursuing research on Island Acadian music have been the subject of some bewilderment for Islanders, colleagues and other people I have met over the course of my doctoral studies.\(^72\) To add to the mystery, my ancestry is Scottish, on both sides, and, until my immediate family moved to P.E.I. in 2004, I had never visited “the Gentle Island.”\(^73\) Although I began classical training on the violin at the age of five, my family’s participation in Scottish Country Dance groups drew me to Scottish fiddling from an early age.\(^74\) My involvement in Scottish Country Dancing, at first as a dancer and later on as a fiddler in dance bands, inspired my first ethnographic study of Scottish and Irish immigrant musicians in southern Alberta (Canada) and, later, my research on the fiddle tradition of the

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\(^{72}\) In contrast, the fact that a friend of mine is of mixed Acadian and Irish ancestry seemed to alleviate any question of his interest in learning how to play Acadian fiddle music.

\(^{73}\) This nickname was the centrefold of Tourism P.E.I.’s 2008-09 marketing campaign. Locally, it is preferred to the less-eloquent “Spud Island.”

\(^{74}\) My parents began Scottish Country Dancing as newlyweds as a social activity to meet other people and one that would help them reconnect (on my father’s part) and continue the connection (on my mother’s part) to their Scottish heritage.
Shetland Isles (UK).  

Despite being “C.F.A.,” a Maritime expression for those who “Come From Away,” my research bridges both the familiar and the unknown. Describing the difficulties of doing fieldwork-at-home, anthropologists John Monaghan and Peter Just compare a person studying her own culture to “a fish trying to describe water;” as James Clifford and others have argued, however, it is our insights and experiences that offer “new angles of vision and depths of understanding,” although these accounts are “empowered and restricted in unique ways.”

On the one hand, I am neither a member of the cultural group I am studying nor have I lived on the Island apart from short visits and extended fieldwork trips between 2004 and 2010. On the other hand, my previous musical experience in various traditional music contexts provided me with some insight into what I might expect in a fiddle culture such as that of the Island Acadians. Although the repertoire and style of playing was different from the fiddle music I had encountered and studied previously, and the concept of “shed” parties was novel, when I began my fieldwork in 2008 I had the tools for understanding the basic and unspoken social rules of communal music-making. I also had experience of the ways in which musicians of a wide range of ages, genders and backgrounds organise tunes, socialise and play together in a variety of public and private settings. That I have family on P.E.I., regardless of the fact that they are “I.B.C.,” and am also a fiddler were invaluable in every aspect of my fieldwork.

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78 “Islanders By Choice.” This term is preferred by many people who have moved to the Island over the traditional “Come From Away,” which many would-be “Islanders” find frustrating and offensive.
from my “entry” to the field to the deep relationships I have developed over the past several years and the rich body of data I collected.

Musically, my familiarity with techniques, tunings, tune and modal structures and tune genres gave me the background with which to understand the characteristics of the new music I was learning and notice subtle local variations. As well, my knowledge of the common musical lingo enabled me to ask key questions of style and form. As a fiddler, I was able to participate fully in musical events (once I had learned a significant chunk of the local repertoire), which facilitated development of deep relationships with other musicians and community members that would otherwise not have been possible, or at least difficult to establish.\(^79\) Aware that I might overlook something that I take for granted as a fellow fiddler, or impose conclusions on a situation based on my previous experience, I checked back regularly with the people I interviewed and played with to ensure that I detected and minimized any biases or assumptions as soon as possible. In particular, I triangulated among my consultants, often using multiple individuals as well as written sources to verify data.\(^80\) This approach also proved to be a useful tool to determine if certain information or ways of thinking were regionally-determined, linguistically-tied, common to certain families’ experiences and/or available to or known by particular generations of Acadians. Thus, in the course of this research I believe the strengths of my emic perspective, particularly the ability


\(^{80}\) That is, to verify that something one musician had told me was a commonly held notion, I would check with several other people. Norman K. Denzin calls this technique “investigator triangulation” to distinguish it from other types of triangulation (data, theory and methodological triangulation) in his taxonomy. Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act*, 3\(^{rd}\) ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 237-41.
to participate fully in the musical activities, outweigh any vulnerabilities stemming from my previous musical and academic experiences.

My research was conducted in both French and English. Most of the Acadians who participated in my research are bilingual and speak English fluently. In some cases, consultants chose to speak English to me, while others, realising that I spoke French, spoke only French to me. I made a conscious effort to speak French consistently, and by the end of my fieldwork I noticed a marked increase in the number of people who would address me in French. Several of my Francophone consultants have Anglophone spouses and live and work in a predominantly Anglophone environment. As several consultants told me, Francophone Acadians will often switch from French to English if an Anglophone is present; according to these consultants, this has as much to do with being polite as it does with the history of tension between Francophone and Anglophones on the Island. Although it took some time to get my ear used to the local French Acadian dialect, the fact that I was able to converse in French greatly facilitated the development of a good rapport with several consultants.

First encounters

My immediate family moved to P.E.I. in 2004 and I have since visited the Island two to three times per year and met a number of Acadians through family connections. My interest in Acadian music was sparked during a winter trip to the Island in 2005, during which time I attended a Christmas Cinq à huit (“five to eight”) potluck evening\(^{81}\) at Le Carrefour de l’Île-Saint-Jean, the French school and community cultural centre in Charlottetown with my parents, sister and (now) husband. I had been asked to bring my violin, and sang and played

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\(^{81}\) These family events occur almost weekly throughout the year and feature a number of local and off-Island artists.
along to the evening of French Christmas carols and well known French songs. The musical entertainers for the evening were two animated older musicians who, toward the end of the evening suggested that we play some tunes together. To my surprise, our shared repertoire was predominantly comprised of Scottish tunes. It was their repertoire of older Acadian tunes and driving playing style accompanied by rhythmic foot-tapping that caught my ear, however. The soirée left a lingering impression and inspired the present research. In subsequent visits to the Island I met Georges Arsenault, an Acadian historian and folklorist from the Région Évangéline (although he presently lives in Charlottetown), who has been generous with his suggestions of musicians with whom to speak and books and events of potential interest to my project, and provided comments on some chapters of my dissertation.

**Data collection**

This dissertation is based on ten months of fieldwork conducted on P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Québec, in 2008 and 2009. Based on my previous fieldwork experiences in the Shetland Isles (2004-05), and punctuated by familial obligations and teaching opportunities in Toronto, I divided my fieldwork into three periods of four months, one month and five months, respectively. I resided in Charlottetown, with my parents, on all three occasions. My decision to do so was based on several factors, including the geography of my population sample, a lack of residence rental opportunities in some areas, and consultation with several Island acquaintances. Since the population sample for this research was Island-

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82 In 2004-05 I conducted three months of fieldwork on the Shetland Isles, divided in two periods. I found that the time spent “away” from the field following the first period allowed me to gain perspective on what I had learned, conduct valuable archive research, and the return trip gave ample opportunity for asking follow-up questions, strengthening relationships and conducting feedback interviews. In addition to the three months of formal fieldwork in Shetland, I traveled to Glasgow with a group of musicians to attend the Celtic Connections festival and with the same group to a festival north of Belfast.
wide, with potential consultants living at both ends of the Island and everywhere in between, I did not wish to confine myself to one region of P.E.I. Charlottetown is approximately one hour in either direction from the Région Évangéline and Souris, and therefore a “neutral” zone, with easy access to the University’s library and Island Studies archives. Although my willingness to travel an hour or so for an evening of music-making, a concert or other events, not to mention the mileage on my little Mazda, took many people aback at first, this proved to be a convenient arrangement. With my sleeping bag occupying a permanent place in the back of the car, I accepted offers to stay overnight or over a Festival weekend with friends on several occasions, and took opportunities to house-sit while friends were out-of-town.

**Entry to the field**

While we all make the best of fieldwork plans, the most exciting opportunities are often those that sneak up on us. Within the first days of my being on the Island, and through a series of personal connections, I was introduced to one of the members of the prominent Acadian fiddling family of Eddy Arsenault, who is widely known as the “Grandfather” of Acadian fiddling on P.E.I. I was put in contact with one of Eddy’s daughters, Helen, a multi-instrumentalist and one of the founding members of the band Barachois. Helen passed me on to her brother, Peter, claiming that he was more “tuned in” to local events in the Région Évangéline. I called Peter, also a well known fiddler, and, when he found out I was a musician, he invited me to a party that was to take place two days later at the home of

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83 It is standard practice on P.E.I. (and elsewhere in the Maritimes) to refer to musicians by their first names regardless of their acclaim and/or commercial success. I have adopted this practice in this dissertation. But because there are a few very common Acadian family names on P.E.I. (i.e. most of my informants are Arsenaulds or Gallants) and many common given names (i.e. Marie) this method does not always work. Therefore, in many cases I use the standard Acadian practice of introducing someone with reference to at least one generation of their family, either along maternal or paternal lines; for example, “Marie à Polycarpe.” This practice is discussed further in Chapter 3.
Philippe LeBlanc in Mont-Carmel, a musical hot spot in the heart of the Région Évangéline.

This invitation shaped the rest of my research trip. The party, which Peter had mysteriously described over the phone as “in a barn with bonfires in old tubs outside and music all night long” turned out to be in a converted shed next to the LeBlanc farm house, complete with wood panelling and a wood-burning stove—it was certainly not the draughty old barn I had envisioned, although there was indeed a bonfire in an old tub outside the shed.

*Journal entry, 19 May 2008 (the day after the party)*[^84]

It is dark and raining hard by the time I navigate my way through the “heritage roads”[^85] of rural Prince county and meet Peter in the driveway to Philippe’s, just after 9 p.m. At Peter’s suggestion, to ensure an easy exit if I want to leave early, I park on what seems like a side road and in we go, fiddles (and notebook) in hand. As Peter told me over the phone, this is a party I cannot miss if I want to meet Island musicians; indeed, I soon find out that this party attracts the Who’s Who of musicians, dancers, music enthusiasts and their friends in the region, as well as many From Away. Musicians simply show up at Philippe’s house on the Sunday of the May long weekend to kick off the summer season, and return on the Labour Day weekend (September) to bring it to a close, in a yearly tradition that has taken place for fifteen years.[^86]

As the rain pours down outside, it is apparent that Peter and I are among the first guests to arrive, but this does not seem to bother him. Showing me into the shed, he disappears to the covered section outside (maybe for a smoke). The shed walls are lined with

[^84]: I have included ethnographic excerpts from my field notes, written in a more casual tone, to enliven the narrative. I also cite from my field notes in this way in Chapters 4 and 5.

[^85]: Mud clay roads.

[^86]: Philippe has since told me that he does not know what will happen if he moves or can no longer host it, as musicians would show up regardless.
chairs, creating an open space in the centre of the room, and a keyboard is set up on one side of the small room with chairs in a semi-circle around it. I put my fiddle case in a corner and find a chair next to a petite, kind-looking woman and her husband who look to be in their mid-fifties; they introduce themselves as Marie (Livingstone) and her husband, Orrin. As we chat, the shed slowly fills up with people and the sound of old friends reconnecting; instrument cases of all shapes and sizes begin to line the walls. A young woman has started singing some light jazz standards accompanied by a man on a snare drum; they are soon joined by two other men on keyboard and electric bass. The focus shifts to another young woman who Marie identifies as Patricia Richard, a young Acadian woman well-known for her sweet singing voice. She is singing some old French songs, accompanied by the small ensemble. She forgets a few lines, and someone sitting against the wall chimes in to remind her. I find myself humming along to the lilting melodies. A man in his late thirties sits down with his fiddle and starts improvising a harmony. I cannot help but be captivated by his bow arm, which barely seems to be attached to the rest of his body, and the ease with which he is improvising on Patricia’s melody. Marie whispers to me that this is Pascal Miousse from les Îles-de-la-Madeleine who plays with the Acadian band Vishtèn, based in the Région Évangéline. There is some applause as Patricia, thanking the musicians, drifts towards someone who has just arrived. Pascal has not stopped playing, but the music has morphed into a set of strathspeys and fiery reels. Another young man has now joined on guitar and, without missing two beats, a young woman has taken over on the piano while another (her twin sister, I am told; they are Philippe’s daughters and also members of Vishtèn) has joined in on accordion.

Within a couple of hours, the small shed is teeming with musicians and bystanders. The group of musicians and their tunes morph continuously as musicians come in and out of
the circle (to talk, to take a break, to get a drink) playing fiddles, flute, whistles, bodhrán and mandolin accompanied by a continuous progression of people playing keyboard, guitar, snare and bass. There must be forty people in the shed who are all talking, sitting or standing along the walls, leaning in to get a glimpse of the musicians. It is warm in the room, and I realise I am completely overdressed with multiple layers (including ski underwear) and a heavy sweater. The music has comprised mainly reels and fast marches for hours, and there is not a still body in the room as musicians and bystanders unabashedly tap their feet to the music—so hard, in fact, that the floorboards are bouncing. All of a sudden, a woman leaps out of her chair and begins step dancing in the middle of the circle of musicians, much to the delight of the bystanders who “yip” and “wooo” in encouragement. Similar spontaneous dancing continues to happen all night as bystanders are clearly moved by the rousing music.

I am still sitting with Marie and Orrin, who by this time have introduced me to a number of other guests and give me the “scoop” on the musical scene unfolding before us. I have found out that they run a weekly “Acadian Jam” at the Boys and Girls Club of Wellington, and I am invited to attend. Marie introduces me to a number of other musicians as they come by and my little notebook already contains a list of people with whom I will follow up. At a rare pause in the music, Marie and I decide to get out our fiddles and see if we know any of the same tunes. Marie coaxes some of the younger musicians into the circle and the composition of the circle shifts to a group of eager young musicians who have obviously been too shy to join into the “wild” improvisational style of Pascal, or who are unfamiliar perhaps with those tunes. Marie confers with a young man sitting next to her and they start into a set of reels. I am familiar with a few of the Scottish and Irish tunes they play, but I realise quickly that our repertoires vary significantly. They are playing fast (what I know now as “jam speed”) but I pick out a few of the melodies and play along as best I can, prompting smiles
from the other players. Eventually Peter and his brother Albert (also a member of Barachois) get out their fiddles and pull up chairs next to me. Their father Eddy, a renowned fiddler from the Région Évangéline, plays a distinctly Scottish Cape Breton repertoire (albeit with his unique turns\textsuperscript{87} and style) with which I am more familiar, and I find myself able to play a few more of the older Scottish strathspeys, marches and reels with them. I leave Philippe’s shed around 4 a.m., as many of the guests start trickling out, although I was later told that the party continued until 6 or 7 a.m.

Figure 1.8 Shed party, May 2008. (Photo by Etienne Desjardins)

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Since this initial soirée I participated in the weekly Friday Jams where I not only learned the standard and popular local repertoire of traditional Acadian tunes and contemporary compositions, but gained invaluable insight into the Evangeline community,

\textsuperscript{87} “Turns” are particular passages of a tune. Often musicians will comment on the way another fiddler “turns” a tune.
introductions to many local musicians, explanations of cultural phenomena and developed a strong rapport with my fellow “jammers” and their families. This weekly interaction and commitment to the jam group proved an essential element in developing my relationships within the community. It is also through my association with the group that I have been invited to many other private and community events, including the yearly Parish picnic, various kitchen parties, family gatherings, recording sessions as an “honorary” Acadian and participation in festivals.

My connection to Helen, Peter and Marie and my invitation to Philippe’s party opened many doors to the Island Acadian community (particularly in the Région Évangéline) in the subsequent months. I met a number of the other guests at events in the weeks and months that followed and the fact that I had been at Philippe’s party seemed to break down social barriers and provided an entrance into other events. In some cases, it served as a useful conversation piece, as it was not only “common ground,” but was also a confirmation of my relationship(s) to other musicians on the Island. (Indeed, on more than one occasion, a new acquaintance would ask “you were at Philippe’s?” and I would find the conversation shift to a more familiar tone).

**Process**

*Participant observation*

My fieldwork methodology is based primarily on participant observation and ethnographic interviews. My ongoing participation in the community is multi-faceted and has

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88 I was invited by members of the community to participate as an “honorary” Acadian (my term) in two “staged” jams; the first taped by a film crew from Heritage Canada for inclusion in a new website on “L’Acadie vivante” (www.acadievivante.ca) and the second taped by a national Francophone organisation that was used in advertisements for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. These opportunities arose near the end of my first fieldwork trip.
been facilitated by the generosity and hospitality of the many individuals and their families whom I have met over the course of my research. I am interested not only in how Acadians view themselves and their music, but also in how Acadian culture is viewed by non-Acadians, other musicians and Acadians living in more Anglicized regions of the Island. To gain a deeper understanding of these complex and historically-engendered perspectives and relationships, I attended on a semi-regular basis several local music “sessions” hosted by the Scottish-oriented Prince County Fiddlers, local pubs (hosted by Island fiddler Roy Johnstone) and the Benevolent Irish Society in Charlottetown. Through my participation in such events outside of the Acadian community I was able to gain a more general perspective on the Island’s traditional music scene and compare the repertoire choices of various groups and individuals, as well as gain valuable insight into the relations between diverse groups of musicians.

As my fieldwork progressed and my relationships with various members of the community evolved from that of researcher-consultant to one of mutual friendship, I was frequently invited to attend private gatherings, in which music was often a central part. These gatherings usually took the form of small gatherings of three to six musicians in someone’s home, or shed (or kitchen) parties ranging from ten to thirty people comprising both friends and family. While both types of gatherings were mostly spontaneously organised, I came to understand that the latter could be anticipated following concerts or large events in the community, as well as nearly every night of a festival weekend in the Région Évangéline. Like the party in Philippe’s shed described above, these events often begin late at night and last well into the wee hours of the morning, fuelled by music and combined with socialising. For the most part, music-making is a group activity, with two or more fiddlers playing together, the group of musicians continuously morphing as players move in and out of the
circle (the kitchen party is the subject of a case study in Chapter 4).

In addition to these musical parties, I was invited by Marie and her family to attend her family’s weekly Sunday gatherings held at her family’s cottage, which is now owned by her brother, the local priest Père Éloi Arsenault. While I was invited twice during my first period of fieldwork, I attended on a near weekly basis during my second fieldwork trip. After eating our packed dinners and engaging in much talking, we would spend hours fiddling accompanied by Marie’s sister Hermine on the old pump organ and Orrin on guitar.

I also attended festivals and concerts put on by musicians around the Island, including the Rollo Bay Fiddle festival (in eastern Kings County), the Atlantic Fiddlers’ Jamboree (in the Région Évangéline), the Small Halls festival (an Island-wide festival) and L’Exposition agricole et le Festival acadien de la région Évangéline, which is the largest Acadian festival in the Maritimes. I attended regularly community lectures on Acadian history and culture hosted by le Musée acadien de l’Île-de-Prince-Édouard (the Acadian Museum of P.E.I.) in Miscouche and the Farmer’s Bank museum in Rustico, which included talks on Acadian dialect, history and various aspect of the culture. I also attended events such as book launches, CD launches for local musicians, concerts of artists “from Away” (often from Cape Breton) and the opening of several exhibits on the Acadians and the deportations at le Musée acadien. My participation in the community at first seemed to draw some confusion from those who did not quite understand why I, an Anglophone, regardless of my academic endeavours, attended so many Francophone Acadian events. I was frequently greeted with surprise: “I see you everywhere...!” “Are you part Acadian?” (a frequent question) or “wow, you really must like Acadian music...” Over the course of my fieldwork these surprised remarks eventually dwindled off as I got to know more people, and I would often attend such events with other musicians.
In August 2009, I was invited to give a lecture on Acadian music as part of the *Mardi causerie* (“Tuesday chat”) lecture series at *le Musée acadien*. This lecture opportunity (and the CBC “Main Street” radio interview that accompanied it) gave me the chance to present the background of my research, including my personal history and motivations, an introduction to my research questions and some preliminary conclusions and further questions, to an audience of my consultants, friends and local Acadians and non-Acadians interested in the topic. This opportunity was particularly helpful in dispelling the presumption that I was writing a history of fiddling on P.E.I. I prepared a handout with a summary of the project and my contact information, and asked audience members to contact me if they had further thoughts, questions or stories about their own musical experiences. In addition to thought-provoking questions, corrections and helpful comments, several people have contacted me following the lecture with other ideas.

*Formal (ethnographic) interviews*\(^{89}\)

**On Prince Edward Island**

The Acadian communities on the Island are divided into six regions that are overseen by *La Société Saint-Thomas D’Aquin* (S.S.T.A.).\(^{90}\) Of the six regions, the *Région Évangéline* is the least anglicized Acadian community of the Island. Although I interviewed musicians and non-musicians and attended events in the Acadian communities across the island, the *Région Évangéline* and Summerside regions dominated my fieldwork because these were the

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\(^{89}\) I distinguish “formal interviews” from other types of meetings as interviews which are set up in advance (as opposed to “spot” interviews discussed below), usually tape-recorded, by length (usually between forty-five minutes and two hours), and that have gone through the formal informed consent process, either written or verbal.

\(^{90}\) The regions overseen by the S.S.T.A. are: *Prince ouest* (West Prince), *la Région Évangéline*, Rustico, Summerside, Charlottetown and Souris. The S.S.T.A. (St. Thomas Aquias Society) is the Francophone cultural parent organisation for Acadians and Francophones on P.E.I., and a voice for Francophone culture on the Island.
home regions of many of the first Acadians I met as well as the location of the weekly “Acadian Jam” and the majority of other events I attended.

Between 2008 and 2009 I conducted 43 formal interviews on P.E.I. with a total of forty-seven people, including two formal interviews conducted by telephone and one formal interview by email correspondence. I also conducted one formal focus group with five musicians. I chose my interview participants to include a variety of perspectives, representing a range of roles within the Acadian community and across the Island, as well as gender, age and geographic location. The roles of the participants included both professional and amateur musicians, visual and textual artists, the Director of La Fédération culturelle de L’Île-du-Prince-Édouard, regional directors of the Société Saint-Thomas-d’Aquin, historians, influential (or outspoken) members of the community and friends or family of musicians.  

Following Bakan’s call for an “alternative ethnomusicology” that acknowledges the valuable contributions of consultants at the centre and margins of the field, I attempted to consult a good cross-section of the Acadian community, including non-musicians and cultural administrators. The majority of the participants were musicians, in particular fiddlers but there were also guitarists, keyboardists and other instrumentalists represented. Many participants were or had been members of a band. There were a number of fiddle and dance teachers, and most of the musicians also identify as dancers. There were also a handful of people who are family or friends of musicians but not musicians themselves. Although fourteen of the participants were born in the 1940s or earlier, including one individual born in the first decade of the twentieth century, the majority of participants were at the time of the

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91 The history of La Fédération culturelle de L’Île-du-Prince-Édouard and the S.S.T.A. is discussed in Chapter 2.
study in their twenties, thirties, forties or fifties. The youngest interviewee was fifteen years old. There were slightly more women than men who were interviewed. The vast majority of participants identified their geographic location (place of birth or long-time place of residence) as the Région Évangéline, even if they have lived elsewhere for a number of years. Similarly, the majority identified as Acadian, although several people also identified as Québécois, Irish or Scottish; only three people did not identify as Acadian. In each category, the roles would often overlap. Please see Appendix A for a breakdown of these descriptors of interview participants on P.E.I.

On les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Québec

During my 2009 fieldwork trip to les Îles-de-la-Madeleine (the Magdalen Islands), I conducted four formal interviews and had musical sessions with an additional three people which acted as “informal” interviews interspersed with sharing or demonstrating tunes. I also had informal phone conversations with two women who work in the arts and culture industry of the islands. Two of these consultants are professional musicians who reside at least a portion of the year on P.E.I. One other consultant works as an advisor and administrator of cultural affairs on “the Maggies.”93 The other consultants are non-professional musicians, although two of them are related to well known madelinot94 fiddlers. There were certain people on both “the Maggies” and P.E.I. whom I wished to interview, but, for a variety of reasons including professional touring, incompatible schedules and simple lack of time, I was unable to meet with them. As this is on-going research, I intend to continue the formal interview process in both locales upon completion of the dissertation.

93 “The Maggies” is the local English nickname for les Îles-de-la-Madeleine.
94 A Madelinot(e) (n., m/f) is a resident of islands.
Interview process

While most people would speak freely with me in informal settings like the jam or at a concert or party, one of the most difficult aspects of my fieldwork was convincing people that their knowledge and experience would be of interest to me, and that my project would benefit from their interview. This was especially apparent with elderly musicians, several of whom I only approached towards the end of my fieldwork once we had got to know each other quite well. In such cases, I also took more time than usual at the beginning of the interview to “small talk,” what James Leigh describes as “friendly conversation.”\(^\text{95}\) Likely because of their exposure to various media and previous interview experiences, interviews did not seem to engender much obvious anxiety among most of the consultants between twenty-five and fifty-five years old, many of whom are professional or semi-professional musicians. In contrast, musicians who were older or younger than this group often needed much more encouragement. Although I was invited to conduct the majority of the formal interviews in people’s homes, there were several instances where an alternative location was found in order to accommodate a consultant’s schedule. These alternative locations were carefully chosen and were often suggested by the consultant her/himself; they included the Friday Night Jam space prior to the arrival of the other musicians, tables or benches outside of rehearsal spaces and, on one occasion, another consultant’s home. On many occasions other family members would join in the conversation towards the end of the interview, and the interview would take on a focus group atmosphere.

Kay Kaufman Shelemay reminds us that the role of the ethnographer is more than that of a gatherer of thoughts and memories shared in the interview process; ethnographers, she

writes, “are also instrumental in elaborating memories in and about musical performance into narratives about the past. The ethnographer is thus an important but largely unacknowledged player in the elicitation of memories and the construction of histories.”

On several occasions, carefully chosen archived recordings served as a springboard for my interviews with local musicians, a technique I found very useful during this research. I found that this approach stimulated hours of fascinating “insider analysis” and, like conversation during the Friday Night Jam (described below), prompted many memories, stories, and tunes. In particular, some informants were able to provide insight into the origins of certain tunes, and point out aspects of a tune’s structure, accompaniment, and melodic variations that were particular to the player or community.

**Informal interviews**

I have classified “informal” interviews as more-or-less spontaneous meetings, usually short (under one hour) and unrecorded, either due to the awkwardness of location or my decision not to request this out of sensitivity to the situation. In the course of my research, I identified two types of informal interviews: the first are “drop-in” interviews, in which I was invited to visit someone’s home or workplace (often accompanied by one of their close friends or a family member) and found that our conversations were relevant to my research questions; the second type are “spot” interviews where I had short conversations or exchanges with people (including those I had already interviewed formally) at local events, on

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97 For example, if it was my first introduction to someone or if they seemed overly nervous. In such cases I would usually ask the participant for verbal consent before continuing our more informal interview.
98 I conducted five “drop-in” interviews. If I had not already done so, my research was introduced on each occasion and verbal consent was requested and documented.
the phone and via electronic media such as email and Facebook. In all cases participants were aware that I was conducting research and provided verbal consent.

**Focus groups**

The weekly jams at the Boys and Girls Club of Wellington, which I describe in more detail in Chapter 4, often acted as informal focus group interviews and quickly became an important part of my research. Many of the musicians (usually between five and fifteen) and observers (usually between three and five) are family or old acquaintances of the jam members, and I observed how this informal group setting provided inspiration for “what to play next,” highlighted their individual musical tastes, and inspired discussion on a variety of topics. Encouraged by my informal probing, discussions took on an organic form as the group habitually fell into the rhythm of the Friday jam. As I describe in Chapter 4, tunes were interspersed with informal discussions of tunes, composers and playing styles, Acadian music and culture and personal anecdotes of musical experiences and influences. These jam sessions were a rich source of information about the music, the Acadian community and Island life, and frequently provided the entry point for future interviews and discussions.

I conducted one formal focus group interview with the five young members of the Acadian group Les Girls, prior to one of their rehearsals. I had not initially intended to conduct a focus group with these women, but due to their performance schedule it became apparent that I would miss the opportunity to speak with most of them if I did not interview

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99 Les Girls comprised former Barachois members Louise Arsenault and Helen Bergeron, whom I had previously interviewed, Clack-a-Zing members Samantha Gallant, Paige Gallant, Janelle Richard and Stephanie Collicut, and local musician Caroline Bernard. The group toured regionally from May to September 2008. In September 2008, four members (Bergeron, Arsenault, Bernard and S. Gallant) of Les Girls formed the group Gadelle and toured regionally and internationally until 2010.
them at the same time. The focus group approach proved successful, although there were several questions that I was not able to ask the participants individually.

Archival research

I conducted archival research at the Centre d’études acadiennes at L’Université de Moncton and in the University of Prince Edward Island (U.P.E.I.’s Island Archives. My goal in this research was to analyse examples of Acadian fiddling, both on- and off-Island, tracing similarities in the style and repertoire of Island Acadian fiddlers with other Acadian communities. At U.P.E.I., I had access to Ken Perlman’s collection of video recordings of Island fiddlers from 1992. Examination of particular videos of Acadian musicians was helpful in my analysis of variations in bowing and ornamentation between fiddlers. Further, I found past issues of The Island Magazine from 1976, held in U.P.E.I.’s digital Island Archives; past issues of the Francophone newspaper La Voix acadienne from 2004, available on the newspaper’s website; and past issues of The Island Fiddler, the newsletter of the Prince Edward Island Fiddlers’ Society, from 1978, all of which helped to piece together a history of music-making on P.E.I.

Several consultants gave me copies of family audio and audio-visual recordings. The audio recordings included stories, interviews and music, while the audio-visual recordings were mainly family videos of performances and events (including music, theatre and dance). Several consultants also provided copies of CBC radio programs and television broadcasts

100 Located in Moncton, New Brunswick, the Centre d’études acadiennes (C.E.A.) is a primary source of information on Acadian history and genealogy. The archive contains the largest collection of Acadian records and resources, extending from the earliest records to later church and government records and numerous contemporary private collections, including French and British colonial records, census and church documents, newspapers, folklore collections (interviews, music and audio-visual recordings), published and unpublished manuscripts, among others.
from the late 1950s and 1970s that they had kept as family memorabilia. In 2008, amateur
genealogists and musicians Marie Livingstone and her sister Hermine Gallant presented me
with a comprehensive genealogy chart that focuses on P.E.I. Acadian musicians.

**Overview of the chapters**

Chapter 2 comprises an ethno-history of the Acadians on P.E.I. The goal of this chapter is to situate P.E.I. and the Island Acadians within the broader history of the Acadians. Beginning with the arrival of the first French settlers in 1604, this chapter follows the Acadian people through the colonization of Île Saint-Jean (now P.E.I.), the eighteenth century deportations and the re-amalgamation and resettlement of Acadians on P.E.I. I examine the theorisation of the Acadian deportations by scholars and popular writers and consider how issues of assimilation, education and economic development have characterised the P.E.I. Acadian community throughout the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A socio-musical history of the Island Acadians, based on oral histories and secondary sources, is interwoven throughout the chapter.

Chapter 3 examines an ongoing process of Acadian cultural definition on P.E.I., focusing on the musical practices of the *Région Évangéline* of western P.E.I. I trace the musical practices, cultural influences and events from the late nineteenth century onward that led to the contemporary cultural climate in the Island’s Acadian community and I consider the impact of disparate processes of revitalisation on local Acadian culture and identity. In particular, I examine the role of the group Barachois in developing a distinct “Island Acadian” sound through a pastiche of older practices. I demonstrate that although this sound is embraced by contemporary players as an “authentic” P.E.I. style, few fiddlers have actually adopted that style; instead, a number of fiddlers have tapped into the tradition’s flexible style
parameters in different ways, articulating distinct interpretations of what constitutes P.E.I. Acadian music.

In Chapter 4, I look at some contexts of Acadian music on P.E.I., with an emphasis on music-making in the Région Évangéline. I argue that on P.E.I., generally, musicians have capitalised on the tourist potential of traditional music and employment prospects, resulting in a shift from private to public performance spheres. Unsurprisingly, this shift is accompanied by a dialectical relationship between maintaining and re-interpreting the tradition. At the heart of this chapter are case studies of two musical contexts that traverse both public and private spheres and that have emerged as an important part of the musical identity of the region. The first case study examines the weekly Friday Night Acadian Jam. The Jam begs important questions regarding the role of music aurality and literacy in performance and the ways in which a sense of community is sustained through musical practices. This context highlights an emerging trend of local tune composition. The second case study looks at the phenomenon of the Acadian party de cuisine (kitchen party). The “kitchen party” has emerged as a symbol of Acadian culture on P.E.I. and has been adopted by musical groups and concert promoters as a marketing strategy for traditional Acadian music.

Chapter 5 explores the alliances and cultural exchanges that inform contemporary Island Acadian identity, and how these relationships have influenced local musical practices and discourses about Acadian identity. First, I consider the development of creative and socio-economic partnerships between P.E.I. Acadians and other cultural groups regionally, nationally and globally. Then, through a case study of the P.E.I.-based group, Vishtèn, I examine the rekindling of alliances between the Acadian communities of P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Québec. I suggest that the strategic marketing of the group’s music as French, Acadian and Celtic enables them to identify, and be identified, with a variety of
musical communities, thus broadening their audience base and facilitating their participation in various performance contexts. I argue also that by promoting the idea of alliances between P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine though a discourse of “sister islands” Vishtèn offers a model through which to consider the complex social and cultural nexus that inform contemporary identity construction. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 include musical transcriptions. I have adopted different approaches, ranging from skeletal transcriptions (what Seeger calls “prescriptive”) to more detailed transcriptions (or “descriptive”) depending on the context of the example. I have included more detailed transcriptions to highlight particular stylistic features of a fiddler’s rendition of a tune, and skeletal transcriptions when the purpose of the example is to highlight particular aspects of form, mode or melodic patterns. The transcriptions are based on a variety of audio sources, from my own field recordings and other non-commercial recordings (some of which are included as embedded audio files) to independent, commercial albums.

The final chapter of the dissertation summarizes how cultural memory, linguistic identity and musical practices intersect in the P.E.I. Acadian community. I consider how the memory of the Acadians’ turbulent history and older cultural practices penetrate the lived experience of contemporary Acadians and how that past has entered a local discourse about identity and music. Finally, I consider the impact of this recent discourse of identity within the Francophone community on the Island’s considerable anglicized Acadian population.

101 Seeger, “Prescriptive and Descriptive.”
Chapter 2
Historical Background

The history of the Acadian people varies significantly throughout the Maritimes, necessitating the study of each region on its own terms. On Île Saint-Jean, now P.E.I., the history of the Acadians is at once comparable to and yet distinct from that of neighbouring mainland Acadians, although it has received considerably less scholarly attention. In particular, the story of the Island Acadians has been frequently overshadowed by accounts of historical events on the mainland, the most obvious example of this being the deportation of 1755 when the majority of the Acadians were exiled from Nova Scotia. This event, which was immortalised in Longfellow’s epic poem “Evangeline,” has dominated not only the complex saga of the Island Acadians but also the earlier history of the mainland Acadians.

Although the French regime on Île Saint-Jean constitutes a brief chapter in P.E.I.’s history, lasting only thirty-eight years from 1720 to 1758, the Island and its inhabitants figure prominently in the history of the Acadian people as a French colony and a place of refuge for mainland Acadians in the eighteenth century; as a site of resettlement following the expulsion of Acadians in the late eighteenth century; and as a scene of political assembly during the nineteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these Islanders were responsible for several pioneering ventures that have had a significant and lasting influence throughout Canada, including the first people’s bank in Canada (the precursor to contemporary caisses populaire or cooperative financial institutions, such as Credit Unions) and the first Acadian teachers’ association, among others. Moreover, since the twentieth

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century the Island Acadians have been increasingly present in the discourse surrounding the preservation of Francophone language and culture in Canada.

In this chapter I present an ethnohistory of the Acadian community of P.E.I. in order to understand the historical and contemporary contexts within which their contemporary musical practices have developed.\(^2\) As such, my goal is to consider the history of the P.E.I. Acadians within the broader context of Acadian history. First, I outline the early history of the Acadians from their origins as French settlers in the “New World” to the establishment of the first Acadian settlements on P.E.I. I then examine the deportation events that took place between 1755 and 1762 and the role of *le Grand Dérangement* (the Great Upheaval) in Acadian narratives over the past two centuries. I describe the reamalgamation of the Acadians following the deportations, their resettlement on P.E.I. and the founding of the *Région Évangéline*, the predominant Francophone community on the Island. Finally, I look at *Acadie* (Acadia) on P.E.I. from the 1950s to the present and consider the social and economic contributions of the Island Acadians to the P.E.I. community and to Francophone culture in Canada more broadly. The socio-musical history of the Island Acadians is interwoven throughout the chapter.

**The first Acadians: 1604 to 1720\(^3\)**

Long before the first permanent French colony was established, the shores of the Maritimes were frequented by fishermen and fur traders from Normandy, Brittany, the Basque

\(^2\) Ethnohistory is the study of culture from a combined historical and anthropological viewpoint. According to the American Society for Ethnohistory, “the ethnohistorical method…involves developing histories informed by ethnography, linguistics, archaeology, and ecology.” Accessed 6 January 2010. [http://www.ethnohistory.org](http://www.ethnohistory.org)

\(^3\) See Daigle (1995) for an overview of Acadian history. See Arsenault (1998) and Harvey (1926) for detailed socio-political histories of the Acadians on P.E.I.
country and various other European port cities. These early travelers established trade with the various Amerindian groups in the area, including the Mi’kmaq, who inhabited mainly the coastal areas of the Maritimes, the Maliseet, who were situated further inland, and the Abenakis, who lived predominately in coastal Maine.

The first French settlers arrived in the region that eventually became known as Acadie in 1604. The survival of these early colonists was largely dependent on their alliances with the local native population in matters of trade, counsel and politics. Over the years, unmarried liaisons and church-registered unions between members of the two groups also created a sizeable Métis population that strengthened these alliances. Unfortunately, local knowledge was not enough to save some of the early settlers whose delayed arrival in the “New World” (due to poor planning and bad weather) meant that they were unprepared for the harsh winter climate of the new territory and short on supplies. After a disastrous first year on l’Île Saint-Croix during which nearly half the colonists died of the cold and scurvy, the colony was relocated across from the Bay of Fundy in present-day Nova Scotia and named Port Royal (Fig. 2.1). Over the next hundred years, as the colony’s strategic position became increasingly coveted by European colonial powers, the Acadians found themselves the unfortunate objects of the Old World power struggle between Great Britain and France.

The common understanding of Acadian origins and many written accounts suggest that the settlers of Acadie came from regions of central-western France, mainly from the

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region of Poitou-Charentes. While historical data demonstrates that the men who founded Acadie in 1604 were French, it seems that these men either perished as a result of sickness or returned to France. Historian Naomi Griffiths contends that subsequent groups of settlers throughout the seventeenth century were of mixed origins, including Scottish, Irish, Basque, French, English and Portuguese, and were a mix of Catholics and Protestants. This eclectic mix of early colonists, she argues, accounts for the development of a distinct culture in Acadie, vastly different and largely independent from their European contemporaries, as demonstrated by the Acadians’ relationships with New England and local indigenous groups, as well as their religious toleration. Over the course of a couple of generations, this distinct culture gave rise to a distinct identity for the settlers of Acadie, who began to distinguish themselves from French newcomers as “Acadian.”

The major colonization of Acadie did not start until after 1632 when New France (which included the region of Acadie) was returned to France from Great Britain with the signing of the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The population of Acadie grew steadily over the next several decades as French families began to arrive in the colony. The new settlers eventually moved further into the marshlands, in areas around the Minas Bassin (the eastern part of the Bay of Fundy) and the village of Beaubassin (on the Isthmus of Chignecto), where they successfully built on the agricultural expertise of settlers from areas of western France (namely the historical region of Poitou) who were accustomed to draining marshy

8 Thus, to my knowledge, no Acadians descend from the men who founded Acadie in 1604. Georges Arsenault, personal communication with author, 5 February 2010.
10 Daigle, “Acadia from 1604 to 1763,” 5.
coastal terrain in order to reclaim large tracts of land from the ocean (Fig. 2.1). To facilitate this draining process, the settlers constructed a system of dykes called *aboiteaux*.

Figure 2.1 Map of first French settlements in *Acadie*.

Although the territory changed ownership between Great Britain and France several times between 1613 and 1713, the general population was largely ignored by the two Imperial rivals. Despite skirmishes with English raiding parties from New England, the settlers were left more-or-less to their own devices. As historians Griffiths and Daigle note, the settlers’ agricultural ventures, such as their building of *aboiteaux*, had a profound influence on their social relationships because maintaining the dyke system fostered teamwork and a strong

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12 Pitre, 24.
sense of community. Further, although it would affect them in the long run, the first settlers in Acadie were not concerned with the questions of territorial borders and politics that occupied British and French authorities. Rather, as Griffiths explains, “their common aim was the creation of a self-supporting community.” The settlers’ autonomous position also promoted distinct philosophies of social organisation and leadership as they developed their own system of self-governance and settled in cluster patterns necessary to maintain the dyke system. These early endeavours profoundly shaped Acadian culture and Acadian social life; moreover, they set the stage for several ventures undertaken in the 1900s, such as the co-operative movement, which I discuss later in this chapter.

The Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713, changing the balance of power in North America. Three French territories were ceded to Great Britain, including its Hudson Bay territory, Acadie and Newfoundland, which was also colonised by French settlers. The wording of the treaty was ambiguous, however, resulting in different notions of which country would retain the territory of present-day New Brunswick, as both Great Britain and France laid claim to it. In the end, France retained its pre-war North American colonies of Île Saint-Jean (now Prince Edward Island) and Île Royale (now Cape Breton Island), as well as the region of (present-day) New Brunswick (Fig. 2.2).

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13 Griffiths, *Creation of a People*; Daigle, “Acadia from 1604 to 1763.”
14 Griffiths, *Creation of a People*, 2.
15 Daigle, ”Acadia from 1604 to 1763”, 12.
16 Ibid., 24.
17 From 1713 onwards “Acadie” constituted present-day Nova Scotia.
The colonization of Île Saint-Jean: 1720 to 1758

Although little archaeological evidence exists, oral history suggests that Amerindian groups have inhabited the northern shore areas of P.E.I. for approximately ten thousand years. Tracing their ancestry to these first settlers, the Mi’kmaq people, who call the Island “Abegweit” (roughly translated as “cradled on the waves”), are known to have visited and lived on the Island for approximately two thousand years. There has been a permanent Mi’kmaq settlement on Lennox Island since the early nineteenth century. As on the mainland, the early settlers who migrated to Île Saint-Jean maintained a good relationship

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18 See Earle Lockerby, Deportation of the Prince Edward Island Acadians (Halifax: Nimbus, 2008), for a detailed description of Acadian history on P.E.I. with a focus on the deportation event of 1758.
with the local Mi’kmaq. The amicable relationship between the Mi’kmaq and European settlers led to some cultural interaction, exchange and to some intermarriage.\textsuperscript{21}

While Europeans have known about the Island since Jacques Cartier’s voyage in 1534, it is possible that the Island was used as a stepping stone for Vikings as early as 1000 CE. The Island was first granted to Sieur du Gué de Monts by Henry IV in 1604, as part of a larger grant that gave de Monts the exclusive rights to colonize New France. In addition to a fur-trade monopoly in New France, de Monts was given the objective of developing a fishery and a permanent settlement on Île Saint-Jean. His concerns with political affairs on the mainland kept him occupied, however, and he was largely unsuccessful in his appointment. Île Saint-Jean changed hands among French gentry several times between 1653 and 1719.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1719, a Frenchman named Louis-Charles-Hyacinthe Castel, known as the Comte de Saint-Pierre, was granted exclusive rights to Île Saint-Jean by the French Crown to establish a permanent colony on the Island in return for fishing rights.\textsuperscript{23} Although the company he founded to carry out this commission, the Compagnie de l’Île Saint-Jean, collapsed after a few years, the Comte “succeeded in laying the foundation of a sedentary (shore-based) fishery, a growing colony, and what would eventually become a haven to a significant fraction of the overall Acadian population.”\textsuperscript{24} The majority of the settlers that came to the Island in 1720-21 with the Compagnie came from the area of La Rochelle and the province of Pictou and established themselves at Havre Saint-Pierre and Port-la-Joie. According to Lockerby,

\textsuperscript{21} Little, if any, intermarriage occurred on Île Saint-Jean.
\textsuperscript{22} The island was granted to Nicolas Denys in 1654, followed by François Doublet in 1663 and Gabrielle Gauthier in 1686. In 1710, Sieur de Louvigny was granted a concession that included only the eastern end of the Island. Georges Arsenault, U.P.E.I. lecture, 13 May 2008.
\textsuperscript{23} A few Acadian families from the Port Royal area moved to the eastern end of the Island between 1713 and 1715 but did not stay due to the high rent they were expected to pay to Sieur de Louvigny. Arsenault, U.P.E.I. lecture, 13 May 2008.
most of these men left the Island after the Compagnie went bankrupt.25 The majority of the settlers from France who lived on the Island between 1720 and 1730 were from Normandy and Brittany, in the north-west of France, and some were Basque fishermen from southern France.26 Over the next two decades, small groups of Acadians continued to migrate to the Island from Nova Scotia, “gradually changing the Island’s complexion from French to Acadian.”27

Some historians refer to the period between 1725 and 1744 as the “Golden Age” of the Acadians due to “an unprecedented period of peace and stability” and their relative economic prosperity.28 In contrast, the Island Acadians did not experience this Golden Age and their existence was far from the idyllic, self-sufficient Acadian life illustrated in Longfellow’s “Evangeline.” Settlers often suffered “extreme hardship as a result of crop failures, forest fires, and inadequate access to the basic necessities of life”29 and the colony never achieved self-sufficiency in sustenance. By 1728, the first small settlements, some comprising only a few families, had emerged at Port-La-Joie (present-day Rocky Point), Havre Saint Pierre (present-day St. Peters Bay), East Point, at the mouth of la Rivière du Nord-Est (present-day Hillsborough River), Havre aux Sauvages (Savage Harbour), Tracadie and Malpèque (now Malpeque) (Fig. 2.3).30 Whereas the economy of the first French inhabitants centered on the cod fishery, the focus shifted in Acadian settlements over the course of the following decade to agriculture, which proved to be a more reliable system of sustenance. While the Island was

26 Descendents of these Basque fishermen include the Cheverie family of P.E.I.
27 Lockerby, Deportation, 3.
29 Lockerby, Deportation, 89.
30 Many Acadians on P.E.I. today trace their ancestry to Jacques and Abraham (“le petit Abraham”), two brothers of Pierre II who came to Malpeque in 1741.
officially under British rule between 1745 and 1748, this change in power had little effect on the French settlers who continued to work their lands, raise their families and practice their Catholic faith.

Figure 2.3 Map of 1728 settlements on Île Saint-Jean.

Although migration to the Island was slow at first with only a few families per year, the population of the Island quadrupled to roughly 3,000 between 1748 and 1755 as tensions between the French and English on the mainland became increasingly hostile and the threat of deportation loomed over the mainland Acadian population.31 In fact, the French authorities encouraged Acadians living on the English-governed mainland to relocate to the French territories of Île Saint-Jean and Île Royale, offering incentives “such as free transportation for themselves, their household effects, baggage and livestock, as well as implements and food for one year.”32 Unfortunately this strategy was so successful that it caused serious problems

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32 Ibid., 3.
of housing and food shortages. Although some Acadians were sent to Québec as a relief measure while others fled to refugee camps in New Brunswick, the Island settlers were not a priority for the French government, who had more pressing political concerns on the mainland.\footnote{Ibid., 7.}

**Le Grand Dérangement: 1755 to 1762\footnote{For a detailed account of the 1758 deportation of the P.E.I. Acadians, see Lockerby (2008).}**

The lingering threat of exile became a reality with the deportation of Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755, when more than 6,500 people of French ancestry were exiled from their homes along mainland Canada’s east coast and shipped to different Anglo-American colonies.\footnote{There are varying accounts of the number of deportees during the year 1755. Clark (1959) and Daigle (1995) set the number at 7,000 and 6,500, respectively.} The deportation of 1755 has been the focus of numerous scholarly and popular accounts of Acadian history and is often cited as the cornerstone of Acadian identity.\footnote{See for example James Laxer, *The Acadians: Creation of a People* (Doubleday Canada, 2006) and Dean Jobb, *The Acadians: A People’s Story of Exile and Triumph* (Mississauga: J. Wiley and Sons, 2005).} As I discuss in later sections of this dissertation, there is no doubt that the deportation plays into contemporary manifestations of Acadian identity to varying degrees. Nonetheless, it is debatable whether this is, or has ever been, the defining factor of the Acadian people. In response to the numerous suggestions that the deportations produced a sense of communal identity among this cultural group, Griffiths points out that while the deportations may have been the most striking event of Acadian history, a distinct Acadian identity was established prior to 1755 in response to the settlers’ new surroundings, community structure and way of life, and survived long afterwards.\footnote{Griffiths, *Creation of a People*, xii.}

Although the largest numbers of Acadians were deported in 1755, the deportation
actually lasted much longer. According to Griffiths, Acadians were still being sent from Nova Scotia as late as 1762; these later deportations have received considerably less attention.\(^{38}\)

During the year or two following 1755, small groups of Nova Scotia Acadians who had previously evaded deportation were exiled to France, while, in 1758, a large-scale deportation was undertaken to remove Acadians from Île Saint-Jean and Île Royal.\(^{39}\)

The mainland deportations in 1755 resulted in a flood of Acadian immigrants to Île Saint-Jean, as approximately 2,000 Acadians took refuge on the Island. This brought the population to 4,700 and added considerably to the Island’s already derelict economic situation. The refuge was not to last, however. In 1758, following the British siege of the fortress town of Louisbourg, the French command centre on Île Royale (Cape Breton), Nova Scotia, British commanders decided to remove all Acadians from Île Saint-Jean due to the Island’s strategic position in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The Acadian dilemma is elaborated by John Eldon Green when he writes,

> Charlottetown may be the only capital city in the world that offers a view, across its scenic harbour, of the site of our country's experience with ethnic cleansing. The early Acadian settlers posed no military threat to anyone, as their easy conquest surely demonstrated, but were exiled nonetheless in case they might someday become a threat.\(^{40}\)

> For the handful of inhabitants who had been deported to the Carolinas in 1755 and who had resettled on Île Saint-Jean, the 1758 deportation was their second deportation. For those who did not perish from famine, illness or shipwrecks, the deportation was the beginning of a transatlantic odyssey that dispersed the Acadians to France, the French islands,

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\(^{38}\) Ibid., 60.

\(^{39}\) I have found no sources dealing with the 1758 deportation of Acadians from Île Royale. This is an area that requires further research.


of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, islands in the Caribbean, Guiana, Louisiana and even the Falkland Islands, though in many instances they stayed in these places for only a short period of time before relocating (Fig. 2.4). More than half the total number of deportees died at sea, while approximately two hundred of those who arrived in France died in the months following their arrival. In short, an estimated sixty percent of all Islanders who were deported did not survive; according to Acadian genealogist Stephen White, at least twenty-four families became extinct as a result of the deportation of 1758.

Figure 2.4 Map of Acadian deportation from Île Saint-Jean, 1758.

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41 There are varying accounts of the number of Islanders who escaped deportation. According to Lockerby (2008), 1500-1700 evaded deportation, while Stephen White (1999) claims the number was closer to 1100. Lockerby calculates that 3,100 inhabitants were deported.
43 Stephen White, Dictionnaire Généalogique des Familles Acadiennes (Moncton: Centre d’Études acadiennes, Université de Moncton, 1999).
The widespread awareness of the 1755 deportation is due in large part to the epic poem “Evangeline” by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. First published in 1847, “Evangeline” follows the story of an Acadian woman named Evangeline and her fiancé Gabriel, two young lovers who are separated by the deportation. The poem follows Evangeline across North America as she dedicates her life to searching for Gabriel, only to find him in old age on his deathbed. Longfellow’s depiction of the tragic events of 1755 has brought the deportation to the attention, and captured the imaginations, of Acadians and non-Acadians around the world for several generations. Indeed, by 1900, nearly two hundred works had been published about it.\(^{44}\) The poem has been a hallmark of scholarly writing about the Acadians, and the influence of the poem on Acadian identity and contemporary views of the historical events have been examined by several historians.\(^{45}\) Moreover, the myriad monuments, songs and stories dedicated to the heroine attest to the continuing importance of Evangeline to Acadians worldwide. Shortly after the poem’s inaugural publication, Evangeline became an Acadian figurehead and a “source of inspiration that reinforced the feeling of belonging to a people.”\(^{46}\) In particular, the poem inspired a bond between disparate Acadian communities throughout North America that continues today.

Lockerby remarks that the poem “imparted a romanticized quality” to the 1755 deportation that has endured.\(^{47}\) According to Griffiths, “the extent to which ‘Evangeline’ became the unchallenged repository of historical truth in the eyes of the Acadians is further

\(^{44}\) Griffiths, *Creation of a People*, xxxi.


\(^{46}\) Sally Ross and Barbara LeBlanc, Introduction to *Evangeline* by H.W. Longfellow (Halifax: Nimbus, 2003), 18.

\(^{47}\) Lockerby, *Deportation*, xii.
revealed by the speeches given by them at their own conventions; for instance, the poem was quoted as historical fact at the inaugural *Convention nationale des Acadiens* (Acadian National Convention) in 1880. Longfellow’s setting of eighteenth century *Acadie* as a “terrestrial Paradise Lost...one lost without proven original sin,” has sparked more than a few erroneous depictions of Acadian life and politics during this period. While they acknowledge the significance and tragedy of *le Grand Dérangement*, some authors have nevertheless questioned previous scholars’ assumptions and have attempted to correct popular misconceptions regarding Acadian heritage, their loyalties and the events during the deportation years that have been fuelled by the famous poem. A review of the scholarly and popular literature on Acadian history reveals that these authors are in the minority, and that the majority of writers have presented partisan or romanticized versions of this history. For example, Dean Jobb begins the introduction to his book *The Acadians: A People’s Story of Exile and Triumph* with the statement: “This is the story of one of the greatest crimes of history, a brutal act of genocide committed two and a half centuries ago,” thus setting the stage for an emotional and, in parts, inaccurate portrayal of historical events.

Besides the lasting legacy of Longfellow’s “Evangeline” and its association with the plight of mainland Acadians, Lockerby suggests several reasons why the 1758 deportation of the P.E.I. Acadians has not received as much attention. He posits that most Maritime Acadians trace their ancestry to the first deportation and have therefore been more interested in events relating directly to 1755. In fact, today, all but two families on P.E.I. descend from

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48 Griffiths, *Creation of a People*, 80.
51 Jobb, 1.
mainland Acadian families who made their way to P.E.I. in the years following their exile. Further, Lockerby explains that the deportation from Île Saint-Jean "was not the first, involved fewer people, and has been less controversial for several reasons. To begin with, it was carried out by a foreign country and not, as in Nova Scotia, by a country that counted the Acadians among its subjects. Moreover, unlike the deportation of 1755, the one conducted in 1758 occurred when France and Britain were officially at war."\(^52\)

It is estimated that approximately 1,250 of 4,700 Acadians evaded deportation from P.E.I.\(^53\) Of that number, approximately 1,100 Islanders managed to escape exile by escaping to the mainland (mainly to Québec and Miramichi, New Brunswick), while roughly 150 Acadians remained on the Island by hiding in the woods.\(^54\) According to oral history and the reports written by British Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Rollo, the officer who oversaw the 1758 deportation, to his command post in Louisbourg, the local Mi’kmaq and Maliseet people with whom the Acadians had formed a close alliance were instrumental in helping settlers in certain areas of the Island escape.\(^55\) As the description of the 2008 commemorative events in Chapter 1 illustrates, this historical alliance between the Acadians and the Mi’kmaq (particularly the Mi’kmaq of Lennox Island on P.E.I.’s north shore) is acknowledged and celebrated at many cultural events today.

\(^{52}\) Lockerby, *Deportation*, xii. For further reading on the Acadians who ended up in Louisiana and their musical traditions, see Ancelet (1984, 1989); Emoff (1991, 1998); Pitre (2002).

\(^{53}\) These figures are based on those put forth by Lockerby in the French translation of his book (2010). The figures have been reconsidered since his 2008 publication.

\(^{54}\) For example, the entire population of Malpeque is believed to have escaped deportation by fleeing to (present-day) mainland Québec; for more information on this topic, see Georges Arsenault, “The Acadians of Malpeque Bay,” (Unpublished). According to historian Cécile Gallant, approximately thirty families that lived in regions further away from the capital Port-La-Joie, as well as a number of inhabitants who had evacuated to the mainland, evaded deportation. Cécile Gallant, *Le Mouvement coopératif chez les Acadiens de la région Évangéline, 1862-1982* (Wellington: Le Conseil coopératif de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard, 1982), 13.

