

Gender and Nationalism: Acadians, Québécois, and Irish in New Brunswick Nineteenth-Century Colleges and Convent Schools, 1854-1888

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The role of Quebec classical colleges in encouraging nationalism is already clear and several excellent studies have shown the importance of Quebec convents in developing women's role, but we know less about nationalism among women or in New Brunswick classical colleges or convents, where the Acadian self-image developed as a counterpoint to Québécois or Irish nationalism.¹

Nationalism developed in both colleges and convents, but it took different forms that related to gender. College and convent administrators encouraged bilingualism but colleges also developed aggressive Acadian, Québécois, and Irish nationalism, sometimes as a by-product of tensions in New Brunswick or within the college and religious community, and sometimes deliberately, as a valued manifestation of masculine emulation. The college authorities sought to unify the students again, either through common dislike of the British colonial actions, or surprisingly pro-British and monarchical sentiments.² In contrast, the

¹ Claude Galarneau, *Les collèges classiques au Canada français*. (Montreal: Fides, 1978); Serge Gagnon, "Le Collège-de-Sainte-Anne au temps de l'abbé François Pilote: les conflits du personnel enseignant," Thèse de Diplôme d'études supérieures, Laval, 1968; Pierre Trépanier, "Une synthèse sur les Collèges Classiques au Canada Française," *Action Nationale*, 69, 3 (1979), 216-25; Micheline Dumont-Johnson "Les communautés religieuses et la condition féminine," *Recherches sociographiques*, 1978, 79-93; Marguerite Jean, *L'évolution des communautés religieuses de femmes au Canada de 1630 à nos jours* (Montréal: Fides, 1979); Marta Danylewycz, "Changing Relationships, Nuns and Feminists in Montreal, 1890-1925," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, 14, 28 (Nov. 1981), 413-34, and *Taking the Veil: an Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

² Jesse Palsetia, *The Parsis of India: Preservation of Identity in Bombay City*, (Leiden, Boston and Koln: Brill, 2001), found enthusiasm for British royalty and institutions was used by that minority community as an acceptable adaptation to changing conditions that allowed them to preserve the

sisters encouraged a bilingual culture and feminine collaboration. They avoided any indication of pro-British imperialist attempts at unity, but did suggest a common pride in surviving persecution and establishing unity in religion.

Outside the colleges and convents, there was considerable tension between Irish, Acadian, and Québécois in mid-nineteenth-century New Brunswick. The priests and politicians from these three groups often had different visions of the future of the emerging Acadian elite.³ It is tempting to see the period as a constant battle for control and respect within the Catholic Church, sometimes veiled by the necessity for cooperation as a beleaguered religious group in a community where, as the Schools Act of 1871 demonstrated, Protestants had much of the political power.⁴ The major cause of the conflict within the church was the Acadian "*prise de conscience*" or expression of themselves as a society distinct from Quebec and from predominantly Irish anglophone Catholics in the Maritimes.⁵

Recognition of this distinction inevitably came with higher education, most of which was provided by Québécois or anglophone Catholic teaching orders and congregations. The schools brought Irish, Acadian, and Québécois together and inevitably reflected problems of Catholic identity. Up to 1871, Catholic schools were given subsidies by the New Brunswick government, limiting the fees required of parents. In 1854, the priest François-Xavier LaFrance set up the pioneering Collège St-Thomas in Memramcook, which was replaced in 1864 by the Collège St-

fundamentals of their religious tradition.

³ Martin S. Spigelman, "The Acadian Renaissance and the Development of Acadian-Canadian Relations, 1864-1912," Ph.D. thesis, Dalhousie University, 1975, and "Race et religion, les acadiens et la hierarchie catholique irlandaise du Nouveau-Brunswick," *Revue de l'histoire de l'amérique française* 29, no. 1 (1975), 69-85. Camille-Antoine Doucet, *Une étoile s'est levée en Acadie* (Charlesbourg: Renouveau, 1973). Marc Smith, "'For the benefit of religion': The Congregation of Holy Cross and the beginnings of Catholic Higher Education in the Diocese of Saint John," paper given at the 12th Church History Workshop, Ludlow Hall, Fredericton, 5 May 2001. Sheila Andrew, *The Development of Elites in Acadian New Brunswick 1861-1881* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996).

⁴ See Arthur Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation 1864-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) and Roberto Perrin "Clerics and the Constitution: The Quebec Church and Minority Rights in Canada" in *CCHA Historical Studies*, 56 (1989), 31-47.

⁵ Raymond Mailhot, "Prise de conscience collective acadienne au Nouveau-Brunswick, 1860-1891 et comportement de la majorité anglophone," Ph.D. thesis, Université de Montréal, 1973.

Joseph, run by the Pères de Ste-Croix from Quebec. The Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, based in Saint John, New Brunswick, founded a school at St-Basile de Madawaska in 1858. The Congrégation de Notre Dame from Montreal opened schools in Bathurst (1869) and Newcastle (1870).

