New Acadia Project could rewrite area's history, create new tourism opportunity

By Megan Wyatt | mwat@theadvertiser.com

A growing number of Cajuns want to set the record straight about their cultural heritage. They want to know where the earliest Acadian settlers lived, what they ate and how they survived.

The truth these Cajuns seek could give less credit to the legend of Evangeline and Gabriel and more credit to Joseph Broussard, the freedom fighter and Acadian hero more commonly known as Beausoleil.

A long-term, multidisciplinary effort called the New Acadia Project, or Projet Nouvelle Acadie, is currently underway to locate, identify and investigate the 18th-century homesteads and unmarked grave sites of Acadian exiles along the Teche Ridge in Loreauville. As funds are raised and research is conducted, those spearheading the project say time could be the enemy as the high-priority archaeological dig sites are in an area of rapid residential and commercial development.

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Acadian historian Warren Perrin and anthropological archaeologist Mark Rees, associates professor for the department of sociology and anthropology at UL, holds a pipe stem, which was found at the Joseph Beausoleil homestead near Loreauville.

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WANT TO DONATE? A goal of $100,000 has been set for the New Acadia Project steering committee to raise for the New Acadia Project's long-term funding. Checks can be made out to the New Acadia Heritage and Cultural Foundation, Inc. and mailed to P.O. Box 53087, Lafayette, LA 70508, care of the New Acadia Project.

Call 233-5832 to learn more about other ways of donating or visit http://www.ad.acadiana.net/adv101/give.html to find out more about the New Acadia Project.

MORE ONLINE Check out a video of the New Acadia Project, including footage, from a high-altitude map, artifacts from the 2003 Amad Broussard project and more.