

Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année

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Dec. 27, 2017

Dear French-Canadian and French heritage friends:

I discovered that I was French-Canadian (FC) on my Dad's side in the fall of 1980. (He was 100% FC; I was 40 years old.) Thereafter came 20 years active involvement in La Societe Canadienne-Francaise du Minnesota (LSCF 1982-2002, including editing the newsletter *Chez Nous* for 15 years); then writing a family history and indexing *Chez Nous* to make it useful to all. The past five years I've been co-founder and vice-president of the French-American Heritage Foundation (FAHF), which focuses on Minnesota and adjacent areas. More about FAHF at **fahfminn.org**, to access *Chez Nous* at that website, click library, click *Chez Nous*. A bit more about LSCF at **chez-nous.net/aboutla.html**. More about Collette-Bernard and Oakwood ND at **<http://chez-nous.net/fc.html>**. (My grandmother Josephine & her brother Arcidas Collette in 1898 are the photo at upper right. The photo was taken just north of downtown Minneapolis.)

My experiences (all as an unpaid volunteer) inform my passion about preserving our French-Canadian heritage. It also informs me that our rich French-Canadian heritage is being lost, as one after another ancestor leaves us. At 77, I'm very aware of the unstoppable march of time...we can't pretend that we're young....

This letter brings three personal requests for you to consider:

1. Become a participating member of FAHF, committing what you can each year, perhaps \$25 or whatever you can afford (you can join on-line). We are 501c3.
2. Help spread the word about FAHF (LSCF ceased in 2002). I'd guess there are thousands out there with potential interest who've never heard of us and may be interested. Feel free to copy and share this letter and enclosures as you wish.
3. Think about committing a one-time \$1,000 tax deductible gift to a proposed new fund, 100 Associates, which will be seeking 100 persons or groups willing to give \$1,000 for the express purpose of establishing a permanent fund dedicated to preserving our heritage in perpetuity. (The mechanics of this fund are not final; details will come later.)

Dad died 20 years ago, and was my last direct link to a very rich heritage. I shared some of his stories, in his own words, at a FAHF story-telling session on Sep. 15. You can watch the program here: <http://fahfminn.org/heritage-storytelling/>. There are two musicians and five speakers, mine is the first story-telling segment.

I hope you had a very good Christmas and you have a happy New Year.

Most sincerely,



French-American Heritage Foundation (FAHF)
320 words. If space limitations, 5th para "The French presence...", 59 words, can be removed.
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EDITOR

FAHF is a statewide cultural organization with a near five year history, whose intention is strictly to complement other groups, as family associations, seeking to preserve their heritage. This release is simply to let people throughout the area know that we exist. Thank you.

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NEWS RELEASE

The French-American Heritage Foundation (FAHF), seeks to connect with people who have French-Canadian or French ancestry in the upper Midwest or an interest in French language or heritage. Our prime geographic interest is in the area of Minnesota and adjacent states and provinces.

FAHF is a 501(c)3 organization founded in 2013 to help preserve the rich French heritage of Minnesota and border areas which dates back to about 1685. Our website is <http://fahfminn.org/>.

Our Board is primarily 2nd and 3rd generation French-Canadian in Minnesota. We are very aware that the task of preserving our historically significant heritage is urgent. We are seeking citizen help in this task.

While most may think of "French-Canadians" as Voyageurs or associated with Red River Ox carts, the French heritage in Minnesota is much broader, and mostly quiet, ("l'Heritage Tranquille"). Few likely know that in the 1980 Census – the last to ask the question – 8% of Minnesotans self-described their ancestry as including French or French-Canadian roots. (Wisconsin reported 7%, Michigan 10%, other states smaller percentages.)

The French presence in North American history began about 1608 in what is now Quebec. French immigration to Canada, largely from France, continued to 1759 (when the French lost to the British.) French-Canadian fur traders began arriving in the Upper Midwest for business in 1685. Some married tribal women and stayed. Thousands later arrived as new residents and contributors.