The number of colleges and convents increased after the New Brunswick Schools Act of 1871 made it against the law to teach religion in state-funded schools. Appeals to the federal government failed and Quebec politicians provided little support for New Brunswick Catholics.⁶ The result was two new colleges and five new convent schools. Collège St-Louis was established in Kent County by the priest Marcel-François Richard in 1874. St. Michael's College was established by Irish-born Bishop James Rogers nearby in Chatham in 1860, and run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools from 1876 to 1880. The Sisters of Charity of Saint John opened schools at Memramcook (1873), and Buctouche (1880). The Hospitalières de St-Joseph set up a school in Tracadie (1873) and replaced the Sisters of Charity in the St-Basile school (1873). The Congrégation de Notre Dame founded schools in Caraquet (1874) and St-Louis-de-Kent (1874).⁷ The Act increased tensions within the province as two men died in violence related to the Schools Act in the primarily Acadian village of Caraquet.⁸ It also increased tension within the church as the colleges and convents struggled for a share of limited New Brunswick Catholic resources. In 1875 the government compromised by allowing schools to teach religion after regular school hours. However, the Congrégation de Notre Dame and the colleges were not willing to apply for money under these conditions.

Although all three male colleges offered instruction in French and English, rivalry between the Irish, Acadians, and Québécois was evident from the beginning.⁹ Father LaFrance based his fund-raising campaign

⁶ For divided views on this topic within Quebec, see Roberto Perin, "Clerics and Constitution," 31-47, and Arthur Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*, Ch.V. For a New Brunswick view on Quebec's lack of support, see Peter Toner, "The New Brunswick School Question," *CCHA Study Sessions* 37 (1970), 85-95.

⁷ The convent schools often taught boys in the elementary classes.

⁸ George F. Stanley, "The Caraquet Riots of 1875," *Acadiensis*, II, 1 (Autumn 1972): 21-38.

⁹ For the claim to a bilingual programme at St. Michael's, see the advertisement in *Moniteur Acadien*, 19 July 1877.

for St-Thomas on a call to establish an Acadian francophone elite.¹⁰ The challenge to the Irish was unspoken, but clear. The students all seem to have been francophones and this would partly account for the financial problems that led LaFrance to close the college. He gave the land and buildings to the diocese, making it clear this was to be for a college to teach Acadians. St-Joseph college was born in strife between Irish and francophones. On opening day, the new principal, Quebec-born Camille Lefebvre faced total rebellion from the only Irish priest on staff who took exception to some comments by François-Xavier LaFrance about Irish priests in general and Irish bishops in particular.¹¹ Fortunately for peace in the college, Father O'Brien and Father LaFrance both left for more distant parishes.

The college at St-Louis was founded by the Acadian priest Marcel-François Richard. After a difficult time at the anglophone seminary of St. Dunstan on Prince Edward Island, he was determined to provide higher education in French for other Acadians.¹² His chief ally in this was an exile from France, Abbé Eugène-Raimond Biron, who became a strident advocate of French language education.

Bishop Rogers said St. Michael's was founded to provide bilingual priests, but he hoped it would give a strong foundation in English, while St-Louis would teach French.¹³ Collège St-Louis continued to offer courses in both languages while Rogers had a constant struggle to find francophone teachers and attracted few francophone students.¹⁴ Events

¹⁰ Philéas Bourgeois, *Vie de l'abbé François-Xavier LaFrance, suivie d'une courte note biographique de l'abbé François-Xavier Cormier* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1913), 11.

¹¹ Lefebvre to Superior General, 10 Oct. 1864, 916. Archives des Pères de Ste-Croix, Montreal, cited in Smith, "For the benefit of religion." LaFrance had given the land and buildings of his college to the Diocese of Saint John as a college for Acadian students and the Irish-born Bishop Sweeney had desperately tried to stretch these resources to include a reformatory and English-language schools in Saint John.

¹² For Richard, see Camille-Antonio Doucet, *Une étoile s'est levée en Acadie* (Charlesbourg: Renouveau, 1973).

¹³ Archives of the Diocese of Bathurst, consulted at the Public Archives of New Brunswick (hereafter as PANB), microfilm 7658, # 1/109, 32. Rogers, undated "Memoire."

¹⁴ PANB, RS 657 H 10 1862-1871, Northumberland County, "St. Michael's Academy and Commercial College. Records of Grammar, Parish and Private Schools." PANB has Bishop Rogers' reports to the Lieutenant Governor, listing student names and classes. Only five francophone surnames are listed. No French was taught before the Senior Division up to this point. Rogers in his "Memoire" names five other Acadians who were boarders or professors.

surrounding the closing of St-Louis in 1882 show the strength of the rivalry between them and the desperation of Bishop Rogers, faced with the strident nationalism of Biron and Richard. According to the sworn deposition of Senator Pascal Poirier, the bishop described the college as too “frenchy” to advertise itself as bilingual.¹⁵ Marcel-François Richard left an even more inflammatory account of this event and Bishop Rogers’ defence shows he was upset by the “discordant or divergent views and feelings of the two nationalities, the two languages.”¹⁶ Soon after, the Collège St-Louis was closed.

