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A letter from the editor

DAVE MACNEIL

participaper@invernesscounty.ca

Community festivals from one end of Inverness County to the other experienced a revival of sorts during this past summer, thanks to the efforts of hundreds of dedicated volunteers.

Many of the festivals benefitted from an infusion of new volunteers, who brought with them new ideas. But there's something else happening with community festivals in this county that bodes well, not only for the events themselves, but for the municipality as a whole.

Shannon MacLean, first-time festival chair for Port Hood's Chestico Days, is a great example of how the summer festival circuit is gradually becoming an important economic driver in Inverness County. MacLean recently returned to the county after living away for three decades. But even during those 30 years away, MacLean always made sure to return for Chestico Days each summer.

Summer festivals capture Inverness County at its best, as volunteers give of themselves to help foster a real sense of community. It's that longing for home and community that is prompting people like MacLean to look to Inverness County as a place to make a life – and not a place to leave to pursue opportunities elsewhere.

Having served for many years as important fundraising opportunities for local arenas, clubs and other services enjoyed by county residents, festivals are now directly influencing many people's decisions to make the county their home.

Jen Ryan, one of the lead organizers of this year's Inverness Gathering, says she's seeing it in her own extended family, as the lure of the community festival draws many who left the area for opportunities elsewhere to return here permanently.

It's one week out of 52 in a year, but community festivals couldn't provide a better blueprint for how life could be the other 51 weeks, as communities come together to celebrate themselves.



Cover Photo: Skiers at the Deepdale Trestle on the Inverness Shean Section of the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail. *Photo by Adam Hill*
Courtesy of Destination Cape Breton

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Chief Administrative Officer's message

KEITH MACDONALD
INVERNESS COUNTY CAO

Inverness County is home to a diversity of cultures, and many volunteer organizations across the county are involved in preserving, interpreting and celebrating the unique mix of heritages that our ancestors bequeathed us, here in Unama'ki – Cape Breton.

This summer for example, costumed interpreters brought some authentic old-style Acadian culture to the visitors of Mkwesagtuk – Cap-Rouge campground in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Starting in this issue, French language content will feature in each issue of the *The Participaper* to reflect the vibrancy of the Acadian community here in the municipality. Turn to page 30 to read the first of these, about the animations at Cap-Rouge. (If your French *n'est pas très bon*, you'll find an English translation on the new digital version of the magazine. Check it out at participaperonline.ca.)

In this issue we also check in on several activities in the Gaelic community here in the municipality that demonstrate the ongoing vitality of that culture here in Alba Nuadh – New Scotland. Local people come together in various ways to preserve and explore the language, song and material culture of the Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia, and are always welcoming to people who are interested to get involved.

Folks from further afield are also keen to come to the county to immerse themselves in Gaelic culture, and this fall a new educational institution welcomed its first cohort of students from across Canada and beyond. Beinn Mhàbu is offering the program Gaelic Foundations – Living Cultures to students enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies program in partnership with Cape Breton University (CBU).

And down in Antigonish, Inverness County expatriates at StFX have recently formed a Musical Coast Society to promote and celebrate the sunset side of Cape Breton Island even beyond its borders. Well done to those enterprising young people!

Happy holidays!

The Participaper

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Community festivals rebound, revisit heydays

BY DAVE MACNEIL



Community festivals can often be overlooked as an economic driver, but if Inverness County's 2023 summer festival season is any indication, they'll only grow in importance in coming years.

Nowhere is the economic impact of a community festival felt more than in the village of Inverness, where the Inverness Gathering has been a mainstay for decades. One of the festival volunteers, Jen Ryan, says this year's event had participants feeling quite nostalgic.

"People kept saying 'this is the Gathering I remember from my childhood' and I think that's what the organizing committee wanted, to bring back something that really held such a special place in our lives," Jen says.

"Coming out of Covid, people are realizing how important it is to have those opportunities to connect, and to come together to celebrate our community and each other," she adds, noting that while they foster a sense of community, summer festivals can provide so much more.

It's a tradition with the Inverness Gathering to have each day of the festival include an event that's a major fundraiser for a local organization, like the Monday golf tournament which raises funds for the local arena.

"We'd never dream of messing with that tradition, but we did come up with lots of different ways to add new events, especially for kids and families," Jen says. "So many people come home for that week, and it's a nice time for families to get out. We want all these people to feel that connection to our community. Some of those kids really connect with these places and they come back."