79 Minnesota towns (out of 853) have a distinct historical French presence, which often centered on a Catholic Church whose congregation was often largely French speaking, and had a French speaking Priest.

FAHF is intended as a permanent and accessible resource to help descendants discover more about their heritage. In many cases, the history has been forgotten and we have been founded to help reconnect with the rich memories of the ancestors.

Honor those great-grandparents, and consider joining FAHF. You can reach us at <http://fahfminn.org/contact/> or 651-334-5744 (Dick Bernard, VP, F-AHF).

NOTE TO READER:

The below timeline appears in the three-volume book, *Chez Nous*, published by French-American Heritage Foundation in 2016.

For more information about *Chez Nous* or other books by the Foundation, go to Amazon.com, enter in the search box *French-American Heritage Foundation*, and you will find information about the three books published: "*They Spoke French*"; "*Chez Nous*" (three volumes); and "*In the Beginning, there was a Chapel*".

For information by mail or phone, contact Dick Bernard, FAHF PO Box 25384, Woodbury MN 55125, or by phone 651-334-5744

French-American Heritage Foundation

<http://fahfminn.org/>

Some Significant Dates and Happenings in the Evolution of What Is Now Minnesota and Surrounding Area Specifically Relating to French-Canadians and France.

This brief timeline summarizes some important dates in N. and Mid-American history involving the Native people, the French, the English, French-Canadians and the United States. We hope this list will encourage conversation and research.

We acknowledge the events listed all resulted in "winners" and "losers", and while most events long preceded the present day, their effects linger. We encourage frank conversation and dialogue towards strengthening a sense of community, which includes all of us, together.

1534 – Cartier enters the St. Lawrence River, first French contact in N. America

1603 – Champlain first visits to-be Quebec City; 1604, Acadia; in 1608 establishes permanent settlement now called Quebec City. "Quebec" first used as place name, variation of Kebec "where the river narrows"

1629-32 – English take control of New France.

1634 – Founding of Trois Rivieres

1642 – Founding of Montreal. In this time period fur trade became important, licensing controlled by the French Crown and tightly controlled in New France. This later became a problem when France lost the colony (1763). Very early relationships established between French and Native populations. Metis early became part of population.

1658/60 – Radisson and Grosseilliers first Europeans in to-be Minnesota, at Prairie Island.

1670 – Chartering of Hudson Bay Company by England

1679 – Daniel Greysolon du Lhut plants the arms of Louis XIV on shore of Lake Mille Lacs.

1680 – Fr. Hennepin sees and names the Falls of St. Anthony

1685 – Revocation of Edict of Nantes (1598), which had permitted Huguenots to freely practice their religion in France, caused some French immigration to what was to become the U.S., primarily Carolinas and Georgia. Catholics only were allowed to come to New France (now Quebec).

1688 – French explorer, Jacques de Noyon, explores what is now Quetico/Boundary Waters area.

1736 – Rene Bourassa sets up trading post at Vermilion River MN

1754-63 – Seven Years War (in N. America called the French and Indian War); 1759 – British defeat the French at Plains of Abraham; 1763 Treaty of Paris cedes northern half of N. America to England.

1774 – Quebec Act gives certain rights to French-Canadians. Later French-Canadian's ally with English against American revolutionists as U.S. is born; France allies with the Americans