These disputes have been documented already, but we know less about the effects on students and their future self-image. St-Joseph was in a predominantly Acadian area and inherited the land Father LaFrance had bought by drumming up enthusiasm for Acadian education. The faculty always remained predominantly francophone in origin.¹⁷ However, between 1864 and 1880, it attracted 327 students with anglophone names and 299 with francophone names.¹⁸ Although names do not necessarily indicate language, this suggests a substantial anglophone presence. The prospectus was written in both languages and explained that in the Classical Course, “the English and French departments are combined. The classics proper are taught by professors who speak with equal facility the French and English languages. Explanations of philosophy are given in Latin. There is in each class, in either language, a special professor who directs all literary studies.”¹⁹

The names of prize winners suggest that the francophone elite in the classical courses held their own against the anglophones and continued to study in their own language. However, in the commercial English course, there were always more prizewinners with francophone names than anglophone names. It made economic sense for the boys to learn the language of the prosperous majority. Very few anglophones apparently chose to take French courses.

The St-Joseph authorities deliberately formalised rivalry between the Irish and Acadian students. They had their own “Academies” with

¹⁵ Centre d’Etudes Acadiennes (hereafter as CEA), Fonds Poirier, Pascal Poirier, “Déclaration signé sous serment le 4 février 1885, relatant les faits tels qu’ils sont passés le 5 juillet 1882.”

¹⁶ CEA, M.F. Richard, “Mémoire,” 1885. The quotation is from PANB, Rogers’ “Mémoire.”

¹⁷ CEA, *Annuaire Université St-Joseph*. Vol. 1 starts at 1878-9. Volumes consulted, 1878-1900.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Annuaire Université St-Joseph*. Vol. 1 gives a summary of student names from 1864 to 1880.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, “Introduction.”

younger instructors of their own language as directors: the Société St-Jean-Baptiste for francophone students and a St. Patrick's Society for the Irish. Relations seemed to be comparatively peaceful in 1864 when future priest Philippe Belliveau gave a St. Patrick's Day speech inviting Acadians to follow the example of Ireland and seek education. However increasing numbers of New Brunswick Acadians did just that and relations seem to have deteriorated. By 1884, the 98 students with francophone surnames easily outnumbered the 67 anglophone surnames and by 1889 the figures were 127 francophone and 91 anglophone. As early as 1880, the two groups were almost coming to blows during debates and oratorical contests.²⁰ The gendered element of this competition is evident when baseball and football were introduced to the college in 1887. Anglophone names dominated the teams to begin with, but by 1888, the francophones were moving in. The article on "Means of Emulation" in the 1887 prospectus shows the same approach, with a publicised Honour Roll for the proper behaviour and penalties for smoking, drinking, and damage to property.²¹

There were tensions among the francophones. Camille Lefebvre was born in Quebec, but he brought missionary zeal to his work in New Brunswick. The French-language newspaper *Moniteur Acadien* reported speeches at the college when Lefebvre described his dedication to Acadians and Dr Provost, who also taught some classes at the college, then told the audience how he had come from Quebec to save them from ignorance and poverty. Missionaries are not always appreciated by their subjects. The speeches were made on the feast of St-Jean-Baptiste, which Lefebvre declared would henceforth be the feast of the Acadians.²² In 1878, he also generously told them what their flag was going to be.²³ Acadian speech patterns were discouraged at the college. An article in the *Moniteur Acadien* in 1871 explained one of the chief reasons for sending "Little Louis" to college was so that he could learn to speak better French than his parents. As the francophone college teachers were all Québécois in this year, "correct" French was obviously that of Quebec.²⁴

Quebec nationalism was inevitably encouraged by Lefebvre's attitude and by the social life of the college. Since Acadian culture was rarely written down at this time, even the plays and music performed were of

²⁰ *Moniteur Acadien*, 29 Jan. 1880.

²¹ *Annuaire Université St-Joseph*. Vol 2. 1887-8.

²² *Moniteur Acadien*, 8 July 1867.

²³ *Moniteur Acadien*, 27 June 1878.

²⁴ *Moniteur Acadien*, 27 June 1878.

Quebec or European origin. Former pupil and future senator Pascal Poirier, for example, starred as a *patriote* in the play *Félix Poutré*.²⁵ There was no Acadian music available to the Quebec-born bandmaster, Léon Ringuette, and concerts featured music from Quebec and France. It is easy to understand why Acadians might begin to feel patronized and even colonized again!

There was obviously some resentment as Pascal Poirier wrote in his tribute to Camille Lefebvre that Quebec students were constantly held up to him as ideals of scholarship and exemplary behaviour.²⁶ Poirier spent his literary career proving to all francophones that Acadians were of noble descent and the true example of the piety that France had lost. The European French philanthropist and scholar Edmé Rameau de St-Père supported this view and his work was almost certainly available at St-Joseph and St-Louis. He and the Abbé Biron were frequent correspondents.²⁷ While there is no record of the college libraries, both colleges subscribed to the *MoniteurAcadien* and Rameau's letters were published there.²⁸

Lefebvre promoted at least one aspect of Acadian nationalism with enthusiasm. The translation of *Évangéline*, Longfellow's romanticised account of the 1755 deportation, was adopted as a set text at the college. Acadian students gave passionate speeches on Acadian history at almost every prize-giving and celebration. It is not clear that the colleges placed much stress on other aspects of history. In 1878 St-Joseph was teaching the History of England and Modern History in the commercial course and by 1884 History of Canada was included at this level. However, the classical course students still learned the classics and the medieval "quadrivium." St-Louis students probably followed the same programme as this was traditional for French *collèges classiques*.²⁹ Up to 1871, St. Michael's only offered an unspecified history course to the third division classical course students. In every case where Acadian history is

²⁵ The play by Louis Frechette was based on the memoirs of Félix Poutré, who claimed to have been a leader in the 1837-8 rebellions. For the performance, see *Moniteur Acadien*, 1 December 1871.