She says it's that connection to the community that has prompted many who have moved away to return.

"I see it in my own family, the nieces and nephews who came home every summer, they're moving here, and they're getting jobs here," Jen notes.

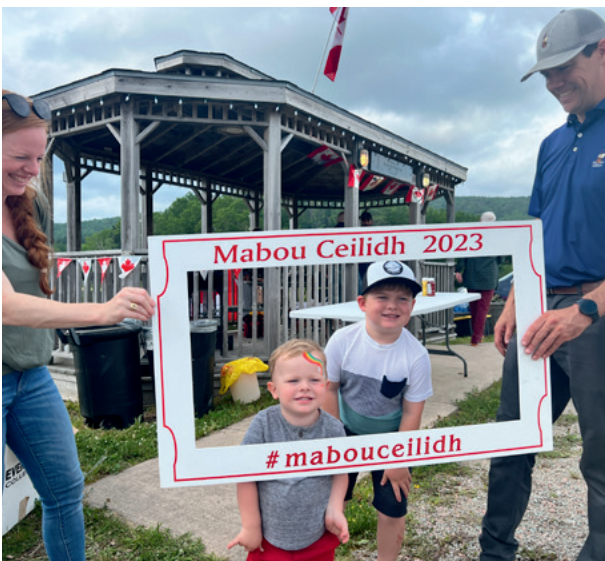
The same thing is happening in Port Hood with the annual Chestico Days celebration. First-time festival chair Shannon MacLean, who recently returned to the area and is now employed by the Municipality of Inverness County, says she knows many people who



An Drochaid Museum was the site of a traditional milling frolic during this year's Mabou Ceilidh Days.



There was something for all ages at this year's Whycocomagh Summer Festival.



The Mabou Ceilidh picture frame helped to foster interest in this year's festival.

continue to travel home during the celebration and get involved in organizing events.

"I was away for 30 years, and I always took my vacation for Chestico. I never imagined I'd be chairing it," Shannon recalls.

But it's not just ex-pat Port Hooders who are stepping up, as this year's festival saw a group of about 150 volunteers put together one of the most successful Chestico Days in recent memory.

"I didn't know what to expect, but Port Hood really showed up," Shannon says, noting that she got great support from former chairs and former Chestico committee members. "I got a lot of yeses. I thought I'd have to twist a lot of arms, but everyone stepped up."

Shannon says there were so many events that were well-attended, especially the harness racing, but she adds that the most pleasant surprise was seeing local youth get involved the way they did.

"We have a population that's aging and young people really came out and got involved this year, from age 12 on up," she says. "So when they say young people don't participate, well they did for Chestico."

Youth participation was also very visible in Whycocomagh, where the Whycocomagh Summer Festival was headed up by Michelle MacLean, another first-time organizer.

She says her committee made the decision early on that they would put a particular focus on local youth, both in terms of planning events they would enjoy and also getting them involved. To that end, they brought back the Youth Ambassador Program, in which Michelle herself participated years ago.

"We brought on about 14 students who were between the ages of 13 and 18, and they worked with us to prepare events, decorate, clean up, and to be there for the leads of the event," she explains.

"Because of Covid, a lot of the youth didn't have the opportunity to meet others within the community, so this was an opportunity for the students to get together, work within the community and meet business owners within the village, and to work with us so that we could provide mentorship."



Aspiring artists tested their skill during this Whycocomagh Summer Festival event.



The Festival de l'Escaouette Gala was enjoyed by a packed house.



Festival de l'Escaouette provided lots of reasons to get outside and enjoy the best of Acadian culture.



The fireworks display wasn't the only Whycocomagh Summer Festival event to go off with a bang.



The Mabou Ceilidh tug-of-war event proved popular with all ages.

Michelle says they also made a point of reaching out to surrounding communities and organizations, who were eager to host their own events as part of the festival.

“I grew up in Blues Mills, and I think it’s important to know that the Whycocomagh Summer Festival is also a festival for the surrounding communities as well,” she says. “Whycocomagh Education Centre is where all the students go to school, from Glendale to past Aberdeen, to Skye Glen and Nevada Valley. So I think it’s important to include different organizations that are within that region.”

“It was a real team effort,” she adds. “It really does take a community to pull off something like this.”