1779 – Northwest Company (fur trade; competition to Hudson Bay) founded in Montreal
1776-87 – The United States is born
1787 – What became IL, WI, most of Minnesota and much of ND, all of which had been part of Quebec, were absorbed into new United States.
1789, 1830, 1848 – The Revolutions in France, each of which led to immigrations of French to the United States, among other places. Also, the suppression of the Paris Commune in 1870 also contributed to immigration.
1803-05 – Louisiana Purchase, Louis and Clark Expedition. Haiti slaves successfully revolt against France, resulting in France losing its richest colony in 1804.
1808 – Founding of the American Fur Company
1811 – Red River Colony (Winnipeg and area) established
1812 – The War of 1812 between England and U.S.
1819 – Ft. Snelling established at confluence of Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers
ca 1820-70 – The Oxcart era, Red River to St. Paul
1830 – U.S. Indian Removal Act; Half-Breed Tract Treaty enacted in Lake Pepin Area
1837 – Unsuccessful Rebellions by French Canada against English Canada. Key Actors: Papineau in Lower Canada; Mackenzie in Upper Canada, each called Patriotes/Patriots (not rebels) by their admirers.
1837 & 1855 – Chippewa Treaty (Mille Lacs Area). Telegraphy invented (1837)
1841 – First “Cathedral” of St. Paul built by eight French-Canadians; “Pigs Eye” renamed St. Paul
1846 – Iowa becomes a state
1847 – City of St. Paul officially established
1848 – Wisconsin becomes a state
1849 – Minnesota Territory established
1849 – St. Anthony established beside Falls of St. Anthony; in 1872 annexed to Minneapolis
1851 – Treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota
1854 – “Grand Excursion” up Mississippi from Rock Island IL to St. Paul begins settlement boom to Minnesota
1858 – Minnesota becomes a state.
1860 – Canadian railroad reaches Sarnia, Ontario, across from state of Michigan.
1861-65 – U. S. Civil War
1861 – Dakota Territory established; First Transcontinental Transmission by Telegraph
1862-63 – Homestead Act; U.S. - Dakota War of 1862-63; 38 Sioux hung at Mankato 1862
1863 – Sibley and Sully expeditions drive Dakota west across the Missouri; Whitestone Hill Massacre in Dakota Territory (southwest of present day Edgeley ND).
1863 – Old Crossing Treaty at Huot cedes NW Minn and Eastern ND to U.S.
1867 – Canada officially named, was Lower and Upper Canada before; variation on “Kanata” Settlement or village
1867 – Railroad connects Chicago and St. Paul; Ontario’s boundaries established.
1870 - Province of Manitoba established; Manitoba Act gives Metis significant rights
1876 – “Custer’s Last Stand” at Little Big Horn, Montana
1878 – Railroad connects Minneapolis and Winnipeg
1880 – Railroad reaches Grand Forks, Dakota Territory
1881 – Canadian railroad system reaches Winnipeg
1885 – Metis insurrection crushed, Louis Riel hung.
1885 – Transcontinental Canadian-Pacific Railroad completed
1889 – North and South Dakota granted statehood
1905 - Province of Saskatchewan established
1968 – War Act against uprising of separatists in Quebec.
1992 – Canada formally recognizes Louis Riel

What is your "Heritage"?...your "Culture"?

Some thought and conversation starters

From the

French-American Heritage Foundation

<http://fahfminn.org>

1. Graveyard
2. Artifact
3. Food/Recipe
4. Photo
5. Dance
6. Religion
7. Dress
8. Community
9. Language
10. War/Peace
11. Nationality
12. Relations with other Nationalities
13. Country of Origin
14. Immigrant/Native born?
15. Music
16. Occupation/Work
17. Pets
18. Gardening
19. Play/Recreation
20. Tradition
21. Dates/Places
22. Holidays
23. Sayings/Folk Wisdom
24. Significant Accomplishment
25. Inherited mannerisms/traits
26. Family Secrets
27. Letters
28. Books
29. Stories
30. Housing
31. Medical/Disease
32. Education
33. Games
34. Hobbies
35. Special Talents
36. Favorite Transport
37. Tools/Utensils/Kitchen
38. Art
39. Homesteading
40. Names, naming systems
41. Water
42. Men's roles
43. Women's roles

her'it-āge, n. [OFr. *heritage*, an inheritance, from *heriter*; LL. *hereditare*, to inherit, from L. *hereditas*, inheritance, from *heres*, an heir.]

1. property that is or can be inherited.
2. (a) something handed down from one's ancestors or the past, as a characteristic, a culture, tradition, etc.; (b) the rights, burdens, or status resulting from being born in a certain time or place; birthright.
3. in the Bible, (a) the chosen people of God; Israelites; (b) the Christian church.

