Partici-Paper

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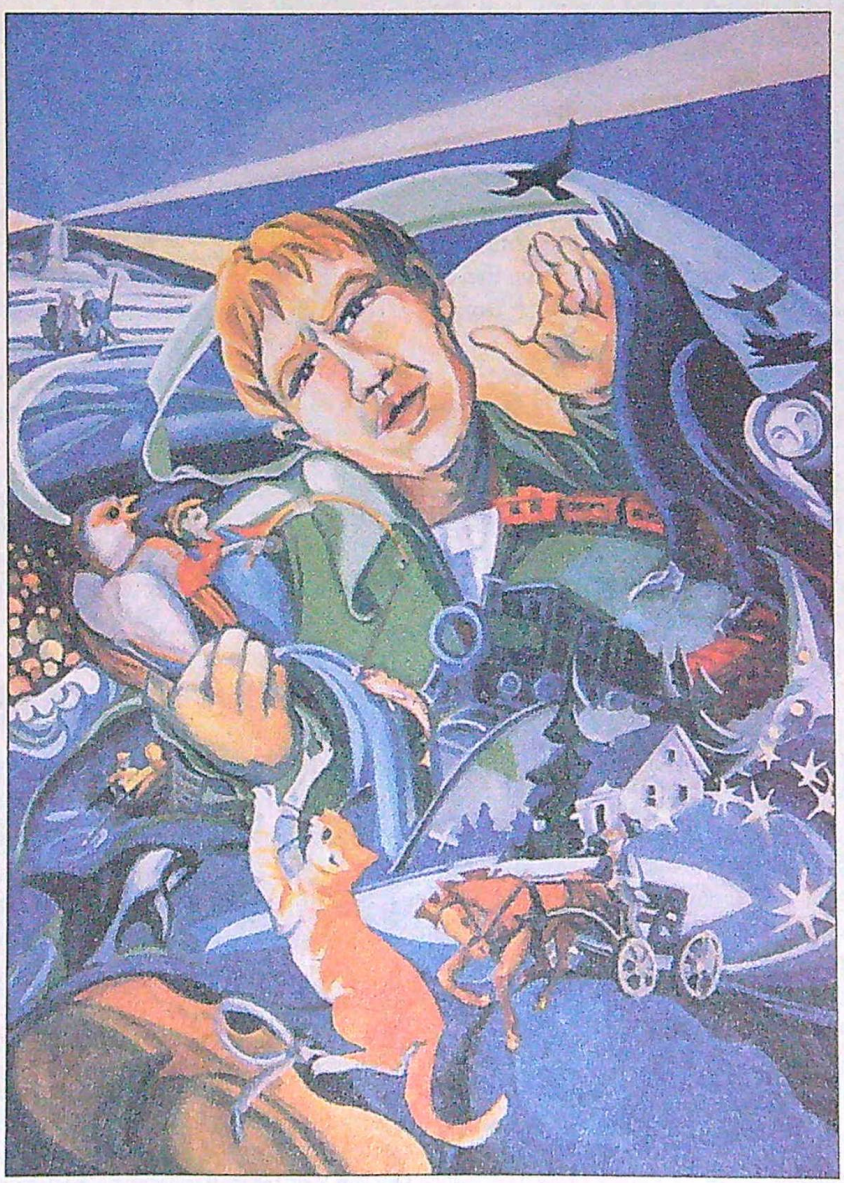

Painting by Virginia McCoy of Inverness

Roots of the Story Teller

Director's Desk

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM– Provincial Competition for 1999!

The County has been invited to participate in a Provincial Communities in Bloom for 1999. We would like to hear from communities who would be interested in representing Inverness County in this competition!

In 1995, the Municipality participated in the National Communities in Bloom competitions and received praise for its "best citizen involvement in municipal beautification." Six communities in the County took the initiative and set out to work with homeowners, businesses and organizations on improving their own properties and helping clean and beautify their community in general. And since then, some smaller Communities in Bloom projects have continued in a few communities. The benefits of all the work and effort that go into the competition stay in the community, enhancing its appearance for visitors and improving the quality of life for the people who live there.

For further information you can contact Donna MacDonald at the Recreation/Tourism office.

WINTER/SPRING EVENTS BROCHURE

The 1999 Winter/Spring Events Brochure is now in circulation throughout the County, listing many events sponsored by the non-profit organizations. We encourage the public to support events in their area. If your organization has any upcoming events and you weren't able to list them in our brochure, please notify our office and we would be pleased to help promote your activities as best we can.

