

The Multicultural

MOSAIC OF NOVA SCOTIA



Photos: NS Tourism, Culture & Heritage

Greater Halifax has a rich and varied cultural mosaic, woven from the histories of 36 different ethnic groups. The region's Mi'kmaq and Algonkian natives are direct descendants of our earliest people, who hunted and fished our bountiful lands and waters 10,000 years ago. Traces of their early settlement can be found throughout Halifax Regional Municipality.

The first European visitors arrived in 1497 with John Cabot, one of the first explorers to map the province's coast. As early as 1520 the Portuguese were coming for the rich fishing area surrounding Halifax Harbour, which they named *Ribiera de jardines*. And in 1605, the French established Canada's first permanent European settlement at Port Royal, calling the province Acadie.

William Alexander, a powerful Scot, also attempted colonization in 1624, naming the province *New Scot Lande*. In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht gave the British a strong foothold in this

part of the New World, and they founded the town of Halifax in 1749 in an effort to counteract the growing French presence in the region. They offered nearby land to German and Swiss farmers to provide food for the town but the farmers soon relocated to the more fertile land of the South Shore. In their biggest show of dominance over the French, in 1755 the British deported Nova Scotia's 10,000 Acadians for their refusal to swear loyalty to the Crown. Longfellow immortalized this tragic event in his epic poem *Evangeline*.

More than 5,000 New England families, both black and white, took up these vacant Acadian farms and fishing grounds—these 10,000 New England Loyalists, fleeing the American Revolution from 1774 to 1776, significantly changed the colony and culture of Halifax.

In 1796, the Maroons arrived with British forces from the Caribbean. Attracted by the promise of land and a new life, they instead found the land unworkable, and many found alternate

employment rebuilding the Halifax Citadel. In 1802 the majority of this group of settlers relocated to another British colony—Sierra Leone in Africa.

Settlers from Ireland arrived as early as 1749, but the largest Irish immigration to the area came during the construction of the Shubenacadie Canal (from 1826 to 1846) when labourers were needed for the hard work.

Since the Age of Steam, well over a million immigrants from around the globe have arrived through the Port of Halifax at Pier 21, the "Gateway to Canada." Many remained here, enhancing Nova Scotia with their skills, experience and cultural distinction. For more information visit Pier 21 (Page 39).

Each June, these distinct groups come together to celebrate their heritage and diversity at the Multicultural Festival on the Dartmouth waterfront. For a list of cultural associations, contact the Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia (www.mans.ns.ca) at (902) 423-6534.