As being lords over God's *heritage*.

—1 Pet. v. 3.

cul'tūre n. [Fr. *culture*, from L. *cultura*, cultivation, care, from *cultus*, pp. of *colere*, to till.]

1. the act or process of tilling and preparing the earth for crops; cultivation of soil.
2. the raising, improvement, or development of some plant, animal, or product.
3. the growth of bacteria or other microorganisms in a specially prepared nourishing substance, as agar.
4. a colony of microorganisms thus grown.
5. improvement, refinement, or development by study, training, etc.
6. the training and refining of the mind, emotions, manners, taste, etc.
7. the result of this; refinement of thought, emotion, manners, taste, etc.
8. the concepts, habits, skills, art, instruments, institutions, etc. of a given people in a given period; civilization.

cul'tūre, v.t.; cultured, pl., pp.; culturing, ppr.

1. to cultivate; to refine; to educate.
2. to grow (microorganisms) in a specially prepared medium.

More about French-Canadians
And French in Midwest at
<http://Fahfminn.org>
Inquiries, comments etc. to:
FAHF

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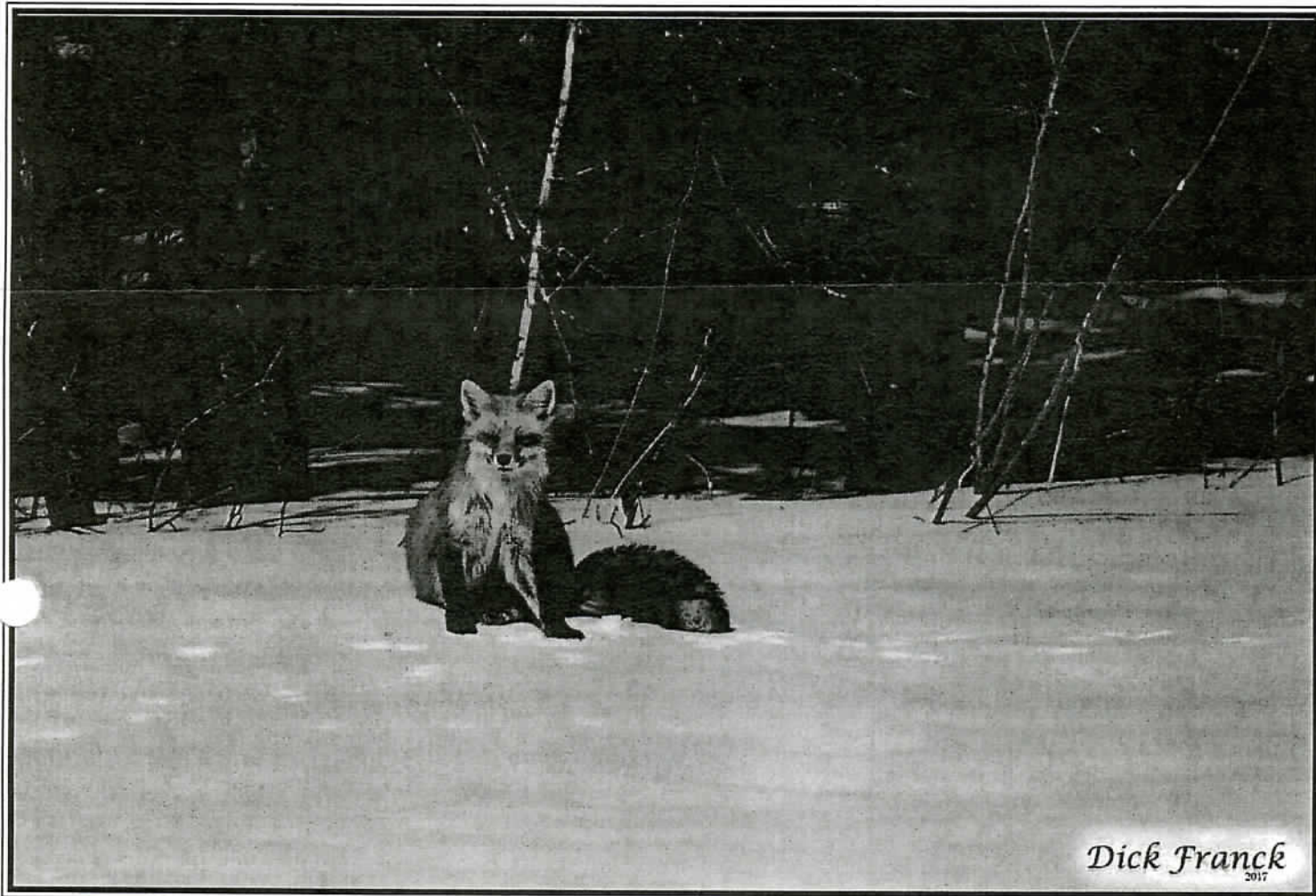
Definitions from
Webster's New Universal
Unabridged Dictionary
Deluxe Second Edition 1979