REGISTRATION: COURSES & WORKSHOPS

Registration Week for courses that will take place during late winter & spring by the Recreation/Tourism Department will take place during the week of February 8-12. The February issue of *Partici-Paper* will feature all the details on programs available in County communities. New instructors and new program ideas are always welcome. Contact us with your program ideas!

The Recreation/Tourism Department's mandate is to develop and enhance opportunities in culture, recreation, tourism and adult education in Inverness County.

You are always welcome to drop in the office, located in the Municipal Building (Court House) in Port Hood. If groups or individuals are interested in a meeting to gather information or discuss ideas about activities, we will gladly arrange this with you. Call 787-2274, Fax 787-310. Or e-mail rectour@invernessco.com. You may also write to us at Inverness County Recreation/Tourism, PO Box 179, Port Hood, Nova Scotia, BOE 2WO.

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Next deadline: January 11, 1999

Partici-Paper

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***Partici-Paper* is published six times a year by the Inverness County Department of Recreation and Tourism, John Cotton, Director.**

Contributions of letters, information, articles, photos, promotion of non-profit events, artwork, stories and poems are welcome.

The publication is a service for the residents of Inverness County. Other subscribers:$8.00 per year Canadian funds. $9.00 per year for the U.S.

Make your checks payable to the **RECREATION/TOURISM DEPARTMENT**, c/o Donna MacDonald, Box 179, Municipal Building, Port Hood, Nova Scotia, BOE 2WO.Phone: 1-902-787-2274.

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The baby who came over the mountain
A true story

by Jim St.Clair

The winds of December gathered from every direction and released their wintry rage across Cape Breton Island from Framboise to Belle Cote, from Bear Island to Meat Cove. In the centre of the Island along the shores of Lake Ainslie, a human drama was unfolding, an event recalled around firesides to this day.

At the end of nine months of a difficult and worrisome pregnancy, a young woman was about to give birth to her first child. The midwife and her helper were apprehensive, for the baby seemed oddly positioned, the mother was not in good health, and it seemed unlikely she would have sufficient milk for her infant.

In those days of the 1840's, mother's milk ignited the vital spark of life for an infant, and the lack of it meant certain death no matter how healthy the baby might be at birth. No formula or powdered substitutes were known.

The young woman weakened visibly as she labored hour after hour. All was in readiness: a warm house; a supply of hot water; warmed blankets and a devoted husband. But the lines of tension tightened on the face of the midwife as she anxiously tended the new mother.

Meanwhile, twenty miles away in a snug valley at the base of Campbell's Mountain, a three day old child eagerly nursed at his mother's breast. A third child, the plump infant was secure and unaware of the danger to his newborn cousin on the other side of Lake Ainslie. Sated, for a short while, he held his mother's little finger in his tiny fist, and then slept contentedly in his cradle by the bedside of his parents. The snow piled up on the dooryard and the night was filled with wild wind.

At Lake Ainslie, however, sadness filled the house. For after two days of intense suffering, the young woman's life flickered into darkness just as her son came into the world. The infant too seemed exhausted after the difficult birth; it lacked the vigor to cry lustily as do most newborns in the first minutes of life. With tears in his own eyes, the young husband closed the eyelids of his wife. After the midwife had cleaned and swaddled the baby, he held his frail son who was too quiet. What to do? Wait for the baby also to die?

The midwife and her helper knew only of one nursing mother nearby -- the dead woman's sister, far away around the lake and over the mountain to Bridgend. But, they warned, it was too long a journey, there was too much snow, it was too cold, and there was too little time. A newborn would never survive it. Let the child suckle on a twist of cloth soaked in cow's milk, they instructed, but they wearily exchanged glances between themselves. There was little hope. Human newborns often sickened on cow's

milk. They did not know about bacteria and germs in those days, only that the infant failed to flourish, and soon succumbed to dehydration.

The young father, however, was desperate to keep alive all that remained of his dead wife. He and his brother went to the barn, harnessed the horse and filled the sleigh with hay. Wrapping the infant in layers of warmed blankets and placing him in a wooden box surrounded with warm bricks, father and uncle prepared to leave the warm shelter at Lake Ainslie for a dangerous journey over miles of snow-blocked roads.