\(^{55}\) Lockerby, *Deportation*, 60.
Resettlement of Île Saint-Jean: 1758 to 1860

Fortunately, the deportation constitutes only one chapter of the Acadian story on P.E.I.\textsuperscript{56} When amity between France and England was struck following the 1763 Treaty of Paris, Acadians began to resettle the Island, which had become an official British colony renamed St. John’s Island. Only two of the original founding families, the Longuëpées and Doirons who had been deported to France, eventually returned to settle permanently on the Island.\textsuperscript{57} By the end of the eighteenth century, the main Acadian families on P.E.I. had settled on the Island in the areas of Rustico, Baie de Fortune and Malpèque.\textsuperscript{58}

In the years that followed the deportation, the Island inhabitants suffered extreme economic hardship and continued political instability.\textsuperscript{59} Following a land survey in 1765, the Island was divided into sixty-seven townships or lots that were distributed to prominent British officials, many of whom did not live on the Island. The landowners leased their lands to tenant farmers and collected annual royalties between 1767 and 1876. Due to the poor economic conditions, many Islanders were again forced to move off-island to seek employment, a situation that has persisted to the present day. Those who stayed on or returned to P.E.I. continued to endure economic hardships and social injustices.

The founding of the Région Évangéline

The \textit{Région Évangéline} (the Evangeline Region) is located in Prince County, P.E.I., along the Northumberland Strait, between Bedeque Bay and Egmont Bay, roughly twenty

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{56} The island was renamed Prince Edward Island in 1799 in honour of one of King George III’s sons. Georges Arsenault, \textit{Historical Guidebook of the Evangeline Region} (Charlottetown, P.E.I.: by author, 1998), 7. \\
\textsuperscript{57} Both families were deported to St. Malo, France, in 1758. For a look at the Doiron family’s odyssey as a result of their deportation, see Georges Arsenault, “The Saga of Alexis Doiron,” \textit{The Island Magazine} 39 (1996): 12-18. \\
\textsuperscript{58} Gallant, 13. \\
\textsuperscript{59} Earle Lockerby, “Deportation of the Acadians from Île St.-Jean, 1758,” \textit{Acadiensis} 27, no. 2 (1998): 45-94.}
kilometres from the city of Summerside. The first Acadian families moved to what is now called the *Région Évangéline* in 1812 “as a direct result of the leasehold system of land tenure,” whereby tenants paid large amounts of money in lease to British landlords. After years living as the victims of dishonest practices by, and ongoing disagreements with, their landlord, the tenants of Lot 17 on the shore of Malpeque Bay abandoned their farms and moved to Lot 15 where they established two parishes which were called *La Roche* (now Egmont Bay) and *Le Grand Ruisseau* (now Mont-Carmel). In 1852, the colonial government gave the Acadians the opportunity to purchase land in Lot 15 at a reduced rate, in an attempt to redress the wrongs perpetuated by the British government which, after the Treaty of Paris, had not given back the land settled previously by the Acadians. Lot 15 constitutes part of what is known today as the *Région Évangéline*, which is the Acadian township with the most homogeneous population and the only region of P.E.I. where Francophone Acadian culture remains predominant. Today the *Région Évangéline* extends beyond the borders of Lot 15 to include parts of Lots 14 and 16. The village of Wellington, in Lot 16, developed as a result of the 1874 construction of a railway station in Wellington, at which time many Acadians joined the Irish and Scottish immigrants who had settled there in the earlier part of the century.

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60 Arsenault, *Historical Guidebook*, 10.
61 Ibid.
62 Gallant, 15.
Figure 2.5 Map showing the lot division of the Région Évangéline.

**Acadian musical traditions prior to 1860**

There is little information on French Canadian music outside of New France before 1800, and even less is known about the Acadian cultural traditions that existed prior to 1900.\(^{63}\)

The first mention of the violin in New France was recorded in a Jesuit *Relation* of 1645 referring to the presence of two violins at a wedding dance in Québec.\(^{64}\) A subsequent report by Gabriel Labbé in 1721 mentions the fiddle in Québec, noting that “the fiddler performed a selection of Scotch reels, jigs, hornpipes, cotillions and waltzes.”\(^{65}\) Jim Hornby speculates that French musicians may have also brought a Scottish repertoire to Canada, having learned tunes

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\(^{63}\) For a history of fiddling in Canada, see Anne Lederman (2009), James Hornby (1982), and Willy Amtmann (1975). Sherry Johnson (2006) provides a detailed literature review of fiddling in North America. There are several sources on music in New France prior to 1800, for example Élisabeth Gallat-Morin and Jean-Pierre Pinson, *La vie musicale en Nouvelle-France* (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 2003); Michelle Pharand, *La musique au Québec, 1600-1875* (Montréal: Éditions de l'Homme, 1976).


from the exiled Jacobites who migrated to France after 1688. Given the prominence of the fiddle in Québec during the 1700s it is plausible that mainland Acadians were familiar with the instrument due to their exchange and trade with Québec. In their chapter on Acadian folklore, Chiasson and others deduce that mainland Acadians played the fiddle prior to 1755 based on evidence that after the Deportation violin makers were found in many of the re-established villages; unfortunately, there is no information provided as to the origins of these findings.

Given the popularity of the violin in western France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it is also possible that the violin was brought over by early pioneers. This would support historian Kenneth Donovan’s suggestion that song and instrumental practices were prevalent on Cape Breton Island during the period 1713 to 1758 and that seventeenth and eighteenth century French settlers brought their musical tastes and traditions with them to the New World. He notes several references to violins and other instruments at Louisbourg, including those in the inventory of personal items belonging to a ship’s captain, and the ease with which merchants could purchase instruments from Boston or have them brought from Europe. If fiddles and other instruments could be bought and traded in Louisbourg, it is likely that Acadians elsewhere in Acadie also had access to them. According to Richard Forsyth and Rob Ferguson, jaw harps have been found in a number of archaeological digs on

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67 The region known today as the province of Québec was called “Canada” until 1763, although after 1608 the term Québec referred to the area surrounding present-day Québec City.
70 Ibid., 9-10.
Acadian sites, including Port-la-Joie (now called Fort Amherst) on P.E.I.\textsuperscript{71}

Pitre suggests that “[early] Acadian music...derived from its Celtic and French sources in certain regions of western France” and, once in Acadie, was further influenced by cultural exchange with the local Maliseet and Mi’kmaq.\textsuperscript{72} This historic connection to France is further underlined in the celebrated Acadian novelist and playwright Antonine Maillet’s doctoral dissertation, \textit{Rabelais et les traditions populaires en Acadie}, published in 1971, in which she traces the survival of French traditions in contemporary Acadian communities throughout the Canadian Maritimes.\textsuperscript{73} In particular, Maillet notes that particular archaic phrases and figures of speech she collected from Acadie (primarily New Brunswick) derive from sixteenth century France.\textsuperscript{74} There is also a large repertoire of French folk songs that was brought from France and transmitted orally throughout Acadie until the middle of the twentieth century. In her article on dance in Cheticamp, an Acadian community on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, historian Barbara LeBlanc mentions the popularity of rondes (social dances), which were danced to the accompaniment of folk songs throughout the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{75}

The influence of Irish and Scottish immigrants on Acadian music in the later part of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was also significant in defining Acadian musical traditions. Pitre suggests that the British view of the Celts as second-class citizens resulted in their placement in close “proximity [to] and on similar quality land” as the Acadians, both before and after deportation, facilitating much

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item Richard Forsyth (U.P.E.I.) and Rob Ferguson (Parks Canada), personal communication with author, 12 July 2009.
\item Pitre, 13.
\item Maillet (b.1929) was born in Bouctouche, New Brunswick. Her work has dominated contemporary Acadian literature and has garnered much success both nationally and internationally.
\end{thebibliography}
cultural exchange. In particular, the fiddle tradition of Cape Breton Island that was brought from the “Old World” by Highland Scots played a significant role in shaping instrumental traditions throughout eastern Canada, including Acadie. This Cape Breton influence and contemporary efforts by Island Acadians to distinguish themselves from their Celtic neighbours is the subject of Chapter 3.

While little information exists to substantiate views of Acadian music prior to 1900, Pitre claims that “it is known that generally most, if not all, Acadian music dating well before... [the deportations] until the early to mid-nineteenth century consisted of unaccompanied singing, mainly for listening, and instrumental music played on [the] fiddle, for dancing.” In a similar vein, in her 1977 article “La musique traditionelle en Acadie,” Cormier states that she believes Maritime Acadians had instruments prior to their deportation, but provides no evidence to support this view. Cajun music scholars have been unable to shed much light on this matter, although several scholars have suggested that it is doubtful the Acadian exiles and earliest French settlers brought instruments with them on their migration to Louisiana. Although the roots of numerous Cajun melodies have been traced to their Maritime Acadian and French origins, Ancelet notes that while melodies traveled easily, instruments of any kind were rare in Louisiana in the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, he suggests that within one generation the Acadians had established themselves in Louisiana and had begun to acquire instruments such as the violin.

76 Pitre, 13.
77 Ibid., 34.
80 Ancelet, Cajun Music, 21.
Local lore in Acadie and Québec suggests that the loss, necessary abandonment, or destruction of musical instruments during the exile resulted in the prevalence of a cappella song genres in much of the early Acadian music for most of a generation following the expulsion. In particular, Acadians developed a practice of reproducing instrumental melodies using vocables. This practice was likely also inspired by similar forms of mouth music from Scotland and Ireland; as Sharon Berman illustrates, it is likely that the development of mouth music in Scotland and Ireland emerged under the same circumstances as it did in Acadie due to the proscription of musical instruments by the Church in the nineteenth century.\(^\text{81}\)

In much of French Canada, this practice is known as *turtulage* or *turlutter*,\(^\text{82}\) an onomatopoeic word used to describe the practice of singing fiddle melodies with full rhythmic nuance.\(^\text{83}\) While many mainland Acadians refer to tunes sung using this technique as *reels à bouche* (“mouth reels”), Island Acadians in the *Région Évangéline* use the terms *touner* (“to tune”) and in the west Prince region the same practice is referred to as *djigger* (“to jig”). This singing of tunes is often accompanied by hand-clapping and foot-tapping. Various forms of this practice exist around the world and are known by a number of names, such as jigging (in Anglo-P.E.I.), chin music, lilting, *musique à bouche*, diddlage or diddling (in Ireland), and *puir-a-beul* (in Gaelic). The term *reel* (or *musique*) à *bouche* is used by many Island Acadians and throughout much of Québec to refer to tunes played on the harmonica.\(^\text{84}\)

The reason for, and history of, the discrepancy in the use of these terms on P.E.I. is unknown.

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\(^82\) Chiasson and others (1995) refer to several famous Acadian practitioners of this tradition as “turlutteux,” which suggests the tradition may be referred to in some parts of Acadie as “turlutter.”

\(^83\) Pître, 34.

\(^84\) In Québec, harmonica playing is also referred to as “*ruine-babines.*”
and requires further investigation.

The prevalence of mouth music has been well documented on nearby Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Ethnomusicologist Heather Sparling describes two popular theories on the origins of *puirt-a-beul*, a prominent song type in Cape Breton, in which the songs “tend to be short and upbeat with humorous or nonsensical lyrics” and often include vocables.\(^8^5\) The first theory is that *puirt-a-beul* were created in response to the proscription of the bagpipes after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, when they replaced the bagpipes as accompaniment for dancing. A second, similar theory “suggests that *puirt-a-beul* originated in the nineteenth century when Presbyterian ministers spoke out against secular music and dance and encouraged parishioners to burn their fiddles.”\(^8^6\) In addition to their function as dance accompaniment, Sparling notes that *puirt-a-beul* have also been used in the oral transmission of fiddle tunes.\(^8^7\) As in the *puirt-a-beul* tradition, *touner* was (and still is) used to learn and transmit tunes. The wife of a dance fiddler told me that she would memorize a tune as it was played on the radio and would “jig” it back to her fiddler husband when he got home from work. I have frequently experienced this practice of *touner* at musical sessions, parties or in interviews with Acadian musicians as they recall or demonstrate tunes, or a different variation of a tune. This method of tune transmission and others may account for many of the tune variations and techniques found in the playing of older fiddlers.\(^8^8\)

While nineteenth century Presbyterian ideologies of music and dance may have prompted the Gaelic *puirt-a-beul* song tradition on Cape Breton Island, Catholicism played a

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\(^8^5\) Pronounced “poorsht-uh-BEE-uhl.” *Puirt-a-beul* is the plural form and literally translates as “tunes from the mouth.” *Port-a-beul* is the singular term. Heather Sparling, “‘Music is Language and Language is Music’: Language Attitudes and Musical Choices in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia,” *Ethnologies* 25, no. 2 (2003): 146.

\(^8^6\) Ibid., 154.

\(^8^7\) Ibid., 155.

\(^8^8\) Repertoire and musical transmission in the context of the revitalisation of Acadian music on P.E.I. will be discussed further in Chapter 3.
significant role in shaping Acadian musical traditions. In her article on Roman Catholic attitudes towards dance in the Acadian community of Cheticamp, Nova Scotia, Barbara LeBlanc explains that from the establishment of the Catholic Church, dancing and associated music-making were considered dangerous and licentious. Until 1829, Acadians in three Nova Scotia parishes were under the diocese of Québec, with the majority of priests serving the Acadian parishes hailing from Québec. According to LeBlanc, views of music and dance as pagan-inspired and immoral were reinforced by these Francophone Catholic clergy who had been instilled with French Jansenist philosophies. When the principally Anglophone diocese of Antigonish was established in 1886, the existing restrictions on music, dance, and celebration continued to be reinforced. Although LeBlanc does not provide details about the extent of these restrictions or community members’ reactions to the ban, she suggests that at least a portion of the population would have been persuaded to give up music and dance.  

I have found neither written nor oral accounts suggesting that the tradition of turlutter began in response to these restrictions on musical activities, though is not difficult to speculate that such a ban might have contributed to the perseverance of the tradition. Stories about the prohibition of dance practices do exist in the oral history of Island Acadians, however. In my conversations with Acadians on P.E.I., I was frequently told stories about a time in Acadian history when the Catholic church forbade dancing; according to Georges Arsenault, step-dancing was not frowned upon as much as square-dancing or dancing that involved contact between men and women. An older musician recalled a story he had been

89 Barbara LeBlanc, *Postcards from Acadie: Grand Pré, Evangeline and the Acadian Identity* (Kentville, N.S.: Gaspereau Press, 2003), 120.

90 Arsenault also suggests that it was Père Sigogne in Baie Sainte-Marie (Nova Scotia) who in the early part of the nineteenth century forbade dancing at weddings unless the men danced in one room and women in another. Georges Arsenault, personal communication with author, 6 October 2010.
told about a priest who would walk past houses and peek in the windows to ensure that the imposed decorum was being upheld. Consequently, a tradition of seated foot-tapping accompaniment (podorhythmie) developed that shares many features with practices of foot-tapping in Québec and French Newfoundland. This anecdote is supported by that of a young Acadian musician who suggested that the similarities between Québécois and Acadian foot-tapping originate from this period when music and dance were repressed at one point by the Catholic Church. She remembered an account of her great-grandfather, whose instruments were confiscated in New Brunswick. As she recalled,

My grandfather had his instruments taken away, in New Brunswick. But he used to tap his feet and, the story goes, they would tap their feet so nobody could see them – that’s why they were sitting down.

Ouellette suggests that this seated accompaniment “was used as a subtle form of bodily expression” when traditional step-dancing was not permitted. Alternate suggestions as to the origins of this foot-tapping tradition exist, however. Taking a different angle, Perlman proposes that foot-tapping evolved as a rhythmic support in the days before extensive instrumental accompaniment, such as the pump organ, piano, or guitar, was available to fiddlers. I will return to the topic of the P.E.I. Acadian tradition of seated foot-tapping in chapter three.

In addition to the practice of turlutter, a variety of song forms comprise an important part of the Acadian musical culture. Acadian folklorist and historian Georges Arsenault has documented many of these, focusing mainly on the historiography of unaccompanied ballad singing on P.E.I. Arsenault notes that following the Acadian resettlement of P.E.I., Islanders

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92 Pastelle LeBlanc, Interview with author, 22 July 2008.
maintained links with outside communities. Fishing boats, in particular, brought new migrants from Québec and France to the Acadian villages, whose song traditions enriched the local culture. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the railway allowed young Acadians to work off-island, often in lumber camps in neighbouring mainland communities and in New England. arsenault has found songs dating back to the early nineteenth century with references to historical events such as the establishment of the Région Évangéline, while other songs frequently contain references to specific times, places and occasionally the author of a song’s text. the history of the Acadians appears in various forms as a theme in the Acadian song genre called complaintes (laments). While these songs act as a form of oral history, it should be noted that there have been no complaintes found to date which explicitly mention le Grand Dérangement. That said, as arsenault notes, we get a taste of the community through the various songs and song forms: complaintes are songs filled with grief and compassion that speak of tragedies befalling the Acadian community, often with a religious preoccupation; chansons humoristiques (humorous songs) are songs that served to censor people whose behaviour did not fit social norms or dominant moral codes; and chansons anecdotiques (anecdotal songs) are often humorous songs that give a glimpse into the everyday life of the Acadians, carrying messages of family, community and joie de vivre.

But what about early Acadian instrumental traditions on P.E.I.? As no written records of fiddle playing on the Island exist prior to the 1770s, it is not known whether Acadians on P.E.I. had been introduced to the fiddle prior to the deportations. In the year 1770, Island

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95 Ibid., 136.
96 Ibid., 137.
97 Ibid., 172.
diarist William Drummond writes that he had gone “to a house where the French were convened, had a dance and spent the evening in jollity” and on the following New Year’s Day, “the French came to us and made a frolic.” Nonetheless, it is possible that these records refer to the tradition of turlutte or dancing to folksongs as they do in France. Perlman notes that the common understanding of fiddling history on P.E.I. assumes that Scottish settlers brought the fiddle to the Island when they landed on the Northeastern shore in the 1770s, and that other cultural groups have adopted their tunes and style of playing. Indeed, this is the most popular theory circulated among the Island musicians with whom I spoke during my fieldwork. Drawing on historical written sources, Hornby substantiates this theory with his report that the fiddle arrived on P.E.I. with Captain James Macdonald and two hundred highland settlers in 1772. Nevertheless, as noted above, based on the prominence of the fiddle in Québec and the trade between Acadians and their neighbours, it is highly likely that Acadians had fiddles before the arrival of the Scots. Based on later written sources it is clear that music and dance (in particular the fiddle) was an important part of Acadian social life. Writing in the 1820s, Island resident, writer and merchant John MacGregor notes that the Acadians fiddled at Christmas and other seasonal events.

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99 Perlman *The Fiddle Music of Prince Edward Island*, 12.
100 Hornby “The Fiddle on the Island”, 12.
101 Ibid., 31.
As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, a main characteristic of the Acadian communities throughout early Acadian history was a prevalence towards mutual aid, much as we might expect to find to varying degrees in a rural and agriculture-based community. Until the middle of the twentieth century, an informal and spontaneous form of cooperation developed in Acadian communities referred to as *les frolics* (frolics), meaning a communal task followed by a party. Written accounts of music on P.E.I. in the form of letters from the Island’s first “tourists,” who were often diarists, mention the occurrence of frolics, describing them as community endeavours with strong connotations of music and dance. These frolics were numerous and the work projects at the heart of the gatherings varied depending on the context. These projects were most often divided along gender lines. While men came together to help each other with large tasks such as harvesting, stump-pulling, barn-raising or to build houses or public buildings (such as schools or churches), women organised frolics to help each other spin wool, knit clothing, or stitch quilts. As Island historian Cécile Gallant notes, the element of enjoyment was an essential ingredient of a frolic, which were seen as at once a chore and a fun, social gathering. Frolics were frequently followed by a meal and an evening of music and dance. One Acadian woman from the *Région Évangéline* recounted a frolic in an interview with Gallant:

> On se mettait tout le tour de la couverte. C’était ça qu’était de la *fun*. On parlait puis on riait...on travaillait en même temps. C’est ça des frolics, c’est de l’ouvrage puis du plaisir en même temps.  
> *We would sit around the quilt. That was what was fun about the gatherings. We talked and we laughed...we worked at the same time. That is what frolics are: they are work and pleasure at the same time.*

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102 Ibid., 16-17.  
103 Gallant, 19.  
With the advances in technology and mechanized agriculture that came in the early twentieth century, the tradition of frolics was progressively abandoned. According to Gallant, by 1960 few frolics occurred. Nevertheless, long before this decline the spirit of cooperation that had developed was securely fixed in the Acadian consciousness. Beginning in 1860, a series of ventures based on development and mutual aid had begun that marked a transition in the Acadian community from an inherent spirit of community cooperation to a prosperous social and economic organisation.\textsuperscript{105}

**Transition years: 1860 to 1950**

The period from 1860 to 1950 marked the beginning of a transition for Acadians on P.E.I. Although they were an insular community up until the mid 1800s, the Islanders did not escape the “trend towards a new awareness of [a] collective [Acadian] conscience” that began to take form throughout mainland Acadie in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{106} By 1860, a number of ventures had been set in motion that eventually placed the Acadians on the economic and political map of the Island, and put them in greater contact with French and Acadian neighbours on the mainland. Moreover, as Lockerby explains, a new “openness to cultural values, advances in education, increasing involvement in the political arena, and new approaches to agriculture and the fishery played a role in the Acadians becoming more integrated in the Island’s social, economic and political fabric.”\textsuperscript{107} In the Région Évangéline, the Acadians focused their efforts on agriculture and, later, lobster fishing as a secondary industry, stimulating their move from

\textsuperscript{105} Gallant, 21.
\textsuperscript{107} Lockerby, *Deportation*, 92.
a subsistence economy to participating in the market economy by selling farm, and later fish, products.\(^{108}\)

This period of transition in the Island Acadian community also saw changes in the composition and organisation of social classes. A middle class began to appear among the Acadians of the \textit{Région Évangéline} at the beginning of the 1860s that established organisations and institutions dedicated to the development of their francophone communities.\(^{109}\) Among the first of these endeavours were the creation of the Grain Banks (a type of farm credit institution that allowed farmers to buy seed on credit) and the Farmers Bank of Rustico in the early 1860s.\(^{110}\) This first co-operative model of economic development was soon expanded to the creation of numerous seed banks, the majority of which were based in the \textit{Région Évangéline}. These first enterprises eventually led to an entire co-operative movement, including fishing, agriculture and housing, among others. Today, the \textit{Région Évangéline} is well known for its co-operatives, which affect virtually every aspect of the community. As Arsenault explains, since 1960, various co-operatives have been established in the production and service sectors. The most notable of these are a medical centre, Seniors’ home, funeral home, Credit Union, grocery co-op and Handicraft co-op, which sells locally-made arts and crafts. In 1993, there were eighteen co-operatives in the \textit{Région Évangéline} with total assets of twenty-five million dollars. It is therefore not surprising that Acadians of the \textit{Région Évangéline} take pride in the region’s slogan: “World capital of co-operation” (Fig. 2.6).\(^{111}\)

\(^{109}\) Gallant, 15.
\(^{110}\) Georges Arsenault, email to author, 6 February 2010.
\(^{111}\) Arsenault, \textit{Historical Guidebook}, 29.
Inspired by the 1880 *Convention Canadienne Française* (French-Canadian Convention) in Québec City, which an official delegation of forty-two Acadians attended,\footnote{Georges Arsenault, “Instinct for Business: Pioneer Acadian Entrepreneurs on Prince Edward Island,” *The Island Magazine* 51 (2002): 24-30.} Maritime Acadians decided to organise a gathering of their own. The inaugural *Convention nationale des Acadiens* (Acadian National Convention) took place in Memramcook, New Brunswick, in 1881, and was attended by Acadians from throughout the Maritimes and Cajuns from Louisiana. The small village of Miscouche, in Prince County, P.E.I., was chosen to host the Second National Convention in 1884 due to its location on the railway line. While several important resolutions were passed, the Miscouche Convention was significant in that the four national Acadian symbols were adopted. The melody of the Latin hymn “Ave Maris Stella” was chosen as the Acadian national anthem in honour of the Virgin Mary, the patron saint of the Acadians. Interestingly, early attempts to find suitable French words to sing to the
melody, or new songs altogether, were unsuccessful. Although the hymn remains the official anthem of *Acadie*, the issue of finding a melody and text that truly represent the Acadians has been a matter of some debate since 1960. The hymn was sung with its original Latin text until French lyrics were composed in 1988 by P.E.I. Acadian Jacinte Laforest, who submitted her lyrics to a contest held throughout the Maritimes by the *Société nationale de l’Acadie* (Acadian National Society). The first verse of the new version of the anthem remains in Latin out of respect for the original hymn and is repeated at the end (see Appendix B for both Latin and French texts). The design of the national flag, the tricoloured French flag with a gold star in the upper left corner symbolizing the Virgin Mary, was also approved; the flag, now a unifying symbol of *Acadie* around the world, was raised for the first time at this convention. Lastly, an insignia and the motto “L’Union fait la force” (“Strength through unity”) were adopted. In 1964, as a result of its significant role in Acadian history, the village of Miscouche was also purposefully selected as the site of the *Musée acadienne de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard* (the Acadian museum of P.E.I.).

A process of anglicization that began in earnest in the 1860s as a result of increased interaction between the Island’s Anglophone and Francophone communities has persisted to the present day. By 1875 there was already a noticeable use of English in the French communities across P.E.I. Concern over the rapid anglicization of the Acadian community was brought to the fore at the aforementioned Miscouche Convention of 1884, where language and cultural retention were highlighted as an important topics of discussion. This focus resulted in the development of several significant ventures launched within the French

114 Lockerby, *Deportation*, 93.
115 Arsenault, “The Miscouche Convention.”
community which contributed greatly to the promotion of Acadian identity. With the aim of promoting the French language and defending Acadian interests, Acadian entrepreneur Gilbert Buote established the Island’s first French-language newspaper, *L’Impartial*, in 1893. Published in the western P.E.I. town of Tignish, *L’Impartial* ran until 1915 when financial problems made worse by World War I prompted it to cease publication.

In his role as the newspaper’s editor, Buote made several recommendations to his readers of undertakings that he believed were needed for the Acadian community to blossom. Primary among his suggestions was the development of a provincial association of Acadian teachers “as a forum for the discussion of the main points that must be considered for the better advancement of French education in our schools.” Buote’s recommendation garnered incredible support from the community and, a few weeks later, *L’Association des instituteurs et institutrices acadiens de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard* (The Association of Acadian Teachers on P.E.I.) was founded in Charlottetown (1893). The goal of *L’Association*, the first of its kind among Acadians in the Maritime Provinces, was to encourage French language instruction in the Island’s public schools. In August of each year the association held a two-day conference that rotated yearly between Acadian parishes and brought together teachers, administrators, clergymen, prominent members of the Acadian community and parents.

The support for and success of Buote’s endeavours inspired several subsequent Francophone organisations throughout Acadian communities on the Island. Chief among these ventures (and a major step towards Buote’s vision of a blossoming French culture on

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P.E.I.) was the establishment in 1919 of La Société Saint-Thomas d’Aquin (S.S.T.A.), the Island’s Francophone cultural organisation. La Société continues to be a cornerstone institution for Francophone culture on P.E.I. and a voice for the Island Acadian and Francophone community, concerned with the revival of Acadian pride and involved in research, publications and activism. In 1976, sixty years after L’Impartial ceased publication, La Voix acadienne was launched as the Island’s official French-language newspaper, and continues to publish weekly editions. As the paper’s first article on June 30th, 1976, noted, La Voix acadienne has become “la parole et la nouvelle des Acadiens et Francophones de l’Île” (“the voice and news of Acadians and Francophones of the Island").

**Island Acadian musical traditions: 1860 to 1950**

The following chapters of this dissertation deal primarily with Acadian musical traditions on P.E.I. from the 1970s to the present. Therefore in this section I will sketch the Island’s Acadian musical practices during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. As demonstrated above, Acadian life beginning in 1860 changed significantly as the Island Acadians were propelled into greater contact with neighbouring mainland Acadian communities and they began to situate themselves more prominently in the Island economy. The musical traditions did not escape these transformations, many of which were felt simultaneously in other Acadian communities throughout the Atlantic Provinces. While music and dance took on various new forms, they continued to feature prominently in Acadian life around the turn of the century.

Writing in 1984, Arsenault explains that,

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The relative isolation of Acadian communities until [the early twentieth century] greatly assisted in preserving oral traditions to the point that today in Acadia, perhaps more so than anywhere else in the Francophone world, it is still possible to collect original versions of old French songs, some of which have been completely forgotten in France.\footnote{119 Georges Arsenault, “Chanter son Acadie,” in Anselme Chiasson and others, “Acadian Folklore,” in Acadia of the Maritimes, ed. Jean Daigle (Moncton: Chaire d’études acadiennes, Université de Moncton, 1995), 664.}

Although the Acadian communities were able to preserve much of the traditional French music, their geographic position, increasingly surrounded by Anglophone neighbours of Celtic origin (mainly Scottish and Irish) had a lasting impact on their traditional music practices. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century, and certainly after 1870, these exchanges introduced the formerly insular community to the popular music from the United States and England, much of which had origins in France, Italy and Austria.\footnote{120 Paul Surette, “Le climat musical acadien de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard à la fin du XIXième siècle,” in Les Cahiers de la Société Historique Acadienne 10 (1979): 157.}

The phonograph and player piano began to play important roles in the musical life of Acadians throughout the Maritimes around 1900. The common song repertoire of this period included American popular songs and some French songs, while instrumental music comprised marches, waltzes, quadrilles, mazurkas, polkas and other popular dances of the era. On P.E.I., this “modern” music took the place of folkloric songs and instrumental traditions for many social occasions. Choral groups and, in particular, brass bands held a prominent position in the communities. Rustico was the first Acadian community to have a brass band in the 1860s, and later both Miscouche and Wellington had one as well.\footnote{121 Georges Arsenault, email to author, 6 February 2010.} Drawing on newspaper references from the late 1800s, historian Paul Surette explains that these brass bands had become popular by 1880 and that by the end of the 1890s, each important centre on the Island had its own brass band to perform at social gatherings and meetings, public
concerts and outdoor parties, and occasionally for the processional of religious ceremonies.¹²²

Large reed organs known as harmoniums (colloquially referred to as “pump organs”), which were originally of French origin, were being widely distributed by Canadian manufacturers by 1860.¹²³ Several scholars have suggested that the pump organ arrived in family homes on P.E.I. between 1860 and the early twentieth century, although the instrument’s place in the musical milieu of the Island community is vague. While Surrette suggests that only affluent families, public halls and churches owned pump organs on P.E.I. in the late nineteenth century, Hornby notes that the pump organ “widely outsold the piano” in rural communities at that time.¹²⁴ In the same vein, Arsenault concludes that the harmonium arrived in many Acadian homes around 1860, at which time Acadian farming and fishing families might have been able to afford them. It was also around that time that the people in the community of Saint-Chrysostome, in the Région Évangéline, bought a harmonium for the local school.¹²⁵ Chiasson et al mention the presence in the first half of the twentieth century of the harmonium in many Acadian homes in passing.¹²⁶ Based on oral accounts of Acadian musicians and their relatives, it seems that the pump organ was played predominantly by women, while men played the fiddle. The pump organ was not only an accompanying instrument for the fiddle, however. Women would also play fiddle tunes on the organ with their right hand while playing a straightforward I-IV-V-I chord progression in the left hand. Marie Livingstone describes her mother playing the pump organ:

[My mother played] the pump organ. That’s always what she had, until, oh, in her 60s [when she got] an electronic organ. But she played accompaniment for Eddy at house

¹²² Surette, 158.
¹²⁴ Hornby, “The Fiddle on the Island,” 22; Surette, 158.
¹²⁶ Chiasson and others, 674.
parties and on her own she played tunes, like the actual melody, and she was really good at it. Really, really fast...I could dance to it. And she had really limber fingers. I could do a little bit, but nothing near what she could do. So she was really good. And she played the mouth organ really well. She used to play the mouth organ for square dances at people’s homes, like if they’d need someone and couldn’t get a fiddler they’d come get her. So she had a lot of wind! ... I can’t even imagine. She was young for that, and she was a step dancer. All her sisters were step dancers and she had a brother that could fiddle.\(^{127}\)

Georges Arsenault explains that when he was growing up, the pump organ was such a prominent fixture in Acadian homes that the instrument itself was called simply “la musique” (“the music”):

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\text{Par chez nous quand les vieux parlaient de l’harmonium ils parlaient de “la musique.” Ils disaient “on a une musique chez nous.” C’était le mot qu’ils avaient pour cet instrument.}^{128}
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\[
\text{At our house when older people talked about the harmonium, they called it “the music.” They would say “we have ‘a music’ at home.” It was the word they had for that instrument.}
\]

While the use of the pump organ had declined by the mid-twentieth century due to the popularity of the player piano, gramophone and radio, several still exist in houses, churches and museums across P.E.I. Moreover, the pump organ has been adopted by contemporary groups such as Barachois and Gadelle for their performances. This and other instrumentation choices by contemporary groups will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

By the mid-twentieth century, the piano, guitar, mandolin and accordion had come into popular use throughout the Maritime Provinces.\(^{129}\) The guitar was introduced to P.E.I. circa 1930\(^{130}\) and became a popular accompanying instrument for traditional fiddle music. Although the piano is the predominant accompanying instrument for fiddle today, it did not become popular until the 1980s when P.E.I.’s traditional music scene was significantly

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\(^{127}\) Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 27 June 2008.
\(^{129}\) Hornby writes that some piano accompaniment, possibly for singing, was reported in more affluent and official circles in the 1850s. Hornby, “The Fiddle on the Island,” 22.
\(^{130}\) Georges Arsenault, in Pitre, 43.
influenced by a resurgence of traditional fiddle music and the development of piano
accompaniment for the fiddle on Cape Breton Island.

The period between 1840 and 1940 has been characterised as “the dance fever era” on
P.E.I.\textsuperscript{131} In the late nineteenth century, dancing was prominent at almost all social events on
the Island, and fiddlers held an important place in their communities. This was especially true
in the Island’s Acadian communities, where fiddlers were frequently called upon—indeed it
was expected—to play for private and public events. Until the late twentieth century, fiddling
was considered a predominantly male tradition across the Island, and few accounts of female
fiddlers exist prior to 1970. An important exception was Zélieanne Arsenault and her sisters
from Abram’s Village, in the \textit{Région Évangéline}, who established themselves as dance
fiddlers in the 1930s. These women were members of one of the Island’s largest and most
musical families, known as “les Jos Bibienne” (after the patriarch, fiddler Joe Bibienne), of
which all fourteen children played the fiddle. Zélieanne and her sisters pioneered as female
fiddlers at community dances and house parties, and were known for their lively fiddling and
tapping feet. Even though they were prominent fiddlers in their community, however, due to
the relative isolation of small communities in the first half of the twentieth century they were
not known by many people in neighbouring communities.\textsuperscript{132}

The style of fiddle playing across P.E.I. varied significantly at the beginning of the
twentieth century, largely due to the level of accessibility and interaction between Acadians
and their Anglo-Celtic neighbours. Thus, by the early 1900s, some parts of the Island that had
a higher degree of anglicization, such as the Island’s easternmost regions, had adopted the
repertoire and style of dominant Scottish culture in the region. In western P.E.I., where French

\textsuperscript{131} Hornby, “The Fiddle on the Island”, 34.
\textsuperscript{132} Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 27 June 2008.
communities were more isolated and had seen less Anglophone settlement, the Scottish influence was much less evident. Because of travel limitations, there was little interaction between fiddlers from different communities, although most fiddlers in the Région Évangéline played a mixed repertoire consisting of French tunes, many of which were derived from song melodies, and Scottish and Irish jigs, reels, marches and strathspeys. The local aesthetic of the region favoured reels and marches, as few jigs and strathspeys were retained in the popular repertoire of older fiddlers. Further west, in the Tignish and Palmer Road area, the French Acadian song tradition flourished mixed with a significant Irish influence.¹³³

Radio broadcasting and traditional fiddling

The advent of radio broadcasting and recording in Canada, as well as the impact of radio fiddling on the retention of regional styles into the twenty-first century have been the subject of several studies of Canadian traditional music.¹³⁴ P.E.I. was not exempt from these influences. Beginning in 1923, local fiddler Lem Jay hosted a live, weekly fiddle-based radio show on CFCY Charlottetown, which featured many local fiddlers. Jay’s broadcasts continued until 1931, though he continued to appear annually on the station for Christmas and New Year broadcasts until his retirement in 1958.

The first off-island radio broadcasts reached P.E.I. around 1930 from New Carlisle, Québec. As Perlman notes, these first broadcasts featured Québécois fiddlers and were largely responsible for the dissemination of several tunes that remain popular on P.E.I., including “St.

¹³³ The community of Tignish was founded in 1799 by eight founding Acadian families from Malpeque, P.E.I. Irish immigrants began to arrive in 1811 from La baie des Chaleurs (Chaleur Bay), New Brunswick, while substantially more Irish immigrants arrived in the 1840s during the great Irish potato famine. Most of the population of the area is now of Acadian or Irish descent.
¹³⁴ For a brief history of radio fiddling in Canada, see Johnson, “Negotiating Tradition”, 94.
Anne’s Reel” and “The Old Man and the Old Woman.” In the Island community these broadcasts had a lasting influence on style and repertoire. With the exception of a few fiddlers who have adopted a more Scottish-influenced style, the regional styles of the Région Évangéline and West Prince County demonstrate several similarities in style to that played by many Québécois fiddlers in terms of tempo, bowed articulation and rhythmic drive, and foot-tapping patterns. In addition to the New Carlisle station, oral history suggests that Islanders, particularly those in the eastern King’s county, received radio broadcasts from Antigonish and Cape Breton Island in the mid-1930s that featured prominent Cape Breton fiddlers such as Winston “Scotty” Fitzgerald (1914-1987) and Angus Chisholm (1908-1979), among others. Although, as I explain below, other styles were more widely accessible via radio and television, fiddlers like Eddy Arsenault picked up the Cape Breton repertoire and stylistic elements from Fitzgerald’s records and radio performances.

Arguably the most influential figure in Canadian fiddling is the New Brunswick-born fiddling icon Don Messer (1909-1973), whose reign on radio, television and recordings spanned over four decades. Messer’s musical legacy, the creation of the Canadian “old-time” fiddle style, is largely a result of his exposure on CBC radio and television. Messer’s radio career began in 1929 at CFBO in Saint John, New Brunswick, where he quickly established himself as a musical director and touring entertainer. When he joined CFCY Charlottetown in 1939 as the station’s musical director, he created the band Don Messer and His Islanders which, as Sherry Johnson describes, quickly became “a household name in

137 Johnson, “Negotiating Tradition,” 95.
Messer recorded prolifically for Apex, MCA and Rodeo labels, toured and was broadcast nationally three times a week on CBC radio. His television career was launched in 1956 when he began making regular appearances on CHBY-TV in Halifax, and flourished with the immensely popular CBC television shows The Don Messer Show and, later, Don Messer’s Jubilee. The year 1958 marked the end of an era of live fiddling on Island radio stations, as local fiddler-broadcaster Lem Jam retired and Don Messer moved from Charlottetown to Halifax.

Messer was clearly a national celebrity with strong ties to P.E.I. It might seem ironic, then, that Messer was never highly regarded on the Island, despite the fact that his orchestra was based on the Island for two decades. Several Islanders recalled watching his television shows and hearing the radio broadcasts when they were young, yet made it clear that he was neither among their favourite musicians, nor a significant influence to their own playing. Indeed, it seems that many musicians went out of their way to avoid adopting Messer’s “down-east” style, though one Acadian fiddler and step-dancer recalled learning dance steps from watching Don Messer’s Jubilee on television when she was a child. Ken Perlman suggests that Island musicians did not have high regard for Messer because they felt he played too fast and that his style lacked the complexity and rhythmic drive that was prized among Island fiddlers at the time. One fiddler explained to me that although the fiddlers who played in Messer’s “down-east” style could play very quickly and precisely, the music “didn’t lift or move us.” Perlman also notes that several of the tunes that Messer popularised were learned and have been retained in the Island fiddle repertoire, although I must point out that these

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138 Ibid.
139 Ibid., 95-96.
140 Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 27 June 2008.
141 Ibid., 16 April 2010.
tunes are not prominent (indeed, they are rarely heard) in the Région Évangéline and West Prince Acadian fiddle contexts.  

Hornby notes a decline in fiddling by the 1920s due to emigration and a depressed economy. There was a further noticeable decline in fiddling on P.E.I. by the 1950s that mirrors other traditional music contexts throughout Maritime Canada. A significant Scotch and Irish emigration to New England and western Canada in the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth century resulted in the dwindling numbers and activities of Island fiddlers. Further changes due to rural electrification, mass communication, school consolidation, among others between the 1950s and 1970s led to a shift from community-based music and dance towards mass-mediated entertainment. As a result, there was less demand for fiddlers, and few youngsters were drawn into the traditional music scene. For those fiddlers who persevered, the influence of radio was significant. Older fiddlers have frequently told me stories about sitting around the radio in anticipation of the evening musical special; they would learn a tune after one listen and, if they were lucky, the radio would not cut out midway through the tune. As noted earlier, this is where mouth music was a very useful practice, as several fiddlers recalled memorizing tunes as they heard them on the radio so that they could learn them later on their instruments. This is obviously no small feat and these methods of learning tunes may account for many of the tune variations and techniques found in the playing of older fiddlers. For example, it was suggested to me that the “shuffle” rhythm (discussed in detail in Chapter 3), a feature that is also found in the fiddling on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine and in parts of New Brunswick that is achieved by “dropping” particular notes resulting in a syncopated feel, might be the result of notes being dropped by the radio, or

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143 Ibid., 15.
perhaps a technique to cover a memory slip; eventually these “dropped” notes became part of the regional aesthetic. Tune variation and fiddling practices are the subjects of subsequent chapters.

**Acadie on P.E.I.: 1950 to 1970**

After the Second World War, the Island could not keep pace with economic and social development that was taking place in the rest of Canada. While most of North America took technologies such as electricity, paved roads and car travel for granted, these were not part of the rural P.E.I. lifestyle until the mid-1950s. In his book, *The Island Acadians, 1720-1980*, Georges Arsenault outlines the steps taken by the provincial government in the 1940s and 50s to modernize the Island, as well as the consolidation of rural schools, wherein the small communities that formed the basis of traditional life began to lose economic and cultural independence. In his recent book on *Mi-Carême* (Mid-Lent festivity) Arsenault notes that this old Acadian tradition was celebrated every year until the 1960s on P.E.I. In the midst of the mid-Lent party, a mysterious costumed character called “the Mi-Carême” would arrive unexpectedly to give sweets to little children who had been well-behaved. However, this strange individual scared many young Acadians because they feared he would take them away if they misbehaved. This particular custom still exists in some Acadian families in west Prince County, P.E.I. In some parts of the Maritimes, Acadians would also visit each others’ homes dressed up in masks and costumes to celebrate *Mi-Carême*, while in other places legend has it that the *Mi-Carême* sometimes delivered babies, though this tradition was not known on P.E.I. The tradition of *Mi-Carême* is still alive and well in some parts of the

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Maritimes such as Cheticamp (Cape Breton Island), Fatima (les Îles-de-la-Madeleine) and Natashquan (mainland Québec).

In particular, the isolation of the small communities and lack of infrastructure was keenly felt in the rural parts of P.E.I. Island Acadian step dancer and fiddler Marie Livingstone (b. 1951) vividly recalls growing up in St. Chrysostome (in the Région Évangéline) in the 1950s and the isolation of the rural community. Marie recounts that as a young girl she traveled to Charlottetown once for a niece’s baptism during the entire decade of the 1950s. Every fall she and her siblings would do their back-to-school shopping in Summerside, located about 36 kilometres from St. Chrysostome, but otherwise they went to the village of Wellington (roughly 15 kilometres away). As she explains, “it was a big deal to go to Summerside.” A member of one of the region’s largest musical families, she remembers attending concerts regularly between the ages of seven and thirteen years old, and she explains that children were taught square dancing in their small school houses and in the local Parish hall. It was a tight-knit community. School was taught primarily by teachers from the area but who had completed their education in Québec or New Brunswick before returning to their home region.

Marie was raised next door to the region’s most celebrated Acadian fiddler, Eddy (Albert) Arsenault, and remembers seeing him perform regularly in the community in the 1950s. She notes that there were few fiddlers in her community who played publicly (only one or two were known in St. Chrysostome), although there were some harmonica players who would play music for dancing if no fiddler was available. Although she now knows that there were several well known fiddlers in nearby villages, particularly the Jos Bibienne family from

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146 Marie is the second youngest of seven children. Her eldest brother, Edward, is thirteen years older than she.
Abram-Village (seven kilometres away) and several Gallants (Alyre, Jaddus and Louise) and Arsenaulds (Albin and Toussaint) from Mont-Carmel (twenty-two kilometres away), she did not see those people play until she was much older.\textsuperscript{147}

A number of significant historical anniversaries both within and outside the Acadian community were honoured between 1955 and 1970 that formed the foundation of processes of identity formation and expression that are discussed in Chapter 3. First, in 1955, the bicentennial of the deportations was commemorated throughout \textit{Acadie}. On P.E.I., Georges Arsenault explains that in his home village of Abram-Village, the bicentennial anniversary marked an important point in which many Acadians began flying Acadian flags on their properties; he notes that the flags did not fly year-round as they do in many instances today, however. In 1960, the first regional high school opened in the \textit{Région Évangéline}; this event is discussed in more detail below. The year 1962 marked the 150\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the founding of the villages of Baie-Egmont and Mont-Carmel. The celebrations included parish picnics, parades, musical concerts and presentations on aspects of Acadian history.\textsuperscript{148}

In 1964 and 1967, respectively, the Island celebrated the 100\textsuperscript{th} anniversaries of the historic Charlottetown Conference and the union that resulted from that meeting, Canadian Confederation (1867).\textsuperscript{149} On both occasions, numerous events were held across P.E.I. that focused on Island history and cultural traditions; in the \textit{Région Évangéline}, events highlighted Acadian traditions. As noted earlier, the \textit{Musée acadien de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard}, located

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Marie Livingstone, phone interview with author, 16 April 2010.
\item Georges Arsenault, email to author, 3 February 2011.
\item The Charlottetown Conference (1864) was planned initially as a meeting of leaders of three of the Atlantic colonies (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and P.E.I.) to discuss a Maritime union under Confederation. The “Province of Canada” (modern-day Ontario and Québec) requested an invitation so that the Canadians could join in the discussion of a union that might include them. Newfoundland’s leaders were present at a subsequent meeting in Québec on 10 October 1864. Desmond Morton, \textit{A Short History of Canada}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Steward Inc., 1997), 84-87.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
in Miscouche, was founded in 1964. The museum is a repository of information for local Acadian history and culture and presents several exhibits on aspects of Acadian life each year. In 1969, l’Association des jeunes francophones de la région Évangéline (Association of Young Francophones in the Evangeline Region) was created. The association was very active for a number of years; most notably, the association initiated “La Boueille” (meaning “buoy,” a kind of floatation device), which was a kind of cultural club held in the basement of the old Abram-Village school (it is now a Seniors’ Club called “Club 50”) that focused on singing French songs and held concerts and dances. These events and activities initiated an important dialogue in the Island’s Acadian community about their local history and cultural traditions. The continuation of this dialogue from the 1970s to present is the focus of Chapter 3.

**French education and the consolidation of Island schools**

P.E.I.’s first Acadian school was established in Rustico in 1815. During the first half of the twentieth century, small French Acadian schools existed across the Island; at one time there were approximately sixty French language schools on the Island. Between the 1950s and 70s the consolidation of the public school system led to a decrease in the number of schools across the Island. The only French schools that survived this reform were located in the Région Évangéline, and they were placed under the responsibility of a French school board; by the end of the 1970s, l’École Évangéline was the only French school on P.E.I. although Arthur Buote, a cultural administrator in Rustico, explained to me all the textbooks were written in English even though teachers taught in French. The year 1960 was a landmark

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150 “Boueille” is an Acadian name for the standard French “bouée.”

year in the history of the Région Évangéline and French language education on P.E.I. In that year, the Région Évangéline opened its first consolidated secondary school, l’École régionale Évangéline (Evangeline Regional High School). In addition to being one of the first regional high schools on the Island, it was also Acadian and French-speaking. Most of the small community schools were kept open until l’École Consolidée Évangéline (elementary school) was built in 1968. Both schools (secondary and elementary) are now part of the Centre d’éducation Évangéline.\textsuperscript{152} The teachers at l’École régionale Évangéline during this period were almost all Acadians from New Brunswick and played an important role in promoting French language and Acadian identity in the region.

These changes in the education system and community life contributed to and strengthened the strong sense of regional identity. As Arsenault explains, “[t]o stress its cultural uniqueness, the school and its school board were named after Evangeline, the famous Acadian heroine created by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Over the next several years, the area served by the school became known as the Evangeline Region.”\textsuperscript{153} Toward the end of the 1970s, l’École Évangéline was the only French language school on P.E.I. It was not until 1980 that another French school, l’École François-Buote, opened its doors in Charlottetown.\textsuperscript{154} In 1990, the P.E.I. Government officially gave the French Language School Board the responsibility of administering and promoting French education throughout the province. Following Canada’s Supreme Court decision in January 2000, parents in the Summerside-Miscouche area were granted the right to have a school in their

\textsuperscript{152} Georges Arsenault, email to author, 6 February 2010.
\textsuperscript{153} Arsenault, \textit{Historical Guidebook}, 4. This area comprises Lots 14, part of 15, and 16.
\textsuperscript{154} l’École François-Buote was named after François-Joseph Buote (1861-1922) of Tignish, P.E.I. Buote was a teacher, printer, and newspaperman. He was the only son of Gilbert Buote, the founder of the French-language newspaper, \textit{L’Impartial}. Arsenault, “Gilbert Buote.”
own community. Shortly thereafter, the French School Board, known as la Commission scolaire de langue française de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard, opened new schools in the West Prince, Summerside-Miscouche and Rustico areas.\textsuperscript{155} In 2003, the sixth French language school opened in Souris. Although a revival of Acadian identity has arguably been brewing for some time, the establishment of l’École La-Belle-Cloche in Souris has been a major proponent of the promotion of French language education and French language retention in Kings County.

The memory and interpretation of the P.E.I. Acadian story are themes that run throughout this dissertation. Today the population of Islanders who cite French as their mother tongue is over 5,000\textsuperscript{156} (although a great many more people are of Acadian origin), from the approximately 682 who escaped deportation or returned to the Island in the years immediately following the deportation.\textsuperscript{157} Roughly seventy percent of Francophone Islanders live in the western part of P.E.I., in Prince County, where they make up eight percent of the population; they are largely concentrated in the Région Évangéline and make up the majority in some villages, including Mont-Carmel, Abram-Village and Wellington. Other large concentrations of Acadians and Francophones are located in Summerside, Miscouche and in western Prince County (Tignish, Palmer Road and St. Louis). Smaller groups of Francophones live in the areas of Rustico, Charlottetown and Souris.\textsuperscript{158} The development of French schools across the Island has helped to promote the retention and, in some cases, re-

\textsuperscript{155} The schools and dates of their opening are: L’école Pierre-Chiasson (DeBlois, West Prince, 2000); L’école-sur-mer (Summerside, 2002); and L’école Saint-Augustin (Rustico, 2002).
\textsuperscript{157} There were 682 Acadians living on P.E.I. at the time of the 1798 census. Georges Arsenault, University of P.E.I. lecture, 13 May 2008.
integration of French language and knowledge of Acadian heritage in the Island’s Francophone and Anglophone communities. In particular, there are ongoing initiatives in Kings County to create a series of French-language activities. The pioneering social and economic developments in Acadian communities and Acadians’ increasing participation in the Island’s lively contemporary cultural scene attest to the perseverance of this minority culture.

Musically, the unique blend of influences on Acadian traditions has resulted in a musical identity that further distinguishes these Acadians from their neighbours. Certain areas of the Island, in particular Tignish and the Région Évangéline, have retained a French song tradition and what is considered by practitioners and members of the community to be a distinctive Acadian sound in the instrumental repertoire, all the while blending Acadian characteristics with stylistic influences and repertoire from other cultural groups. Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in the Island Acadian community in defining a localised Acadian cultural identity. This identity is primarily expressed musically. As we will see in the following chapters, the unique history of this Francophone community, the challenges of linguistic retention and many features of older Acadian practices that have been discussed in Chapter 2 emerge in local dialogue and are drawn on by various musical groups as primary markers of difference.
Chapter 3

“De par chez nous:” Defining Culture and the Acadian Cultural “Revival”

As we drive west from Summerside on Route 11, a remote road that winds its way along the southwest shore of P.E.I., there is little to suggest that we have entered the Région Évangéline. The only sign along this route that identifies the boundaries of this vibrant French-speaking pocket of the Island is hidden among overgrown trees and is barely visible from the road. Few Acadian flags fly in yards and there are no houses decorated in the Acadian colours as you see in some of the mainland Acadian communities such as Nova Scotia’s Baie Saint-Marie or the Acadian Peninsula in New Brunswick, although, increasingly, homes are decorated with the five-point Stella Maris—the star of the Acadian flag—which is often painted in the colour of the house itself (Figs. 3.1 and 3.2). Following the coastline, we see the spectacular Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Carmel, a turn-of-the-century neo-gothic church (Fig. 3.3). Across the road from the church sits the small Parish Hall, the site of weekly summer concerts and community events. The exterior wall of the hall is covered by a mural that depicts vignettes of rural Acadian life; it is one of three murals installed throughout the region to mark the four hundredth anniversary of Acadie in 2004 (Fig. 3.4). These days, Mont-Carmel is a hub of music-making in the region. Just down the road from the church, looking out of the upper window of fiddler Anastasia DesRoches’s picturesque house, we can see both the homes of a number of the region’s prominent musicians and a few of the most

1 Route 11 has been named part of Tourism P.E.I.’s “North Cape Coastal Drive.”
2 In contrast, several large signs along the main highway (Rte. 2) welcome drivers to the region.
3 My mother, Virginia McGowan, recently pointed out that along the Kinkora Road (Rte. 225), between Charlottetown and Summerside, a number of houses now display the star. The trend toward these subtle displays of Acadian identity seems to have increased in various parts of the Island since 2005. Virginia McGowan, personal communication, 10 June 2010.
recognised *maisons de rassemblement* (gathering houses) in the area that are known for their *parties de cuisine* (kitchen parties). Anastasia tells me that she was drawn to this corner of the region from Summerside specifically because of the musical climate. In our conversations, other musicians speak of the quiet (at least during the daytime), the physical space and the ever-present sea as inspiration for their art; this is, by all accounts, a place to create and to play.

A few minutes further along the coast we reach the active wharf at Cap-Egmont, known locally as “le Cove,” where the lighthouse overlooks the red stone cliffs to the bay that has turned red from the soil. Just west of the wharf is one of the region’s only tourist attractions, *les Maisons de bouteilles* (The Bottle Houses). Built in 1979, the site consists of over 30,000 recycled bottles of various colours and shapes that have been used to create “houses,” including a six-gabled house, tavern and chapel, surrounded by gardens. From Cap-Egmont, the road winds its way into Abram-Village, past the Centre Expo-Festival grounds and the large space where the community arena once sat, the site of the annual *Festival acadien*.⁴ At the Centre Expo, Route 11 turns southwest and continues through the serene seaside landscape to St-Chrysostome, home of the region’s iconic fiddler Eddy Arsenault,⁵ and eventually leads back north to Route 2, the Island’s main artery that traverses the province from Tignish to Souris.

There are few overt displays of Acadian heritage along this route; that said, keen observers will notice the Stella Maris on some houses, several subtle bilingual street signs

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⁴ The arena burned down on 11 April 2010. $500,000 was raised toward the construction of a new Recreation Centre within the first six months or so after the fire through community fundraising efforts (including numerous musical fundraisers), private donations, corporate sponsorship and the winnings of a TSN Kraft Celebration Tour contest.

⁵ St-Chrysostome is also referred to as “Rocky Point” and has inspired several fiddle compositions by that name. Georges Arsenault, *Historical Guidebook of the Evangeline Region* (Charlottetown, PE: by author, 1998), 23.
along the route and that the majority of mailboxes belong to either a “Gallant” or an “Arsenault.” Around Abram-Village, colourful mailboxes, some of which sport the Acadian flag, begin to appear; these, too, are remnants of the 2004 celebrations. In August, during the festival season, the main street of Wellington and Abram-Village will be lined with pennants and many houses will be decorated in flags and colourful ornaments; for the moment, however, any decorations are understated.6

![The Acadian flag](image)

Figure 3.1 The Acadian flag.7

![House with Acadian stars](image)

Figure 3.2 House with Acadian stars. (Photo by Orrin Livingstone)

6 August 15th is Acadian National Day, and the *Festival acadien* is held on the Labour Day weekend in late August or early September. One or two other cultural festivals are usually held in August as well.

