

a brief history

Antigonish (pronounced variously as aunti-gun-ish, or aunta-gun-ish) is a Mi'kmaq name. Antigonish has two quite distinct meanings, depending upon whom you ask. No one seems to know the derivation with certainty.

- The place where the branches are torn off by bears gathering beechnuts.
- Five-forked rivers of fish (or spread fingers, snake-like).

In The Past

Natives have been living in this area for many centuries.

1650's: The French arrived but were driven off by the Mi'kmaq. The Mi'kmaq, a branch of the wandering Algonquin race, once were scattered over New England and much of Atlantic Canada. This territory was occupied by the Mi'kmaq.

1724: Legend has it that a Jesuit chapel was built near Antigonish by the Mi'kmaq.

1755: The Acadian French began to settle the east end of Antigonish County near Havre Boucher.

1770's: Thousands of Scots were forced to flee oppressive Highland Clearance in West Scotland. Many settled along the Northeastern coast of Nova Scotia. Soon these original settlers moved east and south to establish farms throughout the region.

1784: Irish Loyalists, led by Capt. Timothy Hierlihy, took up a large land grant surrounding Antigonish Harbour and founded what they first called Georgetown – then Dorchester – and finally Antigonish. To Hierlihy and his ship full of hopefuls, we attribute the establishment of the first permanent settlement in the area.

1787: Loyalist Blacks settled around the present day Lincolnville, Guysborough County, at about the same time Thomas Brownspriggs was granted 3,000 acres of land at Tracadie, NS for himself and 74 other Loyalist Black families.

1861: The Highland Society was formed.

1863: Start of the Highland Games; still held yearly in July.

1889: Antigonish was incorporated as a town. Antigonish County boasted a population of almost 20,000.

1989: Centennial year for Town of Antigonish.

Today

- **Population:** Antigonish Town and County – 18,835 with the Town having 4,235 (plus an additional 4,200 f/t and 600 p/t StFX students).
- **Labour participation rate:** 65.7% (15 years and over)
- **Antigonish's key sectors:** education, retail, health care, business services, agriculture, forestry, and fishing.
- **Major employers:** St Francis Xavier University, Guysborough Strait Area Health Authority, Strait Regional School Board, Online Support, Scott & Stewart Forestry Consultants Ltd.