Le FORUM



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Dick Franck
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Websites:

Le Forum: <http://umaine.edu/francoamerican/le-forum/>

Oral History: Francoamericanarchives.org

Library: francolib.francoamerican.org

Occasional Papers: <http://umaine.edu/francoamerican/occasional-papers/>

Maine's French Communities:

http://www.francomaine.org/English/Pres/Pres_intro.html Francoamericanarchives.org

other pertinent websites to check out -

Les Français d'Amérique / French In America

Calendar Photos and Texts from 1985 to 2002

http://www.johnfishersr.net/french_in_america_calendar.html

Franco-American Women's Institute:

<http://www.fawi.net>

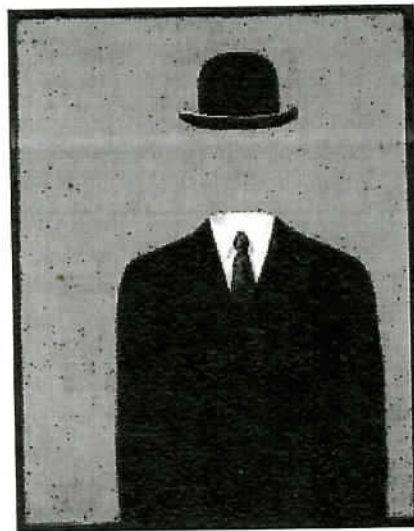


Why Are Franco-Americans So Invisible?

By David Vermette

"Why are we so invisible?" I've heard this question wherever Franco-Americans gather, be it through my social media contacts, at conferences, or at my occasional speaking engagements. The history of Franco-Americans is all but left out of the historical accounts on both sides of the border. It couldn't be more missing among the history of U.S. ethnic groups. And it is largely unknown in Québec.

For example, Maine is among the top three Francophone states but this fact is all but unknown outside its borders and to a large degree within them. I received an e-mail from a mover and shaker from that state who wanted to discuss the "lack of diversity" in Maine. When I responded that about one-quarter of the state was Franco-American/Acadian, and suggested that people with a unique linguistic and cultural heritage counted toward the diversity in the state, the conversation came to a screeching halt. A group that reflects the actual cultural diversity of the region has been subsumed into whiteness. They're "non-Hispanic White" per the U.S. Census and therefore do not count towards diversity in 2016.



Our long history throughout North America is connected with various narratives of U.S. history: the "French-And Indian War," the War of 1812, Westward expansion, Industrialization, Nativism,

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the story of the Roman Catholic Church in the USA, etc. Any one of these narratives should include either Franco-Americans or our Canadian and Acadien forbears. With the exception of the "French-And Indian War" narrative, where they figure as bitter enemies, they're almost completely missing.

For example, one-third of the participants in the Lewis & Clark expedition were Francophones but one never hears of this. Sometimes they're mentioned as a faceless, nameless herd: "the French voyageurs." The fact is, Lewis & Clark couldn't have managed without them.