Figure 3.3 Mont-Carmel-du-Notre-Dame. (Photo by Orrin Livingstone)

Figure 3.4 Mural on Parish Hall. (Photo courtesy of Normand Richard)
Acadians in the Région Évangéline express a strong sense of pride in being Acadian and emphasize a distinct identity as “Island Acadians;” nevertheless, this sense of identity is conveyed in subtle ways. As musician Patricia Richard explains,

We actually live Acadian here...It’s in everything that we do, whether it’s from the cooking, the music we play, the gathering at the local halls. It’s just a way of being and it goes deep. [Our identity is] more a matter of existing that way...expressing it in different ways through our music, through our food, through our ways of communicating, our ways of hanging out and that type of thing.8

Patricia perceives significant differences in the way Acadian identity is embodied between the Evangeline community and the off-Island communities in which she has lived. She explains that she experienced a sense of culture-shock in the overt way some off-Island Acadians perform their identity by displaying symbols (i.e. flags, signs) and enacting a more aggressive attitude toward French language rights. Of course, there are members of the Evangeline community who have petitioned the Federal government, as well as the Queen of England, for an apology to the Acadians for wrongs inflicted upon them in bygone centuries, and others who have campaigned for French services and bilingual signs within the unofficial boundaries of the region.9 While most members of the community with whom I spoke see value in, and, in most cases, reap the benefits of the actions of those few individuals who have taken up what James Laxer has termed the “Acadian project,”10 the majority of the region’s residents express a desire not to draw unnecessary attention to language politics in their communities.

8 Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2009.
9 In 2001, Bloc Québécois MP Stéphane Bergeron introduced a motion in the House of Commons asking the Governor General to demand an apology from Queen Elizabeth II; the motion was defeated. In 2003, at the prompting of the Société Nationale de l'Acadie (S.N.A.), the Canadian government agreed to issue a royal proclamation in the name of the Queen recognizing the suffering of the Acadians during the deportations, setting aside 28 July as the official commemoration date of the Acadian exile, beginning in 2005 (the 250th anniversary of le Grand dérangement). Yet, this issue remains a point of contention for some Island Acadians who seek a full apology and for whom an acknowledgement from the Crown is not enough. David Le Gallant, interview with author, 12 August 2008; James Laxer, The Acadians: In Search of a Homeland (Doubleday Canada, 2006), 285-6.
10 Laxer, 5.
My consultants’ sentiments and actions raise the issue of whether this reticent attitude reflects a lingering sensitivity toward a local history fraught with tension between the Acadians and their neighbours, as some Islanders suggest. Moreover, it prompts us to ask how ethnicity is constructed and enacted by this Island Acadian population. Patricia’s statement suggests that a perception of a distinct local identity exists; she speaks of “our music,” “our food,” “our ways of communicating.” My research suggests that renewed interest among Island Acadians to define, perform and promote a localised experience of “being Acadian” has emerged since the late 1970s, although this revitalisation is rooted in a long history of ethnic and cultural definition that has waxed and waned over the several centuries of Acadian presence on P.E.I.

This chapter examines this ongoing process of Acadian cultural revival on P.E.I., focusing on the musical practices of the Région Évangéline. My use of the term “revival” here stems from an understanding of cultural revival as a flexible and organic process in which cultural meaning is “discursively negotiated”\(^\text{11}\) and performed by members of a community with recourse to particular interpretations of the past, both real and constructed. In particular, I am interested in how musicians in the Région Évangéline fuse individual innovation and musical sensibilities with contemporary interpretations of older cultural practices, thereby articulating a distinct sense of Island “Acadianess” through musical forms. I trace the musical practices, cultural influences and events from the late nineteenth century onward that led to the contemporary cultural climate on the Island. I suggest that an emergent revitalisation of Acadian music and culture on P.E.I. was fuelled by two distinct developments: first, the multifaceted processes of cultural definition that took place in the late

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nineteenth and early twentieth centuries leading up to the 400th anniversary of Acadie in 2004; and, second, the revival of traditional fiddling on Cape Breton Island in the early 1970s and 1990s. Through a study of the Evangeline community of western P.E.I., I consider the impact of these disparate processes of revitalisation on local Acadian culture and identity; specifically, I examine the P.E.I. band Barachois and discuss their process of creating a distinct Island Acadian sound through a pastiche of older practices. I argue that the idiosyncratic musical style presented by Barachois is but one interpretation of traditional Island Acadian music, and that a number of local fiddlers have tapped into the tradition’s flexible style parameters in different ways, articulating distinct interpretations of what constitutes P.E.I. Acadian music.

**A question of “revival”**

The study of cultural revitalization has increasingly occupied scholars in the fields of ethnomusicology, anthropology and folklore over the past three decades. Scholars in these fields concerned with defining the term “revival” have drawn our attention to the myriad ways in which cultural groups balance traditional and modern ways of being in the world. As Tamara Livingston observes, ethnomusicologists have only recently accepted music revivals as suitable subjects of academic study, “as ethnographic realities and not imitations of the real thing.” As such, the scope of the field has expanded to consider a large number of musical traditions, previously regarded as subsidiaries of “legitimate” traditions with longstanding histories, which occupy professional and lay musicians around the world. In particular, the processes of “re-birth” implied by the term revival have led music scholars to question the

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impact of commercialization, social transformation and acculturation, among other things, on musical systems. Yet, while several scholars have taken important steps toward defining and analyzing the concept of revival, it nevertheless remains a loaded and elusive term. In this section I will examine the main themes that have emerged in the scholarly literature on revivals and I will consider how the so-called “revival” of Acadian identity and traditional music on P.E.I. works within and challenges these frameworks.

Nostalgia has emerged as a defining characteristic of cultural revitalization. Indeed, folklorists and ethnomusicologists have focused primarily, but not solely, on so-called “folk music revivals,” grassroots preservationist movements prompted by a nostalgic desire to “[restore and preserve] musical tradition[s] which [are] believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past.”\(^{14}\) In his study of old-time American fiddling contests and associations, Chris Goertzen describes a pervading nostalgia for rural life by old-time fiddlers and event organizers who aim to recall a past way of life.\(^{15}\) This theme of nostalgia also features prominently in his subsequent work on the Norwegian fiddle revival of the 1970s. Drawing on Leo Marx’s notion of the “pastoral ideal,”\(^{16}\) defined by Marx as the longing for a natural, unspoiled environment in the face of rapid socio-cultural transformations brought about by an increasingly complex society, Goertzen argues that the revival of particular cultural traits and crafts in Norway, such as fiddling, was motivated by a desire “to recall a time when life was simpler and presumably better, a time that may never have existed but that people nevertheless yearn for.”\(^{17}\) Anthropologist Jocelyn Linnekin observes a similar scenario

\(^{14}\) Ibid.


\(^{17}\) Goertzen, *Fiddling for Norway*, 11.
in Hawaii, where Hawaiian nationalists “look to the rural lifestyle, use it, and idealize it to create a new version of Hawaiian culture.”\(^{18}\) In addition to identifying this emphasis on a simpler, anti-modernist lifestyle, both Goertzen and Linnekin describe elements of cultural imagining and innovation in the process of renewing past cultural practices, suggesting a process of evolution and not strictly of replication.

Such notions of nostalgia and innovation are further reflected in Gage Averill’s work on American barbershop, in which he defines revival as “the intent on the part of participants to recreate some vision of the past in the present.”\(^{19}\) In *Four Parts, No Waiting: A Social History of American Barbershop Harmony*, Averill explores a nostalgia related to a politicised sense of community and social behaviour, rather than the longing for a specifically rural lifestyle as in Goertzen’s examples. Music revivals have been frequently characterised as reactionary and oppositional, typified by their common expression of explicit cultural and/or political agendas by “core revivalists” and their network of supporters.\(^{20}\) Averill argues that the early barbershop revival of the mid-1930s United States emerged from conservative reactions to social, physical and cultural changes in the context of the Great Depression. As such, he maintains that the barbershop revival sought “to reconstruct a space of privilege for white American middle-class males based on nostalgia for unchallenged and exclusive sociability and camaraderie in the adolescent memories of middle-aged men.”\(^{21}\)

In a similar vein, Richard Blaustein suggests that such revivalist movements are “reactions to displacements or breaks caused by modernization, urbanization, and

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\(^{20}\) Livingston, 66.

\(^{21}\) Averill, 91.
industrialization.” By selectively reconstructing and reinterpreting musical “systems,” a term Neil Rosenberg describes as the combination of a shared repertoire, instrumentation and performance practice that are historically- and culturally-determined by factors such as class, ethnicity, race, religion, commerce and art, individual participants and preservationist organisations satisfy a yearning for earlier forms of expression that are not satisfied by mainstream popular culture and mass media. Livingston posits that such tensions between antiquity and revivalists who wish to hold on to that past, on the one hand, and modernization, urbanization and industrialization, on the other, incite opposition toward mass culture. Moreover, she suggests that the “oppositional character” that motivates musicians to “challenge the values of the musical mainstream” is a central feature of all music revivals.

This balance between tradition and modernity is a theme that emerges later in this chapter and in Chapter 4 in relation to the stylistic and discursive choices musicians make in their efforts to distinguish their music from that of other cultural groups.

It is tempting to turn to Eric Hobsbawm’s well known notion of “invented tradition” to make sense of our encounters with cases of extreme cultural innovation, that is, cases in which “traditions [are] actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period.” For example, in her 1982 study of Cajun cultural festivals in Louisiana, Marjorie Elman describes what she terms the “artificial revival” of traditional cultural traits in a festival context dating only

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22 Richard Blaustein, “Folk Music Revivals in Comparative Perspective,” in Play It Like It Is, eds. Ian Russell and Mary Anne Alburger (Aberdeen: Elphinstone Institute, 2006), 51.
25 Livingston, 67.
twenty years at the time of her research. Hobsbawm distinguishes “invented” traditions, which he identifies as those emerging “in situations of rapid social change or discontinuity with the past,” from genuine traditions with longstanding histories.

While Hobsbawm’s theory and labels have been employed by myriad scholars to explain these processes, their application has been re-evaluated by several scholars who have questioned their validity in the context of music revivals and begun to move past Hobsbawm’s formulations. Noting that Hobsbawm’s notion of tradition as invented was conceived in relation to the “formal activities of governments, nations, and institutions,” Rosenberg suggests that folk music revivals fall more frequently under what Hobsbawm calls “custom;” that is, established traditions that are open to innovation and change while having recourse to the past. Nevertheless, given that “custom” traditions continue to be held to the criterion of older practices, it appears that they have, by definition, a necessarily bounded possibility of change. Hobsbawm’s labels are limited further by his suggestion that “custom” is more common in so-called “traditional societies,” which he characterises as societies that have fixed and formalised traditions based upon historical legitimisation. Ultimately, Rosenberg concludes that although revivals contain some degree of cultural invention, given the restrictions of the labels “custom” and “invented” Hobsbawm’s premises are not useful points of reference in the context of folk music revivals. Linnekin expresses further scepticism toward Hobsbawm’s theories, arguing that all traditions are inevitably invented “in that they

29 This is not to say that folk contexts do not exist in which Hobsbawm’s theory is applicable, as Esman’s study attests.
are symbolically constructed in the present and reflect contemporary concerns and purposes rather than a passively inherited legacy.”

There has been considerable movement toward the view of tradition as a dynamic process that is informed by, but not reliant on, an individual or group’s interpretation(s) of some aspect of the past. A handful of ethnomusicologists have problematised the emphasis on replicating past musical systems inherent in popular definitions of revival. For example, Alan Jabbour posits that the term revival “implies something happening in the present somehow simultaneously resurrects the past.” While he acknowledges revivalists’ emphasis on historical continuity, Mark Slobin argues that the term revival is not an appropriate term to use in examining the so-called “revival” of American Ethnic Music, as expressive cultures do not simply dissolve; rather, he suggests that a more accurate definition of the term would acknowledge the transformative process inherent in music revivalism, in that when an aspect of culture is revived something new is created. In her discussion of heritage, a term inevitably linked to the concept of tradition, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett expands upon Slobin’s suggestion that innovation is a central facet of revivals, emphasizing that heritage is “a new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past.” This point is further underscored by Burt Feintuch, who writes that “revitalization transforms the subject of its efforts.” Seeking to reconcile the inherent dualism of historical continuity and of creation in these views of revivalist movements, Slobin returns to the notion of nostalgia as he expands his definition of revival to include “a variety of phenomena that seem to come from a

32 Linnekin, “Cultural Invention,” 447.
community’s impulse to reach back for something.”

In an attempt to treat revivals in a theoretical manner, Livingston presents six main attributes that form the basis of her model for examining the phenomenon of music revivalism. These basic ingredients, or the requisite characteristics of a revival, include the presence of an individual or small group of “core revivalists;” revival informants and/or original sources; a revivalist ideology and discourse; a revivalist community (or network of supporters); revivalist activities such as organisations, festivals and competitions; and, finally, the marketing of the revival through commercial or non-commercial enterprises. On the surface, the six traits laid out in Livingston’s revival framework are found in the context of P.E.I. Acadian music. First, it is possible to pick out a number of key individuals and groups whose efforts have contributed to the present vibrancy of the tradition; second, these main groups, some of which tour internationally, have drawn on original, archived sources in the creation of their repertoire; third, local musicians are fervently supported and promoted by their communities; fourth, through their dialogue with audiences and festival organisers local groups disseminate information about their culture and communities; fifth, there are numerous cultural organisations and yearly festivals that promote local music; and, lastly, several local musicians have released commercial recordings of traditional music.

Yet, while Livingston’s labels may be shaped to the P.E.I. Acadian context, it nevertheless appears that these traits were manifest at various stages of a century-long process of cultural resurgence; as such, I argue that Livingston’s model works as a starting point to consider this particular context. The evaluation of two elements of Livingston’s model in comparison to the P.E.I. context serves to illustrate this point. First, a “revivalist discourse and

37 Slobin, “Rethinking ‘Revival’,” 42.
38 Livingston, 69.
ideology” has been only intermittently part of the national Acadian cultural movement and has emerged only in the last few decades on P.E.I. Members of the popular Acadian group Barachois were instrumental in drawing both local and global attention to the regional repertoire and older forms of Acadian expressive culture; nevertheless, they explain that, regardless of their legacy as cultural ambassadors, the group was neither formed with the intent of overtly promoting their culture nor were they interested in engaging their audiences in any sort of politicised discourse. In contrast, prompted by an emergent interest in fostering local culture and identity, subsequent groups (including members of Barachois in new musical endeavours) have invested in this identity discourse, to varying degrees, within the past two decades as a means of distinguishing themselves from other traditional music groups on local, regional, national and international scales.

Second, the motivations and actions of individuals and small groups of “core revivalists” in the P.E.I. context do not correspond to Livingston’s justifiably generalised model. While Georges Arsenault’s 1971 collection of Acadian song and instrumental traditions from western P.E.I. has become source material for several musical groups and forms the core of local knowledge about past musical traditions, the collector’s intention was one of preservation and not revival per se; it was not until the mid-1990s that local musicians began to draw on the collection, thus bringing it to public attention.

**Culture as an emergent process**

The studies I have referenced above are primarily concerned with traditions that have fallen out of practice and that have been reconstructed in the present. To what extent, however, must a tradition disappear and by what criteria must it be subsequently “revived” to be characterised as a revival movement? As Jabbour notes, some practitioners regard such
cultural processes more as a continuing development than a revival, an “impetus to a renewed interest in certain instrumental stylistic combinations.”39 In his influential work on cultural revitalization movements, anthropologist Anthony Wallace omits any mention of the past, instead defining revitalization movements as “any deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture.”40 While this statement is limited if we accept that our actions are always an attempt to create what he describes as “a more satisfying culture,” Wallace’s statement points nevertheless to the intentional and progressive nature of revivalist agendas. Linnekin expresses a similar view, emphasising that tradition is a selective process; she argues that “the selection of what constitutes tradition is always made in the present,”41 thus underlining the flexible and immediate nature of tradition. In her later work, Linnekin suggests an understanding of cultural invention as a process and culture as “an ongoing human creation,”42 an approach perhaps best articulated as culture as an emergent process.

Diamond and Colton define the “culture-as-emergent” approach as one that “conveys not only the ongoing development of social practices but the way in which values are discursively negotiated by individuals.”43 As the subsequent sections of this chapter demonstrate, local discourse surrounding Island Acadian culture and, in particular, Acadian musical practices, has increased significantly since the late 1970s. This discourse has emerged as a prominent component of performances by Island Acadian groups who seek to negotiate their place in both regional and global music scenes. As Island Acadians become more

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39 Jabbour, Forward, xiii.
42 Linnekin, “Cultural invention,” 447.
knowledgeable about their distinctive history, these processes of defining cultural practices have extended to the broader community and have fostered a renewed sense of pride in maintaining traditional linguistic and cultural practices. Adopting Williams’ stance on culture as a process in which new meanings, new practices and new experiences are constantly being created suggests that the P.E.I. Acadian context can best be understood through this lens of “culture-as-emergent.” As the subsequent section demonstrates, although the renewed interest in Acadian traditional music on P.E.I. was influenced indirectly by the resurgence of traditional music throughout the Maritime Provinces, the current cultural climate owes much to larger processes of cultural definition in Acadian communities throughout eastern Canada that have been ongoing since the 1880s.

**Acadian renaissance and the “New Acadie”**

The Acadians who returned to Acadia following the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1764 were met with strict regulations concerning their resettlement and the harsh reality that the fertile lands they had cultivated were now occupied by New England Planters and Loyalists.⁴⁴ As a result, the majority of Acadians resettled in eastern New Brunswick, while smaller groups migrated to areas of mainland Nova Scotia, remote parts of Cape Breton Island and P.E.I. By the early 1800s, the population of Acadians in New Brunswick had grown to 3,700. Migration to New Brunswick, a region referred to as the “New Acadie,” continued well into the twentieth century and the province has since emerged as the Acadian stronghold of

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⁴⁴ Acadians were permitted to resettle in Acadie provided they take an oath of British allegiance and disperse in small groups.
the Maritimes.\textsuperscript{45}

Life on the mainland was not easy in the years following this resettlement and Acadians were economically and politically marginalised from mainstream society. Similarly, Acadians on P.E.I. lived on the periphery of the socio-economic and political spheres; they did not win the right to vote until 1830 and it was not until 1854 that Island voters elected their first Acadian representative to the P.E.I. legislature.\textsuperscript{46} While Acadians had thus far taken small steps in the political arena, Acadian communities across the Maritimes experienced important economic, political and cultural transformations over the next thirty years. Led by a small minority of clergymen and Acadian elite, these changes mark the beginning of an ongoing endeavour to define and to unite the Acadian people.

In 1864, under the auspices of the Congrégation de Sainte-Croix from Québec, the Collège Saint-Joseph was founded in Memramcook, New Brunswick, to educate elite Acadian professionals and (Catholic) clergymen.\textsuperscript{47} A few years later, in 1867, the first French-language newspaper, \textit{le Moniteur acadien}, was published in Shediac, New Brunswick.\textsuperscript{48} Over the next few decades Acadian communities throughout the Maritimes continued to experience significant demographic, cultural and political growth. New Francophone institutes of higher education were established, local newspapers were set up in various Acadian communities and Acadians became increasingly invested in the political domain.\textsuperscript{49}


\textsuperscript{46} New Brunswick Acadians were given the right to vote in 1810, while Acadians in Nova Scotia could vote in 1789.


\textsuperscript{49} Jacques Paul Couturier, \textit{L’Expérience canadienne, des origines à nos jours} (Moncton: Éditions d’Acadie, 1994), 225.
By the end of the nineteenth century an educated Acadian leadership had emerged, led by prominent clergymen and influenced by the rise of French-Canadian nationalism in neighbouring Québec. Several historians have referred to this period of “awakening” beginning around 1860 as the first “Acadian renaissance,” a chapter of Acadian history characterised by a number of endeavours, including the cultivation of a unified spirit among the Acadian people; a series of “national” conventions beginning in 1881 meant to regroup Acadians around common themes; the calculated selection of Acadian symbols such as the flag, anthem, crest and national day; and the popularity and unifying effect of Longfellow’s poem, “Evangeline,” discussed in Chapter 2. At the same time as the upper class was concerned with establishing these distinct markers of Acadie, many Acadians held strong ties to their French-speaking neighbours in Québec. For example, according to Georges Arsenault, many delegates at the 1881 Convention were in favour of choosing St-Jean-Baptiste Day (June 24) as a common national holiday to emphasize Acadian unity with the rest of French Canada.

Nonetheless, the eventual decision to adopt August 15 (the Assumption) as a distinct Acadian national holiday rather than Québec’s St-Jean-Baptiste illustrates the more pressing desire of the majority of delegates to affirm a collective Acadian identity and distinguish themselves from other cultural and ethnic groups in Québec and the Maritime Provinces. Somewhat paradoxically, while this decision was intended to distinguish the Acadians from their Francophone neighbours, the debate over the selection of the Acadian flag at the 1884 Convention demonstrates a deliberate attempt to connect the Acadian population with other

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51 The Acadian National Conventions were held in 1881, 1884, 1890, 1900, 1905 and 1908.
cultural groups. Supporters of the French tricolour as the basis for the Acadian flag argued that this choice would not only proudly display their French origins but that it would also align the Acadians with the Irish, Scottish, English and French-Canadians who retained the flags of their mother countries.  

53 These decisions and other achievements by the Acadian leaders set the stage for further changes in the ensuing years, such as the launch of a weekly Francophone paper, *L’Évangéline*, in Nova Scotia in 1887. Meanwhile, the Acadian population as a whole was still very poor and living on the margins of Canadian society; while some surely benefited economically and politically from such developments as local newspapers, the general populace was largely unaffected by the identity work undertaken by this elite.

In her study of folk music and Acadian nationalism, Jeanette Gallant characterises the period from 1880 to 1960 as a period of clerico-nationalism influenced by an ideology of ultramontanism brought to Québec and *Acadie* by Catholic missionaries from France. As she explains,

> Ultramontanism placed the church at the centre of society, promoting the idea of an insulated community which idealized the past while extolling the virtues of faith, ancestry, language, heritage, and tradition. With national repertoires becoming synonymous with the advancement of French Catholicism in Canada, all forms of national song – Gregorian chant, patriotic songs, national anthems, folk song, and even locally composed lyrics set to borrowed European classical melodies – were used to maintain boundaries between the French and English, acting as cultural symbols to create a sense of belonging, teach Christian values, and build Acadian society.  

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In the 1940s, priests Father Anselme Chiasson (a prominent Acadian folk song collector) and Father Leandré Brault (the first Acadian choral director) took up this mission and worked to

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53 Ibid., 18.
promote Acadian linguistic and cultural identity through the valorisation of Acadian folk song traditions. Their efforts produced numerous printed collections of Acadian folk song, carefully “edited to avoid profanity and poor language,” as well as public performances of choral songs. Thus, as Gallant concludes, “while Acadia’s musical success became tied to its public image, it also helped carve a place for Acadians in Canada’s political structure.”

Acadian historians have pointed to the emergence of a second Acadian renaissance that is generally associated with the election of New Brunswick Acadian Louis J. Robichaud as premier of New Brunswick in 1960, the same year that New Brunswick became a bilingual province. Unsurprisingly, this period was more political than the first renaissance and saw the creation of the first Acadian political party, le Parti acadien.

Outside the political arena, however, a cultural awakening among the general population was already in motion by the time Robichaud emerged as a prominent political figure. The first collection of Acadian folk songs in the Maritimes was compiled by two P.E.I. priests, Pierre-Paul Arsenault (who was also an educator, farmer and folklorist) and Father Théodore Gallant (a musician), in 1912. Their collection comprises 130 Island Acadian folk songs, including both French versions of songs and local compositions; it was donated to Marius Barbeau, curator at the National Museum in Ottawa, in 1924. This collection may have sparked, or at least added to, Barbeau’s interest in French folk song outside of Québec, as his seminal 1925 collection Folk Songs of French Canada (in collaboration with Edward Sapir) included some song samples from Acadie and prompted much interest in research on

56 Robichaud was premier of New Brunswick from 1960 to 1970. Political historian James Laxer (2006) offers a detailed account of Robichaud’s career.
Acadian folklore.\textsuperscript{59} Between 1942 and 1956, three volumes entitled \textit{Chansons d’Acadie} were published by Anselme Chiasson and Daniel Boudreau. These collections form the foundation upon which subsequent local enthusiasts and outside researchers undertook the collection of Acadian song and instrumental music. Prolific collections were done by Québécois folklorists, historians and musicians, including those by Luc Lacourcière, Monseigneur Félix-Antoine Savard, Simonne Voyer and Roger Matton, as well as French linguist and folklorist Geneviève Massignon and Carmen Roy of Ottawa.\textsuperscript{60} These early ventures are furthered by the subsequent work of Acadian folklorists Georges Arsenault and Ronald Labelle.

Popular Acadian songs composed at the beginning of the twentieth century with themes relating to Longfellow’s character Evangeline, local means of sustaintment such as fishing (“Le pêcheur acadien,” the Acadian fisherman), exile (“Le Réveil de l’exile,” the awakening of exile) and remembrance (“La fleur du souvenir,” the flower of remembrance), among others, suggest an emergent interest in expressing Acadian identity through music. Beginning in 1939, many of these popular songs were printed in a column on Acadian folksong by journalist Thomas LeBlanc in the newspaper \textit{L’Évangéline}.\textsuperscript{61} The column was meant to help collect and preserve traditional folk songs; readers were encouraged to send in their versions of songs and LeBlanc chose some to publish, including some by Islanders.\textsuperscript{62}

Anselme Chiasson and Ronald Labelle describe a “virtual explosion” in Acadian cultural forms such as handicrafts, painting, song, dance, theatre, cinema and literature

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\textsuperscript{60} Date of collections: Lacourcière (1939-83), Savard (1957-82), Voyer (1956), Matton (1956-76), Roy (1957).

\textsuperscript{61} Originally based out of Nova Scotia, the newspaper was called \textit{La Voix D’Évangéline} from 1937-1944, after which time it was relocated to Moncton and the name was changed to \textit{L’Évangéline}.

\textsuperscript{62} Georges Arsenault, email to author, 5 February 2011.
throughout the Maritimes in the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{63} This cultural awakening is further exemplified by the founding of a folklore studies department at the \textit{Université de Moncton} in 1966, in which research and collections focused on expressive cultural forms, followed by the establishment of the University’s \textit{Centre d’études acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson} in 1970 that is dedicated to collecting and preserving material pertaining to Acadians and Acadian history.\textsuperscript{64}

In the late 1970s, several popular Acadian music bands came on the scene. The most prominent among these was the Moncton-based rock band \textit{1755} that continues to be a central reference point in Acadian music.\textsuperscript{65} \textit{1755}’s musical style featured a regional dialect called \textit{chiac}.\textsuperscript{66} The band is often referenced as an important influence in preserving and popularising the French language and Acadian dialect in the face of the widespread anglicisation of Acadian communities. Picking up on the burgeoning interest in Acadian folklore, the group sparked a far-reaching interest in the expression of Acadian cultural identity and generated a new consciousness of Acadian pride among a generation of young Acadians.\textsuperscript{67} Since their disbandment in 1984, \textit{1755} has reunited several times onstage, notably in 1994 to perform at the inaugural \textit{Congrès mondial acadien} (Acadian World Congress); more recently, in 2009,


\textsuperscript{64} In his ethnography on the compositional processes of French Newfoundland fiddler Emile Benoit, Colin Quigley notes that a similar movement that promoted Newfoundland cultural revival emerged in the late 1960s (Quigley, \textit{Music from the Heart}, ix); Kristin Harris-Walsh (2010) has also documented this movement with regard to its impact on local dance traditions.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{1755} has been called the “Acadian Beatles.” The band received the East Coast Music Award’s Dr. Helen Creighton Lifetime Achievement Award in 2008.

\textsuperscript{66} The word “chiac” is thought to have been derived from the town name Shediac in New Brunswick. Chiac is an oral, vernacular language spoken by Maritime Acadians that mixes French with English. It contains numerous nautical terms and words that are believed to be French archaisms. Gallant, “La place occupée,” 11.

\textsuperscript{67} The Cajun band BeauSoleil emerged at the same period in Louisiana and had a similar effect on the Cajun-Acadian consciousness. The band’s name is a tribute to Joseph Broussard dit Beausoleil, the leader of the Acadian resistance against the British during the 1755 deportation.
the band toured across New Brunswick, Québec and P.E.I., performing on the Island as the main act of the annual Acadian/Francophone festival *Les Francofolies de Charlottetown*.

**Les Productions Ode**

Following in the footsteps of the earlier National Conventions, the late twentieth century saw the conception of pentennial festivities entitled the *Congrès mondial acadien* (Acadian World Congress) the aim of which was to unify the global Acadian community. The inaugural Congress was hosted by New Brunswick in 1994, followed by a second in Louisiana in 1999. In 2004, the theme song of the third Congress, “Je reviens au berceau de l’Acadie” (“I return to the cradle of Acadia”) welcomed an unprecedented 250,000 Acadian descendants to Nova Scotia, the “cradle of Acadia,” on the 400th anniversary of the founding of Acadie. Comprising large family reunions, cultural events and conferences, the 2004 Congress represented a culmination of cultural awareness up to that point in several ways. A substantive part of this awareness was embodied in musical form. In preparation for the 400th anniversary celebrations, the *Festival acadien de Caraquet* proposed a special tribute to Acadian history and the perseverance of the Acadian people in the form of three artistic ventures: a CD project, entitled *L’Acadie en chanson* (Acadia in Song), that featured thirty prominent Acadian singers from across Acadia interpreting their favourite Acadian songs; an exhibition of work by thirty-three Acadian visual artists, entitled L’ArtCADIE; and a large-scale musical production entitled, *Ode à l’Acadie*.

The show features seven multi-instrumental Maritime Acadian artists. These artists performed (choreographed and arranged) interpretations of well known traditional and

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68 The 2005 Congress was held in communities across Nova Scotia; the 2009 Congress was held in Caraquet, New Brunswick.
contemporary songs by popular Acadian songwriters, such as New Brunswick’s Édith Butler, Michel Thériault and Calixte Duguay, P.E.I.’s Angèle Arsenault and Lennie Gallant, Cape Breton’s Ronald Bourgeois and Louisiana’s Zachary Richard, among others. As Paul Marcel Albert, the General Director of the company *Productions de Ode*, writes, the songs that were chosen,

... sont le reflect d’un peuple fier et déterminé, tenace, fier de sa langue, de sa culture et décidé à survivre aux prévisions statistiques.  
... reflect a proud and determined people, tenacious, proud of their language, of their culture, and determined to outlive the statistical predictions.

Due to the popularity of the 2004 show, the troupe has continued to perform throughout Canada and internationally as the contemporary face of Acadie, bringing attention to Acadian history and promoting Acadian culture.  

In addition to highlighting Acadian songs that reflect various aspects of Acadian culture and history, Ode’s performances focus on each performer’s individual experience of being Acadian. As the group’s P.E.I. representative, Patricia Richard, expressed in a 2007 show,

L’Acadie pour moi, qui vient de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard, c’est d’abord la mer et l’horizon. C’est le rythme de la pêche avec les saisons. Et c’est aussi mon père, Clarence à Gildas à Joe L’Amable à Charles à Charles à Paul à Michel à Alexandre à Martin... Ce qui me surprend plus quand je pense à chez nous c’est que les gens d’ailleurs sont étonner qu’on parle encore français à l’Île. Bon, on parle le français puis on chante aussi! On chante tout le temps, jusqu’à dans nos cuisines. Parce que... à l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard encore aujourd’hui on a les parties de cuisine.  

Coming from P.E.I., to me Acadia is above all the sea and the horizon. It’s the rhythm of fishing with the seasons. And it’s also my father: Clarence, son of Gildas, son of Joe L’Amable, son of Charles, son of Charles, son of Paul, son of Michel, son of Alexandre, son of Martin... What surprises me most when I think of home is that people from away are stunned that we still speak French on the Island. Well, we speak

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70 The production was based in Caraquet, New Brunswick and ran from 2004 to December 2010.
71 Patricia Richard, interview (translation by author), accessed 12 August 2009, [www.ode.ca](http://www.ode.ca)
French, and we sing too! We sing all the time, even in our kitchens. Because on P.E.I. we still have kitchen parties.

This short excerpt emphasises a number of elements of Island Acadian culture identified by other Acadians in our interviews or stressed in performance as being central to Island Acadian life, such as the sea, family, language politics and the preservation of their French culture. In the third phrase, Patricia demonstrates the typical manner of situating oneself within a particular familial or community context. It is customary to talk about or be introduced to someone with reference to at least two generations of their family, either along maternal or paternal lines, for example, “Patricia à Clarence” (Patricia, daughter of Clarence). Since there are so few family names in the Région Évangéline one often has to enumerate a few generations when introducing oneself to make sure that the person she is talking to knows to which family she belongs; as Georges Arsenault explained, when a young person meets an old person, he might have to go up to four generations before the older person knows exactly who he is! This addition of further generations, or the rapid recitation of one’s family line as Richard demonstrates in the above statement, is an old Acadian tradition that has been preserved in the everyday practices of French-speaking Acadians throughout eastern Canada.

This practice is often drawn upon in a tongue-in-cheek fashion as a humorous interlude in performances by P.E.I. Acadian musical groups to highlight this aspect of the old Acadian culture. Richard’s statement also emphasises the persistence of some traditions, such as the kitchen party, which remains an important context for informal music-making in the Région Évangéline. As a result of this attention by performing groups, the persistence of these and other traditions has become a source of local pride which, in turn, promotes their continuation by younger generations. Richard explains that being part of the troupe that

72 Georges Arsenault, email to author, 5 February 2011.
creates and presents Ode à l’Acadie, as well as her personal quest to determine which aspects of her own community and experiences to highlight, incited an awakening of her own Acadian identity.\textsuperscript{73}

From the early stages of Acadian re-amalgamation to the founding of the Acadian World Congresses, processes of cultural revitalisation have a long history in Maritime Acadie. The resurgence of interest in expressing a localised P.E.I. Acadian identity owes much to this history of Acadian identity politics on the mainland. However, a resurgence of interest in traditional music, particularly fiddling, across the Maritime Provinces had a significant impact on musical style and repertoire in eastern P.E.I.’s Anglophone communities. Subsequently, these influences have seeped, directly and indirectly, into Acadian musical practices on the Island.

Figure 3.5 Ode à l’Acadie, 2004. (Photo by Yvon Cormier, courtesy of Ode à l’Acadie)

\textsuperscript{73} Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2009.
Revival and the Cape Breton fiddle tradition

The early 1970s witnessed a resurgence of traditional music across Canada’s east coast that was largely spurred on by events on Cape Breton Island. Describing the conditions for Cape Breton fiddling in the wake of the increasing outmigration of young people from rural communities in the 1950s and 1960s, Allister MacGillivray writes that “it appeared imminent that, like the Gaelic [language], the Cape Breton fiddler was to become but a memory of a bygone age.” Several scholars of Cape Breton fiddling have pointed to a 1971 CBC television documentary entitled, “The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler,” as a central turning point in the Cape Breton tradition. Written and narrated by Ron MacInnis, the film’s premise was that the fiddle tradition faced extinction as a result of an aging generation of fiddlers and a lack of interest among young musicians to carry on the tradition due to outmigration and the influence of mainstream popular culture. The message of the film was inflammatory, as many Cape Bretoners did not agree with Innes’ conclusion that the tradition was vanishing; however, as Thompson explains, the Cape Breton community’s reaction was surprisingly subtle:

A careful search of newspaper archives reveals no letters-to-the-editors of newspapers and no public protests. Instead, there were discussions around kitchen tables, in church presbyteries and at country dances.

Before long, a grassroots movement arose to counter the film’s message. Within a year, the Cape Breton Fiddling Association was established under the leadership of Father John Angus.

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76 While there was considerable internal migration from rural areas to more central towns on Cape Breton Island in the 1960s, Thompson reveals that, contrary to popular belief, the population actually grew from 18,152 in 1961 to 20,375 in 1971, and that while many fiddlers and fiddling fans left their rural homesteads, most of them were still living nearby at the time of the documentary. Marie Thompson, “The Myth of the Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler: The Role of a CBC Film in the Cape Breton Fiddle Revival,” *Acadiensis* 35, no. 2 (2006): 12.
77 Thompson, 6.
Rankin (1972), followed by the inaugural Glendale Fiddling Festival in 1973, an event that drew more than 130 fiddlers and 10,000 audience members. As Thompson emphasises, these developments did not arise because local fiddlers agreed with MacInnis’s conclusions; rather, “their true agenda was to demonstrate the strength and longevity of the tradition, which they believed was under no threat of extinction.”

In his book, *The Cape Breton Fiddle Tradition: Making and Maintaining Tradition*, Glenn Graham maintains that the establishment of the Fiddling Association and Festival generated new interest in traditional fiddling among younger generations that contributed to the present vitality of the Cape Breton tradition. Nevertheless, he questions the popular use of the term “revival” to describe the resurgence of Cape Breton fiddling in the 1970s and again in the early 1990s. Although the amplified visibility of the music locally (in the 1970s) and abroad (in the 1990s) led to the popular perception that the tradition had been renewed or revived, he argues that these periods of musical growth in Cape Breton were more akin to revitalisations, as they were “more of a generated awareness than anything else.” Graham contends that because it had not died out, what happened in the Cape Breton tradition “was not a revival in the sense of recovery: the situation facing the music did not require an artificial revival of older playing in order to repair a discontinuity in the tradition.”

While Burt Feintuch agrees that the CBC documentary and Fr. Rankin’s initiatives “helped bring renewed public attention to the music,” he indicates that there were in fact many signs that traditional music was alive and well before the Glendale Festival, a case in

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79 Hennessy, 50.
80 Graham, 100.
81 Ibid., 101.
point being the number of fiddlers who participated in the Festival.\footnote{82}{Burt Feintuch, “A Week on the Ceilidh Trail,” in \textit{Northeast Folklore: Essays in Honor of Edward D. Ives}, eds. Pauleena MacDougall and David Taylor (Orono: University of Maine Press and the Maine Folklife Centre, 2000), 61-85.}\footnote{83}{Hennessy, 51.} Adding to Feintuch’s observations, Jeff Hennessy posits that “it is far more likely that Cape Breton fiddling attained a certain ‘coolness’ during the 1990s due to the commercial success of The Rankin Family, Natalie MacMaster, Ashley MacIssac, and The Barra MacNeils,”\footnote{83}{Hennessy, 51.} this situation was no doubt propelled by a global interest in Celtic music in the 1990s that was celebrated regionally through the mass publicity of these local artists. The sweeping impact of Cape Breton fiddling in the early 1990s on the East Coast Music industry and music throughout North America and elsewhere has been explored by Ian MacKinnon (1989), Graham (2006) and Hennessy (2008); in subsequent sections I will discuss this influence with regard to the impact of Cape Breton fiddling on P.E.I.

\textbf{The P.E.I. Fiddlers’ Society}

The 1970s concern in Cape Breton for the maintenance of the fiddling tradition and the institutionalisation of traditional music was felt, albeit indirectly, on P.E.I., which was experiencing a similar decline in traditional music. While it appears that there was little, if any, direct musical interaction between the musicians from the two islands, the newfound visibility of the Cape Breton tradition seems to have inspired similar trepidation among P.E.I. fiddlers as to the virility of their own tradition, stirring some local fiddlers into action. Under the leadership of Charlottetown priest Faber MacDonald,\footnote{84}{Perlman, \textit{The Fiddle Music of Prince Edward Island}, 15.} prominent eastern P.E.I. fiddler Joe Pete Chaisson (1912-81), and others, the Prince Edward Island Fiddlers’ Society was...
founded in 1976. Eventually four chapters of the Society were established across the Island: Southern Kings Fiddlers (Montague, founded 2009), Eastern Kings Fiddlers (Souris, 1976), Queens County Fiddlers (Charlottetown, 1976) and Prince County Fiddlers (Summerside, 1976). As of April 2010, the membership of the Society totalled 169. While the regional groups organise weekly practices and host annual festivals and concerts, the Society’s membership has expanded to include individual fiddlers, fiddling groups, other instrumentalists, non-musicians, and music enthusiasts who wish to follow fiddling on P.E.I. In addition to these formal members of the Society, triennial newsletters are published in print and online which are accessible to a larger population of non-members. As in Cape Breton, an important activity of the Fiddlers’ Association is its promotion and support of group and private fiddle lessons. In 1976, Joe Pete Chaisson, patriarch of the Bear River Chaisson family, founded the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival in an effort to promote traditional Island music. Using proceeds from the Festival, the Kings County chapter of the Society sponsors free fiddle lessons for local students.

Jim Hornby notes that while P.E.I. was once nationally represented by New Brunswick fiddler Don Messer (who was based on P.E.I. from 1939 to 1957), the Island’s fiddling tradition was “being largely revived as a subsidiary of Cape Breton fiddling.” While fiddlers in western P.E.I., as in other parts, were influenced by early radio broadcasts from Cape Breton, Hornby’s remarks are most applicable to fiddlers in eastern P.E.I. where the Cape Breton tradition had a striking influence on the style, repertoire, and compositional

86 Kevin Chaisson, interview with author, 14 July 2008; Perlman, The Fiddle Tradition of P.E.I., 15.
practices of the majority of fiddlers. Although many Island musicians embrace the notion of a
distinct “Island sound,” which Perlman attributes to shared stylistic features, techniques and
attitudes toward fiddling, other fiddle scholars and enthusiasts have described fiddlers from
the north-eastern region of P.E.I. as playing essentially in the Cape Breton style; in fact,
Hornby goes as far as to write that a “tendency toward homogenization in style and repertoire
has occurred in Cape Breton, Northern Nova Scotia (Antigonish and Pictou counties) and
eastern P.E.I.” Few of these scholars, however, seem to take into account the valued
individualism (however small) in fiddlers’ styles in both P.E.I. and Cape Breton which I
would argue accounts for many subtle differences between fiddlers and fiddling styles on the
two islands.

Island Acadian music: 1970 to 1990

Few Francophone Acadians were active in the early years of the P.E.I. Fiddlers
Society; only two Acadian fiddlers from Summerside, Ervin Solnier (1920-1994) and
Toussaint Arsenault (1916-2000) were active members of the Prince County Fiddlers chapter.
Local musicians recall only one or two young fiddlers who played in the region in the early
1970s. While there are believed to have been older fiddlers who played exclusively in their
own homes, there were few who played publicly for parties and social dances.

Like many others Acadians of her generation, Marie Livingstone (b.1951) explains
that she lost touch with traditional music and step dancing in the late 1960s as rock and roll

88 Perlman, The Fiddle Tradition of P.E.I., 23; Hornby “The Fiddle on the Island;” Graham, 31; Kate Dunlay,
“The Playing of Traditional Scottish Dance Music: Old and New World Styles and Practices,” in Celtic
Languages and Celtic Peoples: Proceedings from the Second North American Congress of Celtic Studies, eds.
Cyril J. Byrne, Margaret Harry and Padraig O Siadhail (Halifax: D’Arcy McGee Chair of Irish Studies, St.
Mary’s University, 1992).
89 Hornby, “The Fiddle on the Island,” 137.
inundated P.E.I. households via radio and television. Although she step danced and sang traditional and folk songs from a young age, increased access to television and the improved quality of radio signals in the 1960s (compared to the battery-operated radios they used in the 1950s) enabled greater exposure to popular American variety shows such as *The Ed Sullivan Show* (1948-1971) and rock and roll that completely occupied the attention of the local youth; as she explains, “we thought that rock was going to take over the world.”

While she lost interest in traditional music and was unaware of any “revival” of traditional music occurring in Cape Breton and elsewhere on P.E.I., Marie recalls Eddy Arsenault (then her neighbour) playing for house parties at her parents’ house for Lenten celebrations such as *mardi gras* (Shrove Tuesday) and for parties whenever relatives would visit “From Away.” As she explains, Eddy’s parents hosted constant parties and he was much in demand as a fiddler. She recalls few other fiddlers who were active in the community at the time, though there were likely others who could play; even her brother, Edward P. Arsenault, picked up the fiddle in secret, playing only in his home for a period of ten years before his family found out he could play. In the early 1970s Marie married an Anglophone who was, at that time, not a musician and moved out of the *Région Évangéline*; she did not return to playing traditional music until the early 1990s. She has since become the most prolific tune composer in the *Région Évangéline* and a prominent proponent of traditional music on the Island.

The inclination toward external musical influences, such Cape Breton fiddling and rock music, exemplifies a larger outward-looking trend prominent among the majority of Acadians in the Evangeline community whom I interviewed. This prevailing focus on traditions other than their own gave rise to a disregard for, and in some cases a devaluing of,
the French language, local dialect and culture; several community members suggest that this may have had much to do with a lack of self-confidence that came from their experiences of assimilation by and segregation in relation to the dominant Anglophone society, whether these experiences were lived directly or imparted from older generations. Mylène Ouellette also observes an inferiority complex in relation to the Anglophone population. She writes:

As a result of a lack of linguistic protection, Acadians in the Évangéline area have frequently felt inferior to their Anglophone and Francophone counterparts, believing people from outside had the ‘right’ way of speaking, dancing and playing music.92

Many older Islanders with whom I spoke recounted incidents of negative encounters on linguistic grounds, often within their own communities and employment biases. These experiences frequently resulted in Acadians abandoning their mother tongue outside their homes in order to alleviate the stigma associated with French speakers and/or anglicising family names in order to fit into mainstream society.93 In a 2007 interview, Patricia Richard admits to having questioned her own accent at one point while performing with Ode à l’Acadie, explaining that it drew attention from people because it was distinct from those of her fellow performers who come from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, although she is now proud of her distinct Région Évangéline accent,

Les gens m’en parlent souvent. Je me suis même demandé si je ne devais pas le changer un peu. Mais, j’ai tellement eu de commentaires positifs du public qui disait aimer mon accent qu’aujourd’hui j’en suis très fière.94

People often speak to me about [my accent]. I even asked myself if I should change it a little. But, I received so many positive comments about it from people who said they liked my accent that today I am very proud of it.

93 For example, the last name “Aucoin” (literally, “in the corner”) was translated to “Wedge,” and the common Acadian family name “Chiaisson” was changed to “Chaisson” in some regions.
Although the region’s cultural and musical practices have gone through periods of decline and revival, Patricia notes that, today, the state of Acadian culture in the Evangeline community shows much promise for the future:

À l’Île la musique acadienne est très forte. Les enfants dansent la gigue et les reels de violon sont très populaires. Ça me suit dans ce que je fais.  
*Acadian music on P.E.I. is very strong. Children step dance and reels on the fiddle are very popular. It follows me in what I do.*

Patricia’s statements demonstrate an awareness of the vitality of the local traditions and a sense of pride in retaining distinctive aspects of the regional Acadian culture that is widely shared by members of the Evangeline community. This transformation from the inferiority complex that was referenced by many Acadians to an emerging pride in local francophone culture owes much to initiatives in the late 1970s to promote local Acadian culture. These endeavours, many of which are embodied in musical forms, had an enduring impact on local practices and cultural esteem within the community. The following sections examine two such initiatives, *L’Exposition agricole et le Festival acadien de la région Évangéline*, an ongoing agricultural fair and music festival, and *La Cuisine à Mémé*, a long-running musical production.

*L’Exposition agricole et le festival acadien de la région Évangéline*

*L’Exposition agricole et le festival acadien de la région Évangéline* (The Agricultural Fair and Acadian Festival of the Evangeline Region) is the oldest continuing rural agricultural fair on P.E.I. Initially conceived as a way to promote agricultural education among farmers, the first *Exposition agricole*[^96] took place in 1903 under the auspices of the *l’Institut des fermiers d’Urbainville* (The Farmers’ Institute of Urbainville), which boasted a membership

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[^95]: Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2009.
[^96]: Between 1903 and 1971 the fair was called *L’Exposition agricole*. 
of seventy men, with the support of P.E.I.’s first Minister of Agriculture. Since its inception in 1903, the *Exposition* has grown from a local, one-day event with seventy people\(^97\) to a three-day event including farmers from across P.E.I. One of the most significant transformations in the *Exposition*, and a major turn for Acadian culture in the *Région Évangéline*, occurred in 1971 when a *Festival acadien* (Acadian Festival) was added to the agricultural fair weekend program. The first productions of the *Festival* included games and fair rides for children, small musical shows by local artists, a lobster dinner, and a large *spectacle de clôture* (closing concert). As the *Festival*’s first coordinator, Georges Arsenault recounts, in the first years it was a challenge to find local singers who were able and willing to sing more than one or two songs in French. As a result, the *spectacle de clôture* featured invited Acadian entertainers from New Brunswick. In 1979, in response to calls for a (more) professional show featuring local talent, the *Festival* organisers hired Montreal-based Lucien Gagnon to work with local singers and instrumentalists. As Arsenault explains, the resulting all-French show entitled “les gens par chez nous”\(^98\) gave confidence to local artists and inspired many of them to subsequently mount their own shows.\(^99\) In 1992, *L’Exposition agricole* and the *Festival acadien* amalgamated to become the association *L’Exposition agricole et le festival acadien de la région Évangéline*. Today, the annual *Exposition* is the most prominent event in the *Région Évangéline*, drawing local and other Maritime Acadians, and expatriate Islanders from across North America for the three-day celebration of Francophone Acadian culture and agriculture on P.E.I. The closing concert draws thousands of spectators and, while some invited off-Island musicians are featured, the spotlight rests on the local Island Acadian

\(^97\) The estimated number of members of *L’Institut Uni*on in 1903.

\(^98\) The expression “de par chez nous” is heard frequently among Acadians on P.E.I. “Les gens de par chez nous” translates to “the people from back home.”

In 1974, the Festival integrated fiddle and step-dancing contests into its annual programme. This format was retained until the fiddle and step dance contests were dropped in 1978 and 1984, respectively. Following many other traditional fiddle contexts in North America, the Island was no stranger to fiddling contests. Beginning in 1926 and for several subsequent decades, large and small-scale contests were regularly occurrences across the province. As the daughter of a well-known dance fiddler explained,

...at that time there were a lot of fiddling and step dancing contests. I’m sure that during the season there was one a week, if not more. And dad would go, and we would always go with dad and participate in the contests.

Indeed, several musicians recalled that renowned local fiddlers, such as Eddy Arsenault from St-Chrysostome who, even in his late eighties, is a favourite step dance fiddler, would travel to dancing and fiddling contests all over P.E.I. In his descriptions of the “Great Fiddling Contests of 1926,” Hornby remarks that “the echoes of these contests still resound in the memories of many old-timers.” It is thus surprising that in my conversations with Island fiddlers, the glamour and excitement of some of the big Island contests and those to which the province sent their champion fiddlers was not what was remembered. As several musicians relate, although the contests were enjoyed by many performers and spectators, the competition

100 The Festival atlantique des violoneux (Acadian Fiddlers’ Jamboree) which is held annually in the Région Évangéline also showcases predominantly local musicians, although one or two representatives from the other Maritime Provinces and Québec (usually les Îles-de-la-Madeleine) are invited.


102 Helen Bergeron, interview with author, 14 July 2008.


often resulted in sore feelings amongst fiddlers (many of whom were family or neighbours) which, in some cases, lasted for decades:

Years ago they used to have competitions and they abolished them because it created too many ill feelings amongst musicians, you know, when you took off with the trophy and maybe the judge was a friend or an influence... 105

Growing frustration and acrimony as a result of the contests eventually led to a near absence of fiddle contests on the Island by the end of the 1970s. Although the number of contests has risen since that time, at present there are few contests on P.E.I. A handful of Island fiddle contests take place annually or biennially in Tyne Valley, Charlottetown and Crapaud, while a yearly “talent contest” in Summerside draws some young fiddlers. 106 There are certainly no P.E.I. contests at present that occur on the same large scale as those of the 1920s.

*Cultural rural tourism and La Cuisine à Mémé*

Building on the increased interest in local talent described above, in the 1980s and 1990s, local musician, composer and arranger Paul D. Gallant played a central role in promoting and organising musical activities in the *Région Évangéline*. He established and directed a number of successful musical theatre companies, variety shows and bands featuring predominately local teenage artists; as a testament to the success of his endeavours, over two decades later, two of these bands, Gameck and Panou, continue to be celebrated names in the *Région Évangéline*. As a founding member of Panou describes, the group performed and staged small tours for nine years, produced two French albums and even represented *Acadie* at a music festival held in conjunction with the 1985 Canada Games in St. John’s, Newfoundland. Panou’s performances featured almost exclusively original song compositions.

105 Philippe LeBlanc, interview with author, 22 July 2008. The negative social impact of these contests was also noted by Peter Arsenault, interview with author, 22 July 2008.
106 Nathan Condon, email communication with author, 10 November 2009.
by Gallant, with little emphasis on instrumental tunes, and the band would often perform new arrangements of traditional songs at local performances.¹⁰⁷

Panou’s performances had a significant impact on the community. Several community members expressed to me that the idea that a local band singing exclusively in French on P.E.I. could become regionally popular and go on tour throughout Atlantic Canada had a strong impact on the promotion of Acadian identity in the community, particularly among younger people. According to one local musician, the opportunities Panou offered young musicians fostered confidence and ambition in its members; many of the members have gone on to professional careers in music.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the group gave rise to an increased awareness of local talent. As Marie Livingstone recalls,

Acadians [are] traditionally shy...you would rarely see someone speaking in microphones except schoolteachers or a priest. Some of the [more extroverted people] would do skits occasionally, but the generally public always seemed shy. [Groups like Panou] brought a lot of confidence – to see young Acadians perform a full concert on stage. Also with the influence of T.V. and school consolidation, it brought students out and they would talk more. It was incredible! It [had] never happened [before] and I couldn’t have imagined it being that way.¹⁰⁹

Several of Gallant’s projects prospered even after he moved to Cheticamp, Nova Scotia, in the mid-1990s to pursue further musical endeavours. The most prominent of these was a long-running seasonal dinner theatre production called La Cuisine à Mémé, which most Acadians describe as having put the Région Évangéline “on the map.”

We were lucky in the community to have this... if you’d go to New Brunswick and say you were from the Evangeline Region, they’d say “oh, that’s where you have that Cuisine à Mémé!” People would associate it with the Evangeline area...like on a

¹⁰⁷ Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2010.
¹⁰⁸ Georges Arsenault, email to author, 5 February 2010; Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2010; Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 27 June 2008; Mylène Ouellette, interview with author, 9 August 2009.
¹⁰⁹ Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 16 April 2010.
smaller scale how people associate Anne of Green Gables [with] P.E.I., they would kind of associate La Cuisine à Mémé [with] the Evangeline Region.  

The productions’ comical plots always revolved around the character “Mémé,” following the now celebrated female character through birthdays, visits from relatives “From Away,” holidays and family feuds. While the term “dinner theatre” can be applied to any meal and entertainment combination, La Cuisine à Mémé followed what P.E.I.-born playwrights Don Groom and Briane Nasimok coined a “feast format” in the early 1980s. This “feast format” was conceived as a four-course meal served around a three-act musical comedy with audience interaction throughout; as Mike Allison explains, “actors sing, dance, play instruments, and serve food and drinks while remaining in character from the moment they seat the audience until they take their final bows.” This model of interactive dinner theatre has since been adopted by theatre companies across Canada, although Atlantic Canada features the highest concentration of such productions. In keeping with this east coast tradition of regional dinner theatre, La Cuisine à Mémé offered singing, step dancing and fiddling and featured songs and tunes by local composers and popular songwriters, such as Angèle Arsenault and local singer-songwriter Jeannita Bernard.

Throughout its twenty-four year production run (1984-2007), La Cuisine à Mémé became an important ingredient of the region’s identity and bolstered the local economy. Most

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111 The word “mémé” is a term of endearment for a grandmother (similar to “nana” or “granny”). The title La Cuisine à Mémé means “Granny’s kitchen.”
112 Other Island Acadian playwrights and directors took over from Paul D. Gallant but the plots maintained the same humourous tone.
113 This differs from most contemporary dinner theatre productions in North America in which the term “dinner theatre” generally refers to dinner followed by entertainment, during which the “fourth wall” between audience and performers is rarely broken. Mike Allison, “Dinner theatre Atlantic style,” Saltscapes (May-June 2008): 45.
114 Born in Abram-Village, P.E.I., Angèle Arsenault is one of the Island’s best known songwriters. She made her career in Québec where she lived for thirty years before recently moving back to P.E.I. I discuss her career and compositions further in Chapter 5.
of the musicians I interviewed between the ages of twenty-eight and fifty years old had participated in at least one production, if not more, and the experience often led to other performance opportunities and musical projects throughout the region. As one former participant explained, the performances attracted busloads of tourists throughout the summer months from across North America, although they were also well supported by local friends and family:

It was more [for] tourists. Most people from the area came at least once during the summer – they enjoyed it. It was part of our summer, I guess, because it went on for so long.\textsuperscript{115}

Staged at Le Village de l’Acadie, a hotel-restaurant establishment and centre for the region’s cultural tourism located in the picturesque rural community of Mont-Carmel, the productions targeted primarily Francophone tourists and highlighted aspects of the local Acadian culture.\textsuperscript{116} Although \textit{La Cuisine à Mémé} was initially conceived as an all-French production, the shows developed into bilingual shows with all French songs, thus increasing the production’s target market to reach a broader tourist market. Jocelyne Arsenault gives an example of how the local dialect was featured:

\begin{quote}
J: It was in both English and French. There was always mention of \textit{galettes blanches}, \textit{râpure} and \textit{pâté} and stuff like that.\textsuperscript{117} Typical Acadian food. They’d always put in points about Acadian stuff and we always used Acadian words [which would be explained in English] on the back of the program.

