



Welcoming sign, University of Maine Fort Kent entrance.

What does it mean to be Acadian in Maine?

Acadians are descendants of those French who came to the new World in the early 1600s, and made Acadie their permanent home. During the Grand Dérangement, some Acadians escaped to New France. Their children and grandchildren were the first French families to settle the Madawaska Territory on both sides of the river.

Acadian culture in the Valley

Coming from a predominantly French and Catholic background, today's maine Acadians are a generous people entirely devoted to their close-knit community. Their work ethic is legendary, as is their spirit of volunteerism. They share a language, oral history, stories, and legends, superstitions, natural medicine and foods. **Traditional arts flourish**, from woven rugs and blankets, braided and hooked rugs, making snowshoes, and wood sculpting, to storytelling, ballad singing, fiddling and dancing.

These Acadians are profoundly linked to the land, lakes, and rivers of the St. John Valley.

The French language they speak reflects its origins in 17th century France, with a mixture of Québécois expressions and English words. They may like Cajun food, but there is always room for a piece of tortière, cipate, or tarte au sucre. Today, ployes are not just eaten with cretons and molasses, but used like pita bread.

New traditions are taking root: creating Grosses Têtes for parades, training for biathlons, and watching sled dog races.

Whether they now live in southern Maine, elsewhere in New England, or across the U.S., **the St. John Valley is still home** to thousands of people who gather annually to celebrate their families with French roots during the Madawaska Acadian Festival.