

# Celebrate Acadian identity today

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Today is the National Day of the Acadians, and the fact that we have such a day is a reminder that the exile didn't work.

Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption, is an official holiday in Canada and is also remembered in South Louisiana, particularly in St. Martinville, "the cradle" of Acadiana's Cajuns.

It is a day on which we remember the exile of the Acadians from their homeland in 1755, but also when we celebrate the survival of the culture despite that exile.

That exile marked a defining event for the culture of old Acadie, the original homeland, and for the culture of South Louisiana, New Acadia, where so many of those exiled families finally found a home.

The British designers of Le Grande Derangement meant to disperse the Acadian people so widely and in such places there would no longer be any

## C'EST VRAI

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such thing as an Acadian. They were to be removed from their homeland and sent to places in which their language, religion, culture and sense of identity would be lost.

Instead, the exile became the bond that united the Acadian people, so that today, 250 years later, even in the face of the huge influences of modern times that have overwhelmed so much, the cultures and identities of the Acadians who returned to their homeland and the Cajuns who came to Louisiana have not been erased.

The Rev. Marcel-Francois Richard may have put best the reason for that perseverance

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and for its remembrance on an Acadian day when the issue was debated in 1881: "It seems to me that a people who, for over a century of hardships and persecutions, was able to preserve its religion, language, customs and autonomy, must have acquired enough importance to affirm its existence in a solemn way; and this could not be accomplished better than being able to celebrate its own national holiday."

*C'est Vrai means "it's true." Read senior writer Jim Bradshaw's observations on Acadiana's history and people each weekdays at [theadvertiser.com](http://theadvertiser.com) and in *The Daily Advertiser*. Reach him at 289-6315 or [jbradshaw@theadvertiser.com](mailto:jbradshaw@theadvertiser.com).*