M: Do you remember any of those words?
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{115} Jocelyne Arsenault, interview with author, 6 August 2008.
\textsuperscript{116} Le Village de l’Acadie (“Le Village”) was the primary tourist complex in the Evangeline Region until it closed prior to the start of the tourist season in 2005. The complex featured a 56-room hotel, conference facilities, tennis courts, restaurant, exhibits of Acadian artists, an Acadian pioneer village, and it hosted \textit{La Cuisine à Mémé}.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Galettes blanches} are white rolls (served with butter and jam or molasses); \textit{râpure} is a casserole with pork (or meat mixture) and grated potatoes, served as is or with molasses; and \textit{pâté} is a traditional meat pie, served with molasses. These dishes are prepared and named differently in other parts of Acadie.
J: ...like “coquemar”

M: The other day I learned the term “tcheque.”

J: Yes, [that means] “quelque” (some). You wouldn’t be able to find it in the [French] dictionary, just the Acadian one! <laughs>

The popularity of *La Cuisine à Mémé* influenced the creation of successive musical theatre productions that continue to be staged annually in the *Région Évangéline*. These productions provide seasonal employment to the area’s local artists and thus serve as short-term economic tools for the community. Contrary to MacDonald and Jolliffe’s predictions for the development of a thriving cultural tourism industry in the region, however, as a result of the closing of Le Village in 2005 due to bankruptcy, cultural rural tourism in the *Région Évangéline* has fallen short of producing any long-term economic benefits. The level of tourist activity in the region has fallen significantly since the early 2000s and is a point of concern for several community members with whom I spoke. While some points of interest for tourists remain, such as the unique *Maison de Bouteilles* (The Bottle Houses), *Le Centre d’Artisanat* (a co-operative craft store) and Mont-Carmel’s historical *Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Carmel* church, locals point to the absence of Le Village as a centre for socialising and cultural activity for both tourists and locals, explaining that it has left a fissure in the region’s economy. One person with whom I spoke attributes this decline in the region’s tourism to a lack of vision in the community in regard to possible projects, the short tourist season (approximately six to eight weeks per year) and a lack of funding with which to develop new projects. While a detailed analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of this chapter, this last

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118 Pronounced “cock marre”
119 Pronounced “chuck.” I have borrowed the spelling “tcheque” from Louise Péronnet (1995).
120 Jocelyne Arsenault, interview with author, 6 August 2008.
point hints at the contentious issue for many islanders and entrepreneurs in the culture and
tourism industry of P.E.I.’s focus on Anne of Green Gables-centred tourism and the relative
neglect of non-Anne attractions and events. The litigious nature of the Island’s tourist industry
and short-term economic potential of small-scale cultural tourism aside, the Région
Évangéline’s tradition of staging seasonal shows remains an important aspect of the region’s
cultural life and local volunteers and performers continue to present dinner theatre and other
musical productions during the summer tourist season.

Figure 3.6 The cast of la Cuisine à Mémé, 2004. (Photo by Orrin Livingstone)

Several musical groups emerged from this climate of pride in local music in the
Région Évangéline, including award-winning groups Acadilac and Barachois. In the 1980s
and 90s, with the exception of Paul Gallant’s songs performed in the dinner theatre
productions, there were few contemporary original songs being composed and performed in
the community. The musical group Acadilac, formed in 1999 by brothers Jacques and Robert
Arsenault, and Sylvie Toupin, found its niche as a “new-tradition folk” group, creating and
performing original French Acadian songs.\textsuperscript{122} Patricia Richard, a former member of Panou and current member of Ode à l’Acadie, joined the group a few years later, adding vocals and mandolin to the ensemble.\textsuperscript{123} Acadilac’s only recording, Acadilac (1998), which was nominated in 2000 for ECMA’s Francophone Recording of the year, was the first recording of its kind on P.E.I. in that it consisted almost entirely of original songs. Although the group disbanded in 2001, Acadilac’s songs and musical arrangements continue to be widely referenced in the Région Évangéline and the creativity exhibited by group remains a source of inspiration and pride for Acadians in the community.

First appearing on the P.E.I. music scene a few years prior to Acadilac, the group Barachois is undoubtedly P.E.I.’s best known exponent of Acadian music.\textsuperscript{124} The following case study examines how Barachois distilled a particular interpretation of a distinct Acadian style and disseminated it to audiences around the world. Moreover, I consider the reception of their music by the local community and the impact of their music on local identity.

**Barachois: Distilling a “P.E.I. Acadian” sound**

They’re French Canadian, but they’re not from Québec. They’re all named Arsenault, but they’re not a family band. They include a fiddler, a dancer, an Elvis impersonator, and the world’s foremost player of the cake rack, and when the mood strikes them, they dress their audience members in funny hats and then whack them over the head with sticks.\textsuperscript{125}

Known for their humorous performances, repertoire of old songs and distinct manner of playing, the multiple award-winning group Barachois formed in 1995 and toured globally

\textsuperscript{122} Jay Scott Kaynes, Island Toes A'Tapping (Cairns Media, 2006), 21.
\textsuperscript{123} Other members of Acadilac have included bassist Rémi Arsenault, percussionist Reg Ballagh, and Carl Cormier.
\textsuperscript{124} The name of the group refers to a barachois, an Acadian word for a type of shallow pools of water separated from the sea by sand dunes along the shores of eastern Canada.
\textsuperscript{125} Dirty Linen “Barachois ,#100,” accessed 12 October 2009, www.dirtylinen.com/100/barachois.html
until it disbanded in 2003. Three of the group members are from the Région Évangéline—siblings Albert (b.1964) and Helen Bergeron (née Arsenault, b.1954), two children of Eddy Arsenault, are from St. Chrysostome and their distant cousin Louise Arsenault (née Gallant, b.1956) is from Mont-Carmel—while the fourth member, Chuck Arsenault (no relation, b.1969) is from Montague, in southern Kings County. Albert, Helen and Louise are from prominent Francophone Acadian musical families, whereas Chuck grew up in an Anglophone community and discovered his Francophone Acadian heritage only later in life. Helen recalls the musical environment in which she and Albert grew up:

[We] grew up in a musical family. I can remember my father playing the fiddle every day. On Sundays after Mass, he’d take out the fiddle and some of the kids would join him. One of my brothers had a cheap set of drums and we had an old guitar and a pump organ. We’d have big [kitchen] parties at my grandparents’ [house]. My grandfather and aunts and uncles step danced and some sang. Dancing is something that I can’t remember learning; it was just always there. The music was always there in my ears, too. So it was just something that I took for granted.  

Barachois presented French songs, lively fiddling, step dancing and humorous stage acts. Their performances highlighted distinctive elements from the kitchen parties of their childhood, such as the pump organ, podorhythmie (foot tapping), djigger (mouth music), innovative percussive instruments such as utensils and suitcases, and audience participation. As Albert explains, the staged antics came from their everyday lives growing up:

It’s a big, big part of what our parents do at parties, like our uncles are really wacky, really funny...we’re just trying to be funny, but they’re really funny.

Helen adds,

Most of the gags that you see [on stage] are just a recreation of what you see at a house party, so it’s really easy to get inspired for what to do.  

The group’s dynamic fiddler, Louise, also grew up in a “fiddling family” where music and dancing were regular household activities and learned through enculturation. Her father, Alyre Gallant (1920-1994), was a well known party fiddler, her mother played the pump organ and her brothers and sisters played guitar and danced. Louise explains that she knew she could play the fiddle before she had even tried it, although she was not allowed to play her father’s fiddle. As she explains, when she was seven years old she snuck out his violin and found that she could indeed play several of her father’s tunes,

Je les avais tous dans mes doigts. J’avais exactement quelle doigts qu’il mettait où sur le violon et puis je savais comment ce qu’il tenait l’archet, ça fait que là, je le mettait tous ça ensemble, c’était comme tout les morceaux que mon père jouait. I had them all in my fingers. I knew exactly where he put his fingers on the violin and I knew how he held the bow. So, I put them all together and it was just like the pieces my father played.128

According to local stories, Alyre had little interest in the influx of Scottish fiddling that permeated the Island in the twentieth century and had instead maintained an older, highly rhythmic style of fiddling. As Louise’s only musical mentors for many years, he and his close friend, fiddler Albin Arsenault (1905-1980), passed their style and local repertoire of old French, Acadian (many derived from songs) and Scottish reels to Louise; as is typical in the playing of the older fiddlers, many of the Scottish reels Alyre and Albin played were modified by changing the key, notes and occasionally entire phrases of a tune, often to accommodate particular melodic tastes or to accentuate the rhythmic aspect of the tune while playing for dancers. Louise is widely acknowledged as the only young female fiddler in her small community of Mont-Carmel, an isolated position that she eventually grew weary of as a young teenager. By the early 1970s she had stopped fiddling and eventually moved to Toronto

to work and raise her family; it was not until she returned to P.E.I. in the early 1990s that she reconnected with her musical roots.\footnote{Ibid.} These narratives of abandoning traditional music, even those associated with family activities, and out-migration are typical of the musical life stories of numerous prominent Island Acadian musicians with whom I spoke, including the group’s keyboardist, Helen; she also quit her musical activities at the age of thirteen, moved away after high school and returned to traditional music twenty years later when she moved back to the Island.\footnote{Helen Bergeron, interview in Ouellette, 45.}

As Barachois’s manager Grady Poe explains, when he moved to the Island in 1990, he felt that many Acadian musicians seemed to have lost sight of their own stylistic roots and were trying to emulate the popular Cape Breton fiddlers such as Natalie MacMaster and the Rankin Family who, by that time, had achieved regional and national fame. The idea for a show based on the experience of an Acadian kitchen party grew out of one of Grady’s first musical endeavours on the Island. In early 1990s, P.E.I.’s Department of Tourism and Parks announced a tourism promotional festival entitled “We’re Akin to Ireland,” as part of a campaign to celebrate the history of particular ethnicities on P.E.I., beginning with the Island’s Irish diaspora. The Irish campaign was followed by a festival of Scottish music on the Island, for which Grady proposed a traveling show, entitled “P.E.I. House Parties.”\footnote{According to Poe, the government intended on also highlighting Acadian culture however the campaign was closed after the second year that featured the Island’s Scottish heritage.} The show consisted of several singers and instrumentalists, including his wife, Helen Bergeron, who performed “house parties” for tourists in various locations around the Island. The concept was highly successful and the following year Helen’s brother, Albert, joined the show. Initially, the musical component of the show comprised a cross-section of Maritime styles and
popular tunes; gradually, however, the music took on a distinctive “Acadian” flavour as more traditional Acadian elements, such as podorhythmie (seated foot tapping) and djigger (or touner, mouth music) were added. Grady explains that the impetus for Barachois was initiated when he began to notice that the Acadian numbers stood out in the show and received a positive reaction from the audiences,

I was beginning to realise there was this thing... an Acadian musical sound and identity that was distinct from Cape Breton. It wasn’t the same thing at all.\(^{132}\)

Barachois formed after Louise, Helen, Albert and Chuck performed together in a season *la Cuisine à Mémé*. Although Louise had grown up listening almost exclusively to her father’s style of playing, in the early 1990s she too was trying emulate the Cape Breton fiddlers. Grady encouraged Louise and other members of Barachois “to forget about that Cape Breton stuff,” urging them instead to focus on their own local style and repertoire. He convinced them that the Acadian culture, if they focused on it, was a niche that had yet to be explored. Thus began a conscious effort to create a stage performance that was reflective of their own experiences of Acadian music; as Grady explains, “not a regurgitated facsimile of it but something that would take it in new directions.”\(^{133}\)

Conscientious about creating a distinct P.E.I. Acadian sound representative of their culture, the group turned to an archived collection of local Acadian songs recorded by P.E.I. Acadian historian and folklorist Georges Arsenault in the 1970s and select memories of the kitchen parties they grew up with to recontextualise various aspects of their musical past, generating at the same time a particular interpretation of their community. Arsenault had taped older men and women singing these traditional songs *a cappella* in their homes. The

\(^{132}\) Grady Poe, interview with author, 29 December 2009.

\(^{133}\) Ibid.
group took these archived recordings and reconstructed them, choosing instrumentation and creating arrangements; as Helen explains, “we grew up with the music and [t]here were the words.”

The “shuffle”

Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, fiddlers in the Région Évangéline were increasingly influenced by the dominant Scottish Cape Breton repertoire and style. Nonetheless, an analysis of early recordings, reinforced by oral histories, reveals that an old style of fiddle playing was retained by some fiddlers in the region through the twentieth century. Many of these older fiddlers incorporated a syncopated, bowed rhythm into their playing created by “dropping,” or not sounding, notes thereby giving the impression the weak beat was accented. Some fiddlers describe this effect as a “stutter” or “hiccup.” In his overview of fiddling styles on P.E.I., Ken Perlman calls this technique a “suppressed stroke” that is achieved by lightly brushing the string on the strong beat of a tune so that a “‘scratching’ sound is heard instead of a pure note.” Louise refers to this technique as a “shuffle,” a term that has been widely adopted by the Evangeline community. While the term represents this specific bowed technique, it may also be used to designate a general sound aesthetic in the region that is characterised as “rhythmic, fast-paced and uplifting for dancers.” The “shuffle” is illustrated in the following transcription of the tune “The Princess Reel” (Ex. 3.1), as played by Louise Arsenault in a recording with her group,

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135 Louise Arsenault, interview with author, 16 August 2008.
137 Ouellette notes that in addition to delineating a specific musical concept, the term “shuffle” can refer to “a general sound described as rhythmic, fast-paced and uplifting for dancing” that is associated with Acadian musical style. Ouellette, 20.
138 Ibid.
Gadelle. The “suppressed” bow strokes are represented as alternate note heads (note that there are no slurred bowings in Louise’s version of the tune and the bowing follows at up-down pattern):

Example 3.1 The Princess Reel, as played by Louise Arsenault on Gadelle (2008). (Transcription by author)

In her analysis of the “shuffle” in P.E.I. Acadian music, Mylène Ouellette posits that, “the ‘shuffle’ seems to be generated from the foot tapping of the fiddler and appears to have an impact on accompanying instruments as well.” Oral tradition in the region suggests that foot-tapping was once a response to Church-imposed restrictions on dance and a lack of accompanying instruments (as discussed in Chapter 2); while it is unclear exactly when and where it originated, foot-tapping is widespread among French Canadian fiddlers and is likely an influence from Acadians’ exposure to Québécois musicians. While most of the Island’s Scottish and Irish fiddlers stomp (sometimes quite aggressively) with their right foot in a flat stomp or “toe-heel” movement, many Acadians perform a “toe-toe-heel” (or “toe-step-heel”) tapping pattern with both feet. This is similar to the foot-tapping practices in other French-

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139 The term “shuffle” is generally used in reference to the fiddle, the term also exists in step dancing vocabulary and “designates a brushing movement of the feet.” Ibid., 16.
Canadian traditions, particularly in les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, parts of mainland Québec and French Acadian parts of Newfoundland. As Albert explains, the use of the feet as percussion instruments is central to the overall musical aesthetic,

We were in a room last night practicing and we didn’t want to bang our feet too much [because of] the plaster ceilings. And there were rugs. Banging [our] feet softly on the rugs we couldn’t hear anything—we weren’t really gelling and we knew it was because the feet weren’t there.

This importance of foot-tapping to the success of a performance is a sentiment that I have heard expressed frequently by Island Acadian musicians. Albert currently performs as one half of the musical and comedic duo, Chuck et Albert. In a recent conversation with Chuck about the duo’s first CD, énergie (2009), I learned that the album was recorded in a century-old house in Malpeque, P.E.I., which has been converted into a recording studio. As he explains, the most challenging aspect of the recording was capturing the sound of the feet so that it sounded as close to a live performance sound as possible. After testing out the acoustics in various rooms in the house—including the bathroom—and trying different pairs of shoes to get “just the right sound,” they eventually recorded the feet while sitting on the staircase.

In the Région Évangéline, the standard foot-tapping pattern for reels (tunes in 4/4 time) creates a repetitive “tic-a-tac” rhythm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription key:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T = Toe tap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H= Heel tap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S = Step (flat foot tap)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

140 Ibid., 19.  
142 Chuck Arsenault, personal communication with author, 8 February 2011. I discuss Chuck et Albert’s performances in Chapter 5.
Example 3.2 Basic Acadian foot tapping pattern based on Ouellette’s model of dance step notation.\textsuperscript{143}

Louise performs a variation on this pattern, replacing the quarter-note length “heel” movement with eighth-note “heel” taps with both feet to create a constant eighth-note pattern:

Example 3.3 Louise Arsenault variation of the basic pattern, based on Ouellette’s notation model.

When the fiddle and foot-tapping are combined, the subdivisions of the beat performed by the fiddle sound on the “silent” beat in the fiddle’s “shuffle,” thus emphasising the syncopated rhythmic feel of the music.

Ouellette posits that the foot-tapping generates the “shuffle” rhythm in the fiddle, which in turn “has an impact on accompanying instruments as well.”\textsuperscript{144} Although, as we will see, Louise’s fiddle style prompted the development of a corresponding rhythmic accompaniment by Barachois’ keyboardist, I argue that it is plausible that the “shuffle” not only had an impact on accompaniment but that it was also influenced by the earlier pump organ sound. Louise has frequently mentioned that the pump organ was a familiar sound in

\textsuperscript{143} Ouellette, 19.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 13.
her childhood; it is therefore not surprising that this influence might have crept into her musical sensibility and that it is embodied in her fiddle playing. With its lack of resonance, the pump organ produced a distinct attack on the beginning of the note, which faded quickly. In the older practice of playing quick reels on the pump organ with the right hand, notes would periodically not sound as distinctly as others depending on the dexterity of the player and the articulation of each note; the resulting sound consisted of few, if any, sustained notes, a distinct rhythmic attack and periodic “hiccups,” the combination of which produce a similar effect to the “shuffle” that characterises Louise’s fiddling.¹⁴⁵

The “shuffle” style of fiddling, with its corresponding seated foot-tapping accompaniment, was identified by Barachois as being typical of the older style of Acadian fiddling. Drawing on memories of her father’s fiddling, Louise emphasised the “shuffle” rhythm in her playing. This fiddle style was reinforced by Helen on the pump organ or keyboard; by emulating and anticipating the accents produced by Louise’s rhythmic syncopation, she created a distinct style of accompaniment that blends the old pump organ style of accorder (“to chord”) with the Cape Breton piano-style accompaniment. Older practices of accorder consisted of a simple I-IV-V-I chord progression played in an “oom-pah” rhythm that emphasised the off-beat, a bass line pattern in the left hand and triad chording in the right hand. Today, pianists in the Evangeline region have adopted the complex left hand broken octave pattern from the Cape Breton style of accompaniment emphasised by chromatic bass runs at the end of tune sections, while the right hand plays root position triads above middle C, following the chord progression of the left hand. Retaining a regular pulse of four beats per measure in her left hand, Helen modified this standard accompaniment by

¹⁴⁵ The mouth organ (harmonica) likely had a similar influence on the fiddle style, as it has a similar articulation (“attack”), non-sustained sound and periodic “hiccups.”
alternating between straight and syncopated rhythms in her right hand to accentuate and anticipate the syncopation in Louise’s style.\textsuperscript{146}

Figure 3.7 Barachois. (Photo by Louise Vessey, courtesy of Barachois)

\textit{Barachois on the world stage}

Although the group made a conscious effort to present their Acadian experience to audiences worldwide, Helen stresses that their aim was not to impart a history lesson or discuss their style of music. She explains that, even if most of their audiences were not familiar with the Acadian story, much less Francophone communities on P.E.I., their shows only \textit{indirectly} addressed aspects of Island Acadian culture and everyday issues within their community, focusing instead on humour, theatrics and entertainment,

We just did what we did. It was not a sentimental, “oh, big victimhood of the Acadians” type of thing. It was just this goofy, more Amand [her uncle]-type thing. With Louise’s wild fiddling and Albert as the second fiddler, they would do a lot of duos... there was a ton of goofiness. So it was that side of being Acadian that we

\textsuperscript{146} Ouellette, 38-42.
focused on. That was more natural to us anyway, because that was how we witnessed our culture growing up. I mean, words like “Acadian” and “culture” and “tradition,” weren’t even in our vocabulary growing up. So we were just presenting what we grew up with...it was easy and natural for us to claim ourselves as an Acadian group because that’s the only thing we knew! So nobody could say “well, that’s not really Acadian” because that’s what we are. Sorry! That’s what we do. That’s who we are.

... If we did interviews and we were asked about the style then we would explain it, but it was just something that was presented and we didn’t shove it down people’s throats. We’re just an Acadian band and if you want to know what’s Acadian, well, here you go.147

In a media interview in the early 2000s, Helen explained that her own cultural awareness, evident in the group’s creative processes, was relatively newfound:

We didn't grow up talking about being Acadian, we just were. We spoke French at home and English when we left the area. We didn't learn about our culture in school. It's just in the last few years that we've been discovering a lot about our history. There's a lot of pride in one's culture; it's kind of a trendy thing nowadays.148

Most Acadians in the Région Évangéline attribute this sense of pride to Barachois’ visibility on national and international stages. Several informants expressed that the success of Barachois’ music outside P.E.I. also had a positive impact on how the community viewed itself, reinforcing the value of their own traditions which had been previously overlooked in favour of external traditions, particularly those of Cape Breton Island. The group was motivated to bring old songs back into popular consciousness; most of the songs they dug out of archives had not been heard before as a result of the decline in oral tradition. As Helen explains, “some people are moved to tears because they haven’t heard these songs since childhood. The oral tradition is dying out.”149 When asked about the ways in which the local culture had changed over the past two decades, Barachois was often mentioned in relation to

147 Helen Bergeron, interview with author, 14 July 2008.
the manner in which local musicians expressed interest in the local tradition. As Grady Poe explains,

There is a kind of identity of an Acadian band and, you know, a distinctive Acadian music from the region. People have stopped trying to play Cape Breton music and started to get more in touch with just playing their own music. I’ve seen that happen. And that happened ... in part anyway, because there was a band in the region who went out there to distil and define an approach and that made a difference. And then, well, [the attitude changed to] “we can do our own thing; we don’t have to do their thing to be successful.”

As a result of Barachois’ success the “shuffle” style has become a symbol of Acadian music on P.E.I. Marie Livingstone describes the “shuffle” as “a different way of playing, it is our region’s style of playing.” When asked about the style in the Evangeline Region, Acadians and other islanders cited this rhythmic feature and often demonstrated it for me, usually in a wildly exaggerated fashion. As result of musical exchanges in recent years between P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the “shuffle” has been further reinforced as a sonic identifier of traditional Island Acadian music. It is somewhat ironic then, that this feature has actually seeped very little into the Acadian musical style of the majority of Evangeline fiddlers. While nearly everyone I jammed with and interviewed could demonstrate this style, Louise remains one of the only fiddlers who have incorporated the “shuffle” into their everyday style, and she is certainly the only fiddler to emphasise the “shuffle” so prominently in her playing. The only others who have begun to play in this manner are the young fiddlers she has begun to teach. Accordingly, although the shuffle style is referenced widely as a characteristic feature of Acadian fiddle music on P.E.I., its penetration into contemporary local practices remains limited.

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150 Grady Poe, interview with author, 29 December 2008.
151 Marie Livingstone, interview with Mylène Ouellette, in Ouellette, 17.
152 This relationship between Acadians on P.E.I. and les Îles de la Madeleine is the subject of Chapter 5.
153 A “jam” is an informal musical session.
The following section examines how individual musicians negotiate tradition and individual innovation in their music. Case studies of three prominent Island Acadian fiddlers are presented, each illustrating different interpretations of what constitutes a P.E.I. Acadian fiddle style.

**Acadian fiddling in the Région Évangéline: Individuality and innovation**

Island Acadian fiddling, like Island Acadian music more generally, is hard to pin down stylistically. Given the apparent discrepancy between the ways in which Acadian fiddling is theorised and the diversity of fiddling styles in the Acadian community, we might be compelled to ask how the P.E.I. tradition may be characterised. Is it, as one of my Acadian friends suggested, “just Island Acadians making music”? How do fiddlers in the Région Évangéline and, indeed, those of us trying to learn from them, account for the significant stylistic variations that all seem to be representative of Acadian fiddling on P.E.I.? In this section I consider these questions and I examine three fiddlers’ “musical life stories,” influences, style and repertoire, experiences of music-making and roles in their communities, with the aim of understanding the community’s musical values and perceptions of the tradition’s parameters. Colin Quigley’s engaging study of the celebrated Newfoundland Acadian fiddler, Émile Benoit, has been influential in shaping my approach to the case studies of these individual musicians. In his ethnography of Benoit, Quigley suggests that the study of individual musicians can serve as a lens onto larger creative and expressive processes. The three musicians I introduce in this section were all raised in environments in which music was

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ever-present, although they cross several generations and, thus, have had significantly distinct points of historical and musical reference, experiences and opportunities related to their art.

While my study is clearly different than Quigley’s in that I present shorter case studies of selected individuals within the larger Acadian community as opposed to focusing on one individual, I nevertheless maintain that we can learn much about the larger Island Acadian community through an examination of the cultural milieu in which these musicians live(d), learned and practiced their craft.

**Continuity and variation in P.E.I. Acadian fiddling**

In her study of Ontario fiddle contests, Sherry Johnson asks, “how do [these fiddlers] assert individual identity without alienating themselves from their musical community?” Johnson demonstrates that individuality within the Ontario tradition is constantly negotiated by contest fiddlers with respect to personal tastes, judging criteria and cross-generational musical expectations and aesthetic preferences. As she explains,

Instances of individuality operate within some rather strong boundaries of acceptable old-time repertoire and style: one can play some variations on the melody, but not too much; one can play certain ethnically associated ornaments, but not too many, and only for certain judges; one can write new tunes, but cannot move too far away from the traditional sound.

While staying within well defined boundaries, the Ontario fiddlers with whom she works express their individuality on the concert stage through melodic variations and ornamentation, and by adding tags and intros to their performances of tune sets. This assertion of individuality among Acadian fiddlers in the **Région Évangéline** is also commonplace.

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157 Ibid., 487.
158 Ibid.
Whereas some fiddlers talk about the “shuffle” as a regional style, most recognise it as a regional style from an older era and acknowledge that contemporary styles vary significantly within the region. As Anastasia Desroches expresses,

I think we’re all so different around here. Acadian style... what’s Acadian style? I don’t think there’s an Acadian style. I think everyone plays very different from one another but each... has something that I can learn from.

...we don’t really have tunes that are Acadian, we just play them in a way that sound different [from fiddlers outside the region.] And I think too that the foot-tapping and the rhythms that go along with it, and the shuffle ... describe a few people, but it doesn’t describe everyone. 159

Nevertheless, local musicians point out that there are similarities in performance practice even if they are difficult to articulate. Describing the variety of fiddling styles in the region, several musicians acknowledged both stylistic similarities and aesthetic preferences that have been transmitted within the community. First, there is a prevalent accent on up-bows, generally on the up-beat, whereas fiddlers in other parts of the Island (particularly in areas where the Scottish tradition is prevalent) would likely play a strong down-beat on the down bow. Second, there is an absence of slurs in the playing styles of many fiddlers in the region; however, as the following case studies demonstrate, this does not apply to the playing of several of the region’s most prominent fiddlers. Lastly, there is continuity in the core repertoire of most Evangeline fiddlers and certain fiddlers’ interpretations of tunes have become standard within the community, distinguishing the way many Evangeline fiddlers play particular tunes from fiddlers outside the tradition. As Anastasia Desroches explains, these local variations often differ from the original (or standard version elsewhere) in terms of

159 Anastasia Desroches, interview with author, 26 June 2008. The question of an “Acadian” repertoire is explored in more detail in Chapter 4.
the mode the tune is played in or the way a fiddler “turns” a tune. The most memorable of these variations are often transmitted throughout the community, usually retaining their association to a particular fiddler:

Where I see a similarity [among fiddlers in our region] is that around here people will take tunes and play them in a mode that they weren’t written in, and I don’t know where [that practice] comes from. Like there’s a tune in A-major called “Dillon Brown” and here, certain players, not everybody, certain players play it in A-myxolidian. They go down to the G, as opposed to up to the D and the E...someone else just learned it that way and it stayed that way, kind of thing. And that happens around here too. You have people learning tunes that way because Eddy played it that way or Edward played it that way. So, there is not necessarily a standard way to play the tune [outside of the region]. [Similarly,] we share a lot of the same tunes.

In broaching the subject of modality, Anastasia refers to another musical aesthetic that was, and in some cases still is, found Island-wide. It is common to hear older P.E.I. fiddlers modify a tune (or a part of a tune) that was originally conceived in a minor mode so that the tune’s mode is either ambiguous or so that it is played entirely in the major mode; this is generally accomplished by raising the 3rd and 7th scale degrees (see Ex. 3.4). Older P.E.I. Acadian fiddlers, such as Jaddus Gallant, Albin Arsenault and members of the Joe Bibienne family were known for having this inclination toward the major mode. According to local musicians, minor chords were not used by accompanying Acadian pianists or guitarists in the region until the late 1970s, even in the context of a minor tune, thus influencing (to varying extents) fiddlers’ preference for a tune’s mode. This practice of transposing a tune into a major mode is particularly apparent in contrast to neighbouring Cape Breton fiddlers who

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160 In his work on the compositional processes of French Newfoundland fiddler Emile Benoit, Colin Quigley defines the expression “turning a tune” as “a fairly common practice of composition in which a traditional first strain [line] serves as the initial idea” upon which the second strain is conceived (“Catching rhymes:” 170). On P.E.I. there are two related meanings of this expression. The phrase can refer to the melodic variations a fiddler adds to an existing tune; for example, fiddlers will often have a distinct way of ending a tune or altering a particular passage. Perlman points out that some P.E.I. fiddlers also refer to sections of the tune (there are usually two parts) as the “low turn” and the “high turn,” respectively. Perlman, The Fiddle Tradition of P.E.I., 17.

161 Anastasia Desroches, interview with author, 26 June 2008.
maintained a large number of tunes in their original minor modes. The musical aesthetic of the older P.E.I. fiddlers was subsequently transmitted to the next generation of fiddlers, such as Edward P. Arsenault and Louise Arsenault, whose early exposure to “mixed-modal” tunes prompted them to feel the tunes in a major (or mixed) mode. Likely as a result of listening to the playing of Eddy Arsenault and Cape Breton fiddlers, both of Edward and Louise’s musical tendencies have shifted to playing such tunes in their original minor form. As Marie Livingstone explains, Eddy was known for his distinct Cape Breton-influenced repertoire and style, as well as for his inclination toward minor tunes that were rarely heard in the region. Edward’s versions of tunes have been strongly influenced by Eddy as well as by playing with Marie who, as Eddy’s neighbour, picked up his taste for minor tunes. Subsequent generations of guitarists have also adjusted their finger positions to incorporate minor chords into their repertoire. The following transcriptions of the popular tune “Paddy on the Turnpike” illustrate an older Acadian version from the Région Évangéline (mixed-modal) as played by Eddy Arsenault (Ex. 3.4) followed by a standard minor version of the same tune found on Cape Breton Island that is played by some P.E.I. fiddlers (Ex. 3.5).

162 The most prominent tunes in the Région Évangéline that fall under this category are “Paddy on the Turnpike,” “The Brae Reel,” the second part of “La Marmotteuse,” “Archie Menzies” and “Pigeon on the Gate.”
163 Marie Livingstone, email correspondence with author, 1 June 2010.
Example 3.4 Paddy on the Turnpike in “A,” as played by Eddy Arsenault.

Ex. 3.5 Paddy on the Turnpike, standard A minor version.

In his collection of P.E.I. fiddle tunes, Ken Perlman reconciles this major/minor ambiguity by explaining that Island fiddlers have a concept of pitch that does not correspond entirely to the tempered scale. He argues that these fiddlers intentionally flatten and sharpen notes (as opposed to just playing out of tune), particularly the 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 4\textsuperscript{th} and 7\textsuperscript{th} scale degrees, resulting in pitches that rest “about half-way between its major-scale and minor-scale values, yielding
what is known as a neutral third.”\textsuperscript{164} While there may be some value in this observation, particularly in reference to an older generation of fiddlers who have passed away, the notion of an intentional “half-way note” is not one that is shared by the participants of my study who spoke to this subject of pitch and modality. As I noted in Chapter 1, this seems to reflect a generational shift in musical aesthetics among traditional fiddlers. With the influx of commercially-available recordings and standardised instrument tuning and tune modes, contemporary fiddlers (in particular, younger generation fiddlers) are less inclined to play a tune in an ambiguous mode; tunes tend to be strictly major or minor, unless they are composed otherwise.\textsuperscript{165}

Grady Poe describes this continuity within the tradition as an Acadian “sensibility.” He identifies four fiddlers, Eddy and his son Peter, Louise and Edward P. Arsenault, as fiddlers who, in his view, share a musical sensibility in their playing that makes people want to get up and dance. As he explains,

Everyone approaches it differently, but they’re all sort of going for the... the whole idea is to give that thing (the music) life. You can hear technically great players but there’s just... not life. It’s not alive. And that’s the sensibility that exists in this area. That’s the thing that people value. They don’t care if your tone is that great, or squeaks and scratches a bit, you know? It’s like... is that thing – if there some kind of life coming out of [the playing.] And that’s kind of like the sensibility, rather than perfection – it’s more like a notion that people value...everybody has their own approach to that equation.\textsuperscript{166}

The “life” to which Grady refers is recognised by most musicians and dancers across the Island as a distinguishing feature of good “dance fiddlers” (in contrast to those who play in other performance contexts) and a vital part the music. Here it is more likely the emphasised

\textsuperscript{164} In his transcriptions, Perlman indicates these “half-way” pitches with arrows above the note pointing up or down. Perlman, \textit{The Fiddle Music of P.E.I.}, 28.
\textsuperscript{165} There are some contemporary Cape Breton tunes for example that clearly shift from major to minor keys.
\textsuperscript{166} Grady Poe, interview with author, 29 December 2008.
up-bows to which Grady refers, which is a characteristic of some Evangeline fiddlers’ styles that gives tunes an added “lift” that is so prized by local step dancers. In her study of Ontario old-time fiddling, Sherry Johnson describes this vague concept of a particular “feel” in music as “danceability,” noting that phrasing, driving rhythm, accents and bounce all play a role in achieving the particular “feel” in the music.\textsuperscript{167} Similarly, Island pianist Kevin Chaisson emphasises that the ability of a fiddler and his accompanist(s) to move dancers to “give a few steps”\textsuperscript{168} requires a strong drive, an uplifting “bounce,” and is based on more than simply the tempo in which a tune is played:

“\begin{quote}
When I sit down to play, I don’t sit down just for any reason at all. When I sit down to play [at the keyboard] I’m gonna do anything in my power to make you feel like getting up and dancing. If it’s good music I don’t care what [tune] it is. If it’s good...[and] I don’t mean a hundred miles an hour, but a nice up tempo... you just want to get up and dance. I mean, that’s what music does to us, that’s what it does to me.\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

Helen reasons that this emphasis on dance in the playing of older fiddlers gave rise to a similar notion of rhythmic pulse, noting that contemporary fiddling has become more geared towards performance as opposed to dance accompaniment:

“The older style, to me, is more to make people dance. It makes you want to jump up and dance. There’s a pulse there, that “sh sh chou, sh sh chou”\textsuperscript{170} rhythm. You can hardly help it to want to dance. And that’s what the aim was at parties was to make people dance instead of actually performing in front of people where people are sitting and watching. That wasn’t how fiddling was in the older days.\textsuperscript{171}

This binary of performance versus dance music will be discussed further in the next chapter in relation to local repertoire, tune preferences among Acadian step dancers and the practice of local tune composition in the region.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Johnson, “Negotiating Tradition,” 422.
\item Local parlance for spontaneous step dancing, often in the context of a kitchen or shed party.
\item Kevin Chaisson, interview with author, 14 July 2008.
\item In standard Western music notation this rhythm would notated as two eighth notes (“sh sh”) plus a quarter note (“chou”).
\item Helen Bergeron, interview with author, 14 July 2008.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In contrast to his sister Helen and several of the musicians I have cited above, Peter Arsenault perceives few stylistic similarities among fiddlers in the region and considers the lack of a definitive fiddling style as a positive trait in their community:

I don’t think there is an Acadian style. You go listen to Louise and then you listen to Edward, you listen to Marie Livingstone, you listen to me...I mean there’s not anything close but in a way that’s great, right? ‘Cause if you go somewhere [else] and you listen to five people, man, they almost all sound alike. So maybe that is the Acadian thing – everyone’s got their own [style] and they don’t really care about having to sound like the next guy. And again that brings it back to the old days where everybody’s versions were wildly different. So I don’t really – [my sister Hélène and I] have talked about this many times, about the Acadians – like what is the Acadian style? All we know is that it’s not the Cape Breton style. It’s hard to pinpoint... it just depends who you listen to. You’d be hard-pressed to find any similarities between two fiddlers, really.172

Thus, it appears that while some comparisons of fiddling styles can be made within the region, the ways in which “Acadian fiddling” is frequently described – “lift,” “danceability,” and “drive” – does not in fact distinguish Island Acadian fiddling from most east coast fiddle styles, most of which are talked about in these terms. Indeed, as my Acadian friend alluded, being an “Acadian fiddler” is more about embodying a particular state of mind than about style or technique. This point is illustrated below through case studies of three Evangeline fiddlers.

Profile of a fiddler: Eddy Arsenault

Often referred to as the “grandfather of Acadian fiddling,” Eddy (Alfred) Arsenault is one of the most respected and influential fiddlers on P.E.I. Eddy was born in 1921 to Arcade and Madeleine Arsenault of St. Chrysostome, a small community in the heart of the Région Évangéline. At the age of eighty-eight, he lives just down the road from his childhood home with his wife, Rita. Of their seven children, four are musicians, including Helen and Albert

who began their professional musical careers with Barachois. Eddy has had many occupations in his lifetime, including army vehicle operator in England during the Second World War, a lobster fisherman for over forty years in Egmont Bay and a carpenter, among other things.173 His daughter, Helen, recounts that her father decided to play the fiddle when he was fifteen years old. Although he was not a fiddler himself, their father found Eddy an old fiddle and set it up. Eddy’s younger brother, Amand, recalls that they were sent to the barn to practice with Eddy on the fiddle, Amand on guitar and their other brother Edmund on harmonica because his mother “didn’t want that noise in the house.”174 His mother was surprised when, after a six-month visit to the United States to visit her ailing sister-in-law, she came home to find that they could play very well.175 Thus began a lifelong affair with the fiddle that took Eddy to competitions, festivals and concerts across the Island, parts of North America and Europe. Eddy’s family and neighbours recall him playing every day; his son Peter jokingly describes Eddy’s fiddling as part of “the daily racket of the household.” Although Eddy did not particularly encourage his children to pick up the fiddle due to the anticipated social lifestyle of a dance and party fiddler, it did not stop three of his children (Peter, Helen and Albert) from becoming accomplished players. Peter recounts the moment upon their return from a musical tour in which he accompanied on the drums, when he realised that he too wanted to fiddle and broached the subject with his father,

> When we got back I said “you know, I think you should fix a fiddle up for me” because he had a few old fiddles lying around. So he said- this is exactly what he said-: “ahhh, don’t get into that – you just got married!”176

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175 Helen Bergeron, interview with author, 14 July 2008.
Eddy is known for his smooth, animated style of performing, impeccable timing and strong, clear tone. Although his initial influences were older fiddlers in his area who played in the old “shuffle” style, Eddy’s style and repertoire were greatly influenced by the Cape Breton fiddlers Winston “Scotty” Fitzgerald and Angus Chisholm whom he heard on the radio and, later, recordings. As one musician described, Eddy emulated the most innovative Cape Breton fiddlers of his day with their smooth and ornamented style, but he maintains an Acadian sensibility in his playing with a driving “French swing”\(^{177}\) that carries the rhythmic nuance of the old Acadian fiddlers.\(^ {178}\) As a result of the Cape Breton influence the “stutters” or “shuffle” of the old style became less evident, replaced by the fingered and bowed ornamentation characteristic of the Cape Breton style. Learning tunes through the media of radio and recordings, Eddy invented a practical bowing style and various techniques to reproduce the

\(^{177}\) Helen Bergeron, interview with author, 14 July 2008.

\(^{178}\) Grady Poe, interview with author, 29 December 2008.
sound of the grace notes which, at first, he did not realise were fingered ornaments such as grace notes. Marie Livingstone recalls Eddy’s learning process:

He had records to listen to, he couldn’t read music... you know, he could slow down the records to 33RPMs or whatever, but then the tone wouldn’t match on his fiddle so he had to use only his ears to remember [the ornaments] and then when he’d speed it up you couldn’t hear all the notes, so... he had some ear!

In contrast to Louise Arsenault’s version of the “Princess Reel” (Ex. 3.1), Eddy’s version (Ex. 3.6) is smoother, with no “shuffles.” Instead of a near-constant eighth-note rhythm, Eddy utilises numerous slurred bows, chords and quarter notes (Ex. 3.6, bars 1-3, 9 and 12).

Example 3.6 The Princess Reel (trad., NB), as played by Eddy Arsenault.

Eddy’s repertoire, too, distinguishes him from other players in the region. While reels are the predominant tune genre in the region, Eddy is known for his diverse repertoire of reels,

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marches, strathspeys and jigs.\textsuperscript{182} His repertoire includes old Acadian and Québécois tunes that were popular among older fiddlers in the region, a number of tune sets played by Winston “Scotty” Fitzgerald and other Cape Breton or Scottish tunes.

Throughout his musical life, Eddy was most often heard accompanied on guitar by his brother, Amand. The duo entertained at house parties, seniors’ homes, the seniors’ club “Club 50” in Abram Village, and continue to be highlights of the annual festivals in the region. As Marie Livingstone explains, in the days when musicians did not travel far (indeed, they rarely entertained outside of their own communities), Eddy was the exception. He was known in musical circles across P.E.I. and off-Island, performed at festivals in eastern P.E.I. (Rollo Bay) and Moncton, competed in fiddling contests across the Maritimes, and once performed for Queen Elizabeth II and former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. He featured on popular Canadian television variety shows “Up Home Tonight” (ATV Halifax) and “On The Road Again” (CBC). Eddy has been honoured by \textit{la Société Saint-Thomas d’Aquin}, the East Coast Music Association, and the Atlantic Fiddlers’ Jamboree, to name but a few organisations for his influence on the region’s music and musicians and promotion of traditional music. He has also released two solo albums, “Eddy Arsenault: Egmont Baie” (LP, 1981) and “Piling on the Bois Sèc” (cassette, 1993), and featured on numerous other recordings including “Party Acadien” (1995), a CD recorded with his close friends and family, and other collections of P.E.I. music.

Eddy’s fame became a source of pride among Acadians in the region and, years later, Eddy remains a cultural icon with small-scale celebrity status. Furthermore, his fiddling sparked a resurgence of interest in traditional music among subsequent generations of

\textsuperscript{182} Reels are lively dance tunes in duple time, either 2/2 or 4/4. Reels usually have two sections (A and B), each consisting of 8 measures, which are repeated (AABB or ABAB). Each section is made up of 2- or 4-bar phrases.
musicians. Eddy’s son, Peter, recalls that during his years living at home there was a constant flow of fiddlers and music-lovers that would come over to listen to Eddy play.  

When Marie Livingstone took up the fiddle in the 1990s, her first goal was to learn all of Eddy’s standard tunes to which she had listened and danced since her childhood. While Eddy’s youngest children, Helen and Albert, later became major advocates for cultural revitalization in the region through their work with Barachois, Eddy was the first to take Island Acadian music off-Island; as such, in his unassuming way, Eddy played a prominent role in ensuring the vitality of the tradition in its modern form. Yet, throughout his busy years of balancing family and community responsibilities, extra-musical work and off-Island musical performances, Eddy’s agenda was never more than to share his music broadly to those who wished to hear it. As such, his music was marketed modestly, seldom utilizing labels such as “Island Acadian” or “Acadian fiddler” that are much in vogue today; depending on the context, Eddy was an “Island”, “French” or “Maritime” fiddler.

Although few young fiddlers have retained Eddy’s particular repertoire and style, drawing instead on other local and neighbouring styles, Eddy maintains an inspirational role for younger generation musicians. This inspiration goes well beyond the musical notes, however. Most Acadians with whom I spoke reflected not only on Eddy’s musical presence and distinct style, but also on his extra-musical characteristics: husband and father of seven, fisherman and dance fiddler, church choir member (in fact, until recently he sang in two church choirs), soft-spoken, modest, and patriarch of a large musical family. As one young man I spoke to describes, “Eddy is the full package Acadian… the typical Acadian. You can’t

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really get more Acadian in that family.” Likewise, Patricia Richard explains that Eddy’s influence factored significantly in her own process of cultural awareness,

[Edward Arsenault b. 1938, often referred to as Edward à Polycarpe, is a soft-spoken, modest man in his early seventies. Born in St. Chrysostome, next door to Eddy Arsenault, Edward started playing guitar and mouth organ (harmonica) at the age of fifteen. Although he is a much sought after fiddler for step dancing, Edward picked up the fiddle in secret at the age of thirty-two at his wife’s urging and it was a full ten years before any of his siblings knew that he could play. Edward explains that he was always surrounded by and interested in fiddle music; his mother played the mouth organ and pump organ, and he regularly heard his neighbour Eddy on the fiddle. The first tunes he learned (by ear) were “the old reels” such as St. Anne’s reel, Princess Reel and Ottawa Valley Reel that he heard Eddy play as he was growing up.

185 Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2009.
As with Louise Arsenault, musicians in the region describe Edward as most similar to the style of older Acadian fiddlers. His sister Marie suggests that this association stems from a similar rhythmic attack in the way that Louise and Edward play fiddle tunes and the manner in which tunes were played on the mouth organ and pump organ in the 1950s and 60s.\textsuperscript{186} In fact, Louise’s and Edward’s styles are viewed by many musicians in the region as being the most alike in terms of its rhythmic intensity and upbeat inflection. Although Edward does not “drop” notes as prominently as heard in Louise’s “shuffle” style, several musicians describe both their playing as having “a real shuffle in the bow,”\textsuperscript{187} referring to the rhythmic lift of the stressed upbeats.

\textsuperscript{186} Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 16 April 2010.
\textsuperscript{187} Anastasia Desroches, interview with author, 26 June 2008.
With a repertoire consisting almost entirely of reels, typical of older fiddlers in the region, Edward’s style incorporates neither fingered nor bowed ornamentation (such as grace notes or “cuts”), and few slurred bowings. He is known for playing a consistent eighth note “down-up” bowing pattern (in reels), with few held (quarter-note length) notes. The lack of ornaments and complex bowing patterns produces a style that is far from simple, however. In order to set up the bow to reach a down bow on particular notes, he strategically adds an eighth note (where other fiddlers would typically insert a quarter note) or multiple up bows to “land” with a down bow on a particular note without creating the impression of slurred bowing. In much the same way as the subdivided foot tapping pattern emphasises the off-beat, Edward’s eighth note bowing emphasizes the off-beat, producing a rhythmic nuance that is not felt in other North American fiddling styles. Where other fiddlers like to “stretch notes,” giving the musical phrase “pull” by adding quarter notes, Edward’s style is described by some fiddlers as being more rhythmically “square,” “percussive” and “driving.” The following transcriptions of Edward’s composition “Reel des acadiens” (Acadian Reel) exemplify this stylistic difference. Example 3.7 illustrates Edward’s version of the tune based on a performance recorded by the author at the Jamboree on 25 July 2009; the ossia staff indicates the way Edward habitually plays the tune. Example 3.8 illustrates how other fiddlers in the region commonly play the same tune.

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188 Indeed, most North American traditional fiddling styles play reels with a mix of quarter and eighth notes, only accenting the off-beat or smaller subdivisions of the beat for added syncopated effect on occasion.
189 Gary Gallant, interview with author, 17 August 2008.
Edward is a prolific tune composer. His first composition, “Reel des acadiens” (1975), transcribed above, is one of the most widely played tunes in the *Région Évangéline* and a popular tune among step dancers. Though it is almost certain that older fiddlers composed tunes, this tune is the first Acadian tune to become well known and is often the first tune all
fiddlers in the region learn to play. As Edward explains, the inspiration to compose tunes developed out of frustration with trying to learn other popular ones,

There were some tunes I was trying to learn to play and I had some awful problems to get all the notes in...I had to learn them by heart. I needed to have them in my head, eh? And sometimes it was hard to get all the notes out. Finally I said to myself, “well, if I can’t learn to play those tunes, I might as well make my own!”

Edward’s active role as a composer has inspired the musical output of a number of younger tune composers in the region. The art of tune composition has exploded in the community as musicians experiment with various ways of putting their own melodic imprints on the tradition. The musical community is strongly supportive of contemporary tune composition; this is perhaps best exemplified by the Friday Night Acadian Jam group, which will be examined in the next chapter, whose repertoire includes a large number of these new tunes.

Profile of a fiddler: Karine Michèl Gallant

Karine Gallant (b. 1985) is a multi-instrumentalist and step dancer from St-Timothée, in the Région Évangéline. She currently resides in Moncton where she coordinates a variety of cultural projects under La Fédération des jeunes francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick (French Youth Federation of New Brunswick).

Karine grew up surrounded by music and is widely regarded in the region for her distinct style of playing and broad repertoire, both of which reflect her wide range of musical influences and formal musical training. Her earliest memories of music are of local musicians playing at parties at her parents’ house. Although there were no other fiddlers in her family, traditional music was often present and her early encounters with local musicians fostered a desire to play the fiddle as early as three years old. Her father, Gary Gallant, is a well known

\(^{190}\) Contemporary tune composition is discussed in Chapter 4.

\(^{191}\) Edward P. Arsenault, interview with author, 8 August 2008.
singer-songwriter and acoustic guitarist whose songs are often heard at house parties, while her mother, Monic, is a well known Acadian step dancer and dance teacher from Québec’s Gaspésie Peninsula; Monic’s father played accordion and guitar in the Gaspésie tradition. Karine learned her first dance steps from her mother and played piano for several years before receiving her first fiddle at age eight. As she explains, she had always listened to traditional music played on recordings and by local musicians. With the tunes already in her ears, she picked up the fiddle quickly and soon began formal lessons with local fiddler Anastasia Desroches (from 1993 to 1997). While a student of Anastasia’s, Karine was a founding member of the dynamic young female fiddle group Clack’Azing.  

Figure 3.10 Karine M. Gallant, June 2010. (Photo by Peter Ballerstedt)

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192 Karine Gallant, interview with author, 2 August 2009.
In 1996, at the age of thirteen, Karine began taking lessons with the celebrated Irish fiddler Kim Vincent (1957-2009), who was a fixture of Island fiddling for twenty years.\footnote{Kim Vincent moved to Toronto in 2004, where he was a staple of the Irish musical scene until his death in 2009.} Karine has studied a range of traditional musics at institutes and workshops around the world, including Sweden, the Cégep regional de Lanaudière\footnote{“Technique professionnel en musique et chanson traditionnelle” certificate, 2004-06.} in Joliette, Québec, the University of Limerick, and in California (Scottish music). These formative musical experiences, blended with her informal education in musical sessions at home and abroad, have moulded her into a versatile musician with a unique sound that blends her Acadian, Québécois, Cape Breton and Irish influences.

Karine’s musical flexibility and distinct fiddling style have opened up a variety of opportunities for her both on and off-Island. In 2008, she was chosen to participate in Francoforce 2008, a four-month cross-Canada artistic tour presented to mark the participation of French Canada in the four hundredth anniversary celebrations of Québec City.\footnote{The production’s brochure describes the event as the “result of an unprecedented collaboration between governments and Canadian francophonie” (2008).} The show itself comprised a three-day programme of entertainment, multi-media presentations and participatory activities that visited fourteen communities across the country. Staged within the imposing geodesic design of the Francodôme, a mobile structure that accommodated up to five hundred people, the troupe of twelve Francophone artists from across Canada showcased the diversity, vitality and creativity of French language and culture in Canada. In addition to concerts and workshops by members of the troupe, local committees in each of the fourteen cities visited adapted the production’s programming to feature their local community’s history and culture. On P.E.I., concerts by the troupe were intertwined with performances by
celebrated local artists, including Angèle Arsenault, Lennie Gallant, Vishtèn, and others from the Région Évangéline and west Prince regions; a Catholic mass in French, theatre and comedy shows and family activities were also part of the festivities.  

Karine describes her responsibility as both an ambassador for P.E.I. and the troupe’s traditional music component (thus representing Francophone traditional music throughout Canada) as daunting. In addition to conducting research on some traditional music styles from across Canada and drawing on her knowledge of Québécois, Irish and Scottish music, Karine showcased her own original compositions and those by P.E.I. Acadian fiddlers such Marie Livingstone. She explains that she wanted to incorporate new compositions to illustrate the living musical tradition and evolving Francophone culture on P.E.I.

Karine’s fiddling style exemplifies her nearly twenty years of diverse musical influences. Her style features many melodic ornaments and a smooth, slurred bowing technique reflective of Irish fiddling, bowed ornamentation and the rhythmic bounce reminiscent of the Evangeline fiddlers. She cites local fiddlers, particularly Eddy Arsenault and his family who frequented parties at her parents’ house, as significant early influences, yet her style is distinct from that of other Island fiddlers. As Karine explains, she is aware that her own style changes depending on the context in which she is playing:

If I play with Marie I don’t play the same at all...if I play Marie’s tunes with her, I won’t be putting rolls in or anything like that. But if I play [the same tune]...in a different context I’ll put different bowings and ornamentation in. I remember once when [Marie asked] me, “is that my tune? It sounds Irish!” I can’t say that I play Québécois or Irish, it’s really just “me.”

The following transcriptions of “reel du Brae” (the Brae Reel) illustrate Karine’s stylistic sensibilities in contrast to Eddy Arsenault’s interpretation of the tune. The “reel du Brae” is a

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197 Karine Gallant, interview with author, 2 August 2009.
favourite tune among fiddlers and harmonica players in the *Région Évangéline*. Example 3.9 illustrates the pronounced “swing” in Karine’s style of playing reels, transcribed here in a dotted eighth-note and sixteenth note rhythm. This swung rhythm is accented in measure 3 with a suppressed stroke on the third beat (“shuffle”); full measures of straight eighth-notes (measures 4, 8 and 16) also provide a sharp contrast. The use of bowed and fingered ornamentation reflect her Irish fiddling training, including the addition of numerous slurs in the middle of several measures (from the second to third beat). In contrast, Example 3.10 (based on the playing of Eddy Arsenault) illustrates the more common interpretation of the tune in the region, which includes little ornamentation and a straight eighth-note rhythm.

Example 3.9 “Reel du Brae” (Brae Reel) as played by Karine M. Gallant, based on recording by author. (Transcribed by author)

Audio example 3.1 “Reel du Brae,” played by Karine Gallant, 2 August 2009. [Click here to listen]
Example 3.10 “Reel du Brae” (Brae Reel) as played by Eddy Arsenault and family on Party acadien (1995). (Transcribed by author)

Audio example 3.2 “Reel du Brae,” field recording of the Friday Night Jam, 30 May 2009. [Click here to listen]

For fiddlers of Karine’s generation, the perception of a “revival” of Acadian music begins with Barachois. In fact, these younger musicians grew up in a milieu in which fiddling was accessible and, to a certain extent, commonplace, a situation far removed from the experiences of Eddy and Edward. As a participant in the surge of popularity in fiddling and the first generation of fiddle “students,” Karine’s musical life story offers a compelling comparison to those of the older fiddlers.

It is evident that fiddlers in the region consider Acadian style as a rather broad continuum, and have an open attitude towards individual interpretations of local style. Variation between styles is common across the Island. As tune collector Ken Perlman observes,

No two fiddlers hold the instrument or bow exactly alike, no two conduct the bow across the strings in the same manner, and no two play any given tune in exactly the same way. In fact, each fiddler regards it as almost a point of honour to put his twist
on each tune that is part of his repertoire.\textsuperscript{198}

As one fiddler from Queens County expressed, “If we all played exactly alike, it wouldn’t matter who played, would it?”\textsuperscript{199} That said, in terms of stylistic variation and breadth of repertoire, the Island’s Scottish tradition is more narrowly defined, as players conform to an overall sound associated with the dominant Irish or Scottish traditions; individual interpretation and variation within the genre does not occur on the same scale as that which I have described in the \textit{Région Évangéline}. As I discuss in the following chapters, these flexible style parameters have enabled contemporary Island Acadian musicians and groups to cast their nets widely when it comes to their participation in concerts and festivals, both at home and off-Island.

The Acadian community of the \textit{Région Évangéline} has clearly undergone a transformative process of self-identification, evident in the resurgence of a number of cultural practices, the dissemination of historical stories and, perhaps most obviously, in the region’s musical traditions. In the contemporary climate in which a range of musics are widely accessible to musicians it is to be expected that Island Acadian musicians are influenced, to varying degrees, by the other Island and off-Island traditions; nonetheless, many of these musicians express their determination to focus on \textit{la musique de par chez nous} (“the music from our home” or more commonly “our music”) in an attempt to uncover, and in some cases rediscover, their musical heritage. Contrary to popular belief, however, these processes of revitalisation have waxed and waned over the several centuries of Acadian presence on the Island. Since the early 1970s, concurrent “revivals” of traditional music in neighbouring communities have contributed to the resurgence of interest in traditional fiddling across P.E.I.