²⁶ CEA, Pascal Poirier, *Le Père Lefebvre et L'acadie* (Montreal: Beauchemin, 1898), 172. See also "Reminiscences," *Album Souvenir des noces d'argent de la société St-Jean Baptiste du collège St-Joseph de Memramcook* (Shediac: Moniteur, 1894), 6.3-4, and "Memoires" *La société acadienne, les cahiers*, 4, no 3 (1971), 92-135.

²⁷ CEA, Fonds Rameau.

²⁸ See for example *MoniteurAcadien*, 26 August 1880.

²⁹ Galarneau, *Les collèges classiques*, 167.

mentioned at St-Joseph or St-Louis, it meant the Deportation. Pascal Poirier carried the poem in his pocket to inspire him on walks while he was at St-Joseph. As Longfellow's poem is clearly set in anti-English terms rather than anti-Protestant, this was not guaranteed to improve relations with anglophones.³⁰ Soon after the college band was formed in 1871, Poirier wrote that he passionately wanted to march on the anglophone town of Moncton. When the band did visit Moncton, they escaped unharmed till it was time to board the train; then the locals attacked. According to Poirier, this illustrated what Acadians had always had to suffer.³¹

The administrators at Collège St-Louis took the high ground in claiming to defend the French language. It is tempting to see ideology mixed with economics in the comparative manifestations of nationalism. All three colleges sought students of both languages and there was obvious rivalry between them.³² In 1875, Abbé Biron was complaining to the generous benefactor of Acadian press and institutions, Rameau de St-Père, that Camille Lefebvre paid too much attention to his anglophone students.³³ In 1878 M-F Richard complained bitterly, and correctly, that the French Preparatory Department established to train Acadian teachers in 1878 was designed to assimilate them and to reduce French to a language of elementary instruction. His main target was former St-Joseph pupil, Pierre-Amand Landry, MLA. Richard wanted to separate Acadians not only from anglophones, but also from Québécois, so disputes broke out over the choice of an Acadian patron saint and feast day at the first Acadian National Convention in 1881. Here the chief target of Richard's rhetoric was Father Lefebvre. Biron's speech on the subject was apparently unrepeatable as it was omitted from the *Moniteur Acadien's* account of the procedures.³⁴ Biron had already advised the Acadian parishioners in Richibucto to avoid patronising English merchants. As the influential local merchant, Irish Catholic Henry O'Leary of Richibucto, had children at the college and convent schools and had been a

³⁰ For the influence of *L'Évangéline*, see Naomi Griffiths, "Longfellow's *Evangeline*: The Birth and Acceptance of a Legend," *Acadiensis*, XI, 2 (Spring 1982), 28-41.

³¹ Poirier, "Reminiscences."

³² For students leaving St-Joseph for the cheaper and potentially more Acadian St-Louis, see Andrew, *Rise of the Acadian Elites*, 58.

³³ Biron to Rameau, 9 August 1875, cited in Doucet, *Une étoile*, 90.

³⁴ See Camille Richard, "L'idéologie de la première convention acadienne" M.A. thesis, Université de Laval 1960, 99, and Fernand Robidoux, editor of the *Moniteur Acadien*, who published the speeches from the records of the paper as *Conventions nationales des acadiennes* (Shediac: Moniteur, 1907).

valuable benefactor and supporter, Biron was obviously prepared to increase tension.³⁵

Students were inevitably drawn into these disputes. Before the memorable meeting that closed the college, Abbé Biron took Pascal Poirier to meet “six or seven” chosen students. He introduced them to Poirier, asking them all to stay united in defence of their religion and nationality.³⁶ Irish students had formed their own national clique. According to Marcel-François Richard, an American called Collaghan roused his fellow Irish students, including the merchant O’Leary’s son, against Biron’s pro-French administration. Richard expelled Collaghan for improper correspondence with a young woman and suspended O’Leary for insolence.³⁷

These struggles reflected tensions between Acadians and Irish elsewhere in society. In politics, Pierre-Amand Landry managed to smooth over tensions in Westmorland, but many francophones of Kent County were eager to set up a French party. The patronage appointment of Auguste Renaud as postmaster and the first francophone civil servant in Richibucto apparently led to a “little civil war.”³⁸ Acadian former pupils of St-Joseph and St-Louis set up their own ethnic debating societies, dramatic societies, and colonization societies, though they joined Irish parishioners in temperance societies and musical performances. Acadian former pupils in business sometimes formed partnerships with Irish merchants, or gained experience with them as clerks who could serve francophone clients, but were happy to advertise in the *Moniteur Acadien* that they were “français.”³⁹ Relations with Québécois also remained uncertain as Acadians got no effective political support from that province in their struggle against the 1871 Schools Act. We get some indication of tensions remaining at the schoolyard level in 1880 when the Acadian civil servants took on the Quebec civil servants in a rowing match in Ottawa.⁴⁰

The colleges seem to have recognized that rivalry might limit the effectiveness of students in public life. One manifestation of this was emphasizing the theme of survival against colonizing powers. As already mentioned, students at St-Joseph performed a play extolling the *patriotes*

³⁵ Rogers, “Memoire.”

