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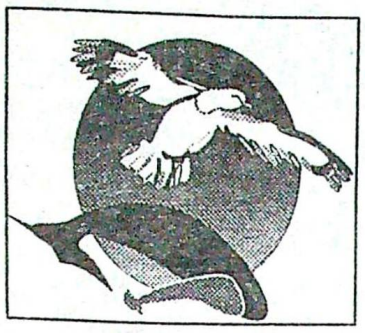

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Literacy Conference "a triumph, a first step"

by Mary Anne Ducharme

In September Sr. Catherine MacNeil presented Francene Gillis with the Laubach Literacy of Canada Outstanding Service Award for her sustained efforts in the cause of literacy.

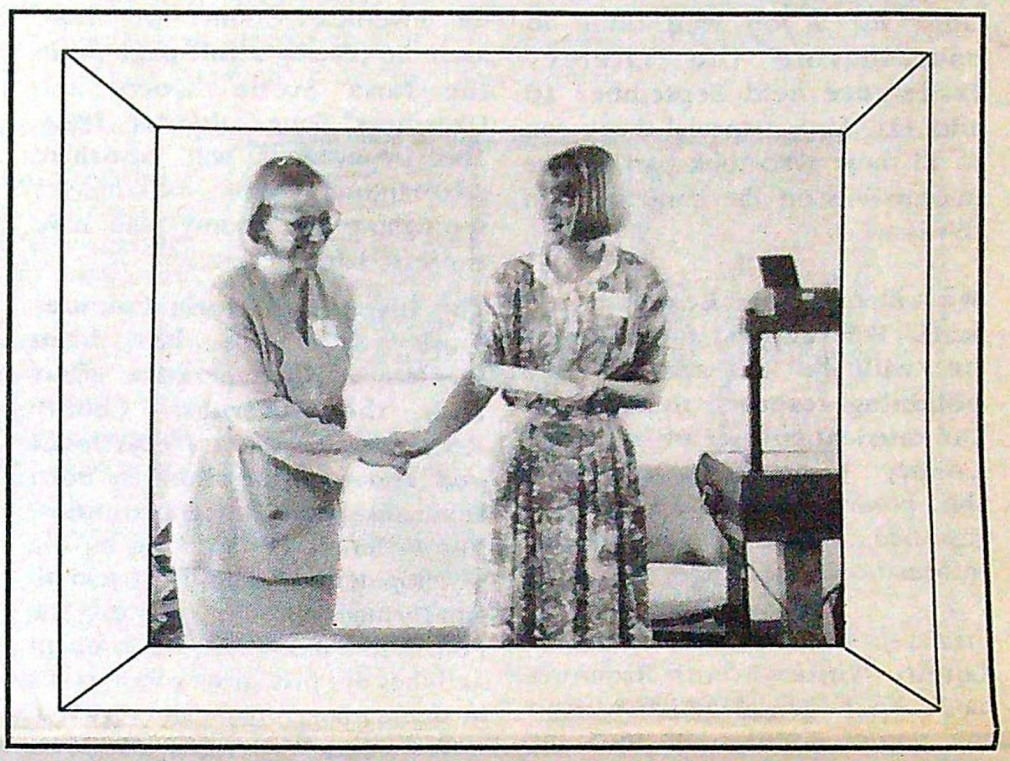
The occasion was a conference "Billy Can't Read," at the Mabou Renewal Centre on September 10th and 11th. This event was to acknowledge the importance of reading, writing and math skills in everyday life, a theme of International Literacy Day on September 8.

Also receiving the award was John Cotton of the Inverness County Recreation/Tourism Department who formed a literacy network in cooperation with the Inverness District School Board in 1991, and with funding provided by the National Literacy Secretariat.

Francene was pleased with the conference, and described it as a triumph -- a first step in addressing the County's needs in literacy education. The Inverness County Adult Tutoring Network is comprised of 12 local committees with approximately 150 volunteers interested in literacy. However, she recognizes that there are flaws in the network which is in its infancy, and at present the eager volunteers need to find better ways with connecting with students. At present there are only about 50 learners in the program, a problem that Francene identifies as a lack of self-esteem among those who need help to achieve a greater level of literacy. "Attitudes are slow in changing, " she explains, " and many learners have spent years hiding their problem. They are often insecure, afraid to come out and openly admit that they need help. It takes time to build trust. We have to get the message out that the program is learner-centred -- that is, we do everything possible to allow the learner to take control -- to say what it is that he or she wants to learn, and how. "

The conference was structured so that several groups interested in literacy could come away with concrete ideas about how to promote learner confidence. There was a session on family literacy of particular interest to parents; and sessions valuable to learners, tutors of adults, peer tutors within the school systems, literacy advocates, and others.

Sr. Catherine MacNeil, ended the conference with encouragement, and insight based on experience in the adult literacy field in Mabou, and now in New Glasgow. She formed the St. Joseph's Literacy Council in Mabou and was chairperson and coordinator for three years. She also tutored and established a resource library for the Mabou Council. Over 20 adults from Mabou, Inverness and Port Hood have benefitted from her program.