\textsuperscript{198} Perlman, \textit{The Fiddle Tradition of P.E.I.}, 22.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
and impacted on the style and repertoire choices of fiddlers in the *Région Évangéline* as well as on the value placed upon traditional music. Groups such as Barachois and long-running musicals featuring local musicians, such as regional dinner theatre and cultural festivals, have played a central role in drawing attention to localised traditions and emergent processes of cultural revitalisation. Based on selective memories of the past and interpretations of older Acadian practices, these musical ventures have fuelled a spirited “identity” dialogue and a burgeoning sense of pride within the Acadian community that have, in turn, stimulated further processes of linguistic and cultural retention in the region.
Chapter 4
From Kitchen Parties to Concerts: Acadian Music in Context

Several contexts for music-making in Acadian communities on P.E.I. have been introduced in previous chapters. In this chapter, I look at the shift from private to public performance, how musicians negotiate this transition and the impact of Island tourism on the performance of traditional music. I then turn to two specific musical contexts in the Région Évangéline that embody the dichotomy between tradition and modernity and demonstrate how these two contexts have contributed to defining the musical identity of the region.

As I describe in Chapter 1, my first experience of live Acadian music took place at a Cinq à huit (‘five to eight’) gathering at Le Carrefour de l’Île-Saint-Jean, the French school and Francophone cultural centre in Charlottetown. While the Carrefour gatherings are open to the public, they are minimally advertised outside of the Francophone community and draw a predominantly Acadian crowd from the Charlottetown area. Until the early 2000s, this scenario was typical of the promotion of Francophone events across P.E.I., in general, and Acadian events, in particular, as these events have been largely localised and frequently overlooked in favour of events showcasing the Island’s Scottish heritage. Nevertheless, today Acadian musicians are increasingly featured in prominent concert venues and annual festivals across the Island, such as the Charlottetown Festival, the Indian River Festival and P.E.I.’s Old Home Week Fair.¹

Celebrations of the Island’s Francophonie (Francophone culture), too, are increasingly visible and widely promoted. That Island Acadian music has found a solid footing on live

¹ For example, the Charlottetown Festival’s 2009 concert series highlighted three musical groups from the Région Évangéline as part of its extended French programming, including Vishtèn, En Acadie and Gadelle.
stages across the Island is also reflected in the presence of Island Acadian musicians on national and international stages and in the media. In the last decade there has been a dramatic increase in the number of professional Acadian musicians and groups who release recordings and tour regularly, particularly to traditional music festivals throughout North America and Europe. Acclaim from off-Island audiences has led to further recognition at home; most recently, a number of prominent Island Acadian musicians, including the four members of the group Vishtèn and fiddler Karine Gallant, were featured instructors at the inaugural P.E.I. Fiddle Camp in June 2010, offering bilingual instruction in traditional Acadian (and Irish) music and dance alongside some of the Island’s preeminent Scottish fiddlers. Moreover, several local and off-Island Acadian artists (from les Îles-de-la-Madeleine and New Brunswick) were highlighted in the 2010 Festival of Small Halls.

It appears that Island Acadian music is increasingly moving from the private to the public sphere as a younger generation of musicians realises that there is tourism potential and employment opportunities available to them through the promotion of Acadian music on the Island. This shift from private to public reflects a burgeoning interest by Tourism P.E.I. to promote traditional music across the Island and a marked increase in the Province’s attention to Island Acadian culture in the past five years. The Provincial tourism industry’s emphasis on the Island’s traditional music is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the number of ceilidhs, or

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2 The bilingual component of the camp drew Francophones from Québec and New Brunswick. In 2010, six of the eleven principle instructors were bilingual. I am part of the organising committee and a fiddle instructor of the camp. See www.peifiddlecamp.com


4 Pronounced “kay-les.” In tourist literature, the word is not written with an accent (“è”) as in the Gaelic spelling.
social gatherings, that take place in Anglophone communities across P.E.I. from May through August. These weekly events, the Island’s modern response to the decline of the community dance hall tradition and a predominant public display of the Island’s Scottish heritage, are open to the public for a fee. These *ceilidhs* are widely advertised in newspapers, tourist brochures and on the radio, and often attract large crowds of tourists as well as locals. *Ceilidhs* take on a variety of forms depending on the host and venue, ranging from set dances (P.E.I.’s equivalent of square dancing) with a live band to informal, often participatory, concerts hosted by local musicians and their musical guests that feature storytelling, singing, fiddling and step dancing; this interpretation of *ceilidh* is reflective of the term’s flexible definitions in various parts of Scotland as a visit, house party, dance or concert.\(^5\) In neighbouring Nova Scotia, and particularly on Cape Breton Island, *ceilidhs* have emerged as a primary tourist attraction, often presented in the form of an informal concert; the popularity of these events for both locals and tourists on Cape Breton has influenced the increased demand for *ceilidhs* on P.E.I. In addition to the Cape Breton influence, the renewed interest in this *ceilidh* culture on P.E.I. is attributed to the establishment in the early 1970s of *ceilidh* events, marketed as “*Ceilidh at the Corner,*” at the Orwell Corner Historical Village Community Hall, located in Queens County, which is ongoing and has now spread to myriad weekly events at venues across the Island.\(^6\)

Yet, despite the popularity of and apparent market for *ceilidhs* on P.E.I., Francophone

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\(^5\) In the Scottish Lowlands the term *cèilidh* generally refers to a dance, whereas in the Highlands it tends to refer to a concert (in the Highlands a dance is sometimes referred to as a “*cèilidh* dance”).

Acadians have not adopted this public *ceilidh* culture.\(^7\) I believe that the reasons for this are two-fold. First, although set dances were once prominent features of public gatherings and private house parties in the Acadian community, step dancing now overshadows set dancing, particularly among younger generations, as the modern preference for dance entertainment at parties; moreover, such parties remain largely private affairs and are not advertised publicly. Second, *ceilidh* culture is strongly associated with the Island’s dominant Scottish heritage. Accordingly, the distancing of Acadian communities from this tradition reflects and reinforces a desire by Acadians to distinguish themselves culturally from other Islanders.

With some tourism-driven exceptions, Acadians have retained their informal musical gatherings for private venues that are not accessible to the broader Island community and tourists. In general, private contexts such as family musical gatherings have become increasingly less prominent over the past several decades. Nevertheless, some families, such as *la familie Polycarpe* (the Polycarpe family), so nicknamed after the family’s patriarch, Polycarpe Arsenault, continue their family tradition of weekly Sunday gatherings during which the family congregates for an evening of music and conversation.\(^8\) While the Polycarpe family meets every week and plays music late into the evening, my experience in the Acadian community suggests that theirs is an exception to the contemporary traditions of most Acadian families. A more common private context is *les parties de cuisine* (kitchen parties), which is examined in more depth later in this chapter. *Les parties de cuisine* vary in size depending on the hosts and occasion; they can range from intimate gatherings of close friends and family to large, raucous events involving a broader sample of the community. A central

\(^7\) I should note that in the Acadian community of Cheticamp, on Cape Breton Island, *ceilidhs* are quite popular, thus this seems to be a specifically P.E.I. Acadian phenomenon.

\(^8\) I am grateful to the Polycarpe family for inviting me to share many memorable Sunday evenings with them.
theme that emerges in the local discourse surrounding these parties is that of change in the
dominant demographic of participants, repertoire and dance practices, jam etiquette and the
overall experience of these parties for attendees. This tradition also factors into performances
of professional Acadian groups from the Island; as discussed in Chapter 3, several musical
groups, such as Barachois, have cultivated a niche for their music by drawing inspiration from
these private events and by appropriating typical elements from them for performances on the
concert stage.

Figure 4.1 Polycarpe Sunday night gathering, 2008. Fiddlers in the photo: Edward P.
Arsenault (front), the author (middle) and Jocelyne Arsenault (left). (Photo by Marie
Livingstone)

While these private contexts remain important facets of the region’s identity, other
musical contexts illustrate that Acadian music is moving increasingly into the public realm.
Regional dinner theatre and cabaret-style shows seem to have emerged as an Acadian
response to the desire of Acadian communities to participate more actively in the Island’s
tourist economy. In particular, and to the extent that the regional economy enables, these
shows have become central features of the summer tourism economy in western P.E.I. The
popularity of la Cuisine à Mémé, discussed in Chapter 3, prompted a series of subsequent
productions to be staged across western P.E.I., including *Le Souper-Spectacle* “Une fois d’même” (The dinner theatre “Once Upon A Time”) at the Centre Expo-Festival, in the *Région Évangéline*; the *V’Nez Chou Nous* Acadian theatre in West Prince that features stories based on local characters, original and traditional music and a comical storyline; and the Centre Expo-Festival’s musical cabaret, “Le Fricot,” which is named after the traditional Acadian dish and features local musicians, music and humorous stage dialogue.

A variety of other public community-centred music contexts have adopted a more formal concert-style format involving much less audience interaction. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, community concerts (sometimes referred to as “Parish concerts”) were held on a semi-regular basis in the Mont-Carmel Parish Hall. These events often took the form of musical concerts at church picnics, special anniversaries or other get-togethers featuring local talent, particularly families and young musicians; Mont-Carmel step dancer Colette Aucoin recalls that at the age of six she danced at one such event accompanied by Louise Arsenault, then twelve years old, on the violin. In the late twentieth century, benefit concerts were the most common motivation for community concerts. These concerts were often presented by a family of musicians with the goal of raising money for a variety of needy causes that ranged from assistance for families affected by fire, illness and job loss, to the construction of a new building in the community, such as the *Chez Nous* seniors’ residence or the community sports arena. For a number of years prior to its closing in 2005, *Le Village de l’Acadie* (the Acadian

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9 This is an old Acadian way of writing “venez chez nous,” based on the local spoken dialect. It means “come to our (home).”

10 *Fricot* (sometimes called *le fricot à la poule*) is a very popular stew found throughout *Acadie*; it consists of chicken, potatoes, carrots and onions, spiced with “Summer Savory.” Some people add dumplings. *Fricot* was traditionally made when visitors stopped by someone’s house or during festivities such as a *frolic* or evening gathering. Marielle Boudreau and Melvin Gallant, *La Cuisine traditionnelle en Acadie* (Moncton, NB: Éditions d’Acadie, 1975), 38.

11 Colette Aucoin, email to author, 8 June 2010.
Village in Mont-Carmel) reinstated the tradition of family Parish concerts, presenting a regular summer evening concert series that featured a different musical family each week. Although these concerts were minimally advertised outside of the community, the reputation of *Le Village* as a tourist attraction and local gathering place drew both tourists and locals. After a hiatus of several years, the concert series in the Mont Carmel Parish Hall has resumed, drawing an almost entirely local audience. The concerts are often presented in the form of musical variety shows featuring performances by individual musicians or small groups, and, occasionally, the series presents concerts that highlight prominent musical families.¹²

According to the oral history of the region, while the fiddle has become the main instrument performed at these Parish concerts, prior to 2000 community concerts featured primarily singing and dancing.¹³ The predominance of fiddling (and relative neglect of other musical forms) emerges as a trend in most Island Acadian contexts; moreover, this issue surfaces as an intriguing point of tension in the Acadian kitchen party context.

Programmed musical performances at the annual festivals also take place in a formal concert setting. The year 2010 marks the twenty-third year of the annual *Jamboree atlantique des violoneux* (Atlantic Fiddlers’ Jamboree), a three-day celebration of fiddling and step dancing in Abram-Village. The Jamboree is a prominent context for traditional music in the *Région Évangéline*, attracting fiddle enthusiasts from across the Maritime Provinces to the small community. The Jamboree features one or two fiddlers from each of the Maritime Provinces as well representatives from Maine and Québec (including at least one fiddler from les Îles-de-la-Madeleine). Similar to the mandate of the *Festival acadien*, discussed in Chapter

¹² In July 2009, the Polycarpe family was featured at one of these Sunday evening concerts. Although at one time the family performed frequently in public, this was the first time they had performed such a concert in at least ten years.

¹³ Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 16 April 2010; Colette Aucoin, email to author, 8 June 2010.
3, local Evangeline fiddlers comprise the majority of the entertainment at the three-day marathon of fiddle concerts. Representatives of different Island fiddling styles are also invited, including the eastern region of Rollo Bay (Scottish Cape Breton style), the Prince County Fiddlers (Scottish and Down-East styles) and Tignish (various styles). As explained by Marie Livingstone, a member of the Jamboree organising committee and long-time attendee, the Jamboree also aims to spotlight a number of up-and-coming younger fiddlers to demonstrate the vitality of the region’s fiddling tradition. The festival’s structure has also become more organised since the Jamboree’s inception in the late 1980s, having shifted from a more-or-less improvised half-day schedule to a fixed three-day program of performers.14

The musical contexts that I have outlined illustrate a widespread desire among Island Acadians to maintain a balance between traditional practices and modern lifestyle and interests, as well as a balance between local community events and those intended for broader audiences. Attempts to realise this balance are achieved through a variety of means. On the one hand, in contemporary dinner theatre and cabaret shows the actors frequently take a tongue-in-cheek approach in their depictions of older traditions and local history, playing off of local stereotypes, traditional cuisine and local vocabulary; consequently, these shows succeed in keeping these older cultural and discursive practices alive in the contemporary memory of their communities. Linguistic choices, too, such as the presentation of all-French or bilingual shows, dictate the audience demographic. On the other hand, the revitalisation of particular musical contexts, such as the Parish hall concert, reveals an attempt by members of the Acadian community to recover the social contexts that were once central to the unity and

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14 Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 16 April 2010.
identity of the numerous small isolated communities, at the same time as they underscore the community’s objective to preserve Acadian French as the region’s primary language.

This nostalgia for the close-knit community is evident in many recent musical endeavours across the Island; for example, the Festival of Small Halls was launched in 2008, prompting a revitalisation (and, somewhat ironically, a technological modernization) of nearly thirty “small halls” across the province, the majority of which are rural parish or community halls.\(^{15}\) Highlighting local musicians, storytellers and artists from neighbouring Maritime communities, many of whom are “returning to the small communities and rural stages where they danced their first jig or plucked their first string,”\(^{16}\) the Festival aims to reintroduce these once central rural contexts into the contemporary experience of Island culture.\(^{17}\)

The dialectical relationship between tradition and modernity, evident in several of the contexts described above, is underscored by J. H. Kwabena Nketia, who writes that,

> The distinction between “traditional” and “non-traditional” has become an important one in many parts of the world undergoing rapid transformation, for there is a growing consciousness of the need for maintaining some balance between modernization or the currents of contemporary culture on the one hand, and on the other, the pre-industrial way of life and the cultural forms that characterize it.\(^{18}\)

The inherent tensions between tradition and modernity that Nketia describes are certainly not unique to the Acadian community or musical practices in the P.E.I. context. Indeed, these tensions persist at various levels of Island life, from farming and fishing practices to the

\(^{15}\) The 2\(^{nd}\) Festival of Small Halls took place in June 2010; owing to its tremendous success, the province has pledged funding to support the Festival until 2014.


\(^{17}\) Such responses to this nostalgia both in Acadian communities and across P.E.I. more generally are beyond the scope of this dissertation but certainly warrant further study.

debate over Sunday shopping.\textsuperscript{19} As the above examples and case studies presented later in this chapter suggest, much of what is emerging as “contemporary Island Acadian music” maintains a vague association with the past practices upon which it is based, although it is this link to the past that is at the forefront of the discourse that surrounds these modern interpretations of the tradition.\textsuperscript{20}

Tension between the past and present is perhaps most evident with regard to the transmission of traditional music. Formal music instruction is a by-product of the late twentieth century resurgence of interest in traditional music and the primary context for learning fiddle across the Island, particularly among younger generation musicians. Although the informal transmission of tunes and playing “tips” does still occur in some private contexts, the majority of the fiddlers who participated in my study have taken a minimum of one or two lessons from a professional fiddle teacher. The duration of formal instruction is notably longer for young musicians who rely more heavily on lessons to learn new tunes, whereas a number of older fiddlers with whom I spoke (who are now in their fifties or sixties) took only one or two lessons to learn basic technique or read music. Due to the high demand for instruction, there are currently several fiddle instructors in the \textit{Région Évangéline} and over twenty fiddle teachers across the Island.

In addition to promoting fiddling and traditional music, formal music instruction has brought about increased female participation (of all ages) in fiddling. This is particularly apparent in the \textit{Région Évangéline}, but is also a growing trend across the Island. While a

\textsuperscript{19} In December 2006, the P.E.I. government amended the Retail Business Holidays Act to allow Sunday shopping on Prince Edward Island from Victoria Day (May) to December 24\textsuperscript{th}. The decision remains a contentious issue among Islanders.

\textsuperscript{20} For an excellent discussion of the tradition/modernity dichotomy in the context of Ontario fiddle and step dancing contests, see Sherry Johnson, “Negotiating Tradition in Ontario Fiddle Contests” (Ph.D. diss., York University, 2006).
detailed examination of the processes of formal musical transmission of Acadian fiddle music on the Island is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I shall address briefly the question of gender and fiddling on P.E.I. and the impact of formal instruction on changes in the gendered identity of the tradition.21

Gender and fiddling on P.E.I.

Until the 1990s it was rare to see young Islanders musicians, particularly female fiddlers, perform publicly on P.E.I. In the Région Évangéline, oral discourse surrounding female fiddlers of the “Jos Bibienne” family in the 1930s and, later, Louise Arsenault’s iconic fiddle playing as a young girl, portray these women as musical anomalies in what was historically a tradition dominated by older male fiddlers. By the mid-1990s the musical scene in the Région Évangéline had clearly entered a state of flux, a transformation that owed much to Barachois’ success in inciting local interest in traditional music-making. Curiously, none of my informants cited the two female musicians of Barachois (Louise Arsenault and Helen Bergeron) or the nation-wide popularity of Cape Breton fiddler Natalie MacMaster who was making headlines as an up-and-coming female fiddling sensation at the time as primary influences on the female fiddlers. Rather, it is local fiddle teacher Anastasia DesRoches, in association with a group of her young, female students, who is recognised as having reversed the trend of the male fiddler in the Evangeline community. Anastasia’s status as a role model for young female fiddlers is consistent with Sherry Johnston’s observation that “it is the successful female fiddlers within the circuit who become important role models for younger

21 C.f. Garrison (1985) and Swing (1991) for studies of formal and institutionalised transmission of traditional fiddling.
participants.”22

In 1995, after only five years of formal lessons with the celebrated Irish fiddler Kim Vincent (1957-2009), Anastasia began to offer fiddle lessons to aspiring young musicians in the Région Évangéline. In 1999, she started a fiddle group called Clack’Azing, comprised of eight of her young female fiddle students (many of whom are related) between the ages of ten and thirteen. Although several members left to attend college or university, and in some cases to pursue formal music studies, five members of the group remained together until 2005. Clack’Azing was the first of a number of all-female traditional music groups in the region, followed by Celtitude (now Vishtèn) in 2000 and Chiquésa (of which Anastasia was also a member) in 2003. In 2007, the five members of Clack’Azing joined forces with Louise Arsenault and Helen Bergeron from Barachois to create the group Les Girls; in 2009, the group was distilled to the quartet Gadelle, who toured internationally until 2009, appearing at festivals, music camps and in concert. In their shows, the members of Gadelle highlighted the multi-generational, multi-instrumental and all-female characteristics of the group. The group’s musical approach was similar to that of Barachois, in that the four women presented energetic and humorous performances, with the aim of recreating the experience of an Acadian kitchen party on stage.

While this shift initially took place in the Région Évangéline, the trend of female fiddlers has spread across the Island. Although fiddling in some regions remains predominantly male-dominated (for example, in the Souris area), expectations across the Island regarding gender and fiddling have adjusted over the past decade to the point where it is customary to see young female fiddlers perform in a variety of settings. Indeed, in some

regions, such as the *Région Évangéline*, the pendulum has swung so far in the opposite direction that young male fiddlers and step dancers are curiously scarce; as such, performances by young males seem to give rise to a heightened interest in these performers by the community. When asked about the prominence of female musicians (particularly fiddlers) in Evangeline community, many community members identified Anastasia’s role in encouraging young women and her initiatives to promote traditional music among young Acadians in the community as central to this revolution. Several musicians also pointed out that conventional gender constructs surrounding the local step dancing tradition, which tend to focus on female step dancing, may have contributed to the surge of interest among young women in pursuing professional or semi-professional careers in traditional music; indeed, most of the young women who have become prominent musicians in the *Région Évangéline* also began step dancing at a young age.

This shift toward female participation in fiddling is evident in a number of traditions throughout North American and the United Kingdom, although few scholars have examined changes of this nature. A notable exception is Sherry Johnson’s work on Ontario fiddling contests, a tradition that is also historically male-dominated. Nevertheless, Johnson describes a significant increase in women fiddlers in the circuit in the 1990s and notes that, while the open competition classes remain predominantly male, a number of her informants perceive an increase in the number of young female participants in the “eight and under” and “twelve and under” fiddle contest categories. While a detailed examination of this global trend is beyond the scope of this dissertation, further study of gender and fiddling, and of this fascinating shift

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on P.E.I., in particular, is needed and a comprehensive cross-cultural examination of gender and fiddling is overdue.24

I shall now turn to two specific contexts of Acadian music-making in the Région Évangéline. First, I present a case study of the Friday Night Acadian Jam, an organised public jam that has had a widespread impact on music-making in the region. Although the weekly Jams follow a similar pattern, each gathering is unique based on the attendance of participants and unexpected visitors, the musical and extra-musical events that have taken place throughout the week and the interactions between the attendees. While the ethnographic snapshot presented below is based primarily on my field notes from a particular Jam night in 2009, I have written the ethnography as a “composite narrative,”25 an aggregate of several events based on my experience of attending the Jam over several years, in order to present a complete picture of the Jam and to highlight particular issues of interest to this study; thus, while all the events in the following ethnography are real, they did not necessarily occur on the same evening.26

Second, I examine the phenomenon of les parties de cuisine (kitchen parties), a musical context for which the Région Évangéline is renowned. In their contemporary form, these two musical contexts traverse both public and private spheres; they reflect a shift in community and creative values and shed light on the impact of these cultural changes on

26 For excellent examples of composite narrative see Sherry Johnson’s description of a weekend fiddling contest in Ontario (2006) and Andrew Woolf’s description of old-time jam sessions at southern U.S.A. fiddle conventions (1990).
contemporary manifestations of Acadian traditions. These contexts paint a comprehensive picture of the centrality of musical traditions in the Island Acadian community; moreover, they serve as an entry point for examining several key elements of the contemporary Acadian music culture on P.E.I., such as the role of music literacy and aurality and the prominence of local tune composition.

**The Friday Night Acadian Jam**

*A mid-summer night jam at the Boys and Girls Club, 17 July 2009*

It’s now several months into my second fieldwork trip and the drive west from Charlottetown to Wellington, through the picturesque landscape of rolling green hills that glow in the summer sunset, has become a familiar one. I’ve been looking forward to the Jam all week. Few of us miss the weekly sessions, which are only cancelled due to conflicting “must-see” fiddle concerts or severe weather. There is certainly no chance of poor weather tonight, although I know that by the time I leave the Jam several hours from now the fog will have settled into the valley pockets.

Seven o’clock. As I sit in my car in front of my Charlottetown home, I thumb through the CDs in my glove box, faced with the all-important task of choosing music for the hour-long drive to Wellington, in Prince County. It strikes me that the CDs I have on hand are nearly all commercial recordings by Island Acadian artists or Cape Breton fiddlers. I settle on the recording Amand Arsenault gave me a couple of weeks ago, a homemade CD recorded for the dances at “Club 50,” the seniors’ club in the *Région Évangéline*. The recording features Amand on guitar, Edward à Polycarpe on fiddle, and Marie (à Eddy) Arsenault on keyboard.

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Edward P. Arsenault.
There’s a raw quality to this recording that cannot be reproduced in the polished, commercially-produced recordings of most contemporary traditional music. As I pull away from the house, Edward flies into the reel “Island Boy,” a favourite tune across P.E.I. His signature rhythmic playing is unmistakeable. A few notes into the tune I hear a tentative chord on the guitar (likely making sure he is playing in the right key) and Amad joins in with his usual enthusiasm; with the tempo established, Marie enters on the next phrase. Fingers tapping the steering wheel, I leave the city and head west on Route 2. I try to “jig” along to the tunes I know, and I see if I can remember the ones I learned last week at the Jam. I wonder if Edward will be at the Jam this week?

Forty-five minutes later I pass the large sign that indicates the entrance to the Région Évangéline (Fig. 4.2) and turn off the main highway towards Wellington. I pull into the small parking lot of the Boys and Girls Club of Wellington (Fig. 4.3). There are already several cars in the parking lot, a telltale sign that there will be a good turn out tonight. Once inside the main doors, I can already hear the sound of fiddles being tuned and the hum of conversation emanating from the basement. Marie Livingstone, the Jam leader, her husband Orrin, Marcia, Noella, Dorothy, Ron and Debbie are already inside. The basement room that we use serves multiple purposes during the week for educational, remedial and recreational community programs; tonight the wooden chairs are set up in a large circle, with several chairs forming an inner ring which some of the musicians will use as music stands. There are two worn couches on the far side of the room and the daycare program’s art supplies have been tucked into the corner. Paula and Norman (à Amand) Arsenault enter behind me, Norman carrying Paula’s keyboard and Paula carrying Norman’s fiddle. Like his father (Amand) and uncle (Eddy), Norman is a lobster fisherman; due to his early morning starts and long days at sea he cannot come to the Jam during the lobster fishing season but we should see him regularly for
the next month. I catch snippets of various conversations around the room as we get our instruments tuned and assume our habitual positions around the circle: there is a buzz about the television series “La Petite Séduction” that aired a few nights earlier, as this latest episode of the Québécois reality show was filmed in the Région Évangéline and many of the “jammers” and their family and friends were involved in the production; Marie and Marcia are discussing their plans to attend the Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival that will take place over the weekend; and Orrin is examining Noella’s fiddle to see if he can find a mysterious “buzz.”

Figure 4.2 Road sign on the way to Wellington. (Photo by author)

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28 P.E.I.’s two lobster fishing seasons run approximately May 1 to June 30 and mid-August to mid-October, respectively.
29 The Rollo Bay Fiddle Festival is one of the Island’s largest fiddle festivals held annually in eastern P.E.I.; it attracts fiddle enthusiasts and performers from across the Maritimes.
A few minutes after eight o’clock, someone mentions the reel “Archie Menzies” and the conversation quiets. After all, we only have an hour for the “workshop” portion of the Jam. Most of us don’t know this tune by heart, so several people pull out their copies of Marie’s handwritten transcription of the tune from their large binders of music and set them up on an inner circle of chairs that function as music stands. Marie begins the tune at a slow pace and we join in, if in a somewhat disorganised fashion. Some of the musicians who read music try their best to keep up, while others wait for the next tune or try to pick it up by ear. For the next hour, we take turns suggesting tunes that we’re working on that we’d like to workshop: Marie’s reel “Jolene Sonier,” the Cape Breton standard “King George IV” strathspey, an old French tune called “Marie Blanche,” and Louise Arsenault’s version of “Reel des insulaires,” originally composed by madelinot fiddler Félix LeBlanc. We play each tune a few times slowly and then a couple of times at a faster “jam” speed. The pauses in between tunes are full of laughter and more stories, usually triggering someone’s memory of
another tune they’d like to play.

We play a group favourite, the “Dragger’s Reel” and “Willow Tree Reel” set. Although “Dragger’s Reel” is identified by most fiddlers on P.E.I. (and elsewhere) as one of Eddy Arsenault’s compositions, the similarities between it and the popular Cape Breton reel “Hughie Shortie’s” by fiddler Johnny Wilmot are unmistakeable. Whether this is a case of convergent evolution or inadvertent emulation is hard to say, though I suspect the latter is true. Marie reminds us that we’ll play the set “the way Eddy plays it.” By prefacing the set of tunes with reference to Eddy Arsenault, a number of changes to the standard rendition of the tune are implied. I’ve learned, for example, that we’ll “turn” the tune “Dragger’s Reel” the way Eddy plays it, adding his signature flourish to the last notes of each line. Then we’ll fly into the “Willow Tree Reel,” playing the B part first, before the A part, and we’ll repeat the tune three times instead of the standard two.

Shortly after nine o’clock a young fiddler, Carole, arrives, followed by Jocelyne (Marcia’s daughter), Edward à Polycarpe (Marie’s brother) and his wife, Claudette, reminding us that our workshop time is over. There are now eight fiddlers, with Paula and Dorothy playing keyboards on opposite sides of the circle, and Orrin, Claudette and Ron on their guitars. We move on to repertoire that we know better; these are the standard sets of tunes we play most weeks, as well as those that are triggered by conversation or by flipping through the tune binder. Amand and Marguerite Arsenault—Norman’s parents and regular attendees of the weekly Jam—arrive in the middle of a lively rendition of what we call “The Mussel Set,” a set of tunes comprised of Edward’s reel “Reel des moules,” “Carter MacKenzie’s reel” by Souris-area Acadian fiddler/pianist Kevin Chaisson and the catchy asymmetrical “Terminal

30 Thanks to Anastasia DesRoches for pointing this out to me.
reel” by Evangeline fiddler Peter (à Eddy) Arsenault. All the jammers know this set well and tonight we’re really grooving. Always the comedian, eighty-one-year-old Amand puts down his guitar case and starts step dancing in his idiosyncratic shuffling style,\textsuperscript{31} triggering smiles and laughter from all the musicians. Shaking her head in amusement, Marguerite takes her usual place on one of the couches to listen to the music as Amand eventually takes out his guitar and joins the circle. Amand’s unapologetic, rhythmic chording heightens the driving bowing style of Edward, Marie, Jocelyne and Norman. Sure, there are a few chords that do not quite fit—Amand tells me that he rarely uses minor chords, and he’s not reading the chord chart like the others—but his enthusiasm is infectious. A different sound catches my ear and I notice that he’s also singing along to the melody (djigger) as he strums. As we finish the tune, Carole starts immediately into the Magdalen Island’s reel “John à Noré” and we dive into the new tune, some of the accompanists shuffling through their binders for the chords. The group learned this tune from the well known Madelinot fiddler, Bertrand Déraspe, during one of his visits to the Island years before. As if inspired by the memory of Bertrand’s style and the captivating lilt of his tune, I see several people’s feet fly to action: tic-a-tac, tic-a-tac, tic-a-tac...

Marguerite (à Jaddus) Gallant and a friend arrive unexpectedly and sit next to Marguerite à Amand.\textsuperscript{32} Marguerite à Jaddus is not a regular jammer and my impression from the group’s surprised reaction is that she hasn’t attended the Jam in several years. Her father,

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\textsuperscript{31} The old “kitchen style” of Acadian step dancing, in contrast to the “new” choreographed style that is performed by younger dancers.
\textsuperscript{32} Just as people refer to themselves and others in relation to older generations of their family, so too can these links be made between spouses, for example “Marguerite à Amand,” or through various chains of association in order to give a place to an individual within a specific familial and/or community context. This practice requires a shared memory of the recent past, what Jan Assman calls the “communicative memory,” in order to understand the implied connections; for example, “Carole à Louise” might refer to a mother-daughter, friend or teacher-student relationship. Jan Assman, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” trans. John Czaplicka, New German Critique 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies (1995): 125-33.
\end{flushleft}
Jaddus Gallant, was a well known fiddler who was recognised for his small stature and wild
tapping feet; he habitually added an extra beat to the standard “tic-a-tac, tic-a-tac” pattern,
creating a consistent eighth note rhythm: “tic-a-tac-a-tic-a-tac-a...” Although she doesn’t play
in public often, I’ve been told that Marguerite is well known for her “older style” of piano and
pump organ playing, which means that she plays the melody in her right hand and
accompanies herself with simple chords in the left hand. Marie asks her if she’d like to play
something for us. After some encouragement from the whole group, she takes Paula’s place at
the keyboard and, fingers flying, she dives into the “Poppyleaf Reel.” On the second time
through the tune some of us join in.

Nicholas (Nick) Arsenault, a young fiddler in his mid-twenties, arrives just before ten
o’clock and sits in one of the empty chairs. Nick has only been playing for four years and has
learned exclusively by ear by coming to the Jam, listening to recordings (including a set of
tapes Marie has made for him with tunes played at a slow speed) and playing with other
fiddlers in the community. It’s no secret that he admires Peter (à Eddy) Arsenault’s playing
and he’s picked up much of Peter’s understated style, repertoire of local and Cape Breton
tunes, and musical tastes that tend to favour stately marches and reels. Nick’s arrival reminds
us of a set of tunes we haven’t yet played, beginning with a march that Nick composed,
entitled “Thinking about Peter,” followed by two of Marie’s tunes, “Fisherman’s Fiddle”
(written for Norman and Paula) and “Quilting Reel.”

Marcia’s husband (and Marie’s brother), Gerard, arrives just after 10pm and takes a
seat in the musicians’ circle. He doesn’t play an instrument but he stops into the Jam every
Friday night and joins the circle, tapping his feet to the music. Paula reluctantly announces
that she and Norman will have to leave soon, which reminds us that we haven’t yet played the
set that begins with Paula’s march, “The Island Penny,” which is a group favourite. As the
clock ticks past eleven o’clock the group starts to thin out as people head home; as usual, it seems as though a few musicians, including myself, are just getting warmed up. Eventually we too pack up our instruments, stack the chairs and get ready to head home. Back in the car, Edward (on my CD) has just launched into the reel “Miramichi Fire;” maybe I’ll suggest that tune for the workshop next week.

Figure 4.4 Friday Night Jam. *Left to right:* Cynthia Cormier, Marcia Arseanult, the author, Mike O’Brien, Marie Livingstone, Orrin Livingstone and Claudette Arsenault. (Photo by Caren O’Brien)

*Creating community: history and significance of the Friday Night Jam*

The scene described above is typical of a Friday Night Jam at the Boys and Girls Club. The majority of the core group consists of musicians who consider themselves beginner or intermediate players of their “jam” instrument, although some of these regular attendees are well-versed in guitar and/or piano and step dancing. In addition to the core group, a number of musicians who live in the region or elsewhere on the Island attend the Jam intermittently. The
Friday Night Jam is widely acknowledged by the larger community as occupying an important position in the region’s musical activities. For beginners, the Jam’s “group playing” format offers a low-pressure and informal environment in which to learn and practice tunes. For more experienced musicians, it is a place to learn new tunes or brush up on old ones; several members of the region’s professional music groups attend the Jam periodically to expand their repertoires of tunes. The Jam also acts as the representative “Acadian” group (sometimes labelled the Acadian Fiddlers) of the P.E.I. Fiddlers’ Society, and is often called upon to perform and to represent the community at a number of events throughout the year.

The Friday Night Jam was established in June 2000 by a small group of musicians who recognised that although musical sessions took place in peoples’ homes sporadically, in the context of a family gathering or on the concert stage there were few public opportunities for musicians to play together in on a regular basis. Moreover, the few musicians who played publicly for parties or informal performances were generally of an older generation and there was a mounting awareness that the region’s traditional style of Acadian fiddling could be lost as these older players retired from playing. The organisers of the Jam 33 sought to reconcile this musical gap in the community by establishing the Friday Night Jam as an informal musical session that had the flavour of an informal kitchen party in which local musicians of various abilities could congregate to play traditional music. As one of the founding musicians explains, their intention was to focus on the region’s older musical repertoire. 34 The Jam was initially held in the small community building in front of Le Village de l’Acadie, in Mont-Carmel. According to the musicians’ recollections of this beginning period, three or four

33 The original organisers of the Jam included Edward P. Arsenault, Jacques Arsenault, Philippe LeBlanc, Peter Arsenault, Robert Arsenault, Marie Livingstone and Marcia Arsenault.
34 Marcia Arsenault, interview with author, 8 August 2008.
fiddles would play in unison, accompanied by a guitarist, and the sessions drew a small number of spectators (usually family and friends). Several months later, as winter loomed over the Island, the Jam relocated to its present location in the basement of the Boys and Girls Club of Wellington, where participants continue to contribute two dollars each per session to cover the cost of the building’s heating and electricity.

The Jam’s popularity as a Friday evening gathering spot spread quickly. Although there was no advertising for these musical soirées, tourists to the region seeking to experience Acadian culture were often informed of the Jam via word of mouth and, in the new venue, the audience regularly comprised a group of at least twenty tourists, relatives from away, friends and local family. The number of musicians also increased dramatically, often drawing as many as fifteen fiddlers, between four and six guitarists and two or three pianists. For the musicians, this meant that the conditions were not always ideal for making music; one fiddler recalled that there were frequently so many onlookers that it was difficult for the musicians to hear each other, musicians who came late often did not have adequate space to join in and, in the summer months, people would often have to stand in the doorway to listen. Despite these annoyances, the Jam succeeded in fostering an awareness of traditional music and increasing its transmission throughout the region. This renewed interest in fiddling prompted an increase, mainly in young students, in formal fiddle lessons and motivated a number of older residents, particularly those of a middle-age demographic, to learn how to play the fiddle outside of the context of formal lessons. In response to this group’s demand for a jam that would accommodate their skill level, a workshop component was added as the first hour of the Jam (8-9pm) to provide a learning opportunity for novice fiddlers, although the workshop has now extended to guitarists and keyboardists. Although there is no designated instructor, this learning session enables fiddlers who have been learning tunes on their own to try them out
with the group.

As a result of the added workshop and the consistent request by novice players that the group play most tunes more slowly before playing them up to the fast “jam” speed, the demographic of the regular Jam attendees changed significantly. The more formal atmosphere and slower pace of the music deterred several of the more experienced musicians from attending on a regular basis. Similarly, the workshop lacked the social “kitchen party” atmosphere, high level of musical proficiency and fast-paced music that appealed to the large group of spectators, many of whom were older and would attend only for the first hour or so. Consequently, today some more experienced players attend intermittently and the number of spectators has dwindled to a mere one or two (and sometimes none) per week. Marie Livingstone believes that regardless of how many attend regularly, the Jam maintains an important role as an open, public context for music-making in the Evangeline community. As she explains, “people in the area still appreciate that it exists. They forget that they aren’t participating in it. It is there if they want to come – it’s there for them.”

Because very few Acadians in the region participate in the weekly rehearsals of the Prince County Fiddlers or are part of other groups that meet regularly elsewhere on the Island, the Jam is the only regular musical session that exists year-round.

The presence of a well known fiddler or spectator at the Jam generates an excited atmosphere and, often, a spirit of determination among the jammers to play their best. Regardless of the noticeable absence of more advanced or well known players in the region, the dedicated core participants are content with the structure the Jam group has adopted over the past few years. These players have attained a level of confidence in their playing and

35 Marie Livingstone, interview with author, 16 April 2010.
proficiency in their repertoire that enables them to perform together (sometimes as few as three people) at a variety of public and private events in the community. For beginners, the Jam setting offers the opportunity to move away from the “closet fiddling” syndrome and learn (or polish) a common repertoire. Because, today, the average musician’s primary exposure to music is via recordings, the slow pace and camaraderie of the workshops enable beginner and intermediate fiddlers who learn by ear to learn tunes with greater ease.

More importantly, however, for the Jam’s regular participants, the weekly sessions are more than just a space to learn and play music. As a welcoming, regular social gathering in which participants interact, share mutual interests and stories, and motivate each other to learn and compose new tunes, the Jam functions as what sociologist Ray Oldenburg calls the “third place,” an “anchor” of community life that reinforces social networks and fosters creative interaction among its participants.36 Yet, these gatherings are more than just what Feintuch describes as the “transcendent moments” that foster a sense of community that “inhabits the social imaginary.”37 The group sessions act as a node of social interaction for the participants that extends beyond the Friday night sessions. The relationships that are fostered each week are sustained in other social spaces in the participants’ everyday lives; this, of course, is made possible in part due to the fact that the majority of the participants are either related, live in relatively close proximity to each other, and/or are involved in other activities or organisations that bring them together outside of the Jam. We shall see later how the Jam also functions as a

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kind of preparatory ritual to the musicians’ participation in musical activities outside the familiar setting of the weekly sessions. As such, the weekly sessions sustain what Feintuch calls “moral community,” the integrity of social relationships in group settings. As he explains, a sense of obligation and continuity are central to this understanding of community:

Community...ought to involve a set of relationships that go beyond a single commonality. In community there is responsibility, integration, and obligation. Presumably, there is more than one thing in common. Community...must be a kind of relationship that allows for varied social roles and relationships.³⁸

Therefore, the Jam embodies a kind of community-within-community, one that seems to enact in microcosm the types of relationships and social values (i.e. family, respect, cooperation, humour) that are revered by the larger community.

Negotiating aurality and music literacy

The inclusion of a workshop session in the Jam, as well as the availability of formal fiddle lessons, has had a significant impact on musical transmission in the region. Until the beginning of the twenty-first century few musicians in the region could read music. Aural transmission of tunes was the conventional mode of learning new tunes; tunes were generally learned privately via recordings and by listening to other musicians perform at house parties, jams or concerts. Several older musicians pointed to a perceived lack of interest among young people to seek out live performances of traditional music on a regular basis and a general decline in the number of opportunities to do so; consequently, written music has largely taken over as the primary channel through which fiddlers learn tunes. Most fiddle teachers on P.E.I. note the importance of aural transmission, yet most of these instructors utilise sheet music as a primary learning tool and as a memory supplement for their students.

When she began to play the fiddle in 1995, Marie Livingstone decided to transcribe her favourite tunes by hand; these tunes, which ranged from her own and other local compositions to Cape Breton, French, Scottish and Irish tunes, were eventually compiled in a binder that now includes well over five hundred tunes. In conjunction with the implementation of the new “workshop” format of the Jam, more musicians began using Marie’s transcriptions as tools to facilitate learning a shared repertoire of tunes (and, generally, the same versions of tunes) with greater ease. As such, over the years the group has established a core repertoire comprising P.E.I., Cape Breton, Scottish, Irish and old French tunes that are popular in the region, as well as locally-composed tunes by musicians in the Région Évangéline and other Islanders. Written in the standard format of fiddle music notation, Marie’s transcriptions are blueprints of tunes, including only the time signature, key signature and skeletal tune melody (see Ex. 4.3 below);\(^{39}\) because she is not trained in music theory, the transcriptions contain errors in rhythmic notation and key signature and missing accidentals.\(^{40}\) Nevertheless, these inaccuracies do not seem to get in the way of the fiddlers, as they would for outsiders to the tradition, as the core jammers use the transcriptions more as an aide-mémoire than a note-by-note guide. A number of these fiddlers were frequent competitors in the Island step dancing competitions as youngsters and have retained a musical imprint of the community dances and kitchen parties they experienced as children; it appears that most of these musicians already have the sound of the common regional tunes in their ears and therefore rely on a mix of aural and music literate abilities.

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\(^{39}\) Generally, printed collections of fiddle tunes are skeletal transcriptions but the level of descriptive detail varies (in terms of bowings, fingerings, accents). Marie’s skeletal transcriptions follow standard practices for unpublished tune notation.

\(^{40}\) As Marie explains, when the project began she had no intention of disseminating the transcriptions, therefore some pages contain up to ten tunes notated on hand-drawn staves.
As is the case for many of the fiddlers, the majority of the Jam musicians who play accompaniment instruments (piano and guitar) follow chord charts that Marie has notated in a separate binder. The chord charts follow a simplified system comprising chord names separated by bar lines, with the implication that the chord is to be played in the standard reel strumming pattern (Ex. 4.1) until a chord change is indicated.

Example 4.1 Standard reel strumming pattern.

This method of chord notation is illustrated in Figure 4.2, below; the example provided corresponds to the reel “Eddy and Amand” composed by Marie Livingstone. For the sake of comparison, Example 4.3 is a skeletal transcription of the tune with chords notated above the staves.

Example 4.2 Accompaniment chord chart for “Eddy and Amand” reel, composed by Marie Livingstone.  

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41 “Eddy and Amand” reel was composed in September 1998. The tune was composed for fiddler Eddy Arsenault and his brother, Amand, two of her mother’s cousins who were Marie’s neighbours. They often played music at Marie’s house for weddings and parties, and had a great influence on Marie.
While the notated chord progressions and straightforward strumming patterns suit the skill level of the novice accompanists, the accompaniment played by the Jam members who read the chord charts does not reflect the style of accompaniment heard in concerts or most other musical contexts in the region. Although they are harmonically accurate, the notated accompaniment patterns lack the creativity and spontaneity heard in more informal “party” and formal concert contexts, wherein more experienced accompanists are concerned not only with providing strong harmonic support for the melodic instruments but also aim to enhance and play off of the melody. Although the Jam accompanists show improvement in the speed of chord changes and rhythmic stability, by reading the notated charts they are neither compelled to develop their aural accompaniment skills nor are they encouraged to experiment with their instruments in the relaxed performance context.
Local repertoire and tune composition

A lot of times people think that there are all these Acadian tunes out there, but they think they are 200 years old... there really weren’t a whole lot of Acadian tunes 200 years ago – the tunes are now. 42

A noteworthy by-product of the widespread renewed interest in traditional music in the Région Évangéline, and on P.E.I. more broadly, since the 1990s is the emergence of an unprecedented volume of new, locally-composed fiddle tunes. Since its onset, the Friday Night Jam has played an important role in the integration of these contemporary P.E.I. Acadian tunes into the common local repertoire. From the early years of the Jam, local compositions have featured prominently in the Jam group’s regular repertoire and the group enthusiastically learns and performs tunes composed by their family members, friends and other members of the community. This enthusiasm for new tunes that have a personal connection has encouraged a number of regular jammers and other local musicians to not only generate compositions but also to share their compositions with the wider community.

Until the mid-1990s, the common repertoire of Evangeline fiddlers featured primarily local variations of Scottish, Irish and Cape Breton tunes with the melodies, rhythm and ornamentation altered to reflect a regional aesthetic. In the Région Évangéline, these variations were often achieved by the performer omitting the complex bowed and fingered ornamentation typical of Irish and Cape Breton fiddling styles, or changing the pattern or length of notes in a melodic phrase. As a result of these individual “stamps” on the traditional repertoire, particular renditions of tunes were adopted by the community of musicians.

becoming a regional variant. As the tune “Dragger’s Reel” (Ex. 4.4), introduced in the opening ethnography of this section, illustrates, the origin of a tune was sometimes forgotten altogether, or mistakenly assumed to be a new composition when it was in fact an unconsciously modified version of an existing tune that the fiddler heard on the radio; “Dragger’s reel” is attributed to local fiddler Eddy Arsenault, but the overall melodic and rhythmic structure of the tune clearly resembles “Hughie Shortie’s” reel (Ex. 4.5), composed by Cape Breton fiddler Johnny Wilmot.

Example 4.4 “Dragger’s Reel,” attributed to Eddy Arsenault. (Transcribed by Marie Livingstone and Meghan Forsyth)

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In his study of the compositional processes of the late French Newfoundland fiddler Emile Benoit, Colin Quigley describes several methods that Benoit used to generate a new melody. In one instance, inspired by a short musical idea comprising a pattern that is either new or borrowed from an existing tune, Benoit embarks on a cyclic compositional process in which a melodic fragment is “aurally monitored, evaluated, and subsequently modified” to become a new fixed melodic unit; Quigley calls this process of experimental composition “melodizing.” In another instance, Quigley documents the transformative process by which an existing tune provides the basis for an entirely new composition. Anne and Norman Cohen describe the latter method as the “wholesale editing” of melodies, in which known tunes are

Example 4.5 “Hughie Shortie’s reel,” composed by Johnny Wilmot. (Transcribed by Meghan Forsyth)

44 “Hughie Shortie’s” is also known as “Hughie Shorty’s,” “Johnny Wilmot’s,” and, less commonly, “Patricia Wilmot’s.”
45 Quigley, Music from the Heart, 83.
transformed based on the individual’s musical sensibilities, thereby adopting an “oral-tradition character.” The unconscious “wholesale editing” of tunes was a common occurrence across P.E.I. for much of the Island’s fiddle history, particularly due to popular radio stations that featured fiddling; it is only in the last few decades, with the increased availability of recordings, the rise in composition of local tunes and the more prominent acknowledgement of living composers, that this practice of “editing” tunes has become less obvious.

In the same vein, the names of older tunes (primarily those composed prior to 1975), were frequently replaced by reference to a particular musician in traditional performance practice. Alternate tune names often pertained to a certain fiddler who was known to have played a tune frequently, while other tunes, or versions of tunes, were attributed to the tune’s presumed composer. Similar to the tradition of referencing family genealogy in order to position oneself within a specific familial context, the practice of referencing a particular musician or composer inscribes and transmits narratives of association, alliances and musical exchanges between people and places, at particular points in time. For example, “la toune à George à Phil,” a favourite reel of the Friday Night Jam group, is believed to have been composed in les Îles-de-la-Madeleine by a fiddler named George à Phil. It was taught to the Jam group by the accomplished madelinot fiddler Bertrand Déraspe on one of his visits to the Island. This practice of dropping the name of tunes is most common on les Îles-de-la-

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48 Francophone Acadians on P.E.I. use the English word “tune” or *mélodie* to refer to a traditional instrumental piece or melody. The word “tune” is pronounced almost the same way in both French and English. Therefore, when writing in English, most Acadians write “tune.” However, when writing in French, it is sometimes spelled “toune” because the “ou” spelling better represents the English “u” pronunciation; if one reads “tune” using the French phonetics, it does not sound like “tune” in English.
Madeleine, where even tunes that are widely known as “standards” in traditional fiddle contexts throughout North American and the British Isles, such as “Lord MacDonald’s reel” or “Heather on the Hill,” are known by alternate names that reference particular fiddlers. Nonetheless, the practice of designating alternate tune names has also decreased significantly within the past few decades for similar reasons as those noted above with reference to the decline in extensive tune variation in fiddle tunes, as well as the increased use of notation.

Today, the names of newly composed P.E.I. Acadian tunes are maintained by performers and, for the most part, composers of popular tunes are acknowledged by local players; yet, as I discuss below, Acadian tunes and their composers continue to be misrepresented off-Island, a situation that has sparked local Evangeline fiddler Anastasia DesRoches to take action to promote the acknowledgement of P.E.I. Acadian tune composers locally, regionally, and internationally. Many of the region’s contemporary composers take a great deal of pleasure in naming their tunes, as evidenced by the tune names of the musical examples that follow. Similar to the aforementioned practice of giving tunes alternate names that convey particular connections, actual composition titles often carry extra-musical associations and transmit narratives of contemporary Acadian life on P.E.I. Edward Arsenault, a prolific tune composer in the Région Évangéline, explains that many of his tunes were initially nameless and were later named after significant moments in his life. Edward’s process of naming tunes illustrates what Quigley explains as “an important meaning-giving act through which the musician and the audience connect the musical experience of the fiddle tune with their other individual and shared worlds of experience.” Indeed, each tune name tells its own story about the people, place, and connections in which it was created. In keeping

50 Quigley, Music from the Heart, 97.
with this tradition of pairing the narrative and the tune, I have attempted to note the composers’ tune stories, as they were told to me, for each of the musical examples that follow.  

Contemporary step dancing practices influence tune composition. There are still several older dancers in the Région Évangéline who perform the “old form” of dancing, that is, the style that was prominent before choreographed steps and patterns became the norm. The older style of dancing generally comprises three to five different steps, typically in a low “shuffling” style, and the steps change at any point in the tune, as opposed to changing by bar or section. As Marie Livingstone explains, most of these dancers would “just jump to the floor at a house party from the joy of the music which would drive them to their feet, with no thought [to] a constructed set of steps balanced to the length of the turns of the tune.” This spontaneous, informal style of step dancing has been largely replaced by choreographed sets of steps, wherein each step lasting sixteen counts (the equivalent of eight measures.) Edward (à Polycarpe) Arsenault’s tune “Reel des acadiens,” composed circa 1975, has been a favourite tune of step dancers in the region for over three decades and continues to be one of the most widely played tunes in the Région Évangéline (Ex. 4.6). Named for its place of honour as the first “Acadian” tune from P.E.I., “Reel des acadiens” was the first local tune to become well known in the region and is commonly one of the first tunes in a fiddler’s repertoire. The tune’s driving eighth-note rhythm and straightforward four-measure phrase structure fits easily with common Acadian step dance patterns. The tune is rarely played with

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51 Thanks to Anastasia DesRoches for providing details of several of the tune narratives.
52 Marie Livingstone, email to author, 15 July 2010.
53 Several musicians recall older fiddlers who may have composed tunes; however, they may have been cases of modifying existing tunes. Regardless, “Reel des acadiens” is the first composition for which players can name the composer.
fingered or bowed ornamentation, although occasionally a fiddler such as Louise Arsenault will incorporate a “shuffle” style whereby some notes are not fully sounded; the following transcription is notated as Edward generally plays it, with a straight eighth-note pattern and few quarter notes or slurs.

Example 4.6 “Reel des acadiens,” composed by Edward P. Arsenault. (Transcribed by Meghan Forsyth)

Tunes that contain six, ten or twelve measures per section (either “A” part or “B” parts), or added beats, are particularly confusing for contemporary step dancers, as the tunes’ phrases do not correspond to sixteen measure steps. The following reel, “Reel à Delphine” (Ex. 4.7), attributed to fiddler Delphine Arsenault, is considered an “old” tune and exemplifies a tune with additional beats. The “A” part of the tune contains four measures in 4/4 time and is typically played four times, the equivalent of two sixteen-count dance steps; the “B” part contains eight measures and is repeated once, although measures five and nine each contain two additional beats. For the sake of clarity, the transcription below shows measures with added notes in 6/4 time. For older dancers, added beats in this type of tune are of no consequence; however, contemporary step dancers consider this a “listening” piece, as their
regular dance steps and patterns of steps are not compatible with the tune’s irregular rhythmic structure. As a point of interest, Barachois fiddler Louise Arsenault often plays measures 5, 6, 9 and 10 with a “shuffle” rhythm. The following transcription includes both renditions, with Louise’s version notated in ossia staff. The shuffle is heard in both versions in measure 5 (and 9), although most players play this tune with the syncopated eighth-quarter-eighth rhythm in measure 5 (and 9) and a full quarter note on the first beat of measure 6 (and 10).

Example 4.7 “Reel à Delphine,” as played by Barachois. (Transcribed by Meghan Forsyth)

With a few exceptions, the majority of contemporary Acadian compositions fall under this category of “listening tunes” instead of “dancing tunes.” The older tunes, many of which are of Scottish or Cape Breton origin, remain local favourites for step or set dancing, while other tunes have been incorporated into the repertoire as music for listening. This distinction between music for performance versus music for dancing reflects changes that have occurred in the tradition of informal musical gatherings, such as les parties de cuisine; as several older musicians observe, whereas kitchen parties were once geared toward adult set dancing, the

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54 Québécois fiddlers often play a tune with four measures three times instead of two or four, which P.E.I. step dancers (indeed, all but Québécois dancers) find difficult to dance to. This practice is also heard occasionally on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, although generally only in a performance and not when playing for dancers.
tradition has now shifted to a younger, group playing-oriented performance context. Without the need for a substantial repertoire of tunes associated with dancing, the musical repertoire has shifted to encompass a wide range of tune genres and styles, many of which are not compatible with Acadian step dancing or the Island-style set dancing, as they do not have the corresponding phrase structure (often obvious four-bar phrases) discussed earlier or the natural “lift” and rhythmic drive of older Scottish or Acadian tunes. In set dancing, preferences for tunes are most commonly related to the “liveliness” of the fiddler, and chosen accordingly, although dancers also have their favourite tunes. Step dancers tend to be more particular in terms of tunes they request for a performance. Marie Livingstone classifies tunes that are not good for dancing as “soft tunes.” While good tunes are specified as having a “natural lift” that is fun to dance to and corresponds well to a dancer’s preferred steps, “soft tunes” are characterised as tunes that are nice to listen to or to play, but that do not have enough “lift” in the natural speed of the tune, phrase structure, or rhythmic patterns to show off a dancer’s aptitude in performance.

In addition to the natural “feel” of particular tunes, tune genre is also a defining factor in distinguishing between “listening” versus “dancing” tunes. Consistent with the predominant preferences of tune genres in the Région Évangéline, reels and marches comprise the majority of the tunes composed in the region. Nevertheless, while this is presently the case, new jig compositions have begun to emerge in the repertoire since 2000, often via composers who have social ties to, or musical preferences related to, Cape Breton or the eastern areas of P.E.I. where jigs are more popular. While it is difficult to speculate at present, it will be interesting to see if a shift in the repertoire of new tunes emerges in the near future.

55 These changes in the kitchen party tradition will be discussed in the following section.
Old and newly composed jigs, strathspeys and slow airs, in addition to marches and reels, are more prominent in eastern P.E.I., particularly in the Souris-area where anglicized Acadian families, such as the Chaissons, continue to be influenced by musical preferences from Cape Breton. The following jig, entitled “Mary Hughes” (Ex. 4.8), by Souris-area composer, pianist and fiddler Kevin Chaisson, is one of the few newly-composed jigs that has seeped into the Acadian repertoire in western P.E.I., courtesy of Marie Livingstone’s introduction of the tune through the Friday Night Acadian Jam group.