³⁶ Poirier, “Déclaration signé.”

³⁷ Richard to Rogers, 26 Dec. 1881, cited in Doucet, 144.

³⁸ *Moniteur Acadien*, 13 July 1896.

³⁹ See for example R.S. Leger’s advertisement in *Moniteur Acadien*, 28 April 1881.

⁴⁰ *Moniteur Acadien*, 26 August 1880.

of 1837 and parallels were drawn between the exiles and the Deportees. Bishop Rogers went further, quoting Thomas Moore's "Island of Sorrow," to bring in the fate of the Famine Irish.⁴¹ In contrast, Lefebvre also chose to promote unity through loyalty to the British heritage, if not necessarily to the British language. It is tempting to see this as recognising Acadian differences from Quebec and the numerical and geographical problems associated with a separation movement in Acadia, but it also reflects some long-standing and contemporary views in Quebec. Bishop Briand had recommended accepting British rule at the time of the Conquest. Louis-Joseph Papineau admired British democracy and Henri Bourassa was forming his views on the benefits of the British system at this time. So the Collège St-Joseph used Lingard's pro-British *History of England* as a text and enthusiastically celebrated the Queen's Birthday, with speeches on the benefits of achievements during Victoria's reign and on the need for a rule of law.⁴² Even the Collège St-Louis advertised its aim to make its students patriotic, courageous, and convinced Christians who would defend their country, in that order. The word used was *pays*, not *patrie* or *patrimoine*, so it does not seem to be protection of any ethnic heritage that is called for, though this could include Bourassa's concept of defending the Canadian nation.⁴³

With rare exceptions, the convent pupils were not faced with the same future conflicts and grew up with a less belligerent nationalism. Their schools were not born from the missionary zeal of an individual administrator like LaFrance or Richard. The priests who invited the sisters had limited influence on day-to-day affairs, and while the sisters undoubtedly included some dedicated women, they were also practical women. Account books suggest that most of these convent schools could not have survived without the financial help of Irish and Acadian supporters in the parishes. Where St-Joseph began with a substantial number of anglophone student surnames, convents seem to have begun with larger numbers of francophone student surnames. Bouctouche, for example, which was within easy reach of both groups, had 130 francophone boarder surnames between 1880 and 1888 and only 43 were anglophone.⁴⁴ They also attracted more Acadian recruits than the Pères

⁴¹ Rogers, "Memoire."

⁴² *Moniteur Acadien*, 8 July 1867.

⁴³ *MoniteurAcadien*, 8 January 1880 .

⁴⁴ Archives of the Sisters Of Notre Dame du Sacré- Coeur, Moncton, NB, List of boarders, Buctouche 1880-1900. The number of anglophone names rose sharply in 1888 and fluctuated between then and 1895. Novices were listed separately.

de Ste-Croix and may have been more sensitive to language issues as a result.⁴⁵

The Congrégation de Notre Dame, which ran the schools in Caraquet, Bathurst, Newcastle, and St-Louis de Kent, was a Montreal-based order and primarily francophone. The sisters were proud of integrating Irish students, who arrived as a minority with troops sent over from Britain, and their curriculum and advertisements stressed teaching students to be fluent in both languages.⁴⁶ There is no record of strife between the Irish and French-Canadian sisters in the foundation of these schools. On the contrary, the congregation was anxious that the sisters should also be fluent in both languages and able to teach in either. The Quebec-born francophone sisters at Newcastle joked that they celebrated St. Patrick's Day with such enthusiasm that they were praised as "real Irish women."⁴⁷ Pupils who later joined the congregation were expected to adopt the same attitude to language as their teachers as they were sent to teach English to Acadians, Québécoises or the emigrant communities from Quebec.⁴⁸ This practical rather than emotional attitude to language, demonstrated by all the convents schools, was partly a matter of policy and partly a practical decision. The convents were poorer and smaller than the colleges and sometimes needed to put Irish and Acadian students in the same classes. Thus a convent might have French and English classes at two levels one year, but might have to amalgamate two classes in another year.

⁴⁵ The *Moniteur Acadien* recorded vocations, and while several Acadian men became priests, I have only found four who joined the teaching orders in this period. Acadian women had less choice in their careers and I have identified thirty-four vocations, 1860-1884: five Congrégation de Notre Dame, sixteen Sisters of Charity of Saint John and thirteen Religieuses Hospitalières de St-Joseph, some of whom were teachers.

