

Salvaging a Treasure from the Sea of Records: Community Archiving at the Mount Allison University Archives

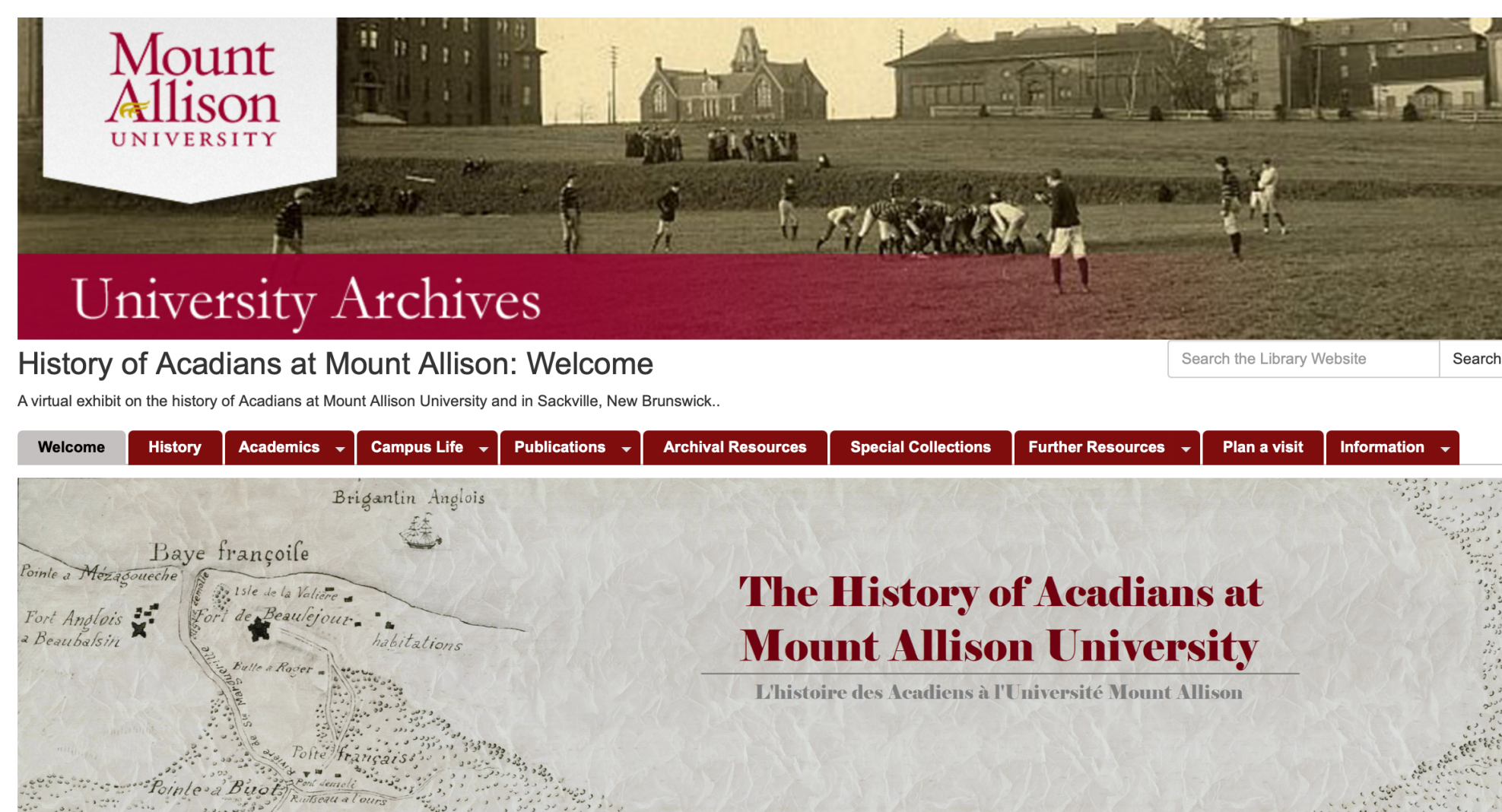
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This project began with the aim of unearthing and giving voice to the underrepresented community of Acadians at Mount Allison University and in the surrounding community of Sackville, New Brunswick.

In the process of going through the records in the university's archival holdings, it quickly became evident that the Acadian community had deep and meaningful roots at the university and that their presence on campus went further back than anticipated at the outset of this research.

The virtual exhibit, entitled *A History of Acadians at Mount Allison University*, provides a glimpse into this previously untold story. It highlights significant moments in the history of Acadians in the region and chronicles the experience of these individuals as told by the records in the archival holdings. It also provides a list of archival fonds within the collection that have some connection to Acadians.

Prior to this virtual reunification, a search in the description database for "Acadians" yielded few results, suggesting that the institutions had no records of significance on the topic. In reality, there were many waiting to be found.



First page of the virtual exhibit, hosted on LibGuides

Mount Allison University was built on the ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaw and Wolastoquik, which was of originally settled by French Acadians in the early 18th century. For nearly half a century, the Acadians lived in relative isolation, relying on the indigenous peoples who had occupied the area for thousands of years to act as guides of the landscape.

During the Great Deportation of 1755, the Acadians were forced from their lands, boarded on ships, and dispersed to other British colonies. Many of them returned, settling other areas of the Maritimes. But in what would later become the township of Sackville, the farms and lands that had been cultivated by the Acadians had been given as land grants to British subjects. This early history was mostly forgotten, and rarely acknowledged in Sackville.

How can we unearth and give voice to the underrepresented communities within our collections? How can institutional archives serve to rectify injustices of the past? And what is the value of doing so?

*Arsenault, Boudreau, Legere, LeBlanc
Dug the dykes and built them strong
They salvaged a treasure out of the sea
For Anderson, Fawcett, Wood and Lea*

Part of an anonymous poem that appears in the MtA student newspaper, *The Argosy*, in 1935

Institutional Value

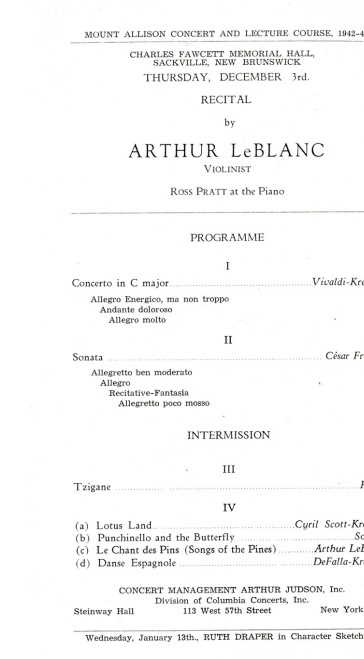
- Sheds light on records that might have otherwise remained dispersed or hidden.
- Invites new researchers into the archives.
- Fosters meaningful relationships with community members by inviting them to participate in the creation of these artificial collections.

Community Value

- Highlights potentially unknown or forgotten histories.
- Reaffirms community identity and legitimizes their experiences.
- Invites those communities to see themselves as part of the documentary heritage of the institution.

Social/Societal Value

- The collections have the potential to act as reparative spaces.
- Acts as formal recognition of past injustices.
- Archives might become a space for commemoration, remembrance, and reconciliation.



Archival images from the virtual exhibit, including the first Acadian to graduate from Mount Allison University (Aurore Bourque, 1932); a recital by Arthur LeBlanc; and first Acadian to be elected Premier of New Brunswick, Louis J. Robichaud, receiving an honorary degree from Mount Allison in 1961.