



Relationships among Nationalism, Nation, and Identity

PART

1

To what extent should nation be the foundation of identity?



These works by Canadian painters Alex Colville and Norval Morrisseau can deepen our understandings of ourselves and of our country. Artists further the evolution of personal and collective identity by adding new meaning to existing ideas of *nation* and *identity*. In what ways do these works reflect Canada and Canadian identity?

The painting *Church and Horse*, painted by Alex Colville in 1964, shows the artist's magical realist style. The church in the painting has a plaque which reads, "The United Church of Canada Hastings". Hastings is a community near Amherst, Nova Scotia where Colville lived. Norval Morrisseau's *Storyteller of the Ages*, from 1970, is just one example of Morrisseau's work that focuses on the myths and legends of the Canadian Ojibwe. Of his work, Morrisseau once said, "My art speaks and will continue to speak, transcending barriers of nationality, language and of other forces that may be divisive, fortifying the greatness of the spirit that has always been the foundation of the Ojibwa people."¹ These paintings are reflections of Canadian experience, which informs our Canadian identity. But no single painting can entirely describe how geography, history, peoples, and politics inform who we are as Canadians. In Part 1, you will explore the points of view of many artists, storytellers, geographers, politicians, and others.

Perspectives about what it means to belong to a nation—as well as our understandings of nation—have evolved over time and continue to evolve. The voices in these chapters will attest to a variety of points of view and perspectives about efforts to build a nation and a national identity, and the roles history and geography have played in this process. At the end of Part 1, you will explore competing national and non-national loyalties, with examples from First Nations and Francophone perspectives, as well as from a variety of religious, regional, and global perspectives.

Part 1 explores a people's relationship to the land, and cultural and linguistic understandings of *nationalism*. Canadians of Acadian heritage, such as Janelle Dupuis, embrace not only their historical experience, but also their modern experience of being Acadian in Canada.

A first step in considering this book's Key Issue: ***To what extent should we embrace nationalism?*** is to ask questions about identity. In Part 1, you will conduct inquiries, think critically, and work as a team to explore the Main Issue: ***To what extent should nation be the foundation of identity?***

¹ Norval Morrisseau and Donald C. Robinson, *Return to the House of Invention*, (Toronto: Key Porter, 2005) p. 22.

Janelle Dupuis fiddles under the Acadian flag during a ceremony in 2005 to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the deportation of the Acadian people from Nova Scotia.



The Oath of Allegiance is a document issued by the British government in response to the Acadians in 1755.

An Oath of Allegiance Demanded

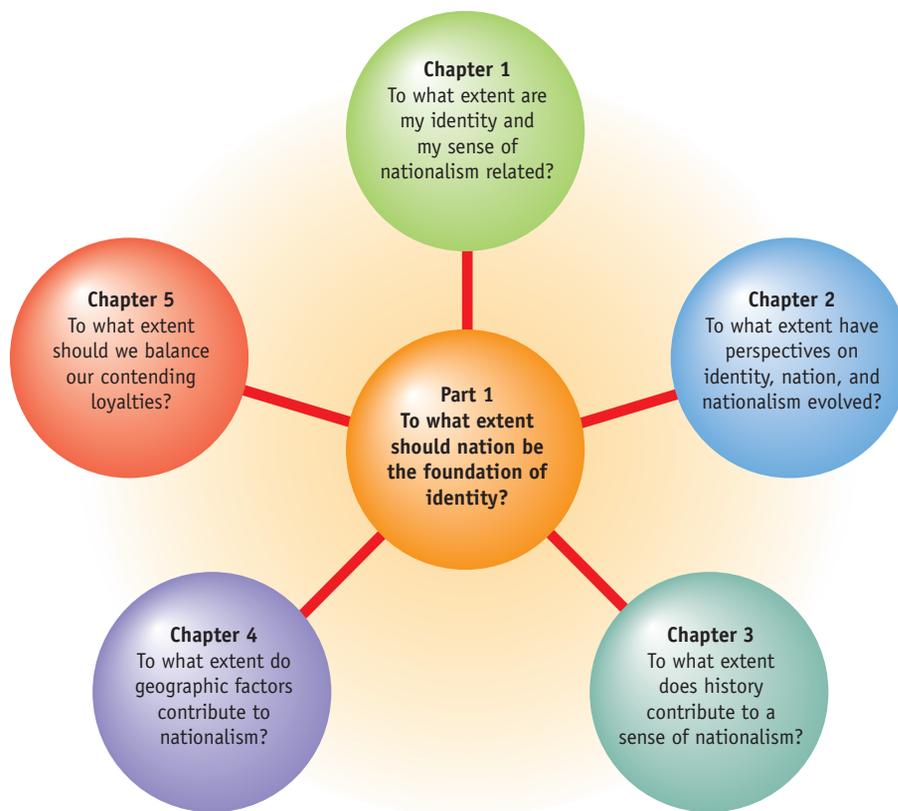
In the face of increasing military preparations and other fighting in North America, the new governor of Nova Scotia, Charles Lawrence, demanded an unconditional oath of allegiance to ensure that the Acadians would not take up arms against the British.

The Acadians at first refused as they were concerned about possible retaliation from the French should they swear allegiance to Britain. Later, they reluctantly agreed. This was not convincing enough for Governor Lawrence, who ordered the [deportations] to begin.

In July 1755, the deportations began. The total Acadian population at the time was around 12 000 and it is estimated that as many as 10 000 were expelled. The British seized farms, goods, livestock, and pillaged and ruined Acadian homesteads to ensure they would not return. This continued until 1762.²

More information about Acadians during this time can be found in Chapter 2 (pages 44–46) of this resource. How might a collective experience like this affect your national identity?

² “The Deportation of the Acadians, 1755–1762,” *Canada in the Making*.
http://www.canadiana.org/citm/specifique/deportation_e.html.



Each of these Chapter Issues is related to the Key Issue: ***To what extent should we embrace nationalism?***, and, more specifically, to the Main Issue for Part 1: ***To what extent should nation be the foundation of identity?***

Visit the Learn Alberta site www.LearnAlberta.ca and click on the *Perspectives on Nationalism* learning object for fully interactive learning scenarios entitled ExCite (Exploring Citizenship). These scenarios related to issues and concepts in the Student Resource enhance learning.

