

FOCUS: French-Canadian Archives Outside Quebec — Moncton, Sudbury and Ottawa¹

Researchers engaged in studying French-speaking minority groups in Canada have worked for a number of years to gather oral and written testimony leading to an understanding of the essential elements of the communities and the evolution of their culture. It is impossible to mention all the groups involved in this research, but three groups which are at present collecting documents and carrying out research on French-speaking settlements outside Quebec and who can be considered leaders in their spheres of endeavour are the Centre d'études acadiennes (University of Moncton), the Centre de folklore franco-ontarien (University of Sudbury) and the Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française (University of Ottawa). Although what follows is by no means a definitive statement on the activities of these centres nor of the orientation of the studies which are being conducted, it does give some indication of the type of documentation collected by these institutions, and of the research projects now in progress.

LE CENTRE D'ÉTUDES ACADIENNES

Since its establishment in 1864, the Collège Saint-Joseph of Memramcook had accumulated numerous documents pertaining to the Acadians. In 1963, these materials were transferred to the new University of Moncton's Archives acadiennes, later re-named the Centre d'études acadiennes. The latter institution has not lost sight of the objectives pursued by its predecessors—to collect all documents or copies of documents from around the world dealing with Acadians, such as all publications, books, journals, newspapers, genealogies, folklore, historical maps, paintings and historical portrait photographs.²

As a result of this collecting, the Centre now holds about ten thousand books, pamphlets and magazines on the Acadians, and approximately twenty-five hundred rolls of microfilm recording tens of thousands of Acadian-related documents, many in French, British and American archives, and in old Acadian parishes. The Centre also preserves approximately sixty collections of manuscripts from individuals who were involved in Acadian life. These historical treasures, along with other Acadian documents in archives elsewhere in the world, have recently been the object of an inventory, the first volume of which is entitled *Inventaire général des sources documentaires sur les Acadiens*.³

The Centre devotes special attention to oral history, and in 1970 it established a Department of Folklore to gather Acadian folklore⁴ and to accumulate oral material on the Acadian way of life. This Department of the Centre had, as of December 1976, more than 8,000 songs, 750 folk tales, 1,500 legends, 1,000 musical works, and numerous *traditions*. Furthermore, the Centre has always been interested in the Acadian language and is considering the establishment of its own Department of Linguistics.

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- 1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Congress of the American Oral History Association held in Montebello, 11 and 12 September 1976. I would like to express our special thanks to Mrs. Rachel Romanica who kindly accepted to translate and type this paper.
 - 2 Anselme Chiasson, o.f.m. cap., *Le Centre d'études acadiennes et l'histoire orale-folklore*, p. 2. Photocopy of a paper read at the annual meeting of the Canadian Oral History Society, held in St. John's, Newfoundland, 4 and 5 October 1975.
 - 3 Centre d'études acadiennes de l'Université de Moncton, *Inventaire général des sources documentaires sur les Acadiens*, vol. 1, (Moncton: Éditions d'Acadie, 1975).
 - 4 The National Museum of Man and the Centre d'études des littératures des arts et des traditions of the Université Laval had already collected folklore material on Acadia. The Department of Folklore of the Centre d'études acadiennes is currently negotiating to get copies of those collections.

The staff of the Centre and its Department of Folklore try to be active on all fronts, as is evident in the diversity of the research projects being conducted. The Centre has interviewed people who had learned, through oral tradition, such secrets as the building of *aboîteaux* (dams used to dry up lowlands), the fabrication of barrels, and some fishing techniques. A team from the Centre systematically combed two counties of New Brunswick (Westmorland and Kent) to find typical Acadian recipes; other groups studied Acadian dance, furniture, and clothing. All these resources have not long gone untapped. The builders of the Village Acadien in Caraquet in north-eastern New Brunswick often consult the Centre and its archival holdings. The Department of Folklore also gives valuable assistance to organizers of cultural events, such as the Frolic Acadien.

The Centre d'études acadiennes of the University of Moncton constitutes an excellent model of the interdisciplinary approach to the historical past, and of community involvement. But a much more significant aspect, and one which makes the Centre unique, is its integral involvement in the Acadian community life, which is its *raison d'être*.

