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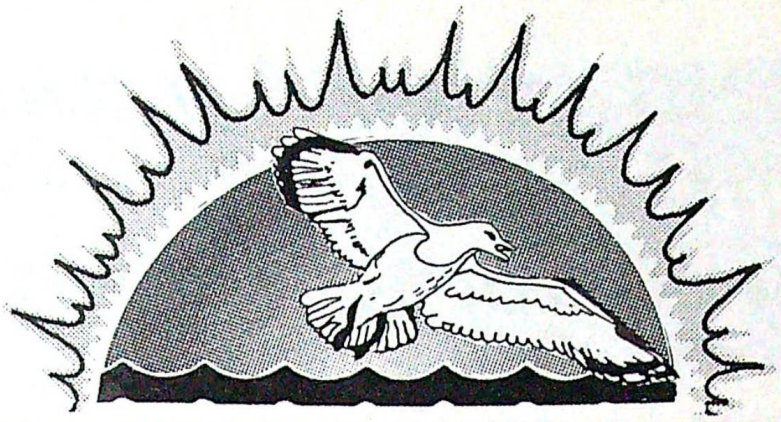

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PARTICI-PAPER

June 1992, Volume 13, no.6

Inverness County project:

Let's Celebrate Canada 125!

Canada is not somebody or somewhere else. It is us. We are the future of Canada. Let's celebrate who we are right here and now! We are a privileged nation, with much to be thankful for --

freedom, opportunity, personal security
a common concern for the environment
the desire to help one another
a wish to know one another better
our many achievements as Canadians!

We only have to look at the world around us to measure how bountiful our standard of living and quality of life truly are.

*We need **you**, as leaders of your communities to encourage your friends and neighbours to celebrate Canada's 125th birthday in a special way in Inverness County this year. Take part in a County-wide project by flying a flag from every home and business from the Causeway to Meat Cove. Especially on Canada Day, July 1st, let's show our pride, our willingness to demonstrate that we know how lucky we are!*

The Inverness County Recreation/Tourism Department and County Council are both promoting this activity as a way of celebrating all the fine things we have in common here in Canada.

The Recreation Department is setting up contacts in each area to give you information about where to buy flags, sizes, and cost. It's easy and the cost is small. Next year, you will still have your own maple leaf flag to proudly display again. And, you will be helping out community organizations as well by buying from them.

How to get your Canada Day flag!

These contacts will have information about where you can purchase flags as well as sizes and prices.

Pleasant Bay,
Charmaine Bishop, 224-1212
Margaree, John Hart, 248-2578
Margaree Harbour,
Bertha Doucet, 235-2268
Inverness Youth,
Bruce Jardine, 258-3520
East Lake Ainslie,
Michael Gillis, 756-2790
West Lake Ainslie,
Kelley Walker, 258-2949

Judique/Creignish/PortHood
MabouCadets/
Charlie Graham, 787-3385

West Bay Road,
Irene Macdonald, 625-2596
Port Hastings,
Yvonne Fox, 625-2951
Port Hawkesbury,
Steve MacDougall, 625-3134
River Denys,
Clarence MacLennan,756-3455
Whycocomagh, Scouts
Lorne MacLeod, 756-2865
Valley Mills,
Rose King, 756-2215
Cheticamp, Claude Major
Legion, 224-3793
For more information,
Recreation, 787-2274

Commentary

Tourism Awareness Week

June 14 -21, 1992

Cultural foundations for tourism

by Mary Anne Ducharme

The Tourist Industry Association of Nova Scotia tells us that "Tourism is everybody's business." The adjectives used to describe the third largest industry in Nova Scotia are "vibrant, enthusiastic, exciting, explosive." Tourism employs over 30,000 people and infuses $790 million in new dollars into communities in this province.

In Inverness County we have a lot going for tourism in both our natural environment and in our people. As travel editor Paul Waters said of Inverness County in the *Montreal Gazette* in 1990: "It is a place that lies softly in the heart and calls you back whenever you leave." He spoke lyrically " . . . there's an eerie magic about the winds from the Northumberland Strait that sweep shadows across *summer fields full of Queen Anne's* lace, buttercups and clumps of wild roses."

The ambience, the scenery -- these fine things are true. But life here is complex -- complexities that take years of living here to appreciate.