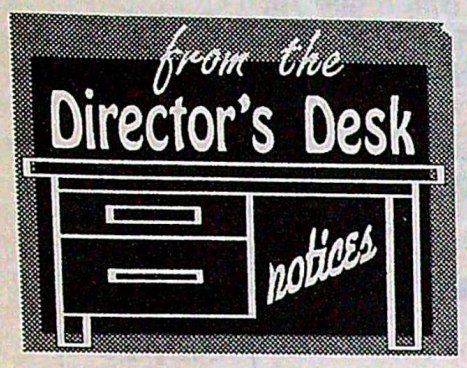
On September 10th and 11th, was the first Inverness County Adult Literacy Tutoring Conference at the Mabou Renewal Centre. Coordinator Francene Gillis, greets Sharon MacCuspic of the Department of Education and Extension Services, Literacy Section.

"Real education takes a learner where he is and helps him go where he wants to go," she says. "We are teaching literacy to free people to be themselves, to achieve their own vision of fulfilment. We have to be affirming and warm; we have to recognize that we are dealing with smart, competent people with considerable life experience who have slipped through the cracks of the education system and have suffered because they couldn't read or express themselves as they wish."

However, she cautions against creating false expectations: literacy is not necessarily a passport to better jobs, and jobs are not the ultimate object of literacy. There are many highly literate people who have lost jobs in these past few years in this region, and she does not believe that illiteracy is higher here than elsewhere in Canada. She says that the placing blame solely on literacy is both simplistic and untrue. "Inverness County has a glorious past that deserves a future. If we are to act as one in creating good changes, we need the wisdom of all of us."

At the conference, the key word, according to Francene Gillis was the word "enabling." She believe that "we have to enable people to deal with their concerns and problems effectively. Literacy is one of the tools to that end."

Congratulations to Francene Gillis and John Cotton, and all those who participated in this worthwhile conference. **(SEE ALSO PAGE NINE)**



Congratulations to Francene Gillis for a job well done in coordinating the Literacy Conference held September 10 and 11! Also, a special thank you to all those who took part. More information on the conference in this issue.

We welcome Joey Beaton to our staff. For the next four months he will be researching and obtaining resource material on the musical culture of Inverness County. This research may lead to the possibility of developing a resource centre to house the information collected.

Preparations for the **Inverness County Winter Events Brochure** have begun. The deadline to have *any winter events put into the brochure is* **NOVEMBER 5TH.** See the ad on this page for more information on the brochure.

Please note that the Recreation/Tourism Department will be sponsoring **Winterfest Activities** again in 1994. We would like to encourage community groups and individuals throughout the county to become involved. The Recreation/Tourism Department will provide assistance in planning and promotion. If you have any questions please give our office a call.

The Recreation/Tourism Department for Inverness County will once again be placing **a full page ad in the Nova Scotia "Doers and Dreamers" Tour Guide for 1994.** The Department will cost-share advertising with businesses throughout the county who have expressed an interest.

The Inverness/Victoria Counties Trails Federation has been formed in a cooperative effort with the Inverness County Recreation/Tourism Department and snowmobile clubs in both Inverness and Victoria counties. The Federation is working on the development of a trails system to run throughout both counties. The Federation has hired a consultant and they are presently working on a business plan. Anyone interested in *trail development* can contact the Recreation/Tourism Department in Port Hood, or any member of the county snowmobile clubs.

Inverness County Winter Events Brochure '94

We are collecting information on events between December '93 and May '94 for a brochure distributed this November.

Please send details of your public events whether indoors or outdoors, one day, weekly, or ongoing.

Deadline for receiving information: November 5, 1993

Send us the name of the event, date, time, admission fee, and sponsor.
For further information contact:

Winter Events Brochure

Inverness County Recreation/Tourism
P.O. Box 179, Port Hood, Nova Scotia, BOE 2WO
Phone: 787-2274

Over 1,000 places of worship are in existence in Nova Scotia, many of which are over a century old. They are an important part of our Province's cultural and architectural heritage and in many communities they stand as the major landmark which helps to provide identity for that community. The Church Conservancy of Nova Scotia is a non-governmental organization for the conservation of religious building and sites across the Province.

Since the founding in 1989, the Church Conservancy has taken steps towards the recognition of this heritage. It has adopted a mission statement which outlines its purpose and objectives and presented lectures, workshops, church tours and has given advice to congregations on church conservancy.

This fall the Church Conservancy is offering a workshop on researching and writing church history on Saturday, October 16 at the Trinity United Church Hall in Mahone Bay. On the Friday before, there will be a short AGM 7 pm to 8 pm at the St. James Anglican Church Hall, followed by a tour of the historic churches of Mahone Bay. All sessions are open to the public with a registration fee of $20.00 which includes Saturday lunch.

For further information, contact The Church Conservancy of Nova Scotia, c/o The Federation of N.S. Heritage, 1809 Barrington Street, Suite 901, Halifax, B3J 3K8. Or you may contact Ms. E.C. Ross, President, 23 Kirk Road, Halifax, B3P 1A5, phone: 477-7342.

church conservancy
OF NOVA SCOTIA

Researching & Writing Church History Workshop

Saturday, October 16
1993 Mahone Bay,
Trinity United Church Hall
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Registration: $20.00
includes lunch

Partici-Paper

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We welcome letters, contributed articles, and photos from all who love Inverness County, its people and heritage

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