⁴⁶ Archives de la Congrégation de Notre Dame, Montreal (hereafter as ACND Montreal), Sr St-Brendan, "The English Language in the Congrégation de Notre Dame of Montreal from the Seventeenth Century," no date of publication details, 28, notes the sisters' pride in introducing English to their Montreal curriculum in 1823 and to schools outside Montreal in 1842.

⁴⁷ "Toutes les langues nous benissent et proclament hautement que nous sommes de vraies bonnes religieuses et qui plus est, de véritables irlandaises." Cited in Thérèse Lambert, Soeur Marie-Médiatrice, *Histoire de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame de Montréal* (Montreal: Maison Mère de la Congrégation de Notre-Dame, 1969), 351.

⁴⁸ See the necrology of Emélie Babineau, "Annales" 49e année, oct. 1943, no. 10; Elisabeth Bourgeois, Ibid. 44e année, dec. 1938, no. 12; Marguerite Barriault, Ibid. 64e année, juin 1958.

It would be reasonable to expect more problems among the Sisters of Charity, a primarily anglophone order that ran convents in the francophone areas of St-Basile, Memramcook, and Buctouche. At least one francophone was disappointed that an anglophone order was brought in. François-Xavier LaFrance wanted a French order in Memramcook, but the Bishop of Saint John had given the sisters a monopoly of convent education in his diocese, and Lefebvre accepted this. The order was eager to attract francophone students and clearly tried to allocate its few francophone sisters to Acadian areas. One of the first to join was Philomène Belliveau, who had taught in French at the little Catholic school established in Memramcook before the Sisters of Charity arrived.⁴⁹ Mère Rosalie, who knew some of the sisters in the early years, said there was “Great cordiality between the French and Irish sisters.”⁵⁰ There may have been some discontent in St-Basile, where the circumstances of the sisters’ departure are not clear and only an elementary French course was offered.⁵¹ However, nobody in that convent seems to have objected to Sr Anne-Marie (Suzanne Cyr) reading a French Grammar propped in front of her while she stirred pots in the kitchen.⁵² The most likely reason for the departure of the sisters seems to have been financial problems, after the Schools Act of 1871 withdrew their government funding. The Acadian sisters who joined the order were already bilingual, through force of circumstances, but at this point in the history of the order, they seem to have been too busy working for Acadian rights to a basic education and the interests of Acadian teachers to make an issue of anti-anglophone sentiments.⁵³

Unlike the colleges, the Sisters of Charity also worked under the New Brunswick Board of Education after the agreement of 1875, which allowed them to wear their habits and teach religion after regular school

⁴⁹ Archives de la Congrégation de Notre Dame (hereafter as ANDSC), Moncton, 13, Mère Rosalie, NDSC “Histoire du Couvent Notre Dame du Sacré Coeur.”

⁵⁰ ANDSC, Moncton, 14, Mère Rosalie, NDSC “Histoire du Couvent Notre Dame du Sacré Coeur.”

⁵¹ Anita Lagacé, *How Grand Falls Grew*, (Lagacé: Saint John, N.B., 1945), 49. For the mysterious departure, see Sr. Marie-Dorothé, *A Stone in the Acadian Mosaic: the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception*, translated by Bertha Marcoux, SCIC, consulted in typescript at the Archives of the Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception, Saint John, NB.

⁵² Sr. Marie-Dorothé, *A Stone in the Acadian Mosaic*.

⁵³ Correspondence of the Board of Education shows Marguerite Michaud, a sister in Bouctouche taking over from the local school superintendent during his absence and fighting for pay and recognition for her colleagues.

hours. This left little room for dispute as the amount of French they were allowed to teach was spelled out by board regulations.⁵⁴ The province intended to restrict it to primary education, with a small bilingual elite taught at the high school or grammar school level, and the sisters were exceptional in pushing the boundaries in their schools to provide more than an elementary French education.

The Hospitalières de St-Joseph, who ran schools in Tracadie and St-Basile, were members of a francophone order from Montreal and also sensitive to the needs of students in both languages. As a nursing order, they were stretching themselves to provide instruction. They were not trained teachers and in their early years at St-Basile, the Sisters said they were only just keeping ahead of their pupils in English and mathematics.⁵⁵ Far from imposing standards from her native Quebec, Sr Amanda Viger, superior of the Tracadie convent, began to use Acadian words in her own writing.⁵⁶

The sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame were sensitive to the possibility of resentment against them because they were Québécoises. The superior at the Caraquet convent Sister St-Marie du Carmel was born in Montreal to “an enviable place in society” and sent to the community of predominantly poor fishermen and farmers.⁵⁷ When pupils were slow to come to their school, the annals record the sisters feared it might have been because they were from Quebec.⁵⁸ In fact it probably had more to do with the poverty of the Caraquet area and analysis of the social background of those who were boarders in the convent suggests learning

⁵⁴ The restrictions on French education in the public school system were covered in Sheila Andrew, “The Contribution of Convent Schools to New Brunswick Education,” paper presented to the joint meeting of the American Historical Association and the Canadian Catholic Historical Association, April 2001.

⁵⁵ Sr. Georgette Desjardins, rshj, “Le rôle des religieuses hospitalières de Saint-Joseph dans l’éducation au Madawaska depuis 1873,” *SCHEC Session d’études*, 48 (1981), 57-66.