The invisibility extends, in fact, to a history wider than the Franco-Americans in the Northeast USA. The cloak of invisibility falls over all of the descendants of the former Nouvelle-France. I use this term Nouvelle-France in the sense in which it embraces the entirety of the former 17th and 18th c. French sphere of influence in North America including l'Acadie, le Canada (both the St. Lawrence valley and the Great Lakes region) and la Louisiane (the territory roughly corresponding to the USA's Louisiana Purchase south of the Great Lakes).

If one totals up these descendants of Nouvelle-France on both sides of the border they number some 20 million people. It's hard to hide a population of 20 million under one's hat but so far the writers of history, beyond specialists in certain areas or topics, have performed the disappearing act.

There must be reasons for this invisibility. Yes, our population tends to be localized in the Northeast, the Great Lakes region, the Gulf Coast and a few other pockets. But other groups, such as Scandinavians in the upper Midwest, were also localized without becoming invisible. I don't accept the explanation that this invisibility "just happened." This is not an explanation.

How We Became Invisible

There are several reasons why I believe that the story of the Northeastern USA's Franco-Americans has become invisible.

1) We are associated today with Canada and therefore beneath the notice of most Americans.

The term most often used to describe us in American English is "French-Canadian" and both sides of this hyphen present obstacles in the minds of many Americans. Québécois of a nationalist bent make a dis-

inction between Québec and Canada but that's a finesse of which most Americans are unaware. A "French-Canadian" is simply a type of Canadian for them.

To most Americans, Canada is the USA's little brother: the USA can beat him up and fail to take him seriously, but they would defend him if a bully from another neighborhood came along. Most Americans are ignorant as to the geography and history of Canada. A current, photogenic Prime Minister notwithstanding, Canada represents little more than clichés about beer, hockey and people who say "eh." When a presidential candidate arrives on the scene who scares one party or another the "I'll move to Canada!" drumbeat begins, but most of that talk is fatuous.

This attitude, that Canada is nothing more than the 51st state, explains why I was laughed at by an (East) Indian-American when I suggested that one could emigrate from Canada. "That doesn't count!" she laughed.

"It counted enough," I answered, "when the Ku Klux Klan burned the 'French-Canadian' school in Leominster, Massachusetts in the 1920s. They were quite sure that we were 'other' enough to count back then."

"Wow, I didn't know about that," she said quietly.

"No one does," I replied.

2) Our Canadian/Acadien ancestors were in North America long before the United States and today's Canada existed.

This complicates matters because historians, thinking in terms of today's political geography, want to tell the story of the USA or the story of Canada. But our people's tale does not fit neatly into that geography. They settled large parts of the USA before it was the USA, as the numerous French place names throughout the USA's midsection testify: Detroit, Des Moines, Vincennes, Terre Haute, Des Plaines, St. Louis, New Orleans to name just a few.

The English speakers who write the histories of the USA and Canada write them from the standpoint of today's national borders. They write about these countries as separate entities while in fact the histories and populations of the two countries are intertwined.

For example, there were large and important exchanges of population originating from both sides of the border:

- The Acadians deported and scattered among the 13 colonies in the 1750s.

- The Loyalists escaping the nascent USA who settled in what is now Ontario and other future Canadian provinces in the Revolutionary War period and who were instrumental in the founding of English-Canada.

- The Creoles of Louisiana whose homes were bought by the Americans in the Louisiana Purchase (including the descendants of the aforementioned Acadians who ended up there).

- The Acadians in Northern Maine who became Americans when the Webster-Ashburton Treaty settled the USA's Northeastern border in the 1840s. (Hint to the geography challenged: there's territory east of Maine; not everything east of Maine is Atlantic Ocean.)

- The *Canadiens* and *Acadiens* who came in droves to the USA in the 1840-1930 period and whose descendants number some 10-12 million U.S. citizens today.