Example 4.8 “Mary Hughes” jig, composed by Kevin Chaisson. (Transcribed by Marie Livingstone)

There is no indication from members of the community as to why this particular tune, written for Kevin’s sister, has become popular and others have not; I speculate that there are both musical and social factors that contribute to its popularity. First, the tune’s melodic range (an octave) and its repetitive melodic and rhythmic characteristics undoubtedly factor greatly in the tune’s broad dissemination; it is a relatively easy tune to learn for players of all levels,

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56 Here “jig” refers to a double jig. Slip jigs (in 9/8 time) and single jigs (jigs in 6/8 which tend to follow a pattern of quarter note plus eighth note twice per bar), standards in Irish traditional music, are rarely heard outside Irish musical sessions on the Island.
while the end product does not give the impression of a “beginner’s” tune. Second, Kevin’s Island-wide reputation for writing memorable, “catchy” tunes and his long-standing association with the musical community of the Région Évangéline play an important role in the popularity of many of his tunes.  

It is neither surprising nor is it unique to P.E.I. that in the process of tune retention only some tunes survive and are selected to join the ranks of other time-honoured tunes. In general, for there are always exceptions to the rule, this selection process takes into account a tune’s innate ease of execution, its aesthetic appeal (either melodic or rhythmic, or both) and its memorability. The indirect influence of some musicians can also influence a tune’s survival; for example, it is common that the Friday Night Jam group will learn tunes that have been featured in a performance or recording of a popular fiddler or group, and which otherwise may not have come under their musical radars. A number of contemporary compositions that have withstood this competitive process are those that have been deemed by other players in the area to have maintained an “old Acadian feel.” It appears that the “feel” of the tune is influenced by the playing styles of particular fiddler-composers, such as Eddy Arsenault, Edward P. Arsenault, Louise Arsenault, and Peter (à Eddy) Arsenault. Fiddlers also talk about the way in which a composer “turns” a tune—that is, the organisation of notes into patterns—that gives it an older “feel.” A common element in a number of these tunes is the presence of a pedal note within a melodic phrase, whereby the melody returns to a particular note (frequently the tonic) within a short melodic sequence. A recurring “G” pedal is evident in measures 2, 5-7, 10, 14 and 16 of Marie Livingstone’s popular tune, “Reel à Hermine.”  

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57 Kevin is Acadian on his father’s side although French has not been spoken in his family for several generations. In Chapter 6 I consider issues of language and identity in the Anglo-Acadian community.
Gallant” (Ex. 4.9). This reel was popularised through its inclusion in the repertoire (and recordings) of the local group Vishtèn.

Example 4.9 “Reel à Hermine Gallant,” composed by Marie Livingstone. (Transcribed by Anastasia DesRoches, Marie Livingstone and Meghan Forsyth)

Peter Arsenault’s well known tune “Terminal reel” (Ex. 4.10), also makes use of an “A” pedal (first four measures) and repeated emphasis of the high A (measures 8-10; 12-13):

Example 4.10 “Terminal Reel,” composed by Peter Arsenault. (Transcribed by Marie Livingstone)

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58 Pedals on “D” are also evident in measures 1 and 3.
59 Composed on August 6th, 1998, for her sister Hermine Gallant (née Arsenault) who plays the pump organ (harmonium).
60 Composed after a ferry trip to Cape Breton with Grady Poe to see Cape Breton pianist Hilda Chiasson.
Several of Edward P. Arsenault’s compositions also fall into this category of tunes that have an “old” flavour, including “Reel des Placide” (Ex. 4.11), a tune named in honour of Edward’s family line (Edward à Polycarpe à Phylimon à Polycarpe à Joe à Placide) and “Reel des Mocoque” (Ex. 4.12). Both tunes feature the modal ambiguity characteristic of many older Acadian tunes (and Acadian versions of popular tunes), discussed in Chapter 3, as well as recurring pedal notes, such as the “a” pedal in the second (B) part (measures 1 and 5) of “Reel des Placide.”

The modal ambiguity is evident in several passages of both tunes, although, interestingly, the common accompaniment varies considerably. In “Reel des Placide” the fiddle clearly alternates between major and minor modes, using both G and C natural (measures 1 to 6) and G and C sharp (measures 7 and 8). Many (older) accompanists chord this tune in the major mode which, as Marie Livingstone describes, gives the tune a “raw edge” that drives the dancers to the floor. When it was composed in the 1980s, few accompanists in the region utilised minor chords on a regular basis, although today it would be chored in the minor mode.61 The chord pattern in the below transcription of “La Reel des Placide” (Ex. 4.11) is based on the playing of Edward’s first wife Marie (Marie à Edward) who was known as a lively pianist.62

61 Marie Livingstone, email to author, 9 April 2011.
62 The tune is transcribed in the key of A mixolydian. See early discussion of modal ambiguity in Chapter 3.
By contrast, the same accompanist (Marie à Edward) chords the tune “Reel des Mocoque” (Ex. 4.12), composed around the same time (approx. 1983), in E minor. The modal ambiguity arises in the beginning of the B part of the tune: she changes from an E minor chord to an E major chord where the tune could have stayed in E minor for four more beats. Also, she moves to a B⁷ instead of B minor at the end of both the A and B parts. Marie Livingstone describes Marie à Edward’s choices as being unique in that regard and “rocking on the edge” of whether it should be in major or minor; she adds that Marie à Edward was recognised for her ability to use chords that made the tune “different and more interesting,” and that the “edge” she created in her accompaniment “lifted dancers off their chairs.”

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63 Marie Livingstone, email to author, 9 April 2011.
Example 4.12 “Reel des Mocoque,” composed by Edward P. Arsenault.\(^6^4\) (Tune transcribed by Anastasia DesRoches based on Edward’s recording of the tune in the *C’est à nous* recording project. Chords transcribed by Marie Livingstone based on the playing of Marie à Edward Arsenault)

Lastly, the tune “Reel des narcisse” (Ex. 4.13), composed by Louise Arsenault, was made popular on Barachois’ recording *Barachois* (1997). What gives this tune its particular old quality is the recurring syncopated rhythm, which is compatible with the natural “shuffle” rhythm of Louise’s style. As in earlier transcriptions, I have transcribed the rhythm as it would normally be notated by players, with an example of the actual “shuffle” as played by Louise in *ossia* staff (measure 1).

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\(^6^4\) This tune is written for Edward’s mother’s side of the family (the “Joe Mocoques,” after the family patriarch, Joe Mocoque Arsenault). The Polycarpe’s and Eddy Arsenault’s family genealogies connect at Joe Mocoque.
Example 4.13 “Reel des narcisse,” composed by Louise Arsenault. (Transcribed by Marie Livingstone and Meghan Forsyth)

*The “C’est à nous” project*

In 2008, Mont-Carmel fiddler Anastasia DesRoches (b. 1972) completed the first stage of a three-part tune collecting project called *C’est à nous*. The inspiration for the project was two-fold. First, the project was inspired by a dilemma that she and other Acadian musicians frequently encountered when performing in concerts and festivals off-Island. She explains that she was frequently asked to play “Acadian” fiddle tunes from P.E.I. and realised that she knew of very few Island Acadian tunes and local composers. Looking through Marie Livingstone’s hand-written transcriptions, Anastasia noticed that Marie had transcribed a number of tunes composed by Evangeline fiddler Peter (à Eddy) Arsenault, accordionist Pastelle LeBlanc, and several other musicians from the region. This discovery inspired her to search out other Acadian composers on P.E.I. The second inspiration for the project was that Anastasia had heard several Island Acadian tunes played by professional off-Island fiddlers or transcribed on traditional music websites (in the United States) without reference to the composer and, frequently, without the proper title. The lack of knowledge about P.E.I.
Acadian tunes and the misrepresentation of these tunes outside of the community contributed to propelling the project forward. At both local and international levels, Anastasia explains that her aim with the project is to demonstrate the value of this contemporary music and “let the composers know that we appreciate them [and] their contribution [to the tradition].” With the support of la Fédération culturelle de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard, a provincial non-profit association that works to develop and promote the arts and culture for the Francophone and Acadian community of P.E.I., Anastasia obtained Federal and Provincial funding from Heritage Canada and the Ministry of Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour, to initiate a project with both local preservationist goals and broader aims for the recognition of P.E.I. Acadian tunes off-Island. The project was conceived in three phases: 1) collecting, transcribing and recording Island Acadian tunes; 2) the commercial publication of a tune book, accompanied by a professionally recorded CD, and the creation of a website for the project; and 3) the development of a social studies curriculum in conjunction with the Department of Education.

The initial phase of the project was completed in 2008. Anastasia identified and interviewed a total of thirty-three Acadian composers from across P.E.I. about their musical influences and compositional processes and collected 297 tunes. Each tune was transcribed and compiled in a binder which is publicly available for browsing and photocopying at the Musée acadien de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard along with a biography of each composer and a brief note about each tune. The composers include both francophone and anglicized Acadians, ranging in age from eighty-seven-year-old Eddy Arsenault to ten-year-old Lexie Drummond,

a fiddle student of Anastasia’s at l’École Sommaire, the French school in Summerside.\(^{66}\)

Almost all the tunes were recorded with the composers playing their own tunes, either solo or in a jam setting, some with accompaniment and others without; some of the recordings were taken from commercial CDs and homemade recordings. At the time of this writing, funding has yet to be received for the second and third phases of the project, although Heritage Canada initially committed to funding the entire three-stage project. The second phase includes producing a commercial tune book and professionally-recorded accompanying CD (the royalties of which would be given to the composers) and creating a website about the project, the composers and Acadian music on P.E.I. As Anastasia explains, she intends to feature a selection of local tunes in a rotation on the website as a means of enticing other musicians to dig deeper into the Island Acadian tradition,

I think the whole point is that if people hear a couple [of] tunes and they read about a couple of composers, and they see the sheet music for a couple of tunes, they will hopefully say, ‘hey, there’s something really neat there in this Acadian culture on P.E.I., maybe we should check that out, maybe we should go and see what’s going on there’...so that [is] the goal: to get [the music] out there and make people aware [of our tradition] without giving it all away.\(^{67}\)

The third phase of the project brings the focus back to the local community level, with the aim to foster an awareness of, and interest in, local artists and culture among Acadian youth across the Island. Developed in conjunction with the Department of Education, this phase will consist of building an applied social studies curriculum that partners local professional Acadian artists (traditional and contemporary musicians, dancers and visual artists) with schools in their own communities. The objective of the new curriculum is to promote Acadian culture at a local level and to expose youth to the active role that local artists (many of whom

\(^{66}\) Ages calculated in 2008.

\(^{67}\) Anastasia DesRoches, interview with author, 26 June 2008.
are their neighbours, family or family friends) play in sustaining and advancing Acadian culture on P.E.I.

The project’s title, *C’est à nous*, reflects these various project goals. The phrase “C’est à nous” was chosen for its *double entendre*: on the one hand, the phrase literally translates as “it’s ours,” reflecting Anastasia’s objective that the project belong to the entire Acadian community and that it will draw awareness to the existence of the Island composers who are represented in the project. On the other hand, however, the phrase can be interpreted as “c’est à nous à protéger” (“it is ours to protect” or, more broadly, “it is up to us”). Anastasia explains that the latter reading of the phrase denotes that “we have to protect the music, we have to protect the composer’s rights” speaking to Anastasia’s goals that the Island composers receive the recognition locally and abroad for their contributions to the tradition.\(^{68}\) The *C’est à nous* project is thus at the fore of a burgeoning interest among local musicians to protect their indigenous culture and to draw awareness to issues of misuse and misidentification of contemporary “traditional” music by musicians outside of the tradition.

Many of the tunes in Anastasia’s project are now among the common repertoire of the Friday Night Acadian Jam group. This is particularly true of the tunes composed by regular Jam attendees, such as those composed by Marie Livingstone, Paula Arsenault and Edward P. Arsenault that feature prominently in the Jam repertoire on a weekly basis. Largely owing to the Jam’s support of these locally-composed tunes, new compositions from within the Evangeline community are increasingly embedded in the regional repertoire and are represented in performances by amateur and professional musicians across the Island. There is some speculation among musicians that the *C’est à nous* project will not have a large impact

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\(^{68}\) Anastasia DesRoches, interview with author, 26 June 2008.
on the tradition until at least the second stage, which includes the release of a tune book\textsuperscript{69} and recording, at which point it will be accessible to a broader community of musicians both on- and off-island; nonetheless, the project has added to the renewed sense of value and pride in the local tradition that was the subject of Chapter 3.

**The Acadian *Party de cuisine***

*A kitchen party in Mont-Carmel, 27 July 2008*

It’s the Saturday night of the Atlantic Fiddlers’ Jamboree weekend. As I make my way toward an empty seat toward the front of the Centre-expo hall in Abram Village in preparation for the evening concert, I’m stopped by Colette Aucoin, one of the Jamboree organisers from Mont-Carmel. “Have you heard?” she asks, “*party chez moi* (party at my place) after the concert. Are you coming?” I tell her that I’ll be there. Given this year’s line-up of musicians at the festival, some of whom we heard hours before in the afternoon concert, this is certainly a party I don’t want to miss. In addition to featured local fiddlers from the *Région Évangéline* and members of the Chaisson family from eastern P.E.I., this year’s invited guests include the exceptional *madelinot* fiddler Bertrand Déraspe, French Newfoundland accordionist Bernard Félix, George Wilson from the northeastern United States and the Beaton family (Kinnon, Betty Lou and Andrea) from Cape Breton, among others. I settle into my seat and watch for the next three hours as fiddlers, accordionists, accompanists and local step dancers light up the stage.

Colette’s house is located just before the *Mont-Carmel-du-Notre-Dame* church,

\textsuperscript{69} I participated in the production of this bilingual tune book, entitled *Le Vent dans les voiles*, in the role of advisor for tune inclusion and editor of transcriptions and English texts. At the time of this writing the book is in publication with *La Fédération culturelle acadienne*. 
overlooking the Northumberland Strait. It’s a known *maison de rassemblement* (gathering house) in the region, and Colette has renovated a shed on her property for the singular purpose of hosting musical gatherings. Yet, tonight, I’m surprised to hear music emanating from the house, not the shed. The music is already in full swing when I arrive. A keyboard and chairs have been set up in the living room adjacent to the open-concept kitchen; soon both rooms are teeming with musicians and onlookers, and beer, wine and water bottles line the countertop behind the musicians. Watching the event unfold from the edge of the room, I see beginner step dancer Nick Arsenault show his new steps to some friends who, in turn, show him a new “shuffle-step-kick” step. In the typical fashion of kitchen or shed parties, the musicians’ circle changes frequently as players give up their chairs to step outside, get a drink or stand in the kitchen to listen and socialise. Fiddle and guitar cases are piled comically high in the front entrance, while instruments that are not in use or in their cases are scattered around the room, out of harm’s way; I add my case to the pile and, fiddle in hand, I take an empty seat in the circle.

The musicians are focused on the music and seem unaware of the laughing and dancing taking place just a few feet away. We’ve found common repertoire in some older Scottish and Cape Breton tunes, although my fingers can barely keep up to the fast pace of the reels. I’m acutely aware of the amount of sweat emanating from Bernard Félix, the robust accordionist to my left and, in particular, the movement of his powerful arms as he expands his instrument’s bellows, his right elbow coming within inches of my nose. I edge my chair back slightly. The set of reels ends with applause and shouts of encouragement from the onlookers; immediately, flautist Philippe LeBlanc slows down the pace with a lilting Irish air

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70 Feintuch notes that, in Cape Breton, these popular gathering houses are known as “ceilidh houses.” Feintuch, “The Conditions,” 85.
he taught me only a few weeks before and I join in, followed by a few others. The second time through the tune my eyes meet Philippe’s for a moment, a mutual acknowledgement of the good “groove” we have established. A minute later, he catches my eye again, although this time I recognise it as a silent signal that he’s changing tunes; sure enough, he moves into the well known Cape Breton strathspey, “Donald Angus Beaton,” and the rest of the group joins in.

A few sets later, I retreat from the circle, making way for another fiddler. As the party continues (until the wee hours), there’s a never-ending progression of musicians who take their turns in the circle, adding their own flavour to the evening’s organic musical roster. Around midnight, Colette announces that there is a pot of homemade fricot on the stove, and we dive in, fuelling our bodies for several more hours of music-making.

Figure 4.5 Kitchen party in Mont-Carmel. (Photo by Colette Aucoin)
A symbol of Acadie

Musical gatherings like the one described above are familiar events in the Région Évangéline and have been important forms of social entertainment in the region, as well as in other P.E.I. and Maritime communities, for decades. Before television and other technological distractions were commonplace, individual music-making and, in particular, spontaneous musical gatherings were primary leisure activities. Such gatherings feature prominently in the childhood memories of many Islanders. Growing up in the 1960s, Helen Bergeron explains that “house parties were regular events for us...it wasn’t a planned thing. People would just drop in.” These were predominantly multi-generational gatherings, in which family and friends would congregate to relax, pass time or weather a winter storm. Souris-area musician Kevin Chaisson is from a well known musical household in which gatherings of family and friends always included making music. As he recalls,

This is as true as I’m sittin’ here. If there was a storm forecast, say for a Friday night or even [a] Thursday night, the house would fill up with people. Honest to God, they’d be coming hoping to get storm stay. You know, so there was a big upright piano down in the living room...it was just <shakes his head in disbelief and laughs> ... the music was just a great time.

Although the tradition of kitchen parties has a long history in the region, the term itself does not. Georges Arsenault explains that when he was growing up in Abram Village, in the 1950s, the terms “kitchen party” and “party de cuisine” were not heard; instead, he, his family and friends would refer to an evening of music and socializing as “une veillée de musique” or “une soirée de musique.” Today, the expression parties de cuisine (kitchen parties) is widely

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72 Kevin Chaisson, interview with author, 14 July 2008.
73 Georges Arsenault, interview with author, 20 August 2009.
used by Acadians in the region, but it was not an expression that was used prior to the early 1990s. The expression came into popular usage in the Acadian community only after Barachois’ manager Grady Poe introduced his concept of “P.E.I. House Parties” to the Island, as discussed in Chapter 3, and Barachois popularised the idea of kitchen parties through their performances. Indeed, Barachois’ success turned “Acadian kitchen party” into a household expression and a vibrant symbol of Island Acadian culture both locally and abroad. Subsequently, other Island Acadian bands, such as Gadelle (2008-2010) and En Acadie (2008-09), have capitalised on this legacy in the design of their own shows.

While kitchen parties have come to represent traditional Acadian music on the Island and have proven to be a lucrative marketing tool, some musicians point out that the association is nevertheless misleading; naturally, Acadian music neither occurs solely in kitchens nor in the impromptu manner suggested by the expression. In fact, for some musicians, such as members of the group Vishtèn, this symbol of Acadian life on the Island has proven to be a frustrating obstacle. While they are influenced by the music and experience of the kitchen party tradition, Vishtèn (and the group members individually) present a style of music that fuses traditional Acadian music and contemporary Celtic influences. Their performances consist of carefully arranged sets that the band members consider to be distinct from the spontaneous nature of music in kitchen parties. Yet, the group is frequently (and misleadingly) marketed by agents and event organisers under headings such as “Acadian kitchen party.”

74 These Celtic influences are discussed in Chapter 5.

75 In Chapter 5 I provide a case study of Vishtèn and examine more fully the marketing of contemporary Acadian music.
All of the musicians with whom I spoke referred to the centrality of the kitchen party tradition to their communities. For many middle-aged musicians and step dancers in the Région Évangéline, these early experiences of kitchen parties and other family musical gatherings were their first exposure to traditional music and the primary motivation for their later musical endeavours, whether it was learning to dance, learning an instrument, or organising a band. Colette Aucoin, a step dancer and traditional music enthusiast, explains that she enjoys the kitchen party atmosphere because of the sharing that takes place between musicians and other guests:

Ce que j’aime c’est d’être là et d’être partie de ce moment là. C’est vraiment des moments de partage. What I like is being there and being part of the moment. They are really moments of sharing.  

Marie Livingstone explains that the social aspect of the music is important for the preservation of the Acadian culture:

C’est une façon pour la communauté de se regrouper pour passer un temps social et pour garder cette culture vivante. It’s a way for the community to get together to pass time and to keep this culture alive.

These sentiments regarding social interaction and preservation are echoed by Acadian accordionist Pastelle LeBlanc, who describes the multi-generational and communal aspects of kitchen parties as integral to the tradition:

[Kitchen parties] bring people together and they get to play together... and it’s good for the tradition to continue because it’s people from all ages that participate usually. [It] goes to the wee hours of the morning and I think it will continue on because people enjoy themselves. They’re getting bigger and bigger when people know there’s a party [going on]. It’s word of mouth, I mean, nothing will go out promotionally or

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76 Colette Aucoin, interview with author, 17 August 2008.
anything saying [that] there’s a party this weekend. It’s usually family members or friends and they invite people, and then they invite people. 78

Such themes of shared experience, preservation and community identity are common in the public discourse surrounding the tradition of kitchen parties. As portrayed by the above narratives, the kitchen party tradition is a form of “secular ritual” through which the participants (musicians, dancers and guests) “explore and celebrate the relationships that constitute their social identities.” 79 Small posits that regardless of the form the ritual takes, whether informal and small-scale, formal and grand, or in between, “to take part in it is to take part in an act that uses the language of gesture to explore, affirm, and celebrate one’s concepts of ideal relationships.” 80 In the kitchen party context, participants articulate a common perception of the “ideal relationships” that underlie their community through “patterns of gesture” 81 that include the participation of musicians of various generations and levels of musicianship, as well as signals of encouragement and other positive interaction among participants. As such, the kitchen party tradition affirms a sense of community for participants and acts as a celebration of Island Acadian culture.

Yet, this is a living tradition that, over the last generation, has undergone a transition; moreover, not all participants would agree that, in its contemporary form, the tradition upholds these social functions in the Acadian community. Indeed, the model of the tradition that is widely disseminated no longer accurately reflects the “social reality” of the tradition in

79 Christopher Small, Musicking: The Meanings of Performance and Listening (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 234.
80 Ibid., 98.
81 Ibid., 95.
its modern form.\textsuperscript{82} The subject of change in the kitchen party tradition since the mid-1990s surfaced frequently in my conversations with musicians between the ages of thirty-five and sixty years, suggesting that perceptions of the kitchen party tradition and contemporary manifestations of it are anchored in particular points of reference held by musicians of different generations: the older generation that experienced kitchen parties first hand as adults at the kitchen party tradition’s peak in the 1970s and 80s; the middle generation that experienced those kitchen parties through their parents and who are most aware of the divide between the past and present nature of the tradition; and the younger generation whose point of reference includes only the stories of older practices. As the tradition evolves and is re-interpreted by subsequent generations of musicians, relationships between individuals, traditional values associated with communal music-making and social interactions between groups of musicians have shifted. Positive narratives about the tradition, such as those noted above, are coupled with a hushed discourse of discontent about the contemporary ways in which the tradition is enacted and a sense of nostalgia for the kitchen parties of previous decades; this discourse, which circulates in private conversations, is largely focused on sceptical perceptions of change within the tradition.

The most prominent changes that were addressed by participants in my study include the frequency and spontaneity of events, the dominant demographic of house party participants, associated dancing practices and tune repertoire, and a lack of awareness of the “etiquette” of playing music in this context. The frequency and spontaneous nature of kitchen parties were often mentioned as areas of significant change in the tradition. This line of discussion was generally framed by a sense of nostalgia as musicians recalled their

experiences as children or narratives about kitchen parties in “the old days;” stories abound about kitchen parties at grandparents’ houses wherein families would congregate and sing, play and dance all night.83 A number of musicians remarked that kitchen parties are less frequent now than fifteen or twenty years ago. Patricia Richard attributes this change of frequency to the breadth of entertainment options available to people today:

[Kitchen parties] happen much less than [they] used to. There’s a lot less person-to-person contact than there was years ago. People didn’t have any choices. That’s how they would pass their time: socializing and playing. It was one of their escapes. Now we’ve got so many other means of entertainment that, you know, it doesn’t happen anymore.84

Recalling the “roaring” kitchen parties he experienced growing up, Peter Arsenault attributes the “life” of the party to the presence of “party fiddlers:”

On Sunday afternoon there’d be relatives coming down from all over the place and everybody [went to] our grandfather’s house which was right next door to our house. That was the place to go when you wanted to listen to hoppin’ music. Pépé (granddad) would take out the plywood sheet there, put it on the floor and dad and Amand would set up and, man, that thing was just roaring! And [the kids] would be sitting on the stairs, like in the hall, and [we] could kind of see the old folks just partying on in the kitchen on Sunday afternoons and wondering what the big stir was about, you know? And yeah, those days are gone. They had some mind-boggling parties. [Also] at Grady and Helen’s, when Dad and Edward were kind of a hot duet there. Man, they had some great parties there. The only reason why those parties were cookin’, like more than any party you can go to now, was because Dad and Edward were there, and Louise. Those people are ...party fiddlers. Like people now are performance fiddlers – so when they’re not performing, they’re not really playing.85

Peter’s narrative, like those of many other musicians, describes a context that he perceives no longer exists in the community. Another musician agrees that today’s fiddlers are more performance-oriented and seem to have less fun:

83 Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2009; Gary Gallant, interview with author, 17 August 2008.
84 Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2009.
I swear to God, you’d walk out of [a party] at 3 or 4 o’clock in the morning [not believing] what just happened in there. [It was] just wild! And, you know, it bothered you for weeks. But it doesn’t happen anymore – it just doesn’t happen. It takes characters like [Eddy Arsenault and Edward P. Arsenault], the older players, because they’ve been playing for parties for like the past 70 years.

[Today] it’s way more performance-oriented, a lot straighter, tighter. You have to be perfect...fiddlers seem to be way too serious. People are taking the music just way to seriously...instead of having a little bit of fun – so what if you screwed up? I was on fire! Do you know what I mean? Every note has to be perfect now. And back then, yeah, it was rough and it was scratchy but it was cookin’. More so than it is now I think.86

This tendency toward performance has promoted the integration of a broader repertoire of tunes into the kitchen party contexts and, to varying degrees, a lack of style and repertoire compatibility. These changes have prompted some musicians to be selective of their playing conditions; several musicians admitted that they generally play only with certain fiddlers or their preferred accompanists.

It is not surprising that this performance-oriented approach has had a further impact on local dance practices. Les danses carrées (“set” or “square” dances), once the highlight of kitchen parties, have fallen out of practice. The custom of step dancing at kitchen parties, too, has diminished as the nature of the tradition has shifted away from participatory and dance-centered. Step dancer Helen Bergeron believes that the playing of the older “party fiddlers” inspired people to dance:

The older style, to me, is more to make people dance. It makes you want to jump up and dance. There’s that pulse there, that “sh sh chou, sh sh chou” [rhythm.] ... you can hardly help it [but] want to dance. And that’s what the aim was at parties: to make people dance. Instead of actually performing in front of people where people are sitting and watching. That wasn’t how fiddling was in the older days.87

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86 Informant’s name withheld, interview with author, 2008.
87 Helen Bergeron, interview with author, 14 July 2008.
Anastasia DesRoches attributes these changes in the kitchen party tradition to the surge of interest in traditional music in the *Région Évangéline* and a lack of knowledge among younger players of traditional jam etiquette. She recalls that, in the mid-1990s, the gatherings she went to featured musicians who were considered *la crème de la crème* of traditional music in the region, including Eddy Arsenault and his family and fiddlers from Cape Breton; in that context, Anastasia explains, beginners would rarely consider playing among the more experienced musicians. In general, the age of musicians ranged from late twenties to late sixties or seventies; younger musicians, she continues, would not play very much, and were quick to put their instruments away if they were coaxed to play a few tunes. The music was “hot,” with different combinations of the top musicians rotating in small groups of one or two fiddlers accompanied by no more than one or two accompanists on piano and guitar, and musicians were careful to take turns moving in and out of the musical circle.  

Fifteen years later, the scene has changed significantly. In general, the average age of players is between 20 and 35. There is a prevalence of group playing, an influence that some people attribute to the large group format of the Friday Night Jam; groups tend to be divided by the musicians’ musical associations in other contexts, such as a group of friends, professional or semi-professional bands, and the Friday Night Jam group, among others. Whereas the older generation was once the life of the party, they are now alienated from these gatherings; musicians over sixty years old now attend intermittently, often only when a gathering is hosted by an immediate family member or close friend, and they rarely participate in the music-making. Unfortunately, because older musicians are no longer active participants in these types of social gatherings, older repertoire and the language of gesture

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88 Anastasia DesRoches, interview with author, 7 July 2010.
long associated with social music-making are not transmitted to younger players.

The musicians who experienced the kitchen party tradition at its peak express that, musically, the kitchen party tradition has lost much of the importance it once carried in the community and many of these musicians find today’s gatherings less satisfying. Whereas music and dance once inspired and propelled these gatherings, kitchen parties now function chiefly as pretexts for social interaction among friends. It is not surprising that the kitchen party tradition has followed a familiar pattern of a generational divide apparent in social contexts both across the Island and beyond, though I would argue that, like other aspects of Island life discussed earlier, ties to family and community have been retained longer in the small Acadian communities than in other (mainland) locales. Older and middle generations struggle to sustain the customs, such as kitchen parties, that have traditionally defined Acadian life according to their recollection of gatherings of particular people at particular periods in time; naturally, however, Acadian life on the Island has changed significantly within a matter of a few decades and younger participants are adapting the tradition to suit their changing interests and musical tastes. These varying perceptions about what it means to live “Acadian” and what constitutes a successful kitchen party have resulted in the distancing of some participants from the tradition. Nevertheless, even as the modern reality of the tradition has shifted, a common narrative of the traditional kitchen party exists that emphasises music and dance, family, the “wild” and spontaneous nature of these gatherings and their role in maintaining the unity of the small community. This narrative is disseminated both on- and off-Island through the staged acts of professional Island Acadian bands. Consequently, a historical memory of older practices has been sustained in contemporary society and continues to be propagated by multiple generations of the community that does not necessarily reflect the participants’ lived experiences. It seems that while the tradition is
perceived as a defining aspect of cultural life in the Région Évangéline, contemporary kitchen parties function as a heightened ritual, in which participants enact a connection, however imaginary, to the romanticized relationships that form the basis of their community.

The kitchen party tradition and the Friday Night Jam are intrinsically linked and each fulfills different social functions for groups or individuals in the community. For beginner-intermediate musicians, the Friday Night Jam acts as a “preparatory phase of performance” for private contexts, such as the kitchen parties, as well as for public performances. One musician who rarely attends the Jam explained that she views the Jam as fulfilling the same role in the community as kitchen parties once did, albeit with a limited representation of the musical community; as she explains, “It’s not your typical Acadian kitchen party, but it kind of plays the same role.” While people still host private kitchen parties, the ideal relationships that once characterised the tradition have changed, leading some members of the community to turn to other options, such as the Jam, to fulfill their desires for musical and social interaction. Participants of the Jam have no pretence of adhering to either historical definitions or outside models of a “good” jam; rather, they have constructed a new tradition to meet their particular needs.

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90 Patricia Richard, interview with author, 26 October 2009.
Chapter 5
Musical Encounters and Performing Alliances

In 2009, a year after the commemorative events described in Chapter 1, the theme of the 2009 festival,¹ “Fêtons et tissons des liens d’amitié en Acadie” (“Let’s celebrate and weave bonds of friendship in Acadia”), stood in sharp contrast to the more sombre themes of commemoration and remembrance that spread throughout P.E.I.’s Acadian communities and local media a year earlier (Fig. 5.1). The new theme highlighted the role of social relationships in engendering and defining identity and, as such, was a fitting welcome for the hundreds of Acadians from across the Maritimes who gathered at the festival grounds in Abram Village for this grand celebration of Acadian culture.

In her announcement of the 2009 theme, Jeanette Blanquière, the president of the festival committee, elaborated on the choice of the word *tisser* (“to weave”) and underscored the importance of creating and maintaining links between Acadian communities. As she explained, “Comme on peut tisser avec des fibres, on peut aussi tisser des liens” (“Just as we weave fibres, we can weave connections [between people]”). These relationships were performed over the course of the four-day festival through a variety of music, dance, craft and livestock exhibitions and games, at once promoting a shared culture and asserting a distinct local Island identity.

While the links between Acadian communities are significant in the context of this festival, the 2009 theme called attention to only one segment of a web of connections and encounters that define the experiences of numerous musicians in the Island’s Acadian

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¹ *L’Exposition agricole et le festival acadien de la région Évangéline* (the Agricultural Fair and Acadian Festival of the Evangeline Region), described in Chapter 3.
community. Narratives of encounter arose frequently in my conversations with musicians, from comments about recent albums and visiting performers, to musicians’ participation in folk festivals, tours and intercultural collaborations, among others.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 5.1** Jeanette Blanquière (left), president of the *Exposition agricole et le Festival acadien*, and Ginette Arsenault, assistant coordinator, with the theme of the 107th festival in 2009. (Photo courtesy of *La Voix acadienne*)

In Chapter 3 I drew attention to the processes of mimesis stemming from both direct and mediated musical encounters that have factored significantly into the (re)definition of Acadian identity and local discourse about what constitutes “traditional” Acadian music. Both musically and discursively, P.E.I. Acadian artists engage and develop further taxonomies of cultural difference by simultaneously drawing upon and distancing themselves from, among others, the dominant Scottish traditions of P.E.I. and Cape Breton Island. Such cultural associations are neither stable nor uniform within the Acadian community and they reflect changing perceptions and realities of contemporary Acadian communities, traditions and identities. These examples illustrate that Acadian identity is constantly, and increasingly, (re)defined in relation to other cultural groups and reified through musical performance.
In his well known essay, “Traveling cultures,” James Clifford contemplates what he describes as the “predicament of modernity:” a world of people and things in transit, a world “increasingly connected but not homogeneous,” a world of encounter. As he explains,

Virtually everywhere one looks, the processes of human movement and encounter are long-established and complex. Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of peoples and things.

This characterisation of a world “in motion” is taken up by Mark Slobin who compels us to view music and ways of thinking and talking about music as mobile and flexible. He writes,

We need to think about music as coming from many places and moving among many levels of today’s societies, just as we have learned to think of groups and nations as volatile, mutable social substances rather than as fixed units for instant analysis.

Island Acadian musicians are active participants in the complex world evoked in Clifford’s travel metaphor. A growing number of touring musicians promote and, to borrow Clifford’s term, “translate” their interpretations of what it means to be Acadian to an increasingly globalised audience; at the same time, they actively construct and maintain an intricate web of exchange and alliances. This “cultural action, the making and remaking [and, I would add, assertion] of identities,” takes place in various spaces of encounter with audiences and other artists: at international festivals, on concert stages, aboard cruise ships, in private jam sessions and in the virtual spaces created by media technology and recordings.

This chapter explores the exchanges, tensions and alliances that inform contemporary Island Acadian identity. In particular, I consider the development of creative and socio-economic partnerships between P.E.I. Acadians and other cultural groups regionally,

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3 Ibid., 3.
5 Clifford, Routes, 7.
nationally and globally. I explore how Acadian musicians (re)present themselves and their music in and beyond the Island community and I consider how their musical choices impact on local identity and musical traditions. In the first section of this chapter I focus on Island Acadian musical encounters with other cultural groups in Québec, the United States and France, paying particular attention to the ways in which these relationships have promoted a sense of alterity among Island Acadians and influenced the musical choices of professional musicians.

In section two I outline the historical foundation for and recent rekindling of alliances between the Acadian communities of P.E.I and Acadians on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Québec. Section three examines this relationship further through a case study of the musical group Vishtèn. I suggest that the strategic marketing of the group’s music as French, Acadian and Celtic enables them to identify, and be identified, with a variety of musical communities, thus broadening their audience base and facilitating their participation in a wide range of performance contexts. I argue that by promoting alliances between P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine though a discourse of “sister islands” Vishtèn offers a model from which to consider the complex socio-cultural nexus that informs contemporary identity construction.

**Musical encounters**

The phenomenon of encounter is familiar to ethnomusicologists and our colleagues in other social science disciplines, although it is seldom described using that terminology. “Encounter” encompasses a vast range of movement and experience within, across and between musical borders: from interpersonal interactions between musicians to the dynamics
of larger socio-musical networks and questions of reception, marketing and power relations. Encounters, however broadly or narrowly identified, redefine relationships between people and between music systems and challenge existing frameworks of musical genre and tradition; consequently, what emerges are a continuum of differences and similarities and new frameworks of musical meaning. Accordingly, the study of encounter is central to the study of musical traditions.

Both in our research activities and daily lives, ethnomusicologists confront (and are confronted) with increasing regularity what Bruno Nettl describes as one of the “fundamental assumptions of our field,” that is, “the view of the world as a group of discrete musics.” The pervasiveness and ease of musical interaction is increasingly difficult to ignore. Indeed, it has become increasingly futile and, arguably, irrelevant, to attempt to map the world’s musics and their practitioners onto bounded categories of musical style. The difficulty of identifying the stylistic parameters of Acadian fiddling on P.E.I. that I described in Chapter 3 is a case in point. Any attempt to define the region’s fiddling styles must necessarily take into account the numerous musical encounters that have shaped the tradition, and those definitions are

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6 Accordingly, there are too many examples to list here. In addition to the studies I discuss in this section, Mirjana Lauševic’s ethnography of Balkan culture in the United States (Balkan Fascination, 2006), Timothy Taylor’s Beyond Exoticism (2007) and Elizabeth Hallam and Brian V. Street’s Cultural Encounters: Representing “Otherness” (2000) examine transcultural encounters and cultural representation; Arjun Appadurai’s theorisation of cultural globalization (1996) and James Clifford’s meditations on ethnography, intercultural encounters and his formulation of culture “in motion” have been particularly influential in considering the global movement and exchanges of peoples and musics (1986; 1997). Mark Slobin (1993) proposes that musical meaning and identity are shaped through encounters and interactions that occur at the intersections of subculture, superculture and interculture. Drawing on Slobin’s work, Jason Stanyek (2004) examines the notion of interculture through case studies of Pan-African collaborations within the African diaspora, institutionalised interculturalism in Pan-Asian communities and the development of an “affinity interculture” in the global capoeira academy. Various modes of encounter between people and between traditions are central in the discourse of diaspora studies (i.e. Guilbault 1993 and Niranjana 2006) and postcolonialism (i.e. Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000 and Weidman 2006). Finally, the study of encounter between performers and audiences—consumption and reception—is an emerging area of study (see Wong 2004; McCann 2004; Gauthier Mercier 2007-08).

continuously evolving; that it is not possible to talk about a singular regional style furthers my point. The futility of compartmentalisation is stressed also by Mark Slobin, whose example of Jewish-American klezmer musician Andy Statman, who describes his own music as “Moroccan African Mongolian klezmer music,” illustrates the eccentric blending of musical styles that shaped the New York klezmer scene of the 1920s and 1930s; as Slobin concludes, “an essentialist analysis of music will not hold.”

In his recent book, Playing Across a Divide: Israeli-Palestinian Musical Encounters, Benjamin Brinner makes a compelling case for the study of musical encounter. He argues that in order to grasp the complexities of particular groups of people at any given time, it is necessary to look at the interactions, convergences and crossings that make up their social and musical experiences. Brinner’s work concerns a cultural and political sphere in which boundaries are being constantly underlined and redefined along ethnic and religious lines. Focusing on the musical collaborations between Israelis and Palestinians in the 1990s, he explores how networks of professional musicians challenge contested socio-political and religious boundaries through the creation of musical alliances; he maintains that “the social terrain must be understood not only in terms of ethnic, religious and regional identities of musicians and audiences, but also in terms of social networks, some of which are transnational in scope.” Brinner’s analysis of these sociomusical networks reveals that, as Martin Stokes also notes, rather than simply reflecting cultural patterns, music and musicians play an active role in negotiating and transforming social boundaries.

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8 Slobin, Micromusics, xiv.
Similar to the network of musicians at the heart of Brinner’s study, several individuals and groups on P.E.I. whom I introduce later in this chapter have been tremendously influential in advancing Island Acadian culture locally, promoting Acadian culture nationally and abroad and building musical networks and alliances that have benefited (or have the potential to benefit) the broader Island Acadian community. One might question to what extent it is possible for individuals or a relatively small network of musicians to exert such influence and bring about cultural change, as I did in the course of this research.¹¹ And yet, there are numerous examples of similar processes occurring, even if we consider for a moment a few examples that I mentioned in Chapter 3: the small number of individuals in Cape Breton who were ultimately responsible for effecting the so-called “revival” of traditional Scottish fiddling, individual Cape Breton fiddlers Natalie MacMaster and Ashley MacIsaac who have exerted significant influence on a global scale and, of course, members of P.E.I.’s own Barachois who are credited with initiating an ongoing local dialogue about Island Acadian music and identity.

Philip Bohlman has labelled this phenomenon the “minority of one,” meaning an individual who acts as an agent to give voice to and consolidate a minority community.¹² Bohlman’s notion of “one” builds upon the work of Lila Abu-Lughod, who proposed an alternative writing “against” culture in the form of “ethnographies of the particular,”¹³ and Clifford Geertz’s earlier urging that anthropologists “descend into detail,” moving away from essentialist studies of peoples and cultures toward the study of individuals in particular

¹¹ Thanks to Stephanie Conn for her helpful feedback on this matter.
cultures. “The road to the general,” Geertz writes, “lies through a concern with the particular.”\(^\text{14}\) As the case studies in this chapter demonstrate, individuals and even the smallest networks can indeed be powerful agents for change on variety of scales. Particular musicians have been primary forces in connecting (and in some cases reconnecting) P.E.I. Acadian music, and by extension the community, to other cultural groups and larger musical networks. Their participation in this national and transnational flow of people and music and, especially, the development of tangible relationships with other cultural groups, has furthered the emergent processes of identity construction discussed in Chapter 3.

How these musicians choose to represent Island Acadian culture, and the historical and cultural connections they choose to articulate musically, both reflect and shape how Acadian music and identity are understood and performed locally. In the midst of these musical encounters and cultural transactions we can find, at any moment, music working in specific and highly localised ways, “creating temporary forcefields of desire, belonging, and, at times, transcendence.”\(^\text{15}\) Indeed, it seems that in considering the intersections between cultures and musical systems, the way music works on a local level becomes an increasingly prominent question.

Jocelyne Guilbault characterises defining the “local” as one of the major preoccupations of world music artists and scholars of the 1990s, a focus she suggests surfaced in response to a widespread focus on the globalisation of culture in the 1980s.\(^\text{16}\) Guilbault argues that for some artists the preoccupation with defining the local was prompted by a fear

\(^{15}\) Slobin, *Micromusics*, xiv.
of the global homogenisation of cultures and accompanying loss of cultural identity, while, for others,

...defining the local has been perceived as an opportunity to redefine and promote local identity...It has also sprung from an economic interest and opportunity to promote difference and to take advantage of the world market now more easily available thanks to the greater access to new technologies and polylateral distribution networks.\(^{17}\)

Although Guilbault’s remarks are based on her observations of “small and industrially developing countries,”\(^{18}\) they speak to the everyday experiences of numerous touring artists on P.E.I. with whom I work and for whom the enactment of a highly situated (musical and cultural) identity is at the fore of their musical and marketing decisions. In my interviews with these musicians, the emphasis on and performance of difference in relation to off-Island Acadians and other cultural groups was stressed as a conscious and systematic manoeuvre. Nevertheless, and somewhat paradoxically, at the same time as they are committed to articulating a sense of locality through their music, contemporary musicians and musical groups (such as Vishtën) identify with and connect to broader musical and cultural communities, both real and imagined.

Beverley Diamond proposes that “identity studies” might well be reconsidered under the paradigm of “alliance studies” as a way of gaining deeper insight into the relationships that shape our sense(s) of selfhood. As she explains,

Alliances studies might look at ways that concepts and social relationships of the past are embedded in the present. Alliances might track connections to people, or networks of people. Such a focus would shift our attention to such things as genre formations, technological mediations, language and dialect choices, citation practices, and issues of access/ownership.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{17}\) Ibid., 138.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

Following this characterisation, alliances might encompass a wide variety of associations, from direct interpersonal relations to technologically-mediated connections.\(^{20}\) The latter, in particular, has become increasingly significant for many artists, not least the so-called “traditional” musicians with whom I work, as the potential audiences for their music are mobilised and maintained in the virtual space of the internet, online communities and social media.

By turning from the traditional emphasis on individual action and bounded communities toward broader cultural networks and ways of enacting relationships, an alliance-centred methodology offers a unique perspective through which to understand the ways in which people create and perform meaning. Moreover, this approach highlights the interpersonal connections—networks, partnerships, tensions and exchanges—between people and between communities that inform our sense(s) of identity and shape how this identity is enacted through cultural markers such as language and music. As Diamond notes, “our alliances produce our identities.”\(^{21}\)

The examples presented in the following sections illustrate that historical, cultural, economic and political alliances follow a process of ebb and flow that hinges on a number of variables, including individual agency, institutional support and community initiative. A renewed interest in rekindling historical connections between the Island Acadian community and other cultural groups in mainland Canada and abroad with whom they share a common history or language is most noticeably enacted through musical ventures. These ventures demonstrate that alliances are fluid. This flexibility is underscored by Brinner when he notes

\(^{20}\) In his preface to the second printing of *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, Slobin describes the internet as a form of interculture. Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds*, vii.

\(^{21}\) Diamond, “Music of Modern Indigeneity,” 2.
that “alliances shift with context, and differences of gender, class, general education, and musical background can be just as important.”

What factors motivate the rekindling of old alliances and the creation of new ones? In this chapter I attempt to unravel this complex question. In the case of the P.E.I. and Québec connection, it is not surprising that language emerges as an important link between the French-speaking communities. Many Francophone Acadians acknowledge a linguistic alliance with mainland Québécois, with whom they share similar interests in linguistic and cultural retention. While it is not without tension, this connection to Québec has provided a political model of linguistic retention for Acadian communities throughout eastern Canada and has facilitated Acadian musicians’ access to the larger Francophone market; similarly, linguistic and historic links to France facilitated Vishtèn’s entry into the European Francophone and traditional music markets. Lastly, an historic connection to their “Cajun cousins” has prompted considerable dialogue and exchange between Maritime Acadians and Cajuns in southern Louisiana, culminating in the recognition and promotion of a transnational Acadian community, a unified front for cultural retention in minority Francophone communities and an increase in cultural tourism in both regions.

_Acadian-Québécois encounters_

Historically, Maritime Acadians have maintained a somewhat fraught relationship to neighbouring French-speaking Québécois. Shawn Pitre has suggested that there is an affinity between Acadians and Québécois that may be represented by the rubric “French-Canadian,” a

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label that stems from the mutual recognition of a shared homeland and language. This connection to an ancestral homeland and language aside, both Francophone groups are keenly aware of and promote what are perceived as significant differences between Québécois and Acadians, including such factors as their respective socio-political histories, “geographical boundaries, language [and dialect], culture and general attitude.” As discussed in earlier chapters, the respective histories of linguistic and cultural retention and issues of identity differ significantly between the two groups: Québécois comprise a majority group within the boundaries of Québec, whereas Acadians have long occupied the position of invisible minorities in the midst of dominant Anglophone communities.

Positioning Acadian culture in opposition to Québécois culture has long been a focus of Acadian scholars whose objectives were to promote a sense of cultural identity throughout Acadie. This history is addressed in Jeanette Gallant’s doctoral dissertation on folksong and Acadian nationalism in New Brunswick, in which she examines how missionaries and prominent folklorists, such as Father Anselme Chiasson and Charlotte Cormier, “worked within an oppositional cultural frame of reference,” using folksong and notions of a distinct Acadian aesthetic to further new conceptions of Acadian culture and identity.

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23 A 1962 study by linguistic historian Geneviève Massignon demonstrates that the original settlers of Québec and Acadie were from distinct regions of western and northern France, based on her field research on the origin of Acadian terms and family names. Her findings suggest that the majority of the first settlers in Québec came from northwest regions such as Normandy and as far north as Calais, while the majority of Acadians originated in the west-central areas of Poitou (former province), Aunis (former province, the capital of which was La Rochelle), Saintonge (region) and the northwest region of Brittany. Geneviève Massignon, “Les parlers français d’Acadie” (Paris: Klincksieck, 1962). For an examination of Massignon’s study and other work on Acadian linguistics, see Louise Péronnet, “The Situation of the French Language in Acadia,” in Acadia of the Maritimes: Thematic Studies from the Beginning to the Present, ed. Jean Daigle (Moncton: Chaire d’études acadiennes, 1995).


Nevertheless, despite these generalizations and perceived differences, there are areas under the administrative control of Québec, such as les Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Gaspésie (the Gaspé Peninsula), that are “recognizably [Acadian] in spirit and collective popular conscience.” A renewed interest in promoting the relationship between Acadians on P.E.I. and residents of les Îles-de-la-Madeleine has emerged that is credited largely to the efforts of touring Acadian musicians. This relationship is the focus of the second half of this chapter.

For numerous Island Acadian musicians, language both creates and subverts cultural boundaries. Pitre writes that “many Acadians feel that they are often belittled or looked down upon by their economically dominant Francophone neighbors [sic] in Québec” due to their dialect and, in the extreme, their close proximity to and relatively friendly coexistence among Anglophones. This is somewhat ironic given the fact that many Québécois talk about a feeling similarly belittled when traveling in France. Although the musicians with whom I conducted interviews did not relay specific accounts of intercultural tension arising from Francophone Acadians’ relationships with, or proximity to, Anglophones, several touring P.E.I. musicians conveyed their experiences of feeling belittled by French speakers in Québec; they attributed this situation predominantly to their distinct dialect(s). For example, fiddler and comedian Albert Arsenault told me that although there are various degrees of difference between Acadian dialects throughout the Maritimes, the similarities between these dialects create an important link between French-speaking Acadians. He added that features of the Acadian dialect, in particular, such as anglicisms, French vocabulary (the use of old French words) and pronunciation, among other traits, create barriers between Acadians and

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26 Pitre, 8.
27 Ibid., 9; Pitre distinguishes between “Acadien” (Maritime Acadians) and “Acadians” (a more general term for all people who descend from the first French colonists, including Cajuns).
Québécois. As a result, he feels that most P.E.I. Acadians’ relationships with Québécois are “less natural” than those with Acadians from Acadian communities in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, such as Cheticamp, Bouctouche or Caraquet, and that Acadians often feel less at ease in Québec. As he explains,

…if you go to Quebec, there you will feel less at ease because they speak good French and they might make comments about your French – that there are anglicisms, [it can be] a little condescending.  

Albert is one half of the musical and comedic duo Chuck & Albert with fellow Islander Chuck Arsenault (no relation). Albert is the son of well known Acadian fiddler Eddy Arsenault from the village of St-Chrysostome in the Région Évangéline of P.E.I., while Chuck is from the town of Montague in Queens County. A former teacher, actor and member of the P.E.I. Symphony, Chuck was introduced to both his Francophone Acadian heritage and traditional music in his mid-twenties through some Francophone musical acquaintances. Chuck and Albert were members of Barachois and launched a bilingual two-man stage show after Barachois disbanded in 2003; since 2008 they have performed full-time across Canada, the United States and France as Chuck & Albert, and released their first CD, énergie, in 2009. Their live performances feature slapstick comedy with a vaudeville flair, physical comedy, step-dancing, witty banter, French songs and traditional tunes on the fiddle and harmonica. In the same vein as their Barachois repertoire, many of the songs are drawn from Georges Arsenault’s archived collections from the early 1970s that have been arranged with accompaniment and paired with traditional tunes and new melodies. Their instrumental sets feature a wide array of instruments, including guitar, fiddle, feet (seated foot percussion), harmonica, spoons, bass, jaw harp, popcorn shaker, (rhythm) bones and a homemade drum kit.

29 Chuck and Albert’s original show was entitled, C’est what?
comprising a “batterie-valise” (suitcase drum), triangle, pie plate, “boîte Huggies” (Huggies diaper-wipe box) and a cowbell. The duo draws upon the tradition of *touner* (they use the term “tounage”), putting new words and vocables to traditional and contemporary fiddle tunes.\(^30\)

In 2008, the duo traveled through Québec with historian Georges Arsenault as Island Acadian ambassadors as part of a federally-funded initiative organised around the 250\(^{th}\) anniversary of the Acadian deportations by the P.E.I. Acadian society, *la Société Saint-Thomas d’Aquin* (S.S.T.A.). The tour comprised lectures by Georges Arsenault on Island Acadian history and the links between P.E.I. and Québec, musical performances by Chuck & Albert and the distribution of information flyers on P.E.I.’s Francophone Acadian community. As Georges explains, the goal of the initiative was to promote P.E.I.’s Francophone Acadian culture and communities beyond the Maritime Provinces; specifically, the project aimed to establish contacts with Québécois and Acadian organisations in Québec. Alongside musical and comedic performances by Chuck & Albert, Georges spoke to audiences about the origins of the P.E.I. Acadians, drawing attention to the Island’s vibrant Francophone community and the national and global Acadian diaspora, including Acadians who migrated to Québec.\(^31\) He also highlighted the numerous accomplishments of the particular individuals and the Island Acadian community, including the establishment of French schools and the local Francophone newspaper (*la Voix acadienne*). Georges describes that the delegation’s reception was

\(^30\) Chuck Arsenault, personal communication with author, 13 January 2011; information is also drawn from the album’s official press release.

\(^31\) Between 1755 and 1758, approximately 2,000 Acadians migrated to Québec from P.E.I. and Miramichi (N.B.) as a result of or in anticipation of the deportations; by 1758, an estimated 1,600 Acadians had settled in and around Québec city, although many died of smallpox in 1757-58. Many Acadian refugees settled in villages on the shores of the St. Lawrence River, in the Gaspé peninsula and in les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. Hébert notes that other groups of Acadian exiles arrived in Montréal and Québec in 1766 and 1767, respectively. Pierre-Maurice Hébert, *Les Acadiens du Québec* (Montréal: Éditions de L’Écho, 1994).
different in the various places they performed; in some regions, for example, audiences had little knowledge about Acadian culture. In the cities of Montréal and Québec the delegates partnered with a local Acadian association. He explains that while those audiences were familiar with local Acadian culture and some artists, like Angèle Arsenault (who established her career in Québec; this is discussed below), were well known, few locals knew there were Francophone Acadians on P.E.I. In some regions, such as Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean (north of Québec city), the trio found active Acadian associations with strong ties to les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. In the region of Lanaudière (which spreads north-east of Montréal), the delegation had personal connections through the P.E.I. Francophone community and they were invited by an association for traditional music to participate in an evening of music.

This initiative is but one example of numerous projects by members (individuals and associations) of the P.E.I. community within the last few years to reach out to neighbouring Acadian and Francophone communities in Québec. La Centre Belle-Alliance, the Acadian and Francophone cultural and community centre in Summerside, is an active proponent of these intercultural links through the organisation of concerts and workshops with well known mainland Acadian and Québécois artists. While the long-term impact of such ventures remains to be seen, this connection is created and maintained largely through artistic initiatives and the work of cultural ambassadors such as Chuck & Albert.

32 The mission of La Centre Belle-Alliance is to bring together Acadians and Francophones in the region by serving as a meeting place; by promoting the French language, Acadian culture, and French education; and by organising cultural activities in French. Several organisations are located in the Centre Belle-Alliance, including the regional offices of La Fédération culturelle de l’Î.-P.-É., the S.S.T.A., Jeunesse Acadienne, the newspaper La Voix acadienne, La Fédération des parents de l’Î.-P.-É., the elementary school l’École-sur-Mer, preschool Le Jardin des étoiles, and the regional public library. See http://www.belle-alliance.ca
A sense of linguistic alliance between Acadians and Québécois has advanced the careers of several Island Acadian artists and provided an alternative Francophone audience for numerous Acadian bands from P.E.I. and the mainland. In the mid-1970s, celebrated P.E.I.-born singer-songwriter Angèle Arsenault (b. 1943) established a successful recording and performing career in Montréal. Angèle is one of fourteen children from the large musical “Jos Bibienne” family from Abram Village in P.E.I.’s Région Évangéline. She studied at l’Université de Moncton and l’Université Laval before turning her focus toward a professional career in music. Settling in Montréal, she released her first album in 1975. Her second album, Libre (1977), sold 300,000 copies and vaulted her to stardom, particularly in Québec, where
she performed widely and released numerous subsequent albums.\textsuperscript{33}

In an interview with the P.E.I. Francophone newspaper, \textit{La Voix acadienne}, Angèle explains that the majority of her Québécois audiences did not know she came from P.E.I. and that they were always surprised to learn of her Acadian roots. As she explains,

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\textit{The majority of Québécois didn’t know I was from here. They were always surprised. What? There are Francophones on Prince Edward Island? they asked, even if I repeated it at all my shows.}\textsuperscript{34}

Due to pressure from her Québec-based producers, few of her songs reflect her Acadian roots, or make reference to Acadie; paradoxically, this pressure for her not to focus on such topics inspired some of her most well known songs, including “Le monde de par chez nous” (1975), “Évangéline, Acadian Queen” (1977) and “Grand Pré” (1994), all of which have Acadian themes. “Grand Pré,” commemorates the 1755 deportation of the Acadians and the village of Grand Pré, Nova Scotia, an iconic Acadian site from which 1,500 Acadians were exiled.\textsuperscript{35} The song conveys the singer’s turmoil in acknowledging the traumatic history of the Acadians and, ultimately, encourages listeners to focus on the present and to look ahead to the future of the Acadians instead of dwelling on the past events of \textit{le Grand}

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\textsuperscript{33} Angèle returned to P.E.I. in 1996 and settled in Summerside. She is a recipient of the Order of Canada (2002) and the Order of P.E.I. (2005).

