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"Volunteers are the heart and soul. we could not exist without them."

A department perspective

For a few years now, the Department of Recreation and Tourism sponsors a Volunteer Recognition Awards Night, devotes most of two issues of Partici-Paper to submitted articles describing the individual contributions of volunteers, and sponsors a volunteer to represent the County in the Provincial Awards Ceremony in Halifax. Each year the Department worries that we will "run out of volunteers" not already identified. What we have found instead, is that the volunteer base in Inverness County is even broader and wider than we already knew. And we are very much aware of how profoundly we depend on these volunteers to carry out the countless programs, activities, and courses, either sponsored or co-sponsored by this department. Says John Cotton, the Director of the Department of Recreation/Tourism : "Volunteers are the heart and soul of this Department. Eighty to ninety percent of the programs and activities we help coordinate is volunteer-dependent. It is very simple: without volunteers, this Department could not exist. And the quality of life in Inverness County would be unimaginably poorer without volunteers."

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On April 12, forty-four Inverness County people were honoured by the Municipality for outstanding volunteer efforts. They were presented with plaques in a formal ceremony, followed by a buffet luncheon. Daniel Rankin, Master of Ceremonies, Warden Ed MacDonald, and MLA Charles MacArthur welcomed and thanked the volunteers.

"The givers outnumer the takers": Inverness County Volunteers

The keynote speaker for the Volunteer Recognition Ceremonies at the Municipal Building in April was David MacIvor, Administrator of the Consolidated Memorial Hospital, who spoke of the history and future of volunteerism in hospitals and health care. He praised the volunteer support over the years for the hospital, emphasizing an escalating need for volunteer assistance in the future. He felt that Inverness County is one place where the givers outnumber the takers. (For more details see page five.)

To the people of Lake and Glen:

A thank you!

from Pieter and Georgi de Vries

A decade has passed since we first criss-crossed Inverness County, in search of a community to spend a year of sabbatical research. We did not, and could not, then, anticipate the extent to which this land, and its people, would become the focus of our lives. Now, ten years later and with the end of our second sabbatical leave regrettably in sight, we want to express our gratitude to all those who have helped us this past year.

During our first year in East Lake Ainslie we collected numerous life histories, in order to gains insights into how people in rural Cape Breton have coped with changing economic circumstances. We learned to appreciate the many and ingenious ways in which limited resources were used to produce the strengths and vitalities that characterize its people and communities.

For this second year of study we planned a comparative study of two communities. We chose East Lake Ainslie and Skye Glen because of the rather different ways they have developed in recent decades. Our plan was to collect detailed information on persons listed in the 1871 census and all their descendants born in the two communities since then. This would involve collecting data on a total of about 3600 people, from various sources, such as the censuses of 1871, 1881 and 1891, as well as archival records. Most important, the study would rely on the wealth of knowledge of, especially older, members of the communities about their families. A generous grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada made it possible to carry out our plans.

A research award from the Secretary of State enabled us to extend our work beyond what was initially planned. We decided we would also look at the history of land in the two communities. Did land change hands? Did the lots become larger, or smaller, over the many decades since settlement? Like a large and complicated puzzle, the pieces of information about individuals and the land on which they lived are fitted together to tell the stories of life in the two communities. Such stories are well worth telling because they give us insights into the complexities of historical processes. Understanding history requires pain-staking analysis of both the ever-changing circumstances of life and of the ways people cope with those circumstances.

This leads us to another aspect of our work this year. In addition to family history and the history of land, we have added folklore to our study of East Lake Ainslie and Skye Glen. This concerns the tales of people and events that are handed down from generation to generation. To collect them is important for a number of reasons. First, they give us insights into life, both past and present, that are impossible to gain otherwise. For stories are not just stories, but expressions of values and meanings about life in a particular community or area. Secondly, there is a danger that they will be lost, as changing lifestyles allow less opportunity for story telling. By recording stories we ensure their availability to future generations.

As our project grew, so did the contributions by our research assistants. Catherine MacLean first worked with us on a part time basis during the pilot phases of our family history project. Since September she has worked full time, at first in East Lake Ainslie and now in the Skye Glen area, collecting information and successfully managing the increasingly complex database. Edward Campbell has worked on the land aspect of our study, spending many, often tedious but very productive hours, piecing together the story of land in the two communities. Our third research assistant, Mary Anne Ducharme, has recently joined us to work on the folklore project. We thank each one for valuable contributions towards the success of our research this year. We would also like to express our gratitude to Barrie Fraser and Jim St. Clair, for generously sharing their materials and knowledge with us.

Our work this year could not be done without the help of the many in East Lake Ainslie, Skye Glen, and elsewhere, who have so freely and generously given of their time to share their knowledge of family and community history with us. We feel extremely privileged and honoured to have been given stewardship of this information. It permits us to contribute, along with others, to the accumulation of historical source material on this part of Cape Breton Island. To the people of Lake and Glen, a sincere Thank You for your continuing assistance.

Touring Company to present two French comedies

La Societe St-Pierre will sponsor the presentation of two French language plays in Cheticamp on May 10th. "La Compagnie Viola Leger." an Atlantic touring theatre company from Moncton will present the comedies "NEXT" and "ADAPTATION," at the Cheticamp NDA School Auditorium at 8:00 pm. The main goal of this theatre company is to promote French language theatre in all the Acadian regions of Atlantic Canada as well as in interested English communities.

Tickets for the May 10th presentation in Cheticamp are on sale at Les Trois Pignons. Tickets will also be sold at the door. For further information: call 224-2642.

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