Since the story is told as two separate nations – either as Canadian History or as U.S. History – these interconnections are missed. North of the border, the need to emphasize a common Canadian nationhood, always a fragile construct, does not favor the story of a Franco-Canadian nation that crosses existing borders. While in the USA, the history of "French-Canadians" seems to be the history of a foreign country.

3) *We do not fit into the existing narratives of U.S. settlement history.*

The established narratives are as follows:

a) Native Americans/First Nations – the original human inhabitants of this continent. The majority of Americans tend to know little about them but increasingly feel they ought to.

b) Jamestown/Plymouth Rock – by this I mean the history of the 13 British colonies before and during the American Revolution. These colonies included a range of ethnic groups such as the Dutch, Germans, and Scots-Irish but this is generally told as an English history.

c) Ellis Island – this is my shorthand for 19th-early 20th c. emigration from Europe, both before and after Ellis Island was established, including emigrants from Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Jewish populations from Russia and Eastern Europe and other peoples from many lands too numerous to mention.

d) People of Color – this frame has emerged relatively recently in its current form. This narrative includes the African
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slaves who were brought to these shores forcibly. It includes the Hispanic peoples either those who settled parts of the USA before it was the USA, or those who entered the country from points south. It also includes East Asian immigration, mainly although not exclusively to the West. It also includes many other more recent emigrants from non-European countries. Native Americans are sometimes brought into the people of color narrative. Native Hawaiians and Native Alaskans might fit into this narrative but, sadly, their story is largely invisible as well.

There is simply no room for Franco-Americans in these narratives. Although many have First Nations ancestors, they don't fit precisely into that narrative. They are the bitter opponents of the Jamestown/Plymouth Rock bunch. There was no Ellis Island, no Statue of Liberty to greet them when and where they crossed the border. They're not people of color either.

When certain allowable, accepted narratives have been established, what doesn't fit into these schemes becomes invisible.

4) *Our national character.*

The notion of a "national character" is old-fashioned but in fact culture exists. There is a difference between a generalization and a stereotype, and there are fair generalizations that can be made about coherent

cultural groups. And generally speaking, the culture of the Franco-North American populations has emphasized tenacity, reliance on our own, and a certain insular quality.

The anthropologist Horace Miner, studying a rural Québec parish in the 1930s, noted that someone from the next parish over was regarded almost as a foreigner. This tendency to fragment into smaller (and frequently squabbling) units has discouraged a telling of the story in its proper breadth. The history of Franco-Americans, when it has been told, tends to be parochial, i.e. the story of Woonsocket Francos, or of Maine Acadians, or even of individual families.

The national character also emphasizes humility, another old-fashioned notion. This anachronism is heard again and again in Franco-American conferences. A Maine Acadian wrote to me, "We were taught that you don't speak well of yourself. You let others speak well of you." In the USA of Donald Trump and Kanye West, this trait is radically counter-cultural. If we don't speak our piece then who will speak it for us?

Raising a Franco Ruckus

In her book *Moving Beyond Duality*, psychologist Dorothy Riddle posits that making people invisible is a form of depersonalization. I've been told in no uncertain terms that my family's and my entire people's experience is insignificant

and beneath notice and that I should forget all about identifying as a Franco-American. The message here is, "People don't know about you because you don't count."

Addressed to any other ethnic group this notion would be insulting at the very least. It's the invisibility, whether it's our own doing or someone else's or some combination of the two, that makes statements like this socially acceptable. In fact, the converse is true: we haven't counted in the eyes of the wider culture because the story has remained untold.

I'm tired of being called a "quiet presence." I'm tired of blending into a pale, beige background labeled "non-Hispanic White." It's un-Franco-American to do so, but perhaps it's high time we raised what one of us called "a Franco ruckus." Let the ruckus commence!

*An edited, French language version of this piece has been published in the book *Franco-Amérique* edited by Dean Louder and Éric Waddell (Septentrion, 2017). David Vermette is currently working on a book called *A Distinct Alien Race: A Social History of Franco-Americans* to be published by Baraka Books of Montreal in 2018. More information on the book is available at frenchnorthamerica.blogspot.com.*