Leaving the women to ready the body of the dead mother for burial, the men hastened into the darkness, not knowing how their trek would end. Three hours later, they arrived at the home of Elder Archibald Macdonald, behind the MacLean Church, and anxiously unwrapped the child to see if he had survived his journey. He was breathing well, and he opened his eyes to look at the face of his father for the first time. But there was no milk for him in this household and after warming themselves and the infant, and against the advice of the Macdonalds, they left again in the small hours of the night. Because the snow and wind were still lashing across the countryside, and the drifts were too deep for the sleigh, the two men decided to continue on horseback. The father strapped the infant snugly under his coat for warmth and protection, but the weather was bitterly cold. Over the small mountain between Stewartdale and Bridgend, they guided their weary horses as they plunged through snow in the intense darkness. It would be all too easy to become disoriented and lost. The child had begun to whimper feebly, his body cooling and limp; his energies waning rapidly. It was clear that he would not survive much longer without his first milk.

But as light began in the east, the storm mercifully abated, and they found their way to the dooryard they had risked so much to reach. A star could be seen in the western sky.

The father awakened the family, and his sister-in-law at once recognized her early morning caller with his small burden. It could only mean one thing: her sister had died. With tears in her eyes, she took her infant nephew to her breast, and soon he was desperately suckling, his instincts for survival and his vital forces strengthening with each swallow. There was ample nourishment for him, as well as for his small cousin.

And so it was that a baby came over the mountain on a stormy night in the middle of December. And so it was that a "child was born" and wrapped in swaddling clothes, a story as old as humankind. The child grew, prospered, and in his time became a father himself. He was remembered by his elders and by his descendants as "the baby who came over the mountain from Lake Ainslie."

Miracles of a modest sort do happen. Hope is rekindled and love survives, both in stories, and in life.

Artwork: page 3: from Dover Archives. This page: from the painting *Maternité*, 1903 by Pablo Picasso. The original is in the Picasso Museum in Barcelona.

Rural Art & The Urban Machine

by Mary Anne Ducharme

Two entities live side by side uncomfortably. They need each other, but they don't trust or understand each other, and they don't even speak the same language.

The first is the rural artist. The more or less subtle pressure that permeates the rural landscape is that if you want opportunity and success, go down the pike. But it is the rural setting that speaks so powerfully and spiritually to some people; it is the essential spark of who they are.

Respect the rural artist well. Here are the roots of music, visual art, dance, literature, film, and other callings that define the uniqueness of a place and set it apart from global blending. It took the rural environment to foster the artist, and years for the artist to master the discipline. The language of this artist is composed of words and concepts such as "metaphor" and "passion."

The second is the urban machine.

This machine is created for the brokerage of art commodities, and it exists invariably in the city. Respect the broker well. This is the wellspring of grants, funding, and the means of production without which all art goes begging.

In government, the rural artist has at least token value in the marketplace of political agenda. But for the most part, government centers are urban and that is the environment which they know best, and rural issues become fringe elements in policy-making. Very little rural development in the arts has been accomplished by government "from the top."

Non-government arts groups have labored mightily in Nova Scotia in raising awareness and advocating culture and the arts. Consultants have come to rural areas upon occasion so that we can help them "articulate priorities to guide decision-making." But these people are not are not well-known here, and it requires considerable effort to explain their complicated strategies played out in the urban arena. In their long struggles with government, they have adopted the language of obfuscation– the rubbery argot of terms such as "key goal result areas." When they leave with their information, the old, tired issues identified decades ago for rural areas remain unaddressed.

In private business, the value of an artist, with few exceptions, is represented either in "the bottom line" or being perceived as good corporate citizens. Arts agents and promoters are interested only in successful clients (i.e. profitable), and they are on board for the gravy train. If the client is taking risks and fickle popularity wanes, then the broker is off to greener pastures.

These entities rarely offer a support structure for the development of the art they are eager to sell in the marketplace.

The 'art-is-money' machine is designed to bend marketable artists to its own perimeters. Broker language is composed of words and concepts such as "analysis of target markets." Artists, they perceive, are eccentric, sometimes outrageous, they defy the norms, and press the buttons of society. The broker complains that the artist is not business-like enough.

To the artist, the machine is anti-art.

Except in rare individuals, it is not the nature of the broker to be artistic, or the nature of the artist to be a broker. The history of art is cluttered with stories of starving, spurned writers, artists, and musicians who once dead, become greatly revered. Dead poets are safer than live ones.

It is said that Nova Scotia culture is the fastest growing sector, providing 1 in 20 jobs.
It is true that a few performers from rural Cape Breton have achieved international success and fame. Nonetheless, the biggest patron of rural arts, unofficially, remains unemployment insurance.