It was that same community effort that breathed new life into Mabou’s Ceilidh Days celebration, according to organizer Simon Beaton, who says a lot of new volunteers came forward to make that festival a resounding success.

Simon says his committee started meeting in the fall of 2022 to begin planning for this year’s festival, which also benefitted from returning to the Canada Day weekend after many years of being held in late July.

One of the keys to this year’s Ceilidh Days was the support of sponsors, who allowed them to offer many events for free, particularly for children.

“People find it hard financially to participate in the festival as a family, so that was a big thing for us,” Simon recalls. “We had so many sponsors, we were able to provide that.”

One of the sponsors, Eastern Fence, even provided free fencing for the outdoor “pig and whistle” held on the main festival grounds. He says Mother Nature, not always a reliable partner to summer festivals, nevertheless played a part in the success of that event.

With local summer festivals benefitting from the relaxing of Covid restrictions that hampered celebrations in recent years, one festival may look at returning to offering some events virtually to people who can’t be there in person.

Lisette Aucoin-Bourgeois, coordinator of Chéticamp’s Festival de l’Escaouette, says that 2023 was a very good year for this long-running highlight of the Acadian summer.

“Our gala on Sunday was a full house, it was packed,” she says. “We had more organizations with floats in the parade than we’ve had in years.”

“The reaction we’ve been getting from the community was that it felt like an older Festival de l’Escaouette,” she adds. “It’s four days long, and they’re pretty jam-packed.”

Lisette says organizers are working their way back up from some challenging days during the pandemic. But there was also a lot learned during those years, when the festival held many successful virtual events, which she says could be offered in future celebrations for people who can’t get back to Chéticamp every year.

“They couldn’t make it home, so they got to see all these musical events and local artists on our Facebook live,” she explains.

Another hit this year, she says, was the participation of musicians from the Magdalene Islands.

“We always bring musicians here from the Magdalene Islands. There’s a strong connection because of the fishing,” she adds. “Every time we bring musicians from there, it’s always well-attended. So we’re trying to build on that.”



A sand sculpture competition during Chestico Days provided just one more reason to spend the day at the beach.

Getting to know...

Beverly MacDonald

In this recurring series, we ask a municipal employee a few questions to get to know them better.

Where are you from?

Little Judique. I was born in a storm in a home across from my parents' house because we couldn't get to the hospital.

Where do you live?

I still live in Little Judique to this day.

What's your role with the municipality?

I'm the Manager of Collections. My main duties are to collect taxes and water bills.

What's your service time?

I've been here for 13 years. I love working with the people here.

What's your favourite thing about Inverness County?

I would have to say Boardwalk Beach in Port Hood. It's so peaceful and calming there.

What's your favourite shop/store/ service in Inverness County?

The Freshmart in Mabou. They usually have everything you need.

Finally, coffee or tea?

Coffee, never tea. I don't like the taste of it. Yuck!



Beverly MacDonald

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Local hiking trails a growing draw for tourists

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Celtic Shores Coastal Trail, Mabou

Visitors to Inverness County are increasingly leaving a trail behind them – a hiking trail that is.

While many visitor information centres (VICs) throughout the county are still waiting for tourism numbers to return to pre-Covid days, there's been a clear shift in visitors' habits when they tour the county.

Jean MacNeil at the Inverness visitor's centre says 2023 was a busy year, as they served more than 2,500 visitors, which is up from last year.

"What people are looking for is everything that's happening on this side of the island," Jean says. "Many head up towards Chéticamp, the Skyline Trail, all the trails. The trails have been huge this year – the Celtic Shores Coastal Trail and all the trails, and that's been since Covid."

Not everybody realizes that so much of the work that goes into maintaining the trail networks all around Inverness County is done by dedicated local volunteer organizations.

Jean says hiking saw a boost in popularity since the onset of the pandemic, as it offers a relatively safe activity. In Chéticamp, Jacqueline Burton says the visitors' centre there experienced a real shift in traffic, with visitors taking advantage of cooler weather in the fall for hiking.

Jacqueline says September saw 300 more visitors to her centre, compared to the same month in 2022, adding that they served 10,454 travellers this year, a number similar to last season.

"Everybody goes to the park to do the hiking trails," she explains. "It's actually busier in September and October than it is May and June."