\textsuperscript{34} “Rencontre intime avec Angèle Arsenault,” \textit{La Voix acadienne}, 25 July 2007, 12.

\textsuperscript{35} Today, the name Grand Pré is applied to a loosely defined geographical area that includes the villages of Grand Pré, North Grand Pré and Hortonville and the surrounding along the river and shores of the Minas Basin. It is estimated that one third (approx. 2,200) of the total number of Acadians exiled in 1755 came from \textit{Les Mines} (the Minas Basin area). Grand Pré is more strongly identified with the deportation than other Acadian sites because it is the setting of Longfellow’s poem, “Evangeline,” from 1847. In 1907, the site of the original church and cemetery was bought privately and established as a memorial park. Numerous commemorative features have since been erected, including a stone cross (1917), a statue of Evangeline (1920) and a Memorial Church (1922). Grand Pré was declared a national historic site in 1961. See \url{http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/ns/Grandpre}
Angèle explains that the song holds special meaning for her because it represents her long personal journey to rediscovering her Acadian heritage:

Les producteurs avec qui je travaillais me demandaient de faire des chansons à succès. On essayait de me faire oublier qui j’étais… en ne voulant pas que je chante l’Acadie… [“Grand Pré”] c’est MA chanson… celle qui décrit le mieux l’Acadie. Elle permet de comprendre l’histoire et la réalité acadienne… Maintenant je sais qui je suis. [“Grand Pré”] is MY song… the one that best describes Acadia. It enables us to understand Acadian history and the Acadian reality… now I know who I am.

“Le monde de par chez nous” is a humorous song that tells a more localised story about the P.E.I. Acadians. The lyrics reflect upon people and traditions of Evangeline community in which Angèle grew up. In it, she illustrates numerous characteristics of the Island Acadians, such as the complex names and nicknames of her family and friends and the tradition of identifying people through their familial connections:

Mais vous pourriez les trouver compliqués, But you might find them confusing
Si vous essayiez de les démêler, If you tried to understand them
Parce qu’ils ont de drôles de noms, Because they have funny names
les gens de par chez nous, The people from my home
Béline à Phil, ‘Melda à Cyril, Florence à Jack à Ferdinand,
Josephine à Jos Cateline, Jos Philippe à Cabortan,
Jos Canae pis Jos Biblienne pis Jos Manuel pis Jos Lament,
Arcade à Philomène à Bélonie Marie.

The song also describes the local culture and economic situation of the Région Évangéline, such as the lack of work and the collapse of the traditional fishery, and adds a gentle satire about the high birth rate in Island Acadian families. She does not shy away from the delicate issue of Island Acadian identity politics, pointing out the challenges Acadians face with regards to language and how this impacts on Acadians’ social confidence and identity:

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36 For the full song text and English translation of “Grand Pré,” see Appendix C.
38 Original French text from http://www.gov.pe.ca/firsthand/index.php3?number=43682&lang=...; Translation by Meghan Forsyth. For full French song text with translation, see Appendix D.
Le monde de par chez nous sont embêtés;  
Ils ne savent pas quelle langue  
ils devraient parler  
Le français l'anglais ou l'canadien,  
le chiac le québécois ou l'acadien  
Alors même s'ils ont bien des choses à dire,  
ils parlent avec le sourire  
Les gens de par chez nous  
*People from my home are shy*  
*They don't know which language they should speak*  
*French, English or Canadian,*  
*Chiac, Québécois or Acadian*  
*So even if they have a lot to say*  
*They speak with a smile*  
*The people from my home.*

39 Set in Angèle’s characteristic satirical and comical style, the song “Évangéline, Acadian Queen,” recorded on her 1977 album, also has an Acadian theme. The song explores the commercialization of the fictional Acadian heroine through a parody of Longfellow’s “Evangeline” poem. Gammel and Boudreau capture the essence of the song:

> The idealized icon [Évangéline] is brought down to earth, to the material level of running shoes and mortgage loans, with Arsenault showing that Evangeline, in a modern Acadian context, has become thoroughly de-romanticized.  

40 The French lyrics reference Longfellow’s role in creating Evangeline as a symbol of *Acadie* and criticize the appropriation of Acadian culture; in particular, the final verse is composed in English and sarcastically proclaims the immortalisation of the character Evangeline:

> Evangeline, fried clams  
> Evangeline, salon-bar  
> Evangeline, comfortable running shoes  
> Evangeline, automobile springs  
> Evangeline, regional high school  
> Evangeline, sexy ladies wear  
> Evangeline, savings, mortgage and loans

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Evangeline, the only French newspaper in New Brunswick Evangeline, Evangeline, Acadian Queen.\textsuperscript{41}

This song has been covered by several groups, including the pan-Acadian ensemble Ode à l’Acadie (discussed in Chapter 3) whose performance of the song further exaggerates its underlying message by satirically setting the song in the context of an Acadian beauty queen pageant.

The above songs are among the most popular of Angèle’s considerable musical output, particularly within Acadie. Her immense success in both Québécois and Acadian markets and her status as one of Acadie’s most celebrated artists furthers the project of promoting P.E.I.’s Francophone community to off-Island groups and has provided an entry point for other artists to engage a larger Francophone market.

\textit{P.E.I. Acadians in France}

In 2009, the relationship between P.E.I. Acadians and France was the focus of the annual \textit{Semaine acadienne} in Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer, a seaside town on the Normandy coast.\textsuperscript{42} Founded in 2006, the festival celebrates the memory of Acadian soldiers who contributed to the liberation of Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer during the battle of Normandy in June of 1944; a different Acadian community is featured each year through a rotation of Canada’s eastern provinces.\textsuperscript{43} The majority of soldiers buried at the Canadian War Cemetery at Bény-sur-Mer were members of the Nova Scotia Highlanders Regiment and the North Shore Regiment of New Brunswick; thirty-one Prince Edward Islanders, including eight Island Acadians, were

\textsuperscript{41} For the full song text, see Appendix E.  
\textsuperscript{42} The town of Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer is located approximately fifteen kilometres from Caen, with a population of roughly 2,000 people.  
\textsuperscript{43} Nova Scotia (2007); New Brunswick (2008); P.E.I. (2009); Québec: la Gaspésie, les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Havre-Saint-Pierre (2010).
among them.

Acadian music featured prominently in the festival. The official P.E.I. delegation included some of P.E.I.’s most celebrated Acadian artists, including singer-songwriters Angèle Arsenault and Marcella Richard (Angèle’s niece), the groups Gadelle and Vishtèn and young fiddler Brandon Arsenault, all of whom performed a series of concerts throughout the week. The festival also included numerous commemorative ceremonies and lectures on Acadian history and culture and the connection between Acadia and France, presented by P.E.I. Acadian priest Père Éloi Arsenault.

In addition to participating in commemorative events at the Juno Beach Centre and the Canadian war cemetery in Bény-sur-Mer, the delegation met with potential strategic partners such as *le Forum francophone des affaires, le Conseil des maires de la région Coeur de Nacre*, and *la Chambre de commerce de Basse-Normandie* to promote future exchange between the province and French town. Edmond Richard, President of *la Société Saint-Thomas D’Aquin*, described the importance of the festival and the links between P.E.I. and France,

> La France constitue un maillon important de la chaîne acadienne mondiale et la Semaine acadienne de Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer représente une occasion privilégiée pour l’Acadie de l’Île de célébrer l’amitié qui nous rapproche et nous fournit de belles pistes de cooperation.  

*France is an important link in the global Acadian chain, and la Semaine Acadienne in Saint-Aubin-sur-Mer is a privileged opportunity for Acadian Islanders to celebrate the ties that bind [P.E.I. and France] together, and offers great possibilities for cooperation.*

The cultural and linguistic link between Acadia and France is also noted by Vishtèn’s whistle and bodhràn player, Emmanuelle LeBlanc, who perceives a close connection between the Acadians and some regions of France. Early in the group’s career, Vishtèn found a

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44 Forum of Francophone Affairs, the Council of Mayors of the Coeur de Nacre region, and the Lower Normandy Chamber of Commerce.  
receptive audience base in France’s traditional music scene that continues today. She recalls the enthusiastic reaction of French audiences in la Vendée \(^{46}\) to the group’s music and dialect, for example:

> [The name] LeBlanc comes from le Poitou which is la Vendée...[They] really love Acadians, especially our language...they feel [this connection to Acadia] when we talk to them. They’re like ―oh my grandmother used to speak that way‖ or ―she used to say that.‖\(^{47}\)

The group’s positive reception by the French music industry, including successful touring opportunities throughout that country, prompted them to record their second album in France under the direction of French producers.

Despite the fact that they perceive an historic connection in some regions, Vishtèn, like Chuck & Albert, has had to negotiate linguistic barriers in order to appeal to the French market. Emmanuelle explains that even though the group’s performances are warmly received in France, and regardless of the fact that all their songs and stage dialogue are in French, they are often addressed by audiences, concert promoters and other members of the music industry in English, which she believes is based on an assumption that they are Anglophones.

Unsurprisingly, as proud Francophones they find this assumption demeaning. Accordianist Pastelle explains that the producers with whom they worked on their second album were keen to produce a recording that would appeal to listeners’ expectations in the French market; she characterises the second album as being more “produced” as a result of this direction, that is, it includes more polished and pre-mediated arrangements in comparison with their subsequent 2009 live album that was recorded in Charlottetown, P.E.I. For example, she

\(^{46}\) La Vendée is part of the former province of Poitou, located south of Brittany and Normandy.

recalls that the French producers “tweaked” their pronunciation of French texts. I return to the topic of Vishtèn’s use of language to enact a particular group identity as well as their alliances to specific musical communities later in this chapter.

**The Acadian-Cajun connection**

In 2009, the annual festival *Les Francofolies de Charlottetown* featured a Cajun theme, one of many similarly-themed events held on P.E.I. and in other Acadian communities that drew attention to a strong affiliation between Maritime Acadians and Louisiana Cajuns. Pitre notes that “the first mass re-acquaintance with Cajun music, language, and culture” was prompted by “country music and country-flavoured hits” through such artists as Hank Williams and Hank Snow in the mid-twentieth century. This Acadian-Cajun connection reached a high point in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries with the initiation of the *Congrès mondial acadien* (World Acadian Congress). Encouraged by parallel cultural-linguistic revivalist and preservationist efforts in *Acadie* and Louisiana, the transnational exchange and events of the Congresses reinforced an emergent sense of solidarity between the two groups based on the mutual recognition of a shared goal of cultural retention in minority Francophone communities.

This connection is often represented in musical form. The Acadian-Cajun link is highlighted frequently in performances by P.E.I. Acadian groups in the form of musical tributes to their “Cajun cousins.” For example, Barachois performed and recorded “Hommage aux cajuns” (Cajun tribute), a medley featuring four Cajun songs that the group learned from

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49 Pitre, 56.
50 Ginger Jones and Kevin Ells (2009) offer a comparison of what they call parallel Cajun and Acadian “revivals,” but I disagree on their use of the term “revival” in the P.E.I. context. See the discussion on this topic in Chapter 3.
Boston-area musician Tom Pixton during their collaborations as featured artists in a Boston-based musical about the dispersion of the Acadians during _le Grand Dérangement_. The group Vishtèn has also performed and recorded several “Cajun” songs and instrumental tunes, including “Joli Coeur,” a traditional Cajun song, and a Cajun waltz (“Valse Cajun”). Pitre has also noted this trend among Acadian performers to include tributes to their southern cousins in performance. He writes,

> I have heard musicians of the group Barachois...express that they feel a closeness to Cajun music, language, and culture. [Helen Bergeron of Barachois] for example, has often expressed her love of Cajun music while admitting that generally Acadiens [sic] do not play Cajun music exactly as Cajuns do. Barachois, like many, if not most Acadien [sic] bands that I am aware of have been including various homages to Cajun music in the form of song covers or medleys, or other references to Cajuns, most often referred to as cousins.

Examples from both Vishtèn and Barachois support Helen’s statement and illustrate that, to varying degrees, these groups draw melodic and textual material from the Cajun repertoire but do not imitate the Cajun sound and style. Vishtèn’s “Valse Cajun” retains the heterophonic melodic texture characteristic of traditional Cajun music in the flute and accordion parts, as well as parallel melodic accompaniment in the fiddle line and the basic waltz accompaniment in the guitar. The group’s arrangement of “Joli Coeur” draws on the melody and text of the Cajun song, but it exemplifies Vishtèn’s characteristic style and instrumentation (the group’s style is discussed in detail in section three of this chapter), with little link to its Cajun roots. Similarly, Barachois’ rendition of Cajun songs borrows melodic material and some instrumentation from the Cajun tradition, such as the cake rack, but on the whole the songs have been adapted to the group’s idiosyncratic style (including the “shuffle”

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51 “Hommage aux cajuns” was recorded on Barachois’s album, _Naturel_ (2002).
52 Both “Joli Coeur” and “Valse Cajun” are recorded on Vishtèn’s _Live_ album (2008).
53 Pitre, 67.
rhythm, seated foot-percussion and pump organ). Additionally, both groups emphasise the cultural connection between Acadians and Cajuns in their dialogue with audiences during introductions to particular songs or tune sets, as well as briefly in album liner notes.

Pitre traces a history of cultural interaction between the Acadians and Cajuns, arguing that the “rediscovery through music of [Maritime Acadians’] cousins in Louisiana coincided with Acadiens’ [sic] discovery of their past and affirmation of their contemporary cultural identity.” He contends that there is a “bittersweet aesthetic” in Acadian and Cajun music that reflects “the historical and contemporary Acadian reality...one of the essences of Acadianness,” and he offers other grounds for the perceived link between the two cultures. In his work on the folksong category of *complaintes* (laments) from P.E.I., Georges Arsenault notes that although there are many genres of Acadian folksong, *complaintes* comprise the majority of the songs collected throughout Acadie. As noted in Chapter 1, this suggestion of an inherent “bittersweet aesthetic” does not resonate with my (and many of my informants’) experience(s) of contemporary P.E.I. Acadian song and instrumental music. While these *complaintes* may have been a dominant genre in Acadian communities, Jeanette Gallant posits that the idea of an Acadian aesthetic was adopted by Acadie’s main folksong collector Father Anselme Chiasson to build a sense of pride among Acadians; subsequently, his ideas were taken up by other scholars, including his student, folklorist Charlotte Cormier, who sought to prove that Acadians had an innate aesthetic (*ésthetique identitaire*) that differed from that of Québécois.

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54 Ibid., 57.
55 Ibid., 67.
56 Gallant notes that the idea of an Acadian aesthetic was also furthered by Québécois singer Jac LaBrecque, who popularised Acadian folksong on Radio Canada. Jeanette Gallant, email to author, 26 February 2011.
Pitre also suggests that Maritime Acadians are drawn to Cajun music in part because Acadians do not have the long history of recorded music that Cajuns do. He writes,

Acadiens [sic] have taken to playing Cajun music in part because Acadiens [sic] do not have recordings of their music, at least not commercial ones, that are as old as Cajun recordings. Acadiens [sic] thus feel that Cajun music is partly their own music as well, especially because the early Cajun recordings are more similar to Acadien [sic] music from a fairly recent past. Most Acadien [sic] groups recognize the similarity in certain musical tendencies between their music and that of Cajuns such as its organization, its approach, most of its instrumentation, many of its influences. Another reason Cajun music has become as popular among Acadiens [sic] is that Acadien [sic] music’s culturally determined stylistic boundaries are generally more flexible than the parameters imposed by Cajuns on their own music. The opposite is not the case.\(^{57}\)

To this he adds that while Acadians often play Cajun music, there is a “limited desire on the part of many Cajuns to play Acadien [sic] music.”\(^{58}\) There are certainly more available collections of old Cajun recordings than there are of Acadian recordings, thanks in large part to Alan and John A. Lomax’s collections of Cajun and Creole music in southern Louisiana from the 1930s.\(^{59}\) Nevertheless, while I agree with Pitre’s statement that “Acadiens...feel that Cajun music is partly their own music as well,”\(^{60}\) my research suggests that this is not because P.E.I. Acadians have an innate “pull” toward Cajun music or that they necessarily hear similarities between Cajun music and their own. Rather, it appears that these cultural ties are emphasised by Acadian musicians and musical groups as the result of an increased awareness and mutual recognition of the historical ties between Acadie and Louisiana dating back to *le Grand Dérangement* that has fostered a sense of solidarity between the two groups. Indeed, the prominent discourse of Acadian “cousins” has been fuelled by increased cultural exchange.

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57 Pitre, 68. As I noted in Chapter 1, Pitre does not specify to which region he refers, nor does it seem to take into account the different musical styles that are present throughout Acadia.
58 Ibid., 69.
60 Pitre, 68.
and interaction at the Acadian World Congresses, increased cultural tourism in both locales and the articulation of a shared objective of cultural retention as invisible Francophone minorities.

**Island encounters**

Visitors to P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine ("the Magdalen Islands") often comment on the shared palette of colours that makes up the landscape of these two island communities: rolling green hills, red sandstone cliffs, red and gold beaches and bright blue-green sea. Discerning listeners might also pick up on a shared vocabulary of nautical terms mixed with old French words in the local dialects of both islands’ French-speaking Acadians, a nod to a way of life that remains at the forefront of the islands’ numerous rural, seaside communities. Visitors to both islands are greeted by the large Acadian flag that is prominently displayed on the exhaust stack of the ferry that shepherds tourists and locals between P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Fig. 5.3). Acadian flags are also painted on a number of telephone poles along the main street of Souris, the eastern P.E.I. town where the ferry lands, a curiously explicit symbol of Acadian heritage in view of the fact that this village is predominantly Anglophone with only a small Francophone community (Fig.5.4). The visibility of the flag in this liminal space of ferry terminals and Gulf crossings suggests a common interest in asserting a sense of pride in the town’s Acadian heritage and the acknowledgement of a strong connection between P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine that emerged frequently in my conversations with P.E.I. musicians.
As noted in earlier chapters, the effects of increased anglicisation on P.E.I. Acadian communities over the past century are felt in various forms, including anglicisation of a number of family names, development of a local French dialect that blends a vernacular
French with English words and the infusion of a predominantly Scottish influence in Acadian instrumental repertoire. French-speaking P.E.I. Acadians have had to engage in a collective struggle to retain their French language, dialect and traditions in an increasingly anglicised and modernised environment. By comparison, Madelinots comprise the cultural majority and have been able to retain their linguistic and cultural traditions to a greater degree.

While the Acadian residents of both island communities share a socio-political history that can be traced to le Grand Dérangement, the geographic location of the islands, their subsequent political affiliations and divergent cultural retentions have shaped different experiences of what it means to be Acadian. Nevertheless, a renewed interest in building inter-island partnerships has emerged in recent years, often along musical lines. This renewed interest in shared identity, new economic alliances and joint cultural activity was fostered largely by a young generation of musicians from the pan-Acadian group, Vishtèn. Through a case study of Vishtèn, in this chapter I examine the development of these creative and economic alliances between the two island Acadian communities and the ways in which this relationship feeds into identity construction among P.E.I. Acadians. I suggest that through their strategic musical and narrative choices, members of Vishtèn have striven to advance the project of a pan-Acadian identity, while actively claiming their place in the global music market. Consequently, they have become local culture-bearers and activists in the ongoing, localised process of Acadian cultural revival.
Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Known affectionately as “les Îles” or “the Maggies,” les Îles-de-la-Madeleine lie in the centre of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, 105 kilometres (65 miles) north of P.E.I. The geography of the islands has long influenced their relationships to neighbouring communities. Although the islands are under the administrative control of Québec and marginally closer to Nova Scotia than they are to P.E.I., they are accessible by ferry from the town of Souris, P.E.I., by multi-day cruise from Montreal or by airplane.

The archipelago comprises twelve islands and islets that form the shape of an extended fishhook, but only seven of the islands are inhabited. Long, thin sand dunes connect six of the islands, as does Route 199, a 100 kilometre (62 mile)-long highway that stretches from one end of the archipelago to the other. Brightly coloured houses, one of the islands’ most distinguishing features, dot the scenery. Most of the houses are situated on the rounded, bare hills (collectively called les butte), which are separated by a network of low, green valleys.

The archipelago is divided into two Québec municipalities: les Îles-de-la-Madeleine (population 12,560), which comprises six communities, and Grosse-Île (population 531).

The community of Cap-aux-Meules, located on the central Île-du-Cap-aux-Meules, is the main ferry port, business centre and unofficial capital of the archipelago.

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61 In 1662, the archipelago was christened “les Îles-de-la-Madeleine” by Francois Doublet de Honfleur, who held the islands as concession until 1665, in honour of his wife, Madeleine Fontaine. The Mi’kmaq call the islands “Menageossenog,” a word that is translated as “islands brushed by the waves.”

62 The archipelago is 215 km (134 mi.) from the Gaspé peninsula and 95 km (59 mi.) from Cape Breton Island. The Groupe C.T.M.A. (Coopérative de transport maritime et aérien) operates a year-round, five-hour ferry service between Souris and Cap-aux-Meules. A regular one-week cruise from Montreal to les Îles-de-la-Madeleine is offered, which entails three days and two nights on the islands with stopovers in Quebec City and the Gaspé Peninsula. Several airlines offer daily flights to and from Havre-aux-Maisons with departures from Montreal, Québec, Mont-Joli and Gaspé.

63 These are the 2006 Census figures for the urban agglomeration of les Îles-de-la-Madeleine (Statistics Canada). The community of Grosse-Île separated (de-amalgamated) from the Municipality of les Îles-de-la-Madeleine in 2006, following the election of Jean Charest as premier of Quebec (2002). Grosse-Île was settled by Scots during the eighteenth century and remains one of two predominantly English-speaking islands of the archipelago (the other is Île-d’Entrée).
Fishing is still a mainstay of the madelinot economy, although les Îles have experienced challenges similar to elsewhere in Atlantic Canada with regard to a lack of jobs, a declining fishing industry, a consistent exodus of youth and aging populations. Mirroring trends in other Maritime communities, residents of les Îles have confronted these obstacles by promoting their cultural tourism and ecotourism industries, both of which are emerging as major industries in the region. Les Îles have become a popular holiday destination for French-speaking Québécois and Island Acadians lured by the serene setting, the prominence of French speakers, the striking local Francophone culture and dialects and, in the case of Québécois visitors, an escape from the mainland. Visitors flock to the islands to take in the vibrant cultural scene, to experience the pristine natural environment of beaches, dunes and
wildlife and to try their hands at a variety of activities from biking and sea kayaking to wind and kitesurfing.

Figure 5.6 Map of les Îles-de-la-Madeleine

Today ninety-five percent of Madelinots are Francophone. The majority of the madelinot Anglophone population, which is largely of Scottish descent, lives in small Anglophone communities on the islands of La Grosse-Île and l’Île-d’Entrée. The Francophone Acadian population of les Îles occupies a complex position as an ethnic and cultural majority within the bounded territory of the islands and, conversely, as an invisible

64 The Anglophone population of the islands is roughly 700 people.
cultural and linguistic majority group within the province of Québec and in the larger Canadian context. As the cultural and linguistic majority of the islands, *madelinot* Acadians enjoy a situation that is distinct from the other Maritime Acadian communities that have been subject to considerable cultural repression, in that the islands have experienced an uncontested preservation of their French dialects and culture. The relative isolation of the islands during the colonial period and challenging economic circumstances fostered a distinct sense of Acadianness and the islands have experienced less encroachment from the dominant Anglophone presence in Canada.

Legends, songs and stories colour the islands’ oral traditions, preserved from a time when the islands’ residents lived in almost total isolation. Although modern communication and increased travel options have eased this cultural isolation, islanders are still geographically marginalised from mainland Acadia and, to some extent, their Québécois counterparts, and they ardently maintain a number of the older Acadian traditions that have been long lost in most other Acadian communities, such as the mid-Lenten tradition of *Mi-Carême* described in Chapter 2, which has been preserved in the village of Fatima, on the island of Cap-aux-Meules. The retention of several *madelinot* French dialects has no doubt also benefited from linguistic support from the province of Québec.

While songs and stories were traditionally the islands’ dominant expressive forms, the archipelago boasts a rich instrumental tradition that has received much less attention than other expressive forms. The most prominent solo instrument is the fiddle; the guitar is likely

65 Georges Arsenault (2008) notes that the tradition of Mi-Carême is also celebrated in Cheticamp and Saint-Joseph-du-Moine, Nova Scotia, and in Natashquan and Pointe-Parent, Québec. In western P.E.I., particularly the parishes of Tignish and Palmer Road, some families continue to practice aspects of the tradition.

66 There have been no comprehensive studies of the musical traditions of les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. Previous research on Madelinot culture has typically been in the form of “salvage” research, that is, studies that are exclusively historical and preservationist in scope, and limited by their relative neglect of contemporary
the most widespread instrument, but it is used almost exclusively as an accompanying instrument for voice and fiddle. The madelinot fiddle style blends elements of Acadian, Scottish Cape Breton and Québécois traditions, reflecting the intricate web of influences that define the lived experiences of the islands’ inhabitants. Of particular interest to this study is an audible connection to older P.E.I. Acadian practices. The madelinot style has rhythmic similarities to the “shuffle” style of older P.E.I. Acadian fiddling from western P.E.I., coupled with percussive foot tapping (a feature that is common to both Acadian and Québécois traditions) and a predominant Scottish Cape Breton repertoire.

**Narratives of encounter**

Hundreds of years before permanent settlements were established on the islands, both P.E.I. and les Îles were used by indigenous Mi’kmaq, Basque fishermen and European explorers as stepping stones to the mainland, hunting and fishing grounds and places of refuge from shipwrecks and the harsh Atlantic weather. Beginning in the seventeenth century P.E.I. and les Îles were linked through land concessions from the French crown to New World entrepreneurs, although the first notable contact between the two islands was approximately two hundred and fifty years ago, just after *le Grand Dérangement*. Small groups of Acadians from the mainland, P.E.I. and Cape Breton Island sought refuge from exile on the islands during the deportations. In 1760, a British Colonel named Richard Gridley was awarded les
Îles as spoils of war and gave them their English name, “the Magdalen Islands.” Saddled with the task of establishing a permanent settlement on the islands, between 1762 and 1765 Gridley recruited a small group of Acadians and their families who had successfully avoided the P.E.I. deportation or who had returned to P.E.I. from exile. As a result of the division of land following the 1763 Treaty of Paris the islands became part of the British colony of Newfoundland until 1774, when they were annexed to the French colony of Québec as part of the Québec Act. In 1793, nearly three decades after the initial settlement, Madelinots were joined by a group of two hundred and fifty Acadians from the French islands of St-Pierre and Miquelon who sought refuge on les Îles during the French Revolution (they had refused to take the republican oath of loyalty to the Civil Constitution) and others stranded by shipwreck or lured by the prospects of a thriving fishery, employment and joining family.

Following the deportations and subsequent re-amalgamation of the Acadians in eastern Canada, the islands were united by missionaries, a Catholic diocese (based in Charlottetown), the exchange of priests and doctors and numerous inter-island marriages. Given the relative proximity of the islands, it is not surprising that, today, P.E.I. is a centre for replenishing supplies, education, work, hospital services and cultural exchange between the islands. Yet, while it might be expected that the history of exchange and proximity of Acadian communities in this region would have fostered a sense of connection between P.E.I. and

68 French merchants from Saint-Malo settled in St-Pierre in the late 17th century. St-Pierre was annexed to Britain in the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) and many residents of St-Pierre were exiled to the French colony of Isle Royale (now Cape Breton Island). The Treaty of Paris (1763) returned the islands of St-Pierre and Miquelon to France. Lieutenant Gridley recruited 22 men and their families from P.E.I. to populate the islands in 1765. Despite subsequent deportations in 1778 and 1793, the population had grown to 150 by 1785 and roughly 500 by 1793. The islands were restored to France in 1796 and were deserted from 1796 to 1816. Sources: Marshall 2009; Andrieux 1983; Ryan 1983; Ribault 1966; and Guyotjeannin 1986.
madelinot Acadians, my conversations with younger generation Madelineots, in particular, suggest that a sense of cultural connectedness with P.E.I. has emerged only within the last decade.

Perceived musical similarities between P.E.I. Acadian and madelinot fiddling were frequently cited by P.E.I. musicians, who feel more of a connection to the lilt of the madelinot style than they do to other fiddling styles. Gary Gallant believes that Acadians in the Région Évangéline of P.E.I. have an affinity to this “Francophone” music that Anglophones on P.E.I. do not. As he explains,

I think it [Madelinot fiddling] has a bit more of the French lift to it. Getting back to the Magdalen Islands style somewhat. There’s a sensitivity in the area that, “oh yeah, that’s nice, I like that” – more than if you played it to an Anglophone somewhere else on the Island who had never heard that style before. There’s a pull…there.70

This sense of connection to the madelinot style is echoed by other musicians who expressed their understanding of the shared features of the two traditions. Louis-Charles explains that before the era of widespread internet and easy dissemination of traditional music, madelinot musicians learned tunes and songs from radio broadcasts out of eastern P.E.I. (CFCY Charlottetown) and Cape Breton Island (CJCB Sydney; CKJM Cheticamp); he explains that Cape Breton was the most common source of these broadcasts due to its elevation and proximity to les Îles.71 This radio link with Cape Breton accounts for the significant influence of the Cape Breton fiddle repertoire on madelinot fiddling.72 Nevertheless, I have been told on numerous occasions that Madelineots transit through P.E.I. out of necessity en route for French-speaking destinations in New Brunswick and

70 Gary Gallant, interview with author, 17 August 2008.
71 Louis-Charles Vigneau, interview with author, 6 August 2009.
72 After 1954, Antigonish radio station CJFX-AM also covered P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine (www.broadcastinghistory.ca). As noted in chapter three, the transmission of fiddle tunes via radio may account for some stylistic particularities, such as the “shuffle” rhythm; this style is also evident on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine.
mainland Québec. Madelinot Louis-Charles Vigneau, a member of the P.E.I.-based group Vishtên and highly-regarded guitarist, divides his time between his home in les Îles and the Région Évangéline. As he explains, he was unaware that a “real Francophone community” existed on P.E.I. until he joined Vishtên and was introduced to the Région Évangéline, adding that he had previously had no reason to venture to the western end of the Island. He contends that this view was shared by many other Madelinots for whom P.E.I. was simply a stepping stone to the mainland:

The thing is, for Magdalen Islanders, when we go out (away from les Îles) we pass through P.E.I. but [we usually need to go to the mainland and we are] sometimes…kind of short in time…so we just pass by between Souris and Borden. And we don’t stop.

Yet, my conversations with Louis-Charles and other islanders suggest that this pattern seems to be in flux. The apparent lack of awareness of a shared Francophone culture on the islands is beginning to dissipate as a renewed interest in developing inter-island partnerships has begun to take form, which many Acadians with whom I spoke attribute to being fuelled by musical practices. While there are no figures to support these claims, several Acadians in the Région Évangéline note a marked increase in madelinot visitors to the region, a development that they claim stems from touring P.E.I. artists and music-centered exchange. Several prominent musicians from both Islands paved the way for today’s cultural exchange, including P.E.I. fiddler Eddy Arsenault, who has played on the Islands several times, and madelinot fiddler Bertrand Déraspe, who continues to visit and perform yearly on P.E.I. Yet, it is the P.E.I.-based group Vishtên that is most often credited with promoting an awareness of

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73 Louis-Charles, interview with author, 6 August 2009.
74 Ibid.
the historical links and shared identity between the island populations that has fostered various patterns of exchange that have bubbled over into the economic sector.

**Vishtèn: Performing alliances**

*Festival of Small Halls, Crapaud Community Hall, June 2010*

The solo, percussive sound of Emmanuelle’s tapping feet fills the packed concert hall. Fiddler Pascal enters, playing a rough, rhythmic eighth-note pattern accompaniment, emphasising the off-beat. The accordionist, Pastelle, eases into the reel, “La Route 11,” a tune she composed in honour of the shoreline road (Route/Highway 11) that passes through her home village of Mont-Carmel, P.E.I. The groove is infectious; no more than sixteen beats into their first set, and there aren’t any still bodies in the audience. After a repeat of the “A” section of the reel, and without missing a beat, Emmanuelle takes over the melody on her penny whistle, Louis-Charles joins in on guitar, and the accordion switches to a rhythmic drone. The whistle’s timbre and ornamentation give the tune a distinct Irish flavour, yet I can’t seem to put my finger on an accurate descriptor of the overall sound; closing my eyes, I can picture myself simultaneously at a session in Belfast and a kitchen party in the **Région Évangéline**.

I don’t have time to dwell on this thought. As seamlessly as they entered, the accordion, feet and whistle have dropped out, and Pascal moves into a mesmerizing blues-inspired fiddle improvisation, with Louis-Charles playing a heavy “dum-chick” guitar accompaniment. After a minute or so, Pascal transitions effortlessly into a lively *madelinot* reel on the fiddle. Meanwhile, Emmanuelle has crossed the stage behind Pascal and Louis-Charles and is now chording on the keyboard. The accordion joins the fiddle, at times playing in flawless unison while at others providing the harmony. There is an abrupt pause and the
accordion transposes the tune to a bright, major key. The tune ends with Pascal and Pastelle at centre stage, each playing off the others’ melody and ornamentation. The remainder of the concert highlights the multi-instrumental faculties of each musician as they move effortlessly between instruments, step dancing, Acadian danse assise (seated step dancing) and haunting vocal harmonies.

Video example 5.1: “Vishtèn—La Route 11” (3m24s) (Used with permission).75

Vishtèn

Vishtèn is a four-member group comprising founding members twin sisters Emmanuelle (whistles, bodhrán, voice, piano, dance) and Pastelle LeBlanc (accordion, piano, voice, dance) from P.E.I.’s Région Évangéline and two men, Pascal Miousse (fiddle, mandolin, guitar, voice) and Louis-Charles Vigneau (guitar, mandolin, banjo, voice), from les Îles-de-la-Madeleine.76 Since the group’s inception in 2000, the group has travelled broadly, playing in concert halls and various folk, Celtic and Francophone music festivals throughout Europe and North America. The group performs and promotes what its members call their brand of “new-traditional” Acadian music, and has released three commercial recordings on their independent label including Vishtèn (2004), 11:11 (2007) and Vishtèn Live (2008). A fourth recording is anticipated to be released in 2011.

The four members of Vishtèn are third generation Acadians in their thirties with

75 The description above is based on a live performance by the group and not this video example, however the video illustrates a comparable performance.

76 The case study presented here is based on the group’s membership during my fieldwork from 2008 to 2010. In 2010, Louis-Charles left the group to pursue other ventures; at the time of this writing the three other members continue touring and recording. Former members of Vishtèn include fiddlers Melissa Gallant and Megan Bourgeois (née Bergeron). P.E.I. instrumentalists Rémi Arsenault and Elmer Deagle have also toured and recorded with the group.
parallel musical histories, having grown up in some of the islands’ best known musical households. All the members come from musical families in which traditional instrumental music and song were a regular part of their home and community environments. Pastelle and Emmanuelle were born and raised in the village of Mont-Carmel, P.E.I., although their family is originally from New Brunswick. Their parents, both musicians, were regular hosts to local and traveling musicians, and musical jams were regular occurrences at their home. Their father, Philippe, is a classical flautist and music teacher in the Région Évangéline who has a passion for traditional Irish music, which he passed to his daughters. At a young age, the sisters were recognised as accomplished step dancers and began playing piano. Although they were influenced by the region’s fiddlers and traditional music, neither twin turned to the fiddle, which is the predominant instrument in the community. Instead, Pastelle eventually picked up the accordion as her primary instrument, a choice she attributes to the musical influence from her maternal grandfather, who played the instrument. Emmanuelle discovered a passion for the penny whistle and, later, the bodhrán, an Irish frame drum. Both women studied classical piano for a brief period at l’Université de Moncton before turning their energy to traditional music.

Pascal Miousse grew up on the island of Cap-aux-Meules and was influenced at an early age by his father, a well known guitarist, and the many musicians who frequented their home. From the ages of four to ten he took classical violin lessons with nuns who taught elementary school music programs before picking up the guitar, mandolin and bass. As he explains, he received no formal training in “traditional” music, although he began playing the traditional reels and strathspeys at a young age. At the age of fourteen, Pascal formed a folk band with whom he performed regularly in bars, dance halls and festivals. When he was twenty he began a ten-year tour of eastern Canada with the group, whose musical style
broadened to include traditional fiddle, rock, soul and folk. Pascal’s vast experience in various musical styles adds hints of all these influences to Vishtèn’s music, and he incorporates a variety of melodic and backup fiddle techniques and combinations in his playing.

Louis-Charles also comes from a musical family on les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. His mother, Carole Painchaud, is a well known singer and instrumentalist who is recognised for her broad repertoire of old Acadian songs. Louis-Charles spent several years touring with various madelinot musicians, including prominent fiddler Bertrand Déraspe, and developing his own instrumental and vocal styles and repertoire. He is well known across the islands as a singer, for his style of guitar accompaniment, and for his proficiency on the banjo.

The story of group’s formation is itself a tale of encounter. In 2000, Emmanuelle and Pastelle founded the all-female group Celtitude, with local fiddler Megan Bergeron. The trio’s repertoire consisted largely of traditional Irish and Scottish tunes, and they performed in small venues throughout the Maritimes; the group’s fiddler changed over the course of the first few years, and eventually they changed the band’s name to Vishtèn. The name itself is inspired by the title of a song (“Vichten”) written by P.E.I. Acadian Arthur à Joe Bibienne (father of singer-songwriter Angèle Arsenault), which the group recorded on their 2007 album. The lyrics are based on an invented language that is influenced by French, English and Mi’kmaq:

\[
\begin{align*}
Vichten \ a \ ven \ a \ ven \\
Vichten \ a \ ven \ a \ va \\
Vichten \ a \ ven \ a \ ven \ a \ ven \ a \ va \ va \\

Ala \ couchi \ oun \ shlou \ shal \ lizabet \\
Ala \ couchi \ oun \ shlou \ shla \\

Bi \ bi \ bitten \ taria \ a \ bodina \ bi \ bodinié \\

Taria \ ton \ shoun \ ton \ shoun \ ton \ shoun \ alawé^{77}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
^{77} \text{Transcription from liner notes, Vishtèn 11:11 (2007).}
\]
In 2002, a chance encounter between Pastelle and Pascal at the *FrancoFête* festival in Moncton, New Brunswick, prompted a new direction for Vishtèn; Pascal’s decade-long collaboration and tour was ending at the same time as Vishtèn’s fiddler left to pursue other ventures. Pascal re-entered the world of traditional music as Vishtèn’s “stylistically French fiddler;”78 in addition to his aptitude with other instruments, Pascal’s distinctive style of playing has become the musical anchor of Vishtèn’s sound. Somewhat ironically, given the small size of the *madelinot* community, Louis-Charles grew up on les Îles and had heard about Pascal but did not know him. Louis-Charles met Emmanuelle and Pastelle at a music festival in Louisiana, and was a member of the group for only six months in 2002; five years later, he rejoined the group, bringing with him years of performing experience, an expansive repertoire of traditional French and Acadian songs from the islands and an infectious passion for music that is conveyed in his animated stage presence.

Musical style

Vishtèn’s musical style defies easy delimitation, with a sound that embodies their musical imaginations and sophisticated tastes, and incorporates their various influences and new ideas, all the while retaining what they call the “essential Acadian spirit of their roots.” As the group’s accordionist, Pastelle, explains, their “sound is essentially Celtic, but with a difference.” The songs are sung in French, either by each band member alone or in four-part harmony. Seated foot percussion drives the rhythmic playing of the fiddle and lively reels, while it is restrained in gentler musical moments that are captured by haunting vocal and whistle melodies (Vishtèn website). While fiddle, piano and guitar are main components of the group’s instrumentation, the group’s members also highlight a variety of what are conventionally called “Celtic” instruments, not generally associated with Francophone

Acadian culture, such as the accordion, penny whistles,\textsuperscript{80} \textit{bodhrán}, banjo, jaw harp\textsuperscript{81} and mandolin in each performance. Recently, slide guitar and the Peruvian \textit{cajón} have joined the mix.

Pastelle links the “difference” in the group’s sound to the elements of older Acadian practices from both locales that pervade their music. \textit{Podorhythmie}, the seated “shuffle” foot-tapping, provides rhythmic background of their performances, either alone or in conjunction with the guitar, jaw harp or \textit{bodhrán}. On occasion, elaborate variations on this basic pattern, combined with modified steps borrowed from standard step dancing, known as \textit{danse assise} (seated step dancing), are included, adding rhythmic and visual variation. The origins of \textit{danse assise} are not known; local accounts suggest that the practice may have emerged as entertainment at house parties in the mid-twentieth century, however. Pastelle and Emmanuelle cite their experiences as members of a local traditional dance troupe, \textit{les Pas d’folies}, directed by Helen Bergeron (of the group Barachois) as the influence behind their incorporation of the practice into Vishtèn’s performances; they explain that Helen choreographed several \textit{danse assise} numbers for the troupe, which were always popular with audiences. The \textit{danse assises} they perform in Vishten’s concerts are combinations of these choreographed steps and their own creations.

The practice of \textit{turlutter (touner)}, Acadian “mouth music,” also features prominently in Vishtèn’s repertoire, and is often interspersed within actual song texts. The source of the vocable patterns varies from song to song; some patterns are newly composed by the group (Ex. 5.3), while others are adaptations of traditional \textit{turlutte} (songs comprised entirely of

\textsuperscript{80} Emmanuelle plays D and G whistles.
\textsuperscript{81} The jaw harp is also known as a “jew’s harp” or “mouth harp.” The instrument’s nickname in the \textit{Région Évangéline} is “la trompe,” or “the mistake” (Georges Arsenault, interview with author, 20 August 2008).
vocables) that are learned from archived sources (Ex. 5.1 and 5.2).\textsuperscript{82} As with the traditional songs the group has retrieved from public archives, the older \textit{turlutte} are predominantly unaccompanied; thus, the group pairs the \textit{turlutte} with a song, often as a sort of bridge within a song, and adds an instrumental (or \textit{podorhythmie}) accompaniment. In addition to drawing on the general practice of singing \textit{turlutte}, the group’s original \textit{turlutte} frequently employ syllable patterns that are similar to older \textit{turlutte} patterns (such as “\textit{did’l}” and “\textit{da}”).

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example51.png}
\caption{Example 5.1 Example of traditional \textit{turlutte} learned from an archived source. Excerpt of “Turlutte Tignish” from track “Monsieur L’Matou” on \textit{Live} album. (Transcription by author)}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example52.png}
\caption{Example 5.2 Example of \textit{turlutte} learned from an archived source. Excerpt from “Turlutte (Trad.)” from track “La Femme Jalousie” on \textit{11:11} album. (Transcription by author)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{82} See Chapter 2 for a discussion of \textit{touner/turlutte}. 
Example 5.3 Example of original *turlutte* by Vishtèn. Excerpt from “L’esprit du bon vin” track on *Live* album. (Transcription by author)

The syncopated lilt in fiddler Pascal’s style is also a distinctive musical marker of the group’s Acadian roots. While Pascal’s fiddle style is characteristic of contemporary *madelinot* fiddling, it also reveals his forays into various musical styles and a keen sense of musicality. Pascal is widely recognised for his charismatic approach to fiddling and the ease with which he personalises tunes through the use of diminished chords and percussive bowing techniques. Whether it is on the concert stage or in the private context of a house party, Pascal’s playing incorporates extensive improvisation on the basic tune melodies, moving from “clean,” melodic playing of the basic tune to purely rhythmic interludes in which he plays chords with percussive bowing patterns, accentuated by other techniques such as *spiccato* (bouncing the bow), *tremolo*, using a suppressed bow to produce an “airy” sound, harmonic slides, *sul ponticello* (playing on or behind the bridge), *pizzicato* and *sul tast* (playing on the fingerboard), among others. A reverb and looping machine is used occasionally to add a variety of effects.

The “shuffle” rhythm also features prominently in Pascal’s playing, in which certain notes are “suppressed” or not sounded, thus producing a syncopated rhythmic feel. The origin of the “shuffle” style is not known; several fiddlers with whom I spoke had their own theories, however. These theories included (as noted in Chapter 3 in relation to the shuffle on P.E.I.) the transmission of tunes via radio broadcast that often resulted in dropped notes or
incomplete mastery of tunes given the difficulty of learning tunes in this manner. For example, an older fiddler described listening to the broadcast of Cape Breton fiddler Winston “Scotty” Fitzgerald on a Cape Breton radio show at neighbour’s house down the road from his own house. He would listen to one tune and then immediately run home, through the fields, to try it on his fiddle, desperately hoping he remembered the tune—or most of it—when he arrived home. Other local theories I have been told are somewhat more creative. Louis-Charles recounts a popular belief on the islands that the rhythmic pulse of a fishing boat engine can be felt in the lilting cadence of the fiddle; he describes how an older fiddler explained it to him:

[The “shuffle” style is] typical in the Maggies. Because of the fish...the fish bring people to the Maggies, it was very prosperous, rich. And the men from the beginning were sailing and working on boats. Little ones to bigger like today. You know that kind of roll you have on the sea? Sometimes bad weather, sometimes calm. A guy from ... home told me that in the fiddle style, the rolling too was associated to the sea. Because many fiddlers were looking out the window to the sea and playing, just trying to forget about the bad day they had, but they still have the rolling in their heads when they come back from the sea <he imitates the rhythmic sound of a fishing boat engine>. So, always rolling. And also they move a lot, like the bounce of the waves.

Light-heartedly, Louis-Charles adds that the constant and unavoidable wind (due to lack of trees) might also be accountable; as he explains, “I figure that’s why [we have] the shuffle in the fiddling playing...because we don’t have place to hide. We always need to shuffle because of this wind.” The transcription of “Shédiac Bridge” (Ex. 5.4), below, illustrates Pascal’s use of the “shuffle” bowing. Notes that are played with a suppressed bow stroke are notated with alternate note heads.

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84 Louis-Charles, interview with author, 6 August 2009.
Example 5.4 “Shédiac Bridge” composed by Pascal Miousse; as played on Vishtèn *Live* (2008).\(^{85}\) (Transcription by author)

Audio example 5.2 Excerpt from “Shédiac Bridge,” played by Vishtèn (Pascal Miousse, fiddle), from *Live* album (Used with permission). [Click here to listen](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ea2FZv72bzw)

Most *madelinot* fiddlers incorporate a certain element of improvisation in their playing; in general this is accomplished while keeping the overall melody and rhythmic structure of the tunes intact, but the extent to which the tune is recognisable depends greatly on the individual player. This widespread deviation from the standard “straight” playing of tunes distinguishes the *madelinot* tradition from related Scottish, Irish, Acadian and Québécois traditions. Pascal is an excellent example: improvising on the basic melody of a tune, he typically pushes and pulls the rhythm and changes the rhythmic emphasis of particular bars. Melodically, he adds and drops notes, and adds a variety of ornamentation, such as slides and the bowed effects noted above.

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\(^{85}\) The tune name is spelled with an “é” in “Shédiac,” unlike the town name of Shediac, New Brunswick. Videos of the group playing this tune can be viewed at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ea2FZv72bzw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ea2FZv72bzw) (2008) and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGWnC3i0Y1U&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGWnC3i0Y1U&feature=related) (2010)
Drawing on the performance features noted above that are shared between the two Acadian communities, Vishtèn has succeeded in reinforcing a distinct “Island Acadian” musical style that has been embraced by fellow islanders. A perceived affinity between the two musical communities is often brought up in my conversation with Island musicians. The music is described as having a shared “Acadian feel” that is “true to its Frenchness.” This notion is extended to perceived connections between their respective histories, dialects, dispositions and ways of life.

Inspired by the charismatic fiddling that is at the forefront of Vishtèn’s performances, and increased exposure to other madelinot fiddlers in recent years, the “shuffle” has been picked up by younger P.E.I. Acadian fiddlers and has re-entered the region’s popular consciousness as a shared feature of island Acadian culture, reaffirming the “shuffle” fiddle style as part of the region’s musical sound. Brandon Arsenault (b. 1992), from Cap-Egmont, P.E.I., is well known in the Evangeline region for his style of fiddling that draws significant influence from the madelinot style. He comes from a musical Acadian household and has been playing the fiddle (among other instruments) since the age of seven; his mother is a prominent step-dancer and his great-grandfather, Félix, was also a fiddler from the well known musical family “les Jos Bibiennes.” Although he considers a number of local fiddlers influences on his playing, Brandon’s playing and compositional styles reveal the influences of P.E.I. fiddler Louise Arsenault (from Barachois), and madelinot fiddlers Pascal Mioussé and Bertrand Déraspe, with whom he has taken some formal lessons. Brandon told me that he took an interest in the madelinot style on his own accord through exposure to Pascal and Bertrand’s performances on P.E.I.; as he explains, he gravitated initially toward the rhythmic

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86 Grady Poe, interview with author, 29 December 2009.
and “exciting” style of Bertrand’s playing and “it just stuck.”

Fellow fiddler Anastasia DesRoches describes Brandon’s performance of one of his own compositions, a reel named “La Coleslaw” (Ex. 5.5), as being clearly influenced by the madelinot style, with a “shuffle” rhythm produced by bowed accents, frequent double stops and bowed slurs and a lack of held (long) notes; the combination of these elements produces a distinctive pattern of off-beat accents. The following detailed transcription of “La Coleslaw” illustrates these features:

Example 5.5 “La Coleslaw” reel by Brandon Arsenault. (Transcription by Anastasia DesRoches and Meghan Forsyth)

Audio example 5.3 “La Coleslaw” reel, played by Brandon Arsenault. Recorded by Anastasia DesRoches, 2008 (Used with permission)

Vishtèn’s repertoire of songs and instrumental tunes is drawn from archived collections and the emerging body of new Acadian tune compositions from the Région Évangéline. All four members have contributed their own compositions to this expanding repertoire, and several tunes by the group’s members have been included in tune collecting

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87 Brandon Arsenault, interview with author, 1 August 2008.
projects such as the *C’est à nous* project discussed in chapter four and other recent
collections; thus, they are at once drawing from, and helping to create, these archives.

Vishtèn’s performances feature an increasing number of its members’ own compositions, as
well as those by fellow Acadian composers, which has added to the tunes’ popularity in the
islands’ fiddle communities. Among the most widely played of these tunes in the community
is one composed by Marie Livingstone, “Reel à Hermine” (Ex. 4.9), which was recorded on
two of Vishtèn’s albums, and “Shédiac Bridge,” which is composed by Vishtèn’s fiddler
Pascal Miousse (Ex. 5.4).

The group has scoured regional archives in search of old French and Acadian music,
and has been awarded various government grants for collecting projects. The older repertoire
is given new life with contemporary arrangements; as Pastelle explains, they aim to interpret
the songs in their own style, influenced by older musical forms, but not copying them. 89 In
contrast to what folklorist Dorothy Noyes calls the “old paradigm” of folk music, that is,
people as bearers, not makers of tradition, Vishtèn emerges as both bearers and makers of a
localised Island Acadian tradition. 90

While features and use of repertoire from Scottish, Irish and local Acadian traditions
are easily recognizable in the group’s performances, these serve primarily as a screen on
which to project their own musical interpretations. The group’s confluence of musical styles
eludes the bounded definitions of the traditional genres from which the musicians have drawn
inspiration and repertoire. As the group continues to produce albums and increase the scope of
its tours, Vishtèn is venturing further away from the standard interpretations of these

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89 Pastelle LeBlanc, interview with author, 10 October 2010.
90 Dorothy Noyes, “Group,” in *Eight Words for the Study of Expressive Culture*, ed. Burt Feintuch (Urbana and
“traditional” forms; fiddle improvisations, new combinations of instruments and new compositions are increasingly important signifiers of the group’s sound.

Vishtèn’s choices of genre, instrumentation, style, language and dialect reflect what Beverley Diamond terms “strategies of allegiance” and serve to position the group within a specific cultural framework.\(^91\) The view of Vishtèn’s music as being rooted in the past generation and representative of older, shared musical forms is increasingly circulated in the Acadian communities. The group’s musical choices are not without critics, however, some of whom see Vishtèn’s choices of instrumentation, their move toward improvisation and their fusion of genres as unrepresentative of local traditional music.\(^92\) These critiques point to views of the “local tradition” that are nonetheless based on the reconstructed performances by groups like Barachois. The critiques reinforce suggestions by Vishtèn’s members that their music is, in general, received more positively outside of the Région Évangéline. Regardless of these criticisms, testimonies from other community members indicate immense pride in the group’s international success and suggest that the group’s choices have musical meaning for many members of both communities, giving voice to a burgeoning interest in connecting these small islands and Francophone communities to broader cultural and musical networks.

**Marketing Francophone-Celtic-Acadian music**

Vishtèn’s narrative and marketing choices articulate their goals of promoting a shared Island Acadian identity and establishing themselves as an Acadian presence in the global music market—a new voice of French Canada. The group’s story, typically unfolded in the course of a concert or festival performance, centres on a century-old connection between


\(^{92}\) Informant’s name withheld, interview with author, 2008.
P.E.I. and les Îles, and positions the group’s members as young musicians with an eye to the past and a foot in the future. A link between the islands has become increasingly present in their dialogue with audiences. In between sets they describe their respective communities and early experiences of music-making. They paint an engaging picture of the frequent kitchen parties and social environment that, even today, contribute to a sense of social cohesion and community identity among Acadians on both islands. Historical events and linguistic retention also feature prominently in this discourse of “sister islands,” as they describe the disproportionate number of Francophones on the two islands, on the one hand a majority and on the other the minority; the optimistic situation of French language schools on P.E.I., as smaller groups of Francophones in predominantly Anglophone communities petition for larger schools and political support; and shared features of the islands’ French dialects and traditions.

Unlike Barachois, members of Vishtên do not promote their performances or music under the rubric of “Acadian kitchen parties.” While there are musical similarities to what one might hear at an informal musical gathering in the Région Évangéline, including various combinations of traditional instruments, the organisation of tunes into sets, and some shared repertoire, Vishtên’s shows are professionally and meticulously presented. They feature choreographed sequences of step dancing and danse assise, premeditated tune sets and elaborate vocal arrangements—none of which would occur in a “kitchen party” setting. Nevertheless, Emmanuelle explains that the “kitchen party” label is frequently used by concert promoters to market their shows:

“Traditional Acadian music” is what [we say] when we’re selling shows. Some of our agents like saying “kitchen party” because they know it’s a good selling point, but we don’t consider ourselves a kitchen party band... what goes on in kitchen parties is really spontaneous and we have arrangements, so in that sense we can’t really say that. But, [the “kitchen party” label helps]... people [make the connection to] an Acadian
traditional band from Prince Edward Island, so it’s a specific style. We have influences from here and there,...but our U.S. agent says “kitchen party with Vishtèn.”

We don’t want to base our show on what our agent wants to sell us as, necessarily. He should be selling the show that we have... [but] we’ve never had comments either from anybody saying it’s not a kitchen party. That’s what draws them there and then they get to hear [what we really do]. [They’ll get] some tunes from home, but a lot of compositions.  

The “Celtic” label is also used frequently by promoters to market the group’s music and, sometimes in combination with the idea of a “party” (see Fig. 5.15). Yet, unlike “kitchen party,” “Celtic” is a label with which the group easily identifies. In his well known chapter, “Thoughts on Celtic Music,” Malcolm Chapman argues that “Celtic” music is a constructed category that enables widespread participation and defies a fixed definition by musical style or genre. Summarizing Chapman’s argument, Stokes writes that the term “Celtic,” allows people access to—in their own terms—a domain of “Celtdom” denied to them by the complexities of, for example, a Celtic language, or by the theoretical and practical difficulties of maintaining a coherent political identity. “Celtic music” is then something which has been created by certain ways of classifying musical experience, and is certainly not a residue of authentic “Celtness” waiting to be discovered in the many and various musical styles and genres played in the Celtic world.  

Vishtèn’s case fits comfortably within Chapman’s notion of “Celticity.” While the group’s members emphasise their roots in Francophone Acadian culture, they lay strong claim to their “Celtic” roots and draw significant musical influence from Irish, Scottish and neighbouring Cape Breton traditions. They also acknowledge that their claim to “Celtdom” and musical exploit of the term’s flexible parameters holds immense marketing value.  

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The members of Vishtèn recognize the perks of drawing on a label that speaks to a broader audience. As Emmanuelle explains,

I think they say “Celtic music” because people don’t know what Acadian music is. I think there is a difference, and I think we do bring a lot more Celtic than what’s going on in Evangeline. You know, we’re all from there, the boys are from the Maggies, but... I can’t say we’re truly playing exactly what’s going on there, we’ll play tunes from composers and whatever’s being played and what we heard as kids, but it’s evolved in a way that I think “Celtic” music is accurate but I think Acadian music definitely is even though we’ve adapted it to our style.  