⁵⁶ Sr. Corinne LaPlante, “Soeur Amanda Viger: la fille d’un patriote de 1837, véritable fondatrice de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Tracadie,” *Revue d’Histoire Société Historique Nicolas-Denys*, XII, no 1 (jan-mai) 1984, 20. For Viger’s good relationship with the local Acadian priest, Père Joseph-Auguste Babineau, see Mary Jane Losier, *Amanda Viger, Spiritual Healer to New Brunswick’s Leprosy Victims, 1845-1906* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1999), 79-97.

⁵⁷ ACND Montreal, “Necrologies” VI, 144

⁵⁸ “Annales du Couvent de Caraquet Nouveau-Brunswick,” 2 Sept. 1875, cited in R. Mailhot, “Prise de conscience,” 181.

upper class Montreal manners was seen as an advantage, not a disadvantage.

There may still have been some resentment against the Québécois standards. The students who did come from Quebec were often charged substantially higher fees than the Acadians and this presumed income level may have been reflected in their clothes, attitudes, and manners. However, the sisters were unlikely to encourage emulation or competition in this area. Their equivalent of the letter about Little Louis' parents and their ungrammatical anglicized French was a more polite play "La nouvelle pensionnaire," presented at Memramcook. This explained how her peers made the new boarder at ease while helping her overcome her rural speech patterns or *patois villageois*. Articles in the French newspapers show that the girls also learned a new decorum and young men were expected to learn these standards if they wanted to get along with the girls during vacations or after they left the schools.⁵⁹

However, these standards were not enforced by encouraging competition, as Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eidt clearly demonstrate in *Les couventines*; pride was to be overcome and submission, silence and decorum encouraged among the girls.⁶⁰ The Congrégation de Notre Dame did not even encourage public performances of plays or music as those responsible for curriculum development feared they might distract the girls from proper studies and create a taste for degenerate entertainment.⁶¹ The Congrégation did encourage competition in studies, and even between schools, inviting submissions for annual awards of honours from all the convents. Like the Sisters of Charity and the colleges, they awarded annual prizes and these attracted the interest of local notables proud of student achievement, but there were no ethnic societies and no bloodletting debates. The girls were encouraged to develop their oratorical skills in speeches to welcome visiting priests and, as a recognition of their spiritual growth, they were invited to join the age group societies of the Enfants de Jésus, the Anges Gardiennes, and the Enfants de Marie. This is a sharp contrast to the ethnic conflicts of the St. Patrick and St-Jean-Baptiste societies.

Acadians may have felt that their own culture was being ignored in the concerts and plays of the Sisters of Charity. The pupils performed standard parlour pieces from English or Québécois society such as "Come

⁵⁹ See for example *Moniteur Acadien*, 4 February 1886.

⁶⁰ Micheline Dumont and Nadia Fahmy-Eidt, *Les couventines: l'éducation des filles au Québec dans les congrégations religieuses enseignantes 1840-1960* (Montreal: Boreal, 1986), 60.

⁶¹ ACND Montreal 660-310.6, Archbishop of Québec to Rev. Mère provinciale, 21 November 1898, citing a precedent of 14 January 1874.

Birdie Come.”⁶² They played the piano, that symbol of Victorian respectability. This particular loss of tradition may have been less of a wrench for the girls than for the boys as Acadian women do not seem to have been the performers on traditional Acadian instruments like the spoons, the fiddle, and the accordion.

This does not mean the girls had no sense of nationalism. Even the public school curriculum taught by the Sisters of Charity in their rate-assisted schools began to gradually recognise the existence of a French heritage in the province. Textbooks designed for schools in Ireland were considered appropriate for Catholic school. However, Normal School examination questions of the period show Jacques Cartier, Samuel de Champlain and even the Sieur de Monts getting some recognition by the 1880s.⁶³ No questions mentioned the deportation or Irish famine either! The Congrégation de Notre Dame taught the history of French Canada and English Canada in separate courses of equal length, following with the history of Britain and the history of France. It may be revealing that students were required to have a good knowledge of individual role models in the French section and only required to identify places on a map in the English section.⁶⁴ The sisters also wrote their own French history of Canada in 1882.⁶⁵

There are suggestions that convents as well as colleges used the nationalism of shared suffering under a colonial regime. Parallels were drawn between the Deportation and the exile of *patriotes* after the 1837 rebellion. Sister Amanda Viger, who taught the Hospitalières school in Tracadie was proud of her *patriote* ancestry.⁶⁶ Several Acadian sisters in

⁶² See for example the end of the year concert at Bouctouche, *Moniteur Acadien*, 19 July 1883, where the girls performed ten English songs, four French songs and two French dialogues. Elizabeth Robidoux, daughter of a Quebec family living in Shediac, sang “Come Birdie Come.”

⁶³ *Journal of the Legislative Assembly*, “Report on the Provincial Normal School,” 1885.

⁶⁴ ACND Montreal, 660.310, “Cours d’étude 1882”

⁶⁵ Ibid. They used Kearney’s *Compendium* to teach history in English in the same year. For more on school text production in Quebec communities, see Paul Aubin, *Les Communautés religieuses et l’édition du manuel scolaire au Québec, 1765-1964* (Sherbrooke: Ex Libris, 2001).

