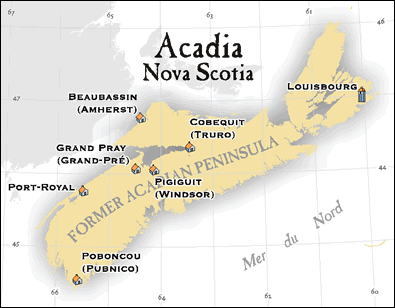
Acadia; the other New France.

In Eastern Canada, among what is known as the Maritime Provinces, is a region known as Acadia. Originally part of New France, this colony is lesser known than its more popular cousin, Quebec, but gave birth to one of the most vibrant and celebrated American cultures, the Cajuns.

The first French settlers came to Acadia in the early to mid 1600s (17th century). In 1628, famine and plague along with series of religious wars between Catholics and Protestants drove more than 10,000 settlers to the new world; specifically a colony founded by Samuel Champlain in 1604 known as "La Cadie" or Acadia. The area, which included what is now Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and part of Maine, was one of the first European colonies in North America.  
  
The colony was separate from the Quebec and the rest of New France. Because of this Acadians developed a distinctly unique culture from the Quebecois (people of Quebec). The new settlers to Acadia were mostly fishermen and farmers; it was not long before they formed a strong alliance with the Wabanaki Natives who taught the Acadians to hunt. The Wananaki, and other tribes, generally preferred the settlers from France over those from Britain because, unlike the British who took all the land they could, French did not invade Indian hunting grounds inland. To bring more settlers to the colony, investors hired indentured servants. Fishermen, farmers, and trappers served for five years to repay the company with their labor for the transportation and materials it had provided.

The early French settlers called themselves "Acadiens" or "Cadiens" (which eventually became "Cajuns") and were among the first European settlers to identify themselves as North Americans. The New World offered them relative freedom and independence from the French upper class. When French owners of Acadian lands tried to collect rent from settlers, many Acadians simply moved away from the colonial centers. When France tried legally to control their profit from their trade in furs or grain, Acadians traded illegally; they even traded with New England while France and England waged war against each other.

As French colonial power weakened, Great Britain captured Acadia in 1647; the French got it back in 1670 only to lose it again to the British in the 1690s. Acadians adapted to political changes as their region repeatedly changed hands. In 1713 most of Acadia became a British colony as part of a treaty which ended one of many wars between Britain and France. True to form, the Acadians resisted the imposition of British language and culture. Large families increased their numbers and new settlers spoke French. The British tried to change the region's French-Catholic culture to a British-Protestant one. The French-speaking Acadians, however, held onto their own culture.

In 1745 the British threatened to expel the Acadians unless they pledged allegiance to the King of England. Unwilling to subject themselves to any king (especially the King of England who opposed the French and Catholics), Acadians refused. They also did not want to join the British in fights against the Indians, who were their allies and relatives. This eventually led the British to deport Acadians in what became known as *Le Grand Dèrangement,*or the Expulsion of 1755.

In an attempt to eliminate the Acadians from Acadia, the British packed them by the hundreds into the cargo holds of ships, where many died from the cold and smallpox. At the time, Acadians numbered about 15,000, however, the Expulsion killed almost half the population. Of the survivors and those who escaped expulsion, some found their way back to the region, and many drifted through England, France, the Caribbean, and other colonies. Small pockets of descendants of Acadians can still be found in France. In 1763 there were more than 6,000 Acadians in New England. Of the thousands sent to Massachusetts, 700 reached Connecticut and then escaped to Montreal. Many reached the Carolinas; some in Georgia were sold as slaves; many eventually were taken to the West Indies as indentured servants. Most, however, made their way down the Mississippi River to Louisiana

After Spain gained control of Louisiana in the mid-1760s, Acadian exiles who were sent back to France offered to help settle the Spanish Louisiana. The Spanish government accepted their offer and paid for the transport of 1,600 settlers. When they arrived in Louisiana in 1785, the Spanish government helped the Acadians get settled in the new colony by providing tools, seed corn, livestock, guns, medical services, and a church.

 20 years later Louisiana attracted Acadians who wanted to rejoin their kin and Acadian culture. After decades of exile, immigrants came from many different regions. What we now know as Cajun culture grew out of the diversity in the background of migrating peoples to the region; they included the arrival of European and American whites, African and Caribbean slaves, and free Blacks. Cajuns and other Louisianans became citizens when the United States acquired Louisiana from Napoleon through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

**STOP:**

1) What is Acadia? Who were the Acadians?

2) Why were the Acadians displaced from their home?

**SETTLEMENT PATTERNS**

Louisiana became the new Acadian homeland and "creolized," or formed a cultural and ethnic hybrid, as cultures mixed. French settlers in Louisiana adapted to the new subtropical climate but not without the help of local Indians who taught them to farm the land. When French settlers raised a generation of sons and daughters who grew up knowing the ways of the region—unlike the foreign settlers— Louisianans called them "Creoles." By the time the Acadians arrived, Creoles had established themselves economically and socially.

French Creoles dominated Louisiana. Spanish administrators welcomed the Acadians to Louisiana. Their large families increased the colony's population and they could serve the capital, New Orleans, as a supplier of produce. The Spanish expected the Acadians, who were generally poor, small-scale farmers who tended to keep to themselves, not to resist their administration.

At first, Spanish administrators regulated Acadians toward the fringes of Louisiana's non-Indian settlement. As Louisiana grew, some Cajuns were pushed and some voluntarily moved with the frontier. Beginning in 1764 many Cajuns began to settle along the Mississippi and the bayous of Louisiana. This area later became known as the Acadian coast. People settled along the waterways in lines, as they had done in Acadia/Nova Scotia. Their houses sat on narrow plots of land that extended from the riverbank into the swamps. The settlement also spread to the prairies, swamps, and the Gulf Coast.

