

News Media

RE: July 28th - Acadian “Day of Remembrance”

Letter to the Editor

In 2003, Queen Elizabeth II signed the Royal Proclamation decreeing that every July 28th the world should pause to remember the suffering of the Acadians during the Acadian exile. The deportation order was signed by the British Governor Lawrence in Halifax, Nova Scotia on July 28, 1755. As an example of the atrocities committed, Lawrence ordered over 700 Acadians to Massachusetts where many died. The local authorities authorized public beatings of exiles who left designated areas and forced Acadian children into indentured servitude.

By symbolically declaring an end to the Acadian exile, the Royal Proclamation stated: “...we acknowledge these historical facts and the trials and sufferings experienced by the Acadian people during the Great Upheaval.” (Source: acadianmuseum.com). On July 28th, as we commemorate this “Day of Remembrance,” We submit that it is important to recall other ethnic cleansings—the removal of one people by another from a geographic region through violence and terror—by despots (Source: Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org):

- During World War II, Hitler’s Third Reich killed 6 million of the 18 million Jews;
- In the post-Vietnam War, Cambodia’s Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge regime killed 2 million of Cambodia’s 8 million citizens;
- In four ethnic cleaning wars he waged through the 1990s, the former Yugoslavian leader Slobodan Milosevic killed 200,000 of the 10 million citizens.

From 1755 to 1763, it is estimated by historians that 7,000—half of the entire ethnic population of the Acadians—perished during their diaspora from disease, starvation and neglect, as well as from violence by the British. National contrition teaches an important lesson to all and thus helps prevent future ethnic cleansings. By repudiating the wrongs committed in the name of the British Crown, the Queen sent a clear message that such actions were wrong.

In order to memorialize the tragedy and suffering of the Acadians during their deportation on July 28th, at exactly 4:15 p.m., Acadiana Catholic churches will toll their church bells to bring awareness to this sad moment in history.

With best wishes, we remain,

Sincèrement,

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