We have no difficulty accepting our undeniable attractiveness, and the contribution that tourism gives us is vital to our economy. But there are problems. Some of them are in dealing with bureaucratic policies in government or service corporations; others revolve around issues of training and information. I think the most important problem is a long-standing lack of vision for this province in the relationship between culture and tourism.

Studies in Nova Scotia tourism have said the same thing for a long time: "cultural experience is a major segment of the Nova Scotian tourism product." In an article by Kathy Mac in the spring 1992 edition of *Nova Scotia Craft News*, she says again what the cultural community has known for a very long time: " It is clear that the largest subsidy to the cultural life of Canada comes not from governments, corporations or other patrons, but from the artists themselves, through their unpaid or underpaid labour." She is quoting the Federal Cultural Policy Review release d in 1980.

In 1983, the 318 recommendations made by members of the cultural community at a Provincial Cultural Policy Conference were ignored by the province. In 1984, there were drastic budget cuts to federal cultual institutions. "After all the meetings, conferences, reports and recommendations (many of which have been made again and again), it is now time for action." This was the conclusion of the Nova Scotia Coalition on Arts and Culture in its report entitled *Coming of Age* last year.

Despite the proven relationship between culture and tourism dollars, despite the good ideas and efforts of many individuals through many years, it is hard to maintain an optimistic attitude. Culture still remains strangely undervalued at the very same time it is exploited.

Festivals are promoted as a sort of conduit between local culture and the tourist. The Department of Tourism has made photographic capital of festivals, especially those featuring kilt-clad dancers and bagpipers.While there is absolutely nothing wrong with being Scottish, wearing a kilt or playing bagpipes on stage for tourists, we should not confuse tourism "show biz" with genuine Celtic culture. In Cape Breton, the Gaelic language languishes near extinction -- and with it all the thoughts, sounds, nuances of meaning conveyed no other way. Who mourns this loss in the Department of Tourism-- enough to help find solutions? Tourism thinkers are absolutely wrong if they think that tourists want "show biz" and not the real thing, or that language is not also a way of attracting visitors and stimulating local economy. The recent enormous growth in parts of Scotland in the demand for Gaelic publications and education is a case worth noting.

Tourism promoters see our festivals in only a superficial light, and do not choose to know that the entertainers and volunteers are desperately struggling to survive economically, and they are losing ground.

This brings us to the relationship problem: are cultural perceptions of ourselves influenced by Tourism promotion and Tourist expectation? There are people here who are French, English, Micmac, Dutch, American, and many other ethnic backgrounds who think their heritage is valuable too, and who get short shrift in tourism promotion because they don't fit the image of the "Nova Scotia Tourism Product." Are they less Nova Scotian if they are not Scottish?

Is tourism a mirror of us, or are we becoming a mirror of it? Is this our real culture? Other than extracting dollars from tourists, does our culture deserve attention and development?

The assertion that tourism has kept certain aspects of our culture alive -- that there would be even fewer Highland dancers and bagpipers without it, has some truth. This is true also of arts, crafts, dance, singing, drama, language, museums, and other manifestations of who we are. Tourism helps support these expressions by providing dribs of sporadic income for a few weeks in the summer. Most often talent and dedication is rewarded by profuse thanks and no pay at all. For the most part, the students of these arts fend financially for themselves " for the love of it," -- perpetual amateurs and volunteers who never reach the fullness of their potential. Certainly the same could be said for museum staff and heritage workers who suffer the same way.

Here we do have an unusual wealth of exceptional talent-- and our finest cultural ambassadors get ample media exposure and a few even make a decent living. But arts of all kinds could touch and involve so many more people than they do now. How many individuals with under-developed talents could benefit by opportunities in local education, programs, shows, exchanges of ideas -- and a possibility of making a viable livelihood? Should we not develop cultural expression to be the best of who we are, and not just because Tourism recognizes a select few ?

What it boils down to is that Tourism uses culture as an attraction -- a business commodity which it sells, having put nothing into its development. Tourism tells us the tune to play. Very little of the economic benefit of tourism sifts down into the pocket of those craftspeople, entertainers, artists, *musuems, etc. who are the* foundation upon which festivals and cultural attractions are built. If 'exploitation' is the appropriate word, it stops at the point when

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