**STOP:**

3) Who are the Creoles?

4) How was Spanish rule of Louisiana different from English rule of Acadia?

**INTERNAL MIGRATION**

Soon after the Louisiana Purchase, the Creoles pushed many Acadians westward, off the best farmland near the Mississippi. Besides wanting the land, many Creole sugar-planters wanted the Cajuns to leave the vicinity so that the slaves on their plantations would not see Cajun examples of freedom and self-support.

After the Cajuns united their society once again, a second exodus, on a much smaller scale, spread the Cajuns culturally and geographically. For example, a few Acadians joined wealthy Creoles as owners of plantations, rejecting their Cajun identity for one with higher social standing. Although some Cajuns stayed on the rivers and bayous or in the swamps, many others headed west to the prairies where they spread out their settlements. As early as 1780, Cajuns headed westward into frontier lands and befriended Indians whom others feared. By the end of the nineteenth century, Cajuns had established settlements in the Louisiana-Texas border region.

Heading westward, Cajuns first reached the eastern, then the western prairie. In the first region, densely settled by Cajuns, farmers grew corn and cotton. On the western prairie, farmers grew rice and ranchers raised cattle. This second region was thinly settled until the late 1800s when the railroad companies lured Midwesterners to the Louisiana prairies to grow rice. The arrival of Midwesterners again displaced many Cajuns; however, some remained on the prairies in clusters of small farms. A third region of Cajun settlement, to the south of the prairies and their waterways, were the coastal wetlands—one of the most distinctive regions in North America and one central to the Cajun image. The culture and seafood cuisine of these Cajuns has represented Cajuns to the world.

**CAMPS**

Life for Cajuns in swamps, which periodically flood, demanded adaptations such as building houses on stilts. When floods wrecked their houses, Cajuns rebuilt them. In the late 1800s, Cajun swamp dwellers began to build and live on houseboats. Cajuns and other Louisianans also established and maintained camps for temporary housing in marshes, swamps, and woods. For the Acadians, many of whom were hunters and trappers, this was a strong tradition. At first, a camp was only a temporary dwelling in order to make money. As settlements grew, so did the desire to get away to hunt and fish; today, many Cajun families maintain a camp for recreation purposes.

**STOP:**

5) What caused the Cajuns (Acadians) to, once again, be displaced?

6) How was life different in the three areas of Cajun settlement?

7) Why were the camps necessary?

**Acculturation and Assimilation**

Cajuns have always been considered a minority group. Language, culture, and family patterns have kept them separate, and they have maintained their sense of group identity despite difficulties. Cajun settlement patterns have isolated them and Cajun French has tended to keep its speakers out of the English-speaking mainstream.

Acadians brought solidarity with them to Louisiana. As one of the first groups to cross the Atlantic and adopt a new identity, they felt connected to each other by their common experience. Differences in backgrounds separated the Acadians from those who were more established Americans. Creole Louisianans, with years of established communities in Louisiana, often looked down on Acadians as peasants. Some Cajuns left their rural Cajun communities and found acceptance, either as Cajuns or by passing as some other ethnicity. Some Cajuns became gentleman planters, denied their culture, and joined the upper-class (white) Creoles. Others learned the ways of local Indians, as Creoles before them had, and as the Cajuns themselves had done earlier in Acadia.

Economics helped Cajuns stay somewhat separate. The majority of Cajuns farmed, hunted, and/or fished; their livelihoods hardly required them to assimilate (blend with other cultures). The majority of Cajuns did not begin to Americanize until the turn of the twentieth century, when several factors made it necessary. These factors included anti-foreign/immigrant sentiments of the early 1900s and WWI era. Perhaps the most substantial change for Cajuns occurred when big business came for southern Louisiana's oil. The discovery of oil in 1901 in Jennings, Louisiana, brought in outsiders and created new jobs.

Although the speaking of Cajun French has been crucial to the survival of Cajun traditions, it has also represented resistance to assimilation. Whereas Cajuns in the oilfields spoke French to each other at work (and still do), Cajuns in public schools were forced to abandon French because a 1922 law banned the speaking of any other language but English at school or on school grounds. While some teachers labeled Cajun French as a low-class and ignorant mode of speech, other Louisianans ridiculed the Cajuns as uneducable.

The 1930s and 1940s witnessed the education and acculturation of Cajuns into the American mainstream. Other factors affecting the assimilation of the Cajuns were the improvement of transportation, the leveling effects of the Great Depression, and the development of radio and motion pictures, which introduced young Cajuns to other cultures. Yet Cajun culture survived and made a comeback. After World War II, Cajun culture boomed as soldiers returned home and danced to Cajun bands, thereby renewing Cajun identity. Cajuns rallied around their traditional music in the 1950s, and in the 1960s this music gained attention and acceptance from the American mainstream. Since the 1970s, Cajuns have exhibited renewed pride in their heritage.

**STOP:**

8) What factors made it easy for the Cajuns to avoid Americanization in the late 19th century (1800s)?

9) What forced the Cajuns to assimilate at the turn of the 20th century?

**ACADIAN/CAJUN HISTORY TIMELINE**

Create a timeline with the most important 10 events (in your opinion) of Acadian/Cajun history. The timeline must be completed on blank white paper (NO LINED PAPER!!!), must be colorful and each event must include a picture (at least 5 must be your own illustrations). The timeline is worth 20 points and is due January 25th. Have fun and be creative!!