LE CENTRE FRANCO-ONTARIEN DE FOLKLORE

This institution specializes in French-Canadian folklore of north-eastern Ontario, but leaves the study of written documents to its parent organization, the Société historique du Nouvel-Ontario. In 1958, the oral documentation of the Société historique was transferred to the new University of Sudbury which founded the Institut de folklore, later re-named the Centre franco-ontarien de folklore.

The goals of the Centre, as expressed by Father Germain Lemieux, are to record on sound and video tape the traditional Franco-Ontarian folklore of the region: songs, stories, legends, proverbs, handicraft techniques, recipes, popular beliefs, remedies, games, nursery rhymes—in other words, everything the people learned from their ancestors which was not transmitted by the written word or through schooling. The ultimate goal of these recordings is to acquire a greater knowledge of the ideas and attitudes of the Franco-Ontarians.⁵

After gathering material for twenty-five years, the Centre has accumulated a great quantity of oral documentation, more than half of which remains untouched. It has about 250 sound tapes and 22 video-tapes on which are recorded the original texts of 5,800 versions of folk songs, 675 stories and legends, as well as a number of old people's reminiscences, jigs, recipes and folk beliefs.⁶ It also has a library and museum containing some two thousand folklore-related works, phonographs, discs, wax cylinders and tools dating back to the latter part of the previous century and the first twenty-five years of the twentieth.

A concerted effort has been made to inform researchers everywhere about the existence of this wealth of material. For example, in 1973, the Centre began publishing folk tales in the series "Les vieux m'ont conté". To date, eight volumes of a projected thirty have been published. Other stories have been published in the form of comic strips by Les Éditions Héritage of Montreal.⁷ Cassette tapes will be available in 1977 to complement what has already been published.

The Centre continues to gather and transcribe the stories of many people whose ancestors first came to this region, thus adding to our knowledge of the folklore and the

5 Germain Lemieux, s.j., *Centre franco-ontarien de folklore de l'Université de Sudbury*, in *Laurentian University Review/Revue de l'Université Laurentienne* 8, no. 2 (February 1976): 135.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

7 *La Belle perdrix verte*. Adaptation et dessins de Claude Poirier et Serge Wilson. (Montréal: Éditions Héritage, 1973). In the series *Contes de mons pays*.

material civilization of these settlements, and permitting an evaluation of the cultural transformation which has taken place within this group, mostly Québécois, which emigrated to a very different environment.

LE CENTRE DE RECHERCHE EN CIVILISATION CANADIENNE-FRANÇAISE

The Franco-Ontarian culture is also being studied in the Ottawa area. The institution active in this field, the Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française (CRCCF) of the University of Ottawa, has been involved in such studies for only about nine years. The Centre was established in the late 1950s in response to an increased awareness of the need to promote studies on French-Canadian literature at the University of Ottawa. Toward the end of the last decade, the programme began to widen its scope to include all aspects of the socio-cultural life of French-Canada (including Quebec) by emphasizing research at three different levels: documentation, research and analysis, and publication.

In the area of archives and documentation, the Centre intends to put at the disposal of researchers the written, audio and iconographical documentation necessary to pursue studies of French-Canadian life in general and of Franco-Ontarian life in particular. In the seventy-five collections held by the archives are more than 450 linear feet of written documents, forty percent of which are related to the artistic and literary life of Quebec from 1850. The rest of the holdings consist of Franco-Ontarian archives donated by individuals and scholastic or patriotic organizations engaged in the defence of the French fact in Ontario.

The Centre ensures the safe-keeping of about thirty-five hundred photographs, mostly of French-Canadian writers and artists, some of which date back to the 1880s. The photograph collection currently offers little that is of interest to the studies of ethnology and folklore; however, the Centre is negotiating for the acquisition of a collection believed to be rich in information about the Francophone settlers in northeastern Ontario.

Also open to researchers is a library of six hundred books including major reference works pertaining to French Canada and Quebec, a few incomplete runs of newspapers and about three hundred periodical titles. The acquisition of Franco-Ontarian newspapers of numerous regions is being actively pursued.

