

Association des Acadiens-Métis Souriquois Newsletter

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Volume 1

Issue 1

We are pleased to present the first issue of a regular newsletter for AAMS members and their families, which we hope to publish at least twice a year. Future issues will include articles on a variety of topics such as *benefits of AAMS membership, Acadien-Métis-Mi'kmaq history and culture, upcoming events, and most importantly the recognition of Métis Rights.*

Due to the length and amount of information contained in the President's Report, we have decided to omit other features and articles in this issue, but will be looking forward to presenting you with a full edition in the near future. Please feel free to ask questions and give your comments to any of the Board of Directors (listed below) on any of the topics you see discussed here.

For those who have already received your Association renewal notices, you are encouraged to send in your fees via cheque or money order, to **Michael Deveau, AAMS Treasurer, PO Box 25, Mavillette NS, B0W 2H0**. The president's report explains in detail how important it is to have our membership grow and the political influence that comes from having large numbers of people speak with one voice as we petition for the recognition of Métis rights.

As you will see in the report, there were (and will be again this year) many opportunities for you, your family and friends to actively participate in AAMS events. Don't miss out! Discover and celebrate the rich and varied heritage that lives in your blood.

AAMS President's Report (Winter / 2010)
by Paul Tufts

The first president's report was on the agenda of the Annual General Meeting of the "Association des Acadiens-Métis Souriquois (AAMS)" held on June 30, 2009, at the Salmon River Fire Hall, Digby County, Nova Scotia. That report focused mainly on the history of AAMS from its inception and was based on the contents of the first AAMS

Newsletter (Spring / 2009), that can be viewed on the AAMS website at: <http://acadiens-metis-souriquois.ca> . This second report will focus on the activities of your association (AAMS) since the 2009 Annual General Meeting.

Organization: AAMS continues to pursue its vision and mission that are respectively: **(1) to promote Aboriginal pride and spiritual values and to ensure that both Acadian-Métis heritage and constitutional rights are safeguarded and respected; and (2) to promote Acadian-Métis identity, cultural respect and social responsibility for the well being of our communities and to advocate for inherent Aboriginal rights in cooperation with other like-minded organizations.**

A special resolution requesting changes to the AAMS by-laws was presented and passed at the annual general meeting. These changes were then accepted by the N. S. Registry of Joint Stock Companies. The revised edition of the AAMS Memorandum and By-Laws can be viewed on the AAMS website.

An AAMS logo design has been selected and is presently being perfected by a professional designer.

Directors (Deputies): At the annual general meeting, a total of fifteen (15) Directors (Deputies) were elected by the AAMS membership to represent the various Acadian-Métis regions of Southwestern Nova Scotia. Alisa Lombard has again volunteered to assist in the capacity of Executive Director and Adviser. A complete list of your AAMS Directors (Deputies) can be found in another section of this newsletter. Since the annual meeting, five (5) directors' meetings were held to deal with AAMS business.

Finances: An audit and financial statement were presented to the membership at the annual meeting. As of the end of December 2009, the AAMS financial statement was at \$ 4,167.00. The main source of income has been membership dues and hopefully renewals (see "Membership" section) will enhance the account so that more AAMS activities will be affordable for the benefit of members. Gratitude is extended to the AAMS directors and members who volunteer their time and travel without compensation. AAMS could not survive financially without such support and dedication.

Membership: The AAMS membership numbers continue to grow slowly. At the end of January 2010, your association was comprised of **234 members**. Unfortunately, a more significant number of members is required for the governments to pay attention and to recognize the existence of an Acadian-Métis heritage with inherent community rights. If only a small number of community members show pride in their identity and heritage, politicians and governments are not motivated to consider the recognition of the rights associated with that heritage. On January 1, 2010, the annual dues of \$20.00 became payable for 156 members who were sent notices. The remaining members, who have only received their membership cards within the six months preceeding January 2010, are not required to renew until 2011.

Communications: AAMS is very fortunate to have received the assistance of Kristanne Chandler, who has volunteered to act as Editor in the production of newsletters in order to communicate with members. Many thanks are extended to Marie Rundquist who has been managing and financing the AAMS website. Gratitude is also extended to Eileen Boudreau who assists with the secretarial work.

Information and articles relating to your association can be viewed on the AAMS website that has recently been updated at <http://acadiens-metis-souriquois.ca> . Acadian-Métis heritage was often the topic of discussion on CIFA radio via the program “**Les gens d'icite**”. The email addresses of AAMS members have recently been placed into a computer “Contact Group Mailing List” to allow communications via the internet. Communication opportunities were provided by the well attended Annual General Meeting and by **three “Aboriginal Day” gatherings in Quinan, Pubnico and Clare**. A special AAMS committee has been recently appointed to organize public meetings and workshops for the benefit of members. Numerous emails and phone calls are always involved in AAMS business.