The Celtic-French-Acadian identity the group has adopted gives them a competitive edge when it comes to securing their place in festivals line-ups and other events. By tying into various “imaginaries”—constructed categories such as “traditional”, “Celtic,” “Francophone,” “Acadian” and “roots”—Vishtèn connotes what James Leary describes as “long-standing,

even mystical relationships between people and places.”\(^{96}\) This combination of these labels, identities and sonic identifiers sets Vishtèn apart from other fiddle- or Celtic-based groups with whom Vishtèn competes for participation in festivals and other performance opportunities.

While they set the group apart within the industry, these discursive and musical connections appeal to the particular tastes of an international market that seeks sonic familiarity at the same time as it values individuality and distinctiveness. Although the term “Acadian” is better known in the U.S. due to the Acadian-Cajun connection, it is relatively unknown in most of Vishtèn’s—particularly European—performance contexts. Vishtèn presents its audiences with an attractive balance, offering the widely recognised instrumentation, sonorities, delivery, “dance-like rhythm” and forms that define popular conceptions of what Adrian Ivakhiv calls “Celticity,” juxtaposed with the “exotic” of unfamiliar features of older island Acadian traditions.\(^{97}\) The “Celtic” label strategically allows Vishtèn to take advantage of the vague parameters of what is conventionally called “Celtic music,” while it positions their music within an identifiable framework. As such, their “Celticity” facilitates an entry point for them to talk about their Acadian heritage and the origins of their Scottish and Irish musical influences.\(^{98}\)

While these labels continue to feed into their marketing platform, the addition of Pascal and Louis-Charles to the group in 2003 and 2008, respectively, has added a further strategic layer to the way the group promotes their music, as well as their dialogue with


\(^{97}\) Adrian Ivakhiv, “Colouring Cape Breton ‘celtic’: Topologies of culture and identity in Cape Breton,” *Ethnologies* 27, no. 2 (2005): 118.

audiences. Pastelle explains that, while their music is still “Acadian” and “Celtic,” the madelinot connection now plays a more prominent role in the way they promote the group’s identity; they market the group as “pan-Acadian” music from P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, and emphasise the social and musical similarities and differences between the two traditions. This approach helps to define Vishtèn in relation to other Acadian groups emerging on P.E.I. and well established Acadian groups from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Vishtèn’s position as a pan-Francophone link between P.E.I. and les Îles establishes and enacts a linguistic relationship to other French-speaking groups in Canada and abroad that further distinguishes Vishtèn’s brand of “Celtic” and “Acadian” from other ethnically- or musically-related groups. Unless they are performing in Québec, French-speaking countries in Europe, or their home communities in P.E.I. and les Îles, their performances are bilingual, with an emphasis on French; songs, too, are sung only in French, although if they are performing for a predominantly Anglophone audience a member of the group will provide a short description of the lyrics in English. Writing about the politics and aesthetics of language choice and dialect in popular music, Harris Berger points out that, for non-English speakers, the choice of language and, for some, the choice of dialect, is a crucial aspect of performance. Far from a simple question of the performer’s ease, these choices inform numerous aspects of the musical experience, from syntax and diction to the various levels of interpretation by “critics, music industry gatekeepers, and listeners.”

When a singer uses, for example, a high-status foreign language, a despised local dialect, or a formal register in song, he or she may be exploring, performing, or

99 Harris Berger and Michael Carroll, eds. Global Pop, Local Language (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), x.
enacting a social identity rather than merely describing it.\textsuperscript{100}

Language comprises a key component of the “pan-Acadian” identity that rests at the core of the group’s music and gives them access to several different performance contexts and markets. Vishtèn tours at least once or twice a year to France and Belgium, where the group’s second recording was recorded under the direction of French producers. Pastelle feels that the group has an obligation to inform the people and audiences they meet on their travels about the Acadian community and P.E.I. Acadian culture. She describes the group’s reception in France and Québec,

C’est vraiment une fierté d’être Acadien et de pouvoir emmener sa musique à l’extérieur, parce que c’est une culture qui n’est pas bien connue mais qui est tellement touchante. Quand on voyage à l’extérieur, on voit vraiment comment le monde apprécie notre accent, nos manières...Ils n’ont jamais vraiment entendu du monde parler comme ça. En France, ils ne connaissent pas l’Acadie : ils connaissent le Québec. On leur apprend qu’ils ont été chez nous en premier. C’est comme une découverte. On amène ça avec nous autres.\textsuperscript{101}

\textit{It’s really an honour to be Acadian and to be able to bring our music off-Island because the Acadian culture is not well known in other places, but it is very touching. When we travel off-Island, people really experience our accent and our mannerisms...they’ve never heard people speak like we do. In France, they don’t know about Acadia, they know about Québec. We tell them that the French were in Acadia first. It’s like a discovery. We bring that with us.}

To this Emmanuelle adds,

Il faut être fier de parler français. Quand on est une minorité, c’est difficile d’être fier de sa langue, mais on a vraiment une culture spéciale... ça fait du bien de partir et de revenir aussi. Il y a une richesse dans la musique traditionnelle ici.

\textit{You have to be proud to speak French. When you’re a minority it’s difficult to be proud of your language, but we have a very special culture...it is good to leave and also to come back. We have a richness in our traditional music here.}


While their various alliances to aforementioned musical communities play a central role in Vishtèn’s discourse with audiences and their successful marketing strategies, there is, nevertheless, a greater reality at play—one that often seems to be overlooked in academic discourse. Practitioners within these musical circles are undoubtedly aware that the musicians’ high level of musical skill factors greatly to the group’s advantage in this highly competitive market; indeed, it is the musicians’ individual and collective musicality, ambition and hard work, above all else, that accounts for the group’s success thus far. Ben Brinner’s seminal work on musical competence and interaction in Java (1995) and among Arab and Jewish musicians in Israel (2009) offers an excellent model with which to consider the role of musicality in the everyday musical lives of these working musicians. Brinner defines musical competence as “an integrated complex of skills and knowledge upon which a musician relies within a particular cultural context.”

Following Brinner, my use of the term “competence” signifies the body of knowledge a musician holds and how they use that knowledge in performance, in building relationships with other musicians and to navigate the various factions of the industry. I am interested here in how these musicians’ skills (“talent”), as defined by their peers, and their affiliation with various musical communities, factors into their success in the industry.

In Playing Across a Divide Brinner notes that, as a result of their competence within

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102 Benjamin Brinner, Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1. While I refer to Brinner’s framework to examine this particular group, of which all four members are professional musicians, Brinner’s model deals with a broad “spectrum of competence as it varies in type and degree among musicians” (Ibid., 2). His model rests on a broad understanding of the term “musician,” which he defines as “that subset of a society that possesses at least some of the skills and knowledge necessary to function in at least some of the musical situations typical for that society” (Ibid.). His more recent work in Israel focuses on professional musicians (Brinner, Playing Across a Divide).
their respective musical contexts, the musicians with whom he works participate in a local scene that feeds into a much larger international network that is constituted from a round of international festivals (on themes such as world music, roots music, and Mediterranean music), other touring opportunities, collaborations at home and abroad with musicians from other countries, contracts with foreign labels, stints in foreign countries, and so on.  

In the case of Vishtèn, a high level of musical competence opens the door for the group’s members to participate in a global musical network that comprises international tours and participation in folk, Celtic and Francophone festival circuits. Moreover, independent from the band as a whole, Vishtèn’s members are called upon frequently to collaborate on recording and performance projects, thus retaining and furthering their individual musical identities.

**Performing alliances**

Vishtèn’s construction of various links to broader communities evokes Benedict Anderson’s conceptualization of nations and identities as imagined communities, in which “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion;” such communities, he argues, are constantly being re-imagined in response to changing political, social, and cultural realities.  

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103 Brinner, *Playing Across a Divide*, 27.
imagined,” carries particular significance for the study of expressive culture.\textsuperscript{105} These communities are maintained and given meaning by the various actors (musicians, audiences, agents, institutions) within established socio-musical frameworks, such as “Celtic,” “Francophone” and “Acadian,” among others. For Vishtèn, the ever-changing realities of the music industry, tastes of audiences in North America and abroad and festival committees, as well as a desire to advocate on behalf of their “home” communities and traditions variously impact on the ways in which the group allies with and seeks to position itself within these communities.

The members of Vishtèn are consciously unified on ethnic and cultural grounds, and their group identity centres on an affinity between Acadian communities on P.E.I. and les Îles; this connection is voiced in their discourse with audiences and media, and as part of their marketing strategy as “pan-Acadian.” Writing about the construction of pan-ethnicity at “ethnic festivals” in the United States, Michael Hawkins notes that,

In response to the economic lure of tourism and the desire for increased visibility to outsiders, previously marginalized groups may reconstruct their identities, often by merging with other groups under a common “pan-ethnic” identity. Pan-ethnic identities require a common interest, often political or economic, and a system of cultural symbols that are selected or invented to serve as a “cultural umbrella” for the varied groups united under a pan-ethnic label. Pan-ethnicities are sometimes so fluid and tenuous that festivals may become the primary symbol of common identity.\textsuperscript{106}

While the “pan” label highlights the members’ inter-island Acadian connections, in the context of Vishtèn the term falls short of the emphasis on the merging of distinct ethnic groups that lies at the centre of academic definitions of pan-ethnicity; at the same time, the

\textsuperscript{105} Waterman also notes the import of Anderson’s argument for those studying expressive culture, in his writing on Yoruba popular music. Chris Waterman, “‘Our Tradition is a Very Modern Tradition’: Popular Music and the Construction of Pan-Yoruba Identity,” \textit{Ethnomusicology} 34, no. 3 (1990): 367-379.

group retains the elements of “polito-cultural collectivity,” self-definition and commonality highlighted by scholars of pan-ethnic movements.  

Regardless of their basis of affinity, “pan-movements” involve the creation of new boundaries and perception of solidarity. By highlighting the shared history of their communities, cultural roots and contemporary “supraethnic” traits, Vishtèn asserts a specifically joint identity. Yet, Vishtèn’s articulation of a “pan-Acadian” identity is highly localised and does not, in fact, link to the broader Acadian community in eastern Canada. Situated in their discourse of sister islands, the group sonically and discursively promotes an expressly Island Acadian identity that is distinct from that of mainland Acadians. This notion of a shared musical identity is increasingly celebrated within their communities. Nonetheless, while the members of Vishtèn have accepted and participate in furthering their roles as culture-bearers, educators and advocates for the island communities, I must add that these musicians did not embark on their musical journeys with that goal in mind—although it has certainly proven to be an added bonus—nor do they necessarily consider themselves part of a larger pan-Acadian movement.  

Nonetheless, the group’s members acknowledge that Vishtèn is a kind of bridge between the island Acadian communities, and that the group’s touring and visibility has helped with the recognition that there are Francophone communities on P.E.I. They have also started to see links beyond their own music, in the form of cultural exchange projects between Arrimage, the cultural organisation of les Îles, and la Fédération culturelle de l’Île-du-Prince-

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108 Espiritu, 2.
109 Brinner makes a similar observation in his work on Israeli and Palestinian musical collaborations; he points out that the musicians with whom he works do not see themselves as part of a larger political movement. Brinner, Playing Across a Divide, 8.
Édouard, the Acadian and Francophone cultural federation of P.E.I. These projects have included co-production and promotion of concerts featuring island Acadian artists. The group’s success both locally and abroad has inspired increased inter-island exchange of musicians. This exchange is most apparent at Acadian traditional music festivals on P.E.I., such as the Atlantic Fiddlers Jamboree and le Festival acadien held in the Région Évangéline, and the Francofolies de Charlottetown, at which there is now regular representation from les Îles, as well as numerous smaller concerts throughout the year.

**Island routes/roots**

These cultural partnerships between P.E.I. and les Îles have contributed to expanding tourism markets in both island locales that target Francophone tourists. The increased flow of people and culture between these sister islands has fostered the recognition of a distinct musical identity and an emic perception of a unified Francophone Acadian community. One of the most intriguing by-products of this process is what my informants posit as a new geographic orientation of madelinot travel patterns through the region; no longer just a place en route for French-speaking communities on the mainland, P.E.I. and, specifically, the Région Évangéline in western P.E.I., is becoming a destination for Francophone cultural (predominantly musical) tourism from les Îles and a hub of musical interaction. This interaction is exemplified by the increasing prominence of madelinot fiddlers at concerts and festivals in the region, at which there is almost always representation from les Îles and a corresponding dialogue of solidarity.

Shifting routes through the region have also fostered deeper personal and intercultural ties. In private contexts, musical encounter and exchange take place at house (or kitchen) parties, such as that described in chapter four. Both Louis-Charles and Pascal recall that their
first visits to the Région Évangéline and experiences of Francophone culture on P.E.I. were eye-opening experiences, as neither musician expected to discover such an affinity to P.E.I.’s Acadian culture and music. As Louis-Charles explains,

The first time I can say I stopped in P.E.I. was in the Evangeline region, at Philippe [LeBlanc]’s house. And then I discover[ed] [that we share] a lot of knowledge… I [met] new people, new musicians, who were knowing the same or doing the same for the same passion for the music. [Our] roots are the same too... [Like me, Pastelle and Emmanuelle LeBlanc] are [playing this music] because...their parents [did] too and kitchen parties [happen here, just like in] the Maggies. I think the oral transmission is very present in islands.¹¹⁰

He continues,

I realised that not only the music was present but all the French and other things, like cuisine, farm, [and] fish, it was the same as home. I felt at home. For sure...because of a lot of fiddlers together, I was really impressed and had never seen that before. Here there is more tunes than songs, opposite at home.¹¹¹

Louis-Charles identifies what he feels are significant cultural resemblances, but alludes to important differences in the musical traditions. While Acadian musicians from both locales share an extensive repertoire, in large part due to a shared Scottish influence from neighbouring Cape Breton, the traditions differ in their approach to informal music-making. As described in Chapter 4, it is typical in the Région Évangéline of P.E.I., though not compulsory, to find an inclusive, group-playing format at informal musical sessions, such as kitchen parties, wherein you might find ten or more fiddlers playing the same tune, accompanied by several accompanists (keyboard, guitars and sometimes percussion). In contrast, Pascal explains that it is more common in les Îles to hear a single fiddler accompanied by a guitarist; at the most you might find two or three fiddlers playing together. Nevertheless, Louis-Charles notes that the connection and increased flow of madelinot

¹¹¹ Ibid.
musicians to the region for the summer festivals and invitations to attend large music-centred parties (such as Philippe LeBlanc’s shed parties, described in chapter one), has popularised the “group playing” format among younger madelinot musicians on les Îles. As he explains,

[Since the] first time [that] Alexandre (à Bertrand) Déraspe...came here four or five years ago and realised what was happening with the kitchen parties, from then to today there’s a lot of young fiddlers that play together on the Maggies. [This has probably fostered more] interest in the fiddle style, more interest in keeping the style [and] the tunes. Models are Pascal, Bertrand [and] Félix, but the interest comes from the P.E.I. connection.

Pascal also notes this shift in madelinot practices toward increased group playing:

On dirait [que]...depuis un couple d’années il y a comme une effervessance par rapport a la musique qui est jouer aux Îles...le monde veux jouer plus ensemble qu’avant, je pense. Avant ça [on] jouait, mais c’était plus...ch’è pas, chacun...il n’y avait pas les gros ressemblement tant que ça pareille qu’a ici à l’Île. Comme les premiers fois que j’ai venu à l’Île et on été ici chez Philippe et tu vois quinze, seize joueurs de violon—c’est comme même assez particulier. Aux Îles t’avais pas ça. Tu peux avoir deux ou trois, mais pas quinze.

I’d say that within the last couple of years there has been a change with regard to the music that is played in the “Maggies.” I think people want to play more together that before. Before this, each person played more-or-less his own style; there weren’t a lot of similarities in style between players like you find here in the Evangeline Region. For example, the first few times I came to P.E.I. and we were here at Philippe’s house and you saw fifteen or sixteen fiddlers playing together—it’s pretty special. In the “Maggies” this wasn’t the case. You might find two or three, but not fifteen.

While the group playing/learning format is growing in popularity, numerous madelinot fiddlers maintain solo careers and perform regularly in a variety of contexts both at home and abroad; similarly, there are a number of prominent fiddlers on P.E.I. who are identified as “solo” fiddlers, best known for performing solo with only guitar accompaniment.

Nevertheless, as noted in Chapter 4, some musicians express concern that the increased popularity and formalisation of informal instrumental group sessions (such as the Friday

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112 Pascal Miousse, Bertrand Déraspe and Félix LeBlanc are three well known madelinot fiddlers. Pascal is the only one who lives on P.E.I.
113 Louise-Charles Vigneau, interview with author, 6 August 2009.
114 Pascal Miousse, interview with author, 8 July 2009.
Night Acadian Jam) threaten a “greying-out” of previously distinctive individual and regional styles and impede the nurturing of fiddlers’ creativity in choosing a personalised repertoire. Such trends are becoming increasingly widespread in fiddle communities as practitioners around the world endeavour to adapt their traditions to the demands of busy modern schedules, media influences, global dissemination of traditional music and, in some cases, increased demand for formal instruction.

My previous research on the fiddle tradition of the Shetland Isles (UK) provides an example of these modern challenges to the continuity of traditional music practices. In 1970, renowned Shetland fiddler Tom Anderson (1910-1991) introduced a fiddle program into public schools throughout the islands that continues today. While his students were encouraged to learn by ear, notation eventually replaced oral transmission as the primary source for learning tunes; this developed in response to a growing body of students and the need for a broader repertoire of tunes for the frequent public performances. While there is no doubt about Tom’s central role in the revival of fiddling in the Shetland Isles, there has been much criticism of his methods by older musicians who feel that by choosing to impart specific aspects of the older tradition and style to his students in lessons he objectified particular tunes and stylistic features under the rubric of “traditional Shetland music.” Moreover, some musicians expressed to me their concerns that most students learn exclusively from one instructor, in a formal (lesson) setting, often without listening to older fiddlers or archival recordings.

The emergence of numerous fiddle groups over the past twenty years has prompted further debate in the Shetland fiddle community. Older fiddlers voice their concern that, as a result of this group focus, fiddling in the Isles has become regimented and students are encouraged to be neither proactive in their choices of music nor stylistically independent in
their performances. As one musician suggested, the lack of exposure to different teaching and performance styles presents a danger of students being mass-produced to play in a certain manner, which is believed by some members of the community to be leading to a homogenisation of regional styles. As a counter argument, some instructors claim that an abundance of young fiddlers has necessitated more organisation and consistency of style. Furthermore, they argue that it provides opportunities for the students to learn new repertoire and to perform, albeit in large groups, more frequently than would be possible otherwise.

The Shetland example is an extreme case of the inherent tension between tradition and modernity in contemporary fiddle communities; nonetheless, it illustrates a concrete reality for contemporary fiddling traditions around the world, including those on les Îles and P.E.I. While the shifts in these two Maritime Acadian traditions are in their (relative) infancy, some debate about change within the traditions is becoming part of the local discourse. Further examination of this phenomenon is beyond the scope of this chapter, although, clearly, the long-term impact of this shift toward group playing on the local tradition and fiddling styles begs further research.

Beyond musical exchange

The renewed interest in shared identity has inspired economic alliances between P.E.I. and les Îles that, while still in their infancy, suggest much promise for the future. As one islander told me, trade between the two islands “seems like a natural process of exchange,” particularly given a recent emphasis on organic farming, a growing industry in both locales.

115 The fiddle groups are run by fiddle instructors in the community and often comprise upwards of thirty to fifty students; some groups, such as “New Tradition,” have recorded CDs.
and a desire to “go local,” through the consumption of local goods. The initiation of such exchange is marked by an ongoing series of “exploratory missions” that have been staged over the past two years, which encompassed multi-day exchanges of islanders from both islands. Facilitated by a joint pilot project of the Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité (R.D.É.E.) and the Société d’aide au développement des collectivités (S.A.D.C.), the objective of the missions is to form economic partnerships and collaborations between island entrepreneurs, exchange services and expertise, as well as to create new markets for products and services.

The initial stages of the program included representatives in the areas of artistic development, tourism, cuisine, winemaking, boat construction and yarn manufacturing, among other endeavours. Building on existing relationships between musicians of both islands, and the momentum of groups such as Vishtèn, the culture industry emerged as a prominent avenue for future cultural and tourism exchange. Madelinot arts developer Carole Painchaud and concert promoter Sébastien Cummings joined the program to explore the possibility of a variety of cultural partnerships at the level of artist exchange and artistic programming; their visit to P.E.I. included meetings with representatives of the Centre Belle-Alliance (the French School and Cultural Centre in Summerside) and organisers of various concert venues across the Island, including the Confederation Centre, The Guild and Le

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117 Pastelle LeBlanc, phone interview with author, 10 October 2010.
118 R.D.É.E. is a community economic development organisation that collaborates with 12 provincial and territorial organisations to “enhance the vitality and support of development of Francophone minority communities.” R.D.É.E., accessed on 14 October 2010, www.rdee.ca
119 S.A.D.C. du Québec is a network of non-profit agencies that work towards economic development of particular regions of Québec. See www.reseau-sadc.qc.ca
120 Painchaud is the Development Agent with Arrimage, the cultural organisation of les Îles-de-la-Madeleine; Cummings is the owner of the popular restaurant and concert venue Les Pas Perdus in Cap-aux-Meules.
Carrefour. In an interview with P.E.I.’s Francophone newspaper, *La Voix acadienne*,

Cummings comments that,

C’est essentiel de cultiver des liens entre l’Île et l’archipel, en raison de la connexion Souris-Cap-aux-Meules, via le traversier. Même si la connexion est naturelle, par sa géographie, elle l’est moins politiquement et administrativement. Il s’agit après tout de deux provinces distinctes, qui font leur propre promotion touristique et qui veulent garder leurs touristes.  

*It’s essential to cultivate links between P.E.I. and the archipelago (of les Îles), because of the connection between Souris [*P.E.I.*] and Cap-aux-Meules (les Îles) via the ferry. Even if the connection is natural due to its geography, the link is less natural at the level of politics and administration. They are part of two distinct provinces that have independent tourism promotion and that wish to keep their tourists.*

As Cummings notes, the connection between the islands is far from uncomplicated.

Nevertheless, P.E.I.’s local R.D.É.E. representative, Francis Thériault, sees much potential for a productive marketing relationship between the island communities and the possibility for P.E.I. to extend its appeal to mainland tourists traveling through P.E.I. en route to les Îles:

De nombreuses personnes à destination des Îles-de-la-Madeleine ne se rendent peut-être même pas compte qu’elles peuvent profiter de leur passage à l’Île pour voir des choses. L’Alliance touristique de l’Île est à développer son passeport et les Îles-de-la-Madeleine pourraient y trouver une place.

*A number of people destined for the Magdalen Islands perhaps don’t even know that they can take advantage of their trip to P.E.I. [to get to the Magdalen Islands] to see things. P.E.I.’s Tourism Alliance needs to expand its tourism marketing strategy and the Magdalen Islands can help to facilitate that.*

The provincial government, too, supports the goal of expanding the Island’s Francophone tourism market, and some local festivals have placed particular importance on attracting *madelinot* visitors. In 2004, the P.E.I. government established the “*P.E.I. Acadian and Francophone Tourism Development Program,*” a grant program providing financial

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121 Jacinthe LaForest, “*Madelinots et Prince-Édouardiens voient un grand potentiel à exploiter,*” *La Voix acadienne*, 25 March 2009, 2.

122 Ibid.
assistance for the “promotion and development of Acadian and Francophone tourism products,” with the primary goal of attracting more Francophone tourists to P.E.I., particularly through French cultural festivals.\textsuperscript{123} The program has led to an increase of Acadian community festivals across the Island, such as the Souris Acadian festival. In 2009, Tina Peters-White, president of the Comité Acadien Francophone de L’est (C.A.F.E.),\textsuperscript{124} requested $10,000 to expand the size of the one-day Souris Acadian festival to include a second day of festivities, more music, food venues, a family-oriented festival and an adult dance. In an interview with the CBC, Peters-White explains that the goal of C.A.F.E. is to attract more tourists to the predominantly Anglophone region of Souris from les Îles:

You go to New Brunswick and the festival lasts for the weekend, and everybody has a great time. We'd like to be able to bring that here...As an Acadian, it's very important for me. My family kind of lost their roots, and it's just nice to bring it all back.\textsuperscript{125}

According to statistics from the P.E.I. Tourism Department, such granting programs contributed to nearly a ten percent increase in Francophone tourism on P.E.I. in 2009.\textsuperscript{126} It remains to be seen what will come of this emergent interest in developing cultural and economic partnerships between P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, although ongoing efforts by community organisations, festival organisers, and individual entrepreneurs and artists show much promise of continued joint ventures for the foreseeable future.

\textsuperscript{124} A Francophone Acadian community organisation for eastern P.E.I.
\textsuperscript{125} “P.E.I. looking to lure more French tourists to the Island.” CBC Online, accessed February 14, 2010, www.cbcnews.ca
In summary, the case studies presented in this chapter illustrate the centrality of cultural encounters and alliances to the formation, maintenance and expression of identity in P.E.I.’s Acadian community. Acadian cultural organisations and musicians acknowledge and celebrate linguistic and historical links to their Francophone counterparts in Québec and France, although their relations are not without tension. At the same time as these connections facilitate Island Acadian musicians’ access to broader national and global audiences, their musical encounters highlight their differences, helping to establish and articulate the markers that distinguish the Island community from other Francophone groups. An historic connection to their “cousins” in Louisiana has given rise to a dialogue of “pan-Acadianism” and cultural exchange between Maritime Acadians and Cajuns in southern Louisiana, fuelled also by the transnational nature of the Acadian World Congresses. In addition to inspiring new creative projects and promoting tourism between the Maritimes and Louisiana, this alliance has promoted the recognition and celebration of a transnational Acadian community that is unified in their struggle for cultural retention as minority Francophone communities.

Finally, the historical and cultural connections between P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine emerged frequently in my interviews with musicians, as did Vishtèn’s role in promoting the alliance. A discourse of sister islands that highlights parallels in the islands’ socio-economic circumstances, ways of life, cultural and linguistic roots and musical practices has led to increased tourism and economic and cultural exchange between the islands, as well as increased interest among younger generation P.E.I. Acadian fiddlers in older playing styles.

Both at home and abroad, touring P.E.I. musicians, such as Vishtèn, play a central role in articulating a sense of Island Acadianness through a variety of expressive forms and contribute significantly to nurturing an emerging pride in local Francophone culture.

Vishtèn’s social agenda and musical choices stem from the resurgence of interest in defining
and expressing a localised P.E.I. Acadian identity that has emerged within the last couple of decades. At the same time as it draws from this movement, the group’s discursive and musical performances of an inherent link between P.E.I. and les Îles fuel these processes of Acadian cultural revival. At once connecting their local communities to broader island, Acadian, linguistic, cultural and musical networks, Vishtèn draws upon and furthers these ongoing processes of identity construction. As such, the group models new frameworks for understanding and giving voice to Acadian identity, which, in Brinner’s terms, exemplifies “socio-political as well as cultural possibilities for the future.”

It is intriguing, but not altogether surprising, to think that it is musicians on P.E.I. who are leading the way in creating alliances that extend beyond the purely musical and to hear their work acknowledged in such terms by the larger Acadian community. This notion that music can be a primary tool to “motivate people to action,” to articulate identity and to create links between people and places, among other things, speaks to the experiences of most musicians and ethnomusicologists that I know. The socio-musical alliances created by these musicians provide a strategy by which they are united in their difference, whether that difference stems from a specific historical past, a linguistic connection or a common musical language. The musical articulation of such alliances enables these Acadian voices to be heard and for their unknown stories to be told.

127 Brinner, Playing Across The Divide, 8.
Chapter 6
Narrating Identity: Memory, Language and Music

At the time of this writing, the Island is still abuzz with the sounds and anecdotes of the 2011 East Coast Music Awards (E.C.M.A.) hosted by the city of Charlottetown, P.E.I.\(^1\) Although the E.C.M.A. is not a bilingual event *per se*, this year’s week-long string of shows and award ceremonies included numerous Francophone-focused events organised by the *Fédération culturelle de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard* (the Francophone Cultural Federation of P.E.I.), ranging from formal concerts to informal musical sessions. The *Scène francophone* (Francophone stage) featured a line-up of Acadian artists from New Brunswick, Newfoundland and P.E.I., including Vishtèn and Lennie Gallant, the latter singing songs from his two Francophone albums. In addition to their participation in the Francophone programming, Vishtèn performed with Symphony Nova Scotia in the opening show, “A Sound Celebration,” that featured a series of collaborative performances between the Symphony and Island musicians. The Francophone programming also included an “Acadian Jam” (which was billed simultaneously as a kitchen party) staged at the Rodd Charlottetown Hotel, that was led by numerous Acadian musicians from the *Région Évangéline* and featured guests from New Brunswick. Finally, Timothy’s Coffee House in downtown Charlottetown hosted a *Café francophone*, an informal jam session that saw a steady rotation of Acadian musicians fill the small space for the better part of two days.

This cluster of performances highlights several themes that emerge in this dissertation and illustrates the complex duality of the Francophone community that is both a growing

\(^{1}\) April 13-17th, 2011.
presence in the P.E.I. cultural scene and a community on the margins. In addition to coordinating the E.C.M.A.’s Francophone programme, the Fédération culturelle played a much more active role in the planning of the 2011 event than have other Francophone organisations in past years. Most notably, the Fédération culturelle worked with the Award organisers to implement a change of policy to ensure that the winner of the “Francophone Album of the Year” award was chosen by a jury comprising a percentage of Acadian Francophone artists assembled by the Fédération culturelle, as opposed to an Anglophone committee as in previous years. While this endeavour points to the increased involvement of Acadian organisations and musicians in Island events, there is little doubt that the Francophone contingent continues to occupy a marginal position in the larger picture of the E.C.M.A. programming. With the exception of the category of “Francophone Album of the Year” and some Acadian nominees in a few other categories, the Francophone/Acadian components of the week-long festival were organised and presented as separate threads from the E.C.M.A. mainstream events.

The events of the Awards week also exemplify an ongoing need within the Francophone community to carve out a place for Francophone activities amid mainstream Anglophone events and a desire to draw attention to the distinctiveness of the local Acadian culture in relation to Anglo-P.E.I. and other Francophone populations. These objectives reflect a prominent local discourse about Acadian cultural identity on P.E.I. that is

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3 In 2011, Francophone nominees were included in the following categories: “Roots/Traditional Group of the Year” (Chuck et Albert-P.E.I.); “Fan’s Choice Entertainer of the Year” (Chuck et Albert, Lennie Gallant-P.E.I. and Blou-N.S.); “DVD of the Year” (Blou); “Children’s Recording of the Year” (Art Richard-N.B.); “Classical Recording of the Year” (Bruno Jacques Pelletier-N.B.); and, lastly, “Francophone Recording of the Year” (Chuck et Albert, Daniel Goguen-N.B., Lennie Gallant, Marie Philippe Bergeron-N.B., Mary Barry-N.L. and Tradition-N.B.).
increasingly shaped through and articulated by musical performances. In Chapter 3, I described a resurgence of interest in defining a local Island Acadian identity and the central role that music plays in furthering such processes. Although this resurgence is sometimes labelled a “revival” within the community and by scholars, I argue that it is not a recent phenomenon, but, rather, the culmination of a long history of defining their culture that is rooted in the broader Acadian community.

Musical traditions continue to play a central role in defining and expressing this localised identity, even as individual musicians and groups continue to (re)define the parameters of the tradition. The group Barachois has played an important role in developing a distinct local style of playing through a pastiche of older practices. The musical choices of groups like Barachois and Vishtên point to a desire to maintain strong links to the past, even as they endeavour to mark out new creative territory.

These links to the past are constructed both musically and discursively. For example, the “shuffle” pattern has emerged as a distinct marker of the local Acadian tradition. Musically, this single stylistic feature embodies past practices from the western P.E.I. region and links between Acadian traditions on P.E.I. and other Acadian communities such as that of les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. The “shuffle” is also a discursive marker of the local musical identity; its local significance as a symbol of Island Acadian culture is validated by its existence in other Acadian musical traditions. Although the “shuffle” features prominently in both emic and etic descriptions of the local Acadian style, few fiddlers (including some of the region’s most celebrated musicians) actually incorporate this element into their individual styles. Nevertheless, perhaps due to its prominence in that local discourse and the legacy of groups like Barachois, the “shuffle” is increasingly noticeable in the playing of younger generation musicians in the Région Évangéline.
The E.C.M.A. events illustrate the increasingly public face of Acadian musical performance. Focusing on musical practices in the Région Évangéline, in Chapter 4 I examine how musicians negotiate a balance between the desire to maintain traditional practices (in traditional contexts) and the demands of modern lifestyles and a growing tourism economy on P.E.I. A particular challenge to preserving older music forms and contexts has emerged with regard to the increased demand for formal transmission of traditional music. An interesting result of this trend toward formal teaching has been a marked shift in the gendered identity of fiddling in the region, with far more young women participating in the once male-dominated tradition.

The Friday Night Acadian Jam and kitchen parties exemplify this shift from private to public performance. In addition to fostering a sense of “moral community” among participants, the Jam functions as a preparatory stage for some musicians for performing in more public contexts or private kitchen parties, where the performance stakes are perceived to be higher. Although there is some criticism from within the community about the impact of the Jam structure and participants’ use of music notation on overall musicality and players’ technical development, the Jam has played a central role in encouraging local composition and integrating new tunes into the local repertoire. The influx of new tunes and a local discourse about new tunes composed in an “old style” reflect the resurgence of interest in traditional fiddling in the region. Moreover, it suggests that composition is a means by which musicians carve out their niche and emphasize the distinct nature of contemporary Island Acadian culture.

The importance of composition to local identity is underscored in the grassroots tune collecting project C’est à nous that sought to bring recognition to local composers, draw outside attention to the tradition and foster a sense of pride in the community.
The staging of an “Acadian Kitchen Party” as a main event in the E.C.M.A.’s francophone programming illustrates how kitchen parties have emerged as a symbol of Island Acadian culture that is embraced locally and celebrated outside the community. Although the terms party de cuisine and kitchen party have proven useful marketing tool for several Acadian bands (and events, in the case of E.C.M.A.), the association of Acadian music with this particular music context poses a challenge for other groups whose performances and musical choices are not consistent with the spontaneous nature of kitchen parties. These shifts in the music scene reflect larger social changes in the Island’s Acadian community, and the complex dialectic of tradition and modernity.

In Chapter 5 I explored the development of creative and socio-economic partnerships between P.E.I. Acadians and other cultural groups in the Maritimes, Québec, France and Louisiana in the form of musical exchanges and gigs, perceived historical links, touring and festival exchanges and musical homages. These connections to other cultural groups occupy a central place in local processes of cultural definition. In particular, members of the group Vishtèn have played a key role in rekindling alliances between the Acadian communities on P.E.I. and les Îles-de-la-Madeleine. A discourse of “sister islands,” which reflects both musical and historical connections, is prominent in the group’s performances and marketing platform. At the same time as they promote this historic and musical alliance, the group offers a new interpretation of Acadian music that blends the old and new aspects of this evolving tradition and borrows elements from global Celtic influences to bring Acadian music to broader audiences.

**Memory and Acadian identity**

Many Island Acadians credit the development of the dynamic cultural networks
summarized above to a heightened awareness of, and for some, interest in, a shared history that includes, but is not limited to, *le Grand Dérangement*. But what does the past mean to someone who has not experienced it? In Chapter 1 I asked how we might account for the ostensible indifference among many Island Acadians toward the 2008 commemoration of the 1758 deportation. A relevant example from neighbouring Nova Scotia illustrates this phenomenon. In their critical examination of the development of Nova Scotia’s tourism promotion, Ian McKay and Robin Bates contend that Nova Scotia’s history was reorganised, reinterpreted and packaged as “tourism/history” for the purpose of selling the province to visitors. They conclude by stating that, as a result, “history is just something that happens every summer.”4 Reading this critique of a story that is intrinsically linked to the Island by virtue of the imagined land of *Acadie*, I cannot help but wonder if, in the P.E.I. Acadian context, history similarly just “happened” in 2008. To what extent are narratives about the trauma of deportation meaningful to Island Acadians today? There are no clear answers to this question. Several people with whom I spoke felt that it is useful to acknowledge the past and welcomed to varying extents the attention placed on Acadian history and on their communities by media and governments. We might also consider, however, that many of those with whom I spoke during the process of researching this dissertation were musicians who also benefited economically from the promotion of the commemorations. For many Acadian musicians (from amateurs to professionals) the 2008 events resulted in numerous employment opportunities and musical projects, as well as exposure to new audiences and new markets.

Nonetheless, many Acadians do not appear interested in the deportation as a potential

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unifying symbol of resistance towards the dominant Anglophone community, nor do they seem concerned with holding anyone accountable for any wrongs inflicted upon their ancestors. While *le Grand Dérangement* is recognised as part of their shared history, it is clearly not *the* defining feature of Acadian identity, at least not on P.E.I. Instead of focusing on distant past events, there are other, more tangible events and connections that occupy most contemporary Acadians’ experiences or those of their immediate predecessors and it is *these* connections that are more commonly expressed among Acadians and in their musical practices.

**Language and Acadian identity**

The E.C.M.A. events described at the beginning of this chapter underscore the centrality of language and music as markers of Island Acadian culture. There was no ambiguity in the press releases and naming of events (for example, “French Toast and Jam” and the *Scène francophone*) that, regardless of the bilingual reality of P.E.I.’s Acadian communities, French language factors significantly into the ways in which performers choose to represent their culture. Indeed, in P.E.I.’s Francophone Acadian community, language and music serve as sonic reminders of a distinct identity and differentiate its members from the predominant Scottish and Irish heritage of the Island, as well as from mainland Francophone groups. Numerous Francophones who participated in this study noted the importance of their French dialect to their sense of identity. Thus, for these Acadians, music and language reinforce not only who they are, but also, significantly, these markers underscore the community’s difference.

The question of language as a marker of Acadian identity becomes far more complex when we consider that nearly twenty-five percent of the Island’s English-speaking population
also identifies (to varying degrees) as Acadian. At the E.C.M.A. awards gala described at the outset of this chapter, Rustico-born Lennie Gallant, who reconnected with his Acadian roots and learned to speak French only later in life, won the “Francophone Recording of the Year” award for his second French album, *Le Coeur Hanté* (released 2009). As I discussed in Chapter 2, the history of anglicisation that has shaped the linguistic division between the Island’s Francophone and anglicised Acadian communities. This division is also felt musically. The anglicised Acadian community has championed the region’s dominant Scottish tradition, combining local sensibilities with a predominant Cape Breton influence. But this is changing.

I interviewed members of the Bear River Chaissons, one of P.E.I.’s most musical families from the Souris area, about their family, music and identity as Island Acadians. On numerous occasions I was told that although French had not been spoken in the family for several generations and Scottish music has been the dominant tradition in their family for as many generations, a younger generation of Anglophone family members are (re)discovering their French heritage. Well known fiddler, pianist and composer Kevin Chaisson explained that, although many anglicised Acadians had either denied or simply not known about their roots, “there are a few [people] who are picking upon it again...even people of my generation [b.1950s] are just realising, you know, that basically their roots are Acadian.”

Numerous informants also told me that contemporary musical connections between Francophones and anglicized Acadians on the Island have renewed interest among many

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5 Lennie also won this award in 2003 for his first Francophone album, *Le vent bohème* (released 2002).
6 For a discussion of the different musical styles on P.E.I., see the liner note contributions by myself and Sherry Johnson in the double CD collection, *Bellows and Bows: Traditional Instrumental Music in Canada*, ed. Sherry Johnson. MMaP Archive Series no, 4. B. Diamond, series producer. St. John’s: Memorial University of Newfoundland.
7 Pronounced “Chay-suns.”
8 Kevin Chaisson, interview with author, 14 July 2008.
young Anglophones to (re)discover their French roots, creating a ripple effect in their communities. This interest is influenced by the resurgence of interest in expressing and promoting a distinct Acadian identity and Francophone culture on P.E.I. One Francophone musician told me that she had been astonished to hear a member of the Chaisson family introduced at a music concert as a “Chaisson” (the last syllable pronounced as the French “sson”). When, in her surprise, she mentioned this to a friend, she was told, “oh, they are starting to look back, digging into their family history.”

Over the course of my fieldwork I came across numerous anecdotes in which people described similar situations, sometimes describing these moments as epiphanies about their Acadian roots; I also noticed increased participation of these Anglo-Acadians in Francophone events, including the Acadian National Day festivities.

Closing reflections

I have been inspired time and again by the extraordinary musical talent on P.E.I. and by the generosity and “joie de vivre” of the people who participated in this study. Many of the people with whom I have worked have much to say about their music, their communities and what it means to them to be Acadians and Islanders. Many also have ambitious and important visions for the Island’s traditional music scene. I have seen many of these visions come to fruition over the last few years and am fortunate to have been involved in several local projects. First, in 2011, Anastasia DesRoches’s tune collecting project C’est à nous (discussed in Chapter 4) was published as a tune book entitled Le vent dans les voiles with the support of La Fédération culturelle. My role in this project consisted of assisting in the selection of tunes to be included in the book (ensuring a representative and musically varied sample) and editing

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9 Informant’s name withheld, interview with author.
the tune transcriptions and accompanying bilingual texts. Second, I am on the organizing committee and teaching roster for the P.E.I. Fiddle Camp. The goal of having a fiddle camp on P.E.I. has been a dream of several community members for many years, and it was a rewarding experience to see this dream realised in June 2010. Finally, in 2009 the *Jamboree atlantique des violoneux* (Atlantic Fiddlers’ Jamboree) presented a workshop-demonstration on traditional forms of P.E.I. Acadian step dancing, which I captured on video. This was the first workshop of its kind and sparked an interesting dialogue among musicians and step dancers about the roots of fiddling and step dancing, contemporary changes to their traditional practices and the preservation of older forms of dance (heightened, I am sure, by the fact that the average age of the demonstrators was roughly seventy-five years old). Given the local interest in learning more about these localised traditions, I am completing an annotated, bilingual collection of my audio-visual recordings of P.E.I. Acadian fiddling and step dancing to be deposited, along with my other fieldwork recordings, in the archives of the *Musée acadien de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard* (the Acadian Museum of P.E.I.) and the *Centre d’études acadiennes Anselme-Chiasson*.

This dissertation has documented the P.E.I. Acadian tradition at an exciting time for the Acadian community both musically and in terms of the identity discourse that I have documented. As my research illustrates, small Acadian communities such as those on P.E.I. have unique narratives, musical practices and experiences of what it means to be Acadian. My work confirms the need for more studies of Francophone culture in Canada and nuanced examinations of how invisible linguistic and cultural minority groups choose to make their voices heard through music in the broader Canadian context.
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Appendix A

Descriptors of Interview Participants on P.E.I.

The following table summarizes the number of formal interview participants (including focus group participants) on P.E.I.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role within the community</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiddler</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accompanist(^2) Guitar</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Keyboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other instrumentalist(^3)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singer</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Music (general)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Fiddle</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step dancer</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of a band</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration role</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist (visual, textual)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/friend of musician (non-mus.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade born</th>
<th>1910s</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1920s</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1930s</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) The numbers in the several categories of the table do not add up to 52 because many of the participants are multi-instrumentalists and occupy multiple roles in the community (i.e. fiddler, teacher, and band member).

\(^2\) This category includes only those musicians who identify guitar or keyboard as a primary instrument.

\(^3\) This category includes: mandolin, bodhran, whistle, flute, harmonica, percussion, bass, saw, and guimbarde (jaw harp.)
The “Geographic Location” refers to the place of birth or long-time place of residence of the consultant. Some consultants felt more comfortable identifying with two places, usually birth/family home and current dwelling. Several consultants identify with more than one of these categories.
Appendix B

“Ave Maris Stella;” The Acadian national anthem

Original Latin text:

Ave, maris stella,
Dei Mater alma,
Atque semper Virgo,
Felix coeli porta. (bis)

Sumens illud Ave
Gabrielis ore,
Funda nos in pace,
Mutans Hevae nomen. (bis)

Solve vincla reis,
Profer lumen caecis,
Mala nostra pelle,
Bona cuncta posce. (bis)

Monstra te esse matrem,
Sumat per te preces
Qui pro nobis natus,
Tulit esse tuus. (bis)

Virgo singularis
Inter omnes mitis,
Nos culpis solutos
Mites fac et castos. (bis)

Vitam praesta puram,
Iter para tutum,
Ut videntes Jesum
Semper collaetemur. (bis)

Sit laus Deo Patri,
Summo Christo decus,
Spiritui Sancto,
Tribus honor unus. (bis) Amen.¹

¹ “Un people à unir,” La Petite souvenance (Special issue on the centennial anniversary of the Acadian flag, 1984), published by the Société historique acadienne de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard.
French text composed by Jacinthe Laforest in 1988 to the melody of the “Ave Maris Stella”:

Ave Maris Stella
Dei Mater alma
Atque Semper Virgo
Felix Coeli Porta (bis)

Acadie ma patrie
À ton nom, je me lie
Ma vie, ma foi sont à toi
Tu me protégeras (bis)

Acadie ma patrie
Ma terre et mon défi
De près, de loin tu me tiens
Mon coeur est acadien (bis)

Acadie ma patrie
Ton histoire, je la vis
La fierté, je te la dois
En l'avenir, je crois (bis)

(Chorus)
Appendix C

“Grand Pré" by Angèle Arsenault
Album: Transparente (1994)
Translation by Meghan Forsyth

On porte toujours en soi un peu de son pays
Et moi je n'oublie pas que je suis d'Acadie
Si mon histoire est triste, ce n'est pas votre faute
Mais soyons des artistes, écrivons-en une autre
Qui sera bien plus belle, beaucoup moins dramatique
Avec des arcs-en-ciel, d'la danse et d'la musique
À partir d'aujourd'hui, bâtissons l'avenir
En gardant du passé nos plus beaux souvenirs

We always take with us a little of our country
And I never forget that I am Acadian
If my history is sad, it's not your fault
But let's be artists, and write another one
One that would be nicer, much less dramatic
With rainbows, dance and music
From today forward, let's build the future
Keeping the best memories from the past

Grand Pré, c'est là que tout a commencé
Grand Pré, c'est là que nous avions révé
Grand Pré, de bâtir un monde nouveau
À l'abri des tempêtes, au bord de l'eau
Grand Pré, c'était un peu le paradis
Grand Pré, les Indiens, c'étaient nos amis

Grand Pré, à l'abri des arbres géants
Dans le Bassin des Mines, à l'origine
Du nouveau continent
Non, ils sont pas venus, les soldats, c'est pas vrai
Car dans la petite église, tous les hommes priaient
Les femmes à la maison préparaient le fricot
Les enfants dans les champs suveillaient les troupeaux
Non, elle n'est pas venue, la si terrible guerre
Si c'est ça mon histoire, je refuse d'y croire
Je préfère oublier ce qui est arrivé

Grand Pré, tout un peuple qu'on a déporté
Grand Pré, une page d'histoire qu'on a déchirée

Grand Pré, les maisons, les fermes, brûlées
Tout c'qu'on avait bâti s'est effondré
Grand Pré, où sont les Leblanc, les Légère
Sont-ils en Louisiane ou à Belle-Ile-en-Mer
Grand Pré, comment faire pour garder l'espoir
Allons-nous nous revoir, comment savoir
Où se trouve l'Acadie
Dans les prisons de Londres et dans le port de Nantes
Pendant de longues années, ils vivaient dans l'attente
De pouvoir retourner chez eux en Amérique

Grand Pré, that's where it all began
Grand Pré, that's where we dreamt
Grand Pré, to build a new world
Sheltered from storms, at the edge of the water
Grand Pré, it was a little like paradise
Grand Pré, the Native Americans were our friends

Grand Pré, in the shelter of the giant trees
In the Minas Bassin, in the birthplace
of the new continent
No, the soldiers didn't come, it's not true
Because in the little church the men were praying
The women were at home, preparing the soup
The children were in the forests watching the flocks
No, the terrible war did not come
If that is my history, I refuse to believe it
I prefer to forget what happened

Grand Pré, an entire people that was deported
Grand Pré, a page of history that we destroyed
Grand Pré, houses and farms burned
All that we had built was destroyed
Grand Pré, where are the Leblancs, the Légères
Are they in Louisiana or Belle-Ile-en-Mer
Grand Pré, what do we do to maintain hope
Will we ever see again, how will we know
We are in Acadia
In London prisons and in the port of Nantes
Over many long years, they lived in wait
To be able to come home in America
On les a bien nommés, les piétons de l'Atlantique
We named them well, these travelers of the Atlantic

Ces braves paysans qui venaient du Poitou
These brave people that came from Poitou
Du Berri, d'la Touraine, d'la Bretagne, de l'Anjou
From Berri, Touraine, Brittany and Anjou
Ils avaient tout quitté pour un peu d'liberté
They left everything for some liberty
On les a condamnés à vivre en exilés
We condemned them to live in exile

Grand Pré, je ne veux pas vous faire pleurer
Grand Pré, I don't want to make you cry
Grand Pré, mais je ne peux pas oublier
Grand Pré, but I don't want to forget
Grand Pré, que mes ancêtres étaient Français
Grand Pré, that my ancestors were French
Et tout ce qu'ils voulaient c'est vivre en paix
And all they wanted was to live in peace
Grand Pré, nous n'étions que quelques milliers
Grand Pré, we were only a few thousand
Grand Pré, nous n'avons pas abandonné
Grand Pré, we didn't abandon
Grand Pré, aujourd'hui nous pouvons rêver
Grand Pré, today we can dream
Trois millions d'Acadiens et d'Acadiennes
Three million Acadians
continuent à chanter
continue to sing
Nous avons survécu
We have survived
Nous sommes les invaincus
We are the unconquered
Nous nous sommes relevés
We picked ourselves up
Nous avons triomphé
We triumphed
Nous connaissions la guerre
We know war
La faim et la misère
Hunger and misery
Mais nous n'avons ni frontière
But we have neither borders
Ni haine, ni regard en-arrière
nor hatred nor regret
Nous marchons droit devant
We walk straight ahead
Vers le soleil levant
Toward the rising sun
Fiers de notre héritage
Proud of our heritage
Parlant notre langage
Speaking our language
Marchant à notre pas
Walking in our own step
Chantant Alléluia
Singing Halleluja
Enfants de l'Acadie
Children of Acadia
Notre histoire nous a grandi
Our history made us stronger
Notre histoire n'est pas finie.¹
Our history is not finished.

¹ Source of french text: Accessed 8 February 2011,
http://www2.umanitoba.ca/efdocs/etudacad/1755/index.cfm?id=020302002&lang=fr&style=G&admin=false&linking=&fromRow=1&identifier=003892&bd=CEA&overlay=doc&dsp=transcript
Appendix D

“Le monde de par chez nous” by Angèle Arsenault
Album: *Première* (1975)
Translation by Meghan Forsyth

French lyrics (English translation follows):

J'vais vous parler du monde de par chez nous
Ce sont des gens gais qui aiment s'amuser
Ils sont très gentils et sans cérémonie
Mais vous pourriez les trouver compliqués
Si vous essayiez de les démêler
Parce qu'ils ont de drôles de noms
les gens de par chez nous

Béline à Phil, ‘Melda à Cyril, Florence à Jack à Ferdinand
Josephine à Jos Catecline, Jos Philippe à Cabortan
Jos Canae pis Jos Bibienne pis Jos Manuel pis Jos Lament
Arcade à Philomène à Bélonie Marie

Le monde de par chez nous sont embêtés
Ils ne savent pas quelle langue
Ils devraient parler
Le français l'anglais ou l'canadien
Le chiac le québécois ou l'acadien
Alors même s'ils ont bien des choses à dire
Ils parlent avec le sourire
Les gens de par chez nous

Par chez nous y a pas beaucoup d'ouvrage
Pour ceux qui font la pêche
Ceux qui font le labourage
On n'peux plus vivre de ces métiers-là
Puisque les terres sont vendues aux états
Et pis du poisson y en a plus beaucoup
Non y en a plus beaucoup
Dans les eaux de par chez nous

Le monde de par chez nous sont bien contents
Même s'ils n'ont pas d'argent
Ils font beaucoup d'enfants
Pour la survie c'est pas très inquietant
Parce que s'y continuent à cette vitesse-là
Ils vont tout'envahir le Canada
Et pis tout l'monde s'appelera
Pareil comme par chez nous:
Béline à Phil, ‘Melda à Cyril, Florence à Jack à Ferdinand
Josephine à Jos Cateline, Jos Philippe à Cabortan
Jos Canae pis Jos Bibienne pis Jos Manuel pis Jos Lament
Arcade à Philomène à Bélonie Marie
Arcade à Jos Bibienne et pis ma tante Marie

**English translation (by Meghan Forsyth):**

I will tell you about the people from (my) home
They are people gay who like to have fun
They are very nice and without formality
But you might find them complicated
If you tried to distinguish between them
Because they have funny names
the people from my home

Béline, daughter of Phil, son of ‘Melda, son of Cyril, son of Florence, daughter of Jack, son of Ferdinand,
son of Josephine, son of Jos Cateline, son of Jos Philippe, son of Cabortan
Jos Canae and Jos Bibienne and Jos Manuel and Jos Lament
Arcade son of Philomène daughter of Bélonie Marie

The people from my home are shy
They don’t know what language
They should speak
French, English or Canadian
Chiac, Québécois or Acadian
So even if they have a lot to say
They speak with a smile
The people from my home

At home we don’t have a lot of work
For those who fish
For those who do manual labour
We can’t live off of those occupations
Because the land is sold to Americans
and there are no longer a lot of fish
no, there are no longer a lot
In the water of our home

The people by us are very happy
Even if they don’t have a lot of money

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They have a lot of children
So survival (of the culture) is not a point of concern
Because if they continue at this rate,
They will take over the rest of Canada
And then the world will call themselves
The same as at home:

Béline, daughter of Phil, son of ‘Melda, son of Cyril, son of Florence, daughter of Jack, son of Ferdinand, son of Josephine, son of Jos Cateline, son of Jos Philippe, son of Cabortan Jos Canae and Jos Bibienne and Jos Manuel and Jos Lament Arcade son of Philomène daughter of Bélonie Marie Arcade, son of Jos Bibienne and then my aunt Marie
Appendix E

“Évangéline, Acadian Queen” by Angèle Arsenault
Album: *Transparente* (1994)
Translation by Meghan Forsyth

French lyrics (English translation follows):

Je m’en vais vous parler de quelqu’un qu’ vous connaissez
Oui mais trompez vous pas, a vient pas des États
Même si un certain fellow qui s’appelait Longfellow
L’a popularisée ya deux cents ans passés
Elle s'appellait Évangéline, elle était ben, ben fine
Elle aimait Gabriel sur la terre comme au ciel
Ils vivaient en Acadie, ils étaient riches en maudit
Mais un jour les anglais n’étaient plus satisfaits
Alors ils les ont déportés, Gabriel a disparu
Évangéline déconfortée l’a cherché tant qu’elle a pu
Elle l'a cherché en Acadie au Québec en Ontario
Pis aux États-Unis en Floride en Idaho
Arrivée en Lousiane avec sa cousine Diane
A dit là, j’perdrai pu mon temps
Elle avait soixante et quinze ans
Engagée à l’hôpital elle soignait les malades
Pis elle a vu son Gabriel qui partait pour le ciel
A y a sauté au cou
A y a dit merci beaucoup
Asteure que t’es enterré j’avais pouvoir m’en retourner
Je m’en vais pour investir dans les compagnies de l’avenir
Afin que l’nom d’Évangéline soit connu en câline

Évangéline Fried clams
Évangéline Salon Bar
Évangéline Sexy Ladies wear
Évangéline Comfortable Running Shoes
Évangéline Automobile Springs
Évangéline Regional High School
Évangéline Savings Mortgage and Loans
Évangéline The only French Newspaper in New Brunswick
Évangéline Évangéline Acadian Queen

English translation (by Meghan Forsyth):

I will tell you a story about someone you know
But don’t be mistaken, she isn’t from the United States
Even if a certain fellow named Longfellow
Made her popular her two hundred years ago
She was called Evangeline, she was very, very beautiful
She loved Gabriel on earth as in heaven
They lived in Acadia and were very rich
But one day the English were no longer satisfied
So they were deported, Gabriel went missing
Evangeline searched for him as long as she could
She searched in Acadia, in Quebec, in Ontario
And then in the United States, in Florida, in Idaho
When she arrived in Louisiana with her cousin Diane
She said “there, I can waste no more time”
She was seventy-five years old
She worked in a hospital taking care of the sick
And then she saw Gabriel who was on his death bed
She threw her arms around his neck
She said thank you so much
Now that you’re buried I will return
I am going to invest in the companies of the future
So that the name Evangeline will be well known

Évangéline Fried clams
Évangéline Salon Bar
Évangéline Sexy Ladies wear
Évangéline Comfortable Running Shoes
Évangéline Automobile Springs
Évangéline Regional High School
Évangéline Savings Mortgage and Loans
Évangéline The only French Newspaper in New Brunswick
Évangéline Évangéline Acadian Queen