To make more people aware of the extent of the collections, inventories are being prepared. These are usually printed, in quantities of one hundred and distributed to certain public and private libraries in the country. The first volume of the *Inventaire des documents de l'Association canadienne-française d'Ontario* appeared early in 1976, followed recently by the *Inventaire des papiers Edmond Dyonnet*, a French-Canadian artist who died in 1954 at the age of ninety. The publication of a similar inventory of the sound material is to be ready by the end of 1977.

In addition to conducting its own research projects, the Centre encourages *extra muros* endeavours through small grants or professional assistance. During the past three years, a five-member team has been preparing a critical edition of the complete works of François Xavier Garneau, whose *Histoire du Canada*, published in the middle of the last century, won him the title of "national historian." This is the Centre's major project, but it also collaborates on other projects, such as the preparation of the *Dictionnaire pratique des auteurs québécois*,⁸ which came out late in 1976. The Centre provides financial and technical assistance to a specialist preparing a musical atlas for French Canada. In addition, documents are being gathered that pertain to Calixa Lavallée, who wrote the music for "O Canada."

8 Réginald Hamel, John Hare, Paul Wyczynski, *Dictionnaire pratique des auteurs québécois* (Montreal: Fides, 1976).

Two important projects relying on oral material are of special interest. The first concerns the French language in Ontario and relies on sound documentation stored in the archives of the Centre. During the summer of 1976, Professor André Lapierre of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Ottawa conducted a survey entitled "Témoignage sur le parler français en Ontario." He transcribed approximately ninety interviews with French-speaking residents of south-western Ontario. This geo-linguistic study is attempting to determine the structures of French as it is spoken in Ontario, and to measure the influence of English on the morphology and syntax of the language. These same documents will also be of value to those involved in sociological and historical studies, as they provide information concerning the origins of Franco-Ontarians, their social structures, work environment, cultural aspirations, and efforts to maintain their identity in Anglophone surroundings.⁹ Professor Lapierre is also conducting a more limited survey of the French language as it is spoken in the counties of Prescott and Russell, and plans to deposit his findings in the Centre. The second project will gather the testimony of older people as it pertains to the French-Canadian way of life in Ontario at the beginning of the century. The project team intends to interview about thirty individuals whose recollections and commentaries might shed light on its economic, cultural, political and social characteristics. This oral material, of which large segments will probably be published, will be stored at the Centre and made available to researchers.

The CRCCF is involved in the preparation of three published series: "Les Archives des lettres canadiennes" published by Fides, "Les Cahiers du CRCCF" and "Les Isles fortunées" published by the University of Ottawa. The vast subject matter covered by these publications includes studies in literature and history, as well as general reference works for use by researchers. The Centre also publishes a bulletin semi-annually to inform researchers of new developments in French Canadian studies, and usually includes short articles on particular projects as well as useful information on the activities in related fields of research.

In addition to these three institutions outside Quebec which have initiated research into the Francophone minority in Canada, others have begun to explore more deeply this aspect of Canadian research in recent years. For example, at the Centre des études franco-terreneuviennes, folklorists are collecting and analysing information about the small French community in the south-western part of Newfoundland, while at Church Point, a group of professors and students is involved with the Acadian minority of Nova Scotia.

On the Prairies, the Centre des études franco-canadiennes de l'Ouest is being set up to serve researchers from Winnipeg and St.-Boniface, Regina, Saskatoon, and Edmonton.¹⁰ At the same time, sociologists and linguists in Ontario are actively attempting to understand the Franco-Ontarian reality.¹¹

Even if many aspects of French-Canadian life outside Quebec remain unexplored to date, there is every reason to be optimistic, for wherever French Canadians are found, archival documents are being collected and researchers are putting them to good use.

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9 André Lapierre, "Rapport des recherches," CRCCF, (August 1973), p. 3.

10 At a symposium organized by the Centre de recherches en civilisation canadienne-française de l'Université d'Ottawa, these researchers were able to discuss their plans and to report on their accomplishments to date.

11 These researchers met at the University of Ottawa, 7 and 8 March 1977, to formulate their plans and to define new areas of research.