Events and Activities: An AAMS delegation travelled to Saint Isidore, New Brunswick, to attend an Acadian-Métis gathering that featured a presentation by a group of lawyers called “**Elders without Borders**”. These lawyers have designed an innovative, complicated and different approach for establishing the recognition of Acadian-Métis rights in the courts. Jackie Vautour announced that his court case may pursue this new strategy. Stephen Augustine, hereditary Chief on the Grand Council of Mi'kmaq Chiefs, was also present to support the Acadian-Métis cause. Another Mi'kmaq, Hector Pictou, also expressed an interest and even met with AAMS directors in the Clare area of Nova Scotia.

An AAMS representative made two presentations about “Aboriginal Spirituality” at the **Tuna Museum** during the **Wedgeport Acadian Festival**. AAMS also accepted invitations from the **Clare Acadian Festival** to participate in several activities. Extensive volunteer efforts produced an impressive float that featured a nature scene with a “pioneer Acadian-Métis family”. This float generated many favourable comments in the Clare parade. An AAMS information booth was also set up at the Clare bazaar. At the well attended “**Order of Good Cheer**” **banquet**, two members from AAMS and Kespu'kwitk took part in a skit that portrayed the historical meeting of Champlain and Membertou at Port Royal around 1605. Members also took part in the “**Tintamarre**”. These activities qualified a few AAMS members to attend a gratitude evening for volunteer participants in the Clare Acadian Festival.

A few AAMS members attended the **Mi'kmaq / Acadian Festival in LaHave**, Nova Scotia. This annual event in August is highly recommended since its objectives are to revive the close historical relationships that existed between the Mi'kmaqs and the Acadians. Aboriginal gatherings in Nova Scotia at **Keji, Bear River, Arcadia and Argyle** were also attended. AAMS also took part in the activities of “**Aboriginal Day**” **gatherings at Meat Rock in Quinan, at the Acadian Museum in Pubnico and at the former Richelieu Club in Clare**. In honour of Marie Rundquist, who manages our website, an AAMS director organized a lake side gathering that featured a “wild game BBQ” for a small group of invited guests.

Community Issues and Rights: AAMS is registered as a supporter of the “**Buy Back Nova Scotia (BBNS)**” coalition, which strives to safeguard the diverse public uses associated with Irving lands that are now for sale. For the benefit of all Nova Scotia residents, BBNS is dedicated to influencing government decisions in relation to the purchase and management of these extensive Irving lands, that are of interest to AAMS as **hunting, fishing, trapping and recreational areas for the Acadian-Métis people**. Some AAMS members have attended several meetings and made several trips to

Halifax in support of BBNS. The efforts of BBNS have led to success since the provincial NDP government has recently purchased some of these lands at a cost of 40 million dollars.

AAMS is cooperating with a PhD student, from Laval University in Quebec, who will come to Southwestern Nova Scotia in order to study the customs, traditions and life styles of the French Acadian-Métis communities, as a requirement for his Doctorate Degree. During three weeks in February / March, he will conduct observations and interviews for his doctorate report that will certainly provide a foundation for Acadian-Métis recognition in the future.

Two court cases, that have been ongoing for several years in relation to Acadian-Métis rights, are now completed and awaiting the judges' decisions. In New Brunswick, the judge's decision was to be announced in February in relation to the **Jackie Vautour** case. This case could now be moved to a federal court with lawyers called "**Elders without Borders**", which would delay the verdict somewhat. The judge's decision in the Nova Scotia case of **Jean-Paul Babin** will be released in April. To understand the judicial controversies and courtroom debates associated with the recognition of Acadian-Métis community rights, go to the **AAMS website** and click on the tab "**A Métis Rights Perspective**".

However, there are many opportunities extended to Acadian-Métis individuals who **self-identify as Métis** and apply for benefits in relation to careers, employment, education, training, grants, bursaries and scholarships. AAMS has appointed a committee to discover and report such opportunities for the benefit of community members.

Acadian-Métis Pride: In conclusion, it can be said **that two main concepts stimulate Acadian-Métis people to seek membership in AAMS. The first is** "what is in it for me", such as **rights, and the other is pride in personal identity and heritage.** However, if personal pride in Métis identity and heritage is not demonstrated by a significant number of supporting community members, the associated inherent rights may not be recognized and respected. The Métis of the West, who show identity-pride openly in great numbers, are accorded many privileges. Unfortunately, too many Métis in the East are ashamed of their identity and remain hidden as "closet Métis" who are waiting to see if their identity and rights will be recognized without their support and involvement. **In response to this hindrance, AAMS has appointed a committee that will organize public meetings and workshops designed to revive and promote the Acadian- Métis pride that existed before the Acadian Deportation of 1755.**

AAMS Board of Directors

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LeBlanc, Donald (Spiritual Adviser): St. Anne-du-Ruisseau, N.S.
LeBlanc, James (Deputy Director): Yarmouth, N.S.

Muise, Joseph (Deputy Director): Yarmouth, N.S.

Muise, Raymond (Genealogy Committee): Yarmouth, N.S.

Muise, Robert (2nd Vice-President): Quinan, N.S.

Therault, Alyre (Deputy Director): Saulnierville, N.S.

Tufts, Paul (President and Genealogy Committee): Hebron, N.S.

Lombard, Alisa (Executive Director and Adviser): Little Brook, N.S. and Ottawa, Ont.