⁶⁶ Sr Corinne LaPlante, “Soeur Amanda Viger: la fille d’un patriote de 1837, véritable fondatrice de l’Hôtel-Dieu de Tracadie,” *Revue d’Histoire Société Historique Nicolas-Denys*, XII, no 1 (jan-mai) 1984. Men may have drawn similar parallels. See for example Pascal Poirier’s appearance as a *patriote* hero. The only other clear example is in the *Moniteur Acadien* where Dr Girouard’s mother is hailed as the wife of a *patriote* and herself a heroine for

the Congrégation de Notre Dame mentioned their families' role in the Deportation with equal pride when they told their life stories to the sisters who wrote the necrologies.⁶⁷

The public schools of the Sisters of Charity used the same pro-British textbooks as other public schools, but there is no evidence of other efforts to unite the students under pro-British patriotism at any of the schools. Queen Victoria's birthday passed without the *Moniteur* recording any celebrations. The Congrégation de Notre Dame had offered a course on the British Constitution in 1856, but this was replaced by a course on the social role of women in history presumably explaining their role as defenders of the family and faith rather than militant nationalists.⁶⁸

Most Acadian women seem to have accepted this role without too much difficulty. Women's associations were church based, embracing Acadian and Irish women. Fund-raising bazaars, suppers and social events allowed cooperation where politics and the professions tended to encourage competition.

Only a few of the educated female elite openly expressed nationalism after they left the convent school, and when they did, it was in terms of preserving the language. Some of them expressed their pride in French in social activities at the Normal School or as teachers. There were also former students who felt pride in their history. In notes dictated to a secretary before her death in 1942, Emélie Babineau described her grandfather as a "political martyr" of the deportation at Grand Pré and Marguerite Barriault said her childhood was nourished with memories of the deportation, in which her great-grandfather had taken a heroic role. She said these stories gave her courage.⁶⁹

The *Moniteur* records only one example of protest against assimilation by a woman in the 1880s. An Acadian who went to the conference of the Enfants de Marie at the convent in Arichat, Cape Breton, was appalled to discover that even the speech representing the Acadian delegates was made in English, showing that English was a powerful social force, but

hiding out in the woods with her husband. This example of historical memory developing while ultramontanist was so strong deserves more examination.

⁶⁷ *Annales de la maison mère*, 49e année, oct. 1943, 471-3. Marie-Emélie Babineau, Sr St-Gétule, died 19 juin 1942, and 64e année juin 1958 #10, 344-49, Marie-Marguerite Barriault, Sr. St-Marie-Marcel. Both were educated by the Congrégation de Notre Dame.

⁶⁸ In 1856, this course replaced one on the British constitution. Compare *Histoire de la Congrégation de Notre Dame*, VIII:106 to ACND Montreal, 660.310-1, "Cours d'étude 1856."

⁶⁹ See above, footnote 64.

also that “*Une Acadienne*” was able to complain in excellent French.⁷⁰ As she was shocked to discover this in Cape Breton, she presumably had not yet found it a problem in New Brunswick. The supportive response to this letter in the *Moniteur* came from the professional men.

The situation within the convents changed by the twentieth century, when the best known protest on behalf of Acadian women came from inside the Sisters of Charity. Suzanne Cyr was a student at the first St-Basile convent school and later taught at Memramcook and Bouctouche convents. As Sr Marie-Anne, she was one of the leading “French Sisters” who began working towards a separate French speaking section of the Sisters of Charity in 1914.⁷¹ Mixing with so many anglophone contemporaries could have made students more aware of their Acadian heritage. There are also indications in the post-1888 balance of francophone and anglophone surnames later in the century that suggest an increasing threat to Acadian identity among convent students.⁷² But in the early years of New Brunswick’s convent and college education, it is clear that bilingualism and national pride were encouraged. The more aggressive nationalism of the colleges mirrored the expected masculine characteristics and showed itself in occasional outbursts against the colonizing forces of Quebec and of anglophone and Protestant society. It also showed itself in pro-British sentiments that were acceptable to the New Brunswick majority without compromising Catholicism and the preservation of French. The convents’ nationalism was not political but based on Catholic pride in surviving persecution and establishing unity in religion that included the heritage and language of Québécois, Irish, and Acadian pupils.

⁷⁰ *Moniteur Acadien* 3, 6, and 10 August 1886.

⁷¹ Neil Boucher, “Un exemple du nationalisme de l’Église en Acadie: les ‘French Sisters’ chez les soeurs de Charité de Saint Jean, 1914-22,” *SCHEC Études d’histoire religieuses*, 60 (1994), 25-34.

⁷² ACND, Montreal, Bathurst 301-100-7, “Compte des Pensionnaires, 1874-1890,” and List of Boarders Bouctouche 1880-1890 and Memramcook 1873-1900 consulted at the ASNDSC, Moncton NB. Bathurst, Memramcook, and Bouctouche records all show a trend towards a rising percentage of anglophone surnames in the late 1880s. .