It's the same story in the Margarees, where the VIC in Margaree Forks catered to crowds of visitors in 2022 who were looking for hiking and walking trails. Mary MacNeil, who runs that centre, says they advised more than 5,000 visitors this season, which is still far off the more than 10,000 they'd see prior to Covid.

Mary suggests some of the reason for the lower numbers is that, in years past, people did not rely on digitally formatted information as they do today.

"I will say that many people still want print information and brochures, especially in an area like Margaree where satellite and cellular service can be unreliable," she adds.

She says travelers ask about four main categories: outdoor experiences, cultural experiences, dining, and natural sights reflecting the beauty of local topography.

"People were most interested in hiking or walking trails, adventures on the Margaree River, Celtic music and the Gaelic language, seafood specialties and local artisans," she notes. "Egypt Falls, Cape Clear, the beaches, the Dancing Goat, Larch Wood Enterprises, square dances, and musical events at the Barn on the grounds of the Normaway Inn were sought-after destinations."

"As well, a river tour with Live Life In Tents and catching a trout at Old Miller Trout Farm were very popular. As the season progressed, the lure of the Atlantic salmon brought many visitors to the area, some of which have been returning to the area for generations. The Margaree Salmon Museum is a highlight for visitors and has been for over 50 years."

Mary says along with the growing popularity of hiking, the Celtic Colours music festival is also a big reason why tourists are visiting the region later in the season.

The provincial visitor information centre in Port Hastings doesn't track the number of travelers using its facility who are intending to visit Inverness County. But their numbers do also reflect the region's struggle to return to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019, when 84,163 visitors used the Port Hastings centre.



The annual Glendale Scottish Concert is one of the many events that bring visitors to the region each summer.

That number dropped dramatically in 2020 to 8,992 but rose substantially in 2021 to 32,377 and again in 2022 to 65,090. But with 55,546 visitors by the end of September this year, it appears that growth is stalling.

The newest visitors' centre in the county is in Mabou, where Mabou Communications operated a VIC out of the old post office building for the first time in 2023. Jimmy Cummings, chair of the community-owned company, says their office had been serving unofficially as a visitors' centre for years, given its location beside the busy Red Shoe Pub in the centre of the village.

"The idea of setting up a visitor information centre at the post office came from the community as a way we could help the business grow," Jimmy explains. "That led to approaching the local municipal councillor to make a formal request."

Jimmy says the centre was late in getting set up in 2023, but he looks forward to being fully operational in 2024. He says they received a great deal of help from other visitors' centres in the county and of course from the municipality.

"They provided us with brochures, and booklets and maps and that sort of stuff, but again because we were late, we didn't really get approved till the middle of May," he says, adding that "next year, we hope to get up to speed with proper signage and tourism materials."



Warden Bonny MacIsaac and Inverness MLA Allan MacMaster (far left of photo), with municipal staff and local sports club organizers, scoped out the site of the future multi-court facility.



Phase one of multicourt project to ramp up in 2024

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Pickleball enthusiasts in Inverness County could have three new courts on which to enjoy their sport as early as 2024.

The courts are part of phase one of a multicourt project being undertaken by the Municipality of Inverness County. This first phase will also include a basketball court, a games area, parking, and accessible pathways.

Funding for the project was made available last spring by the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, and a procurement process has been launched to hire contractors to complete the work. The new recreation facility is being designed to serve all Inverness County residents. It'll be located on land owned by the municipality, adjacent to the Inverness Education Centre/Academy and the Ned MacDonald Memorial Ball Field, with public access off MacLean Street.

Melanie Meagher-Beaton, Deputy CAO with the municipality, says the construction contracts could be awarded early enough to allow for the start of construction in December. She notes a December start would be totally dependent on weather, and that it's possible work won't begin until the spring of 2024.

"We are still striving to deliver what was promised in phase one (during the 2024 construction season)," Meagher-Beaton says.

Phase two of the development will include a second basketball court, two tennis courts, a covered seating area and amenities building.

"Work is underway to see how the second phase will roll out," Meagher-Beaton says. "We're currently working with David Greenwell of M3D Design to design the amenities building. It's hoped the amenities building will house a kiosk and have space for a canteen, equipment storage, washrooms, and locker facilities."

"So that building is currently in design, and we're hoping to have it at a level of readiness to apply for the next round of funding," she explains. "But phase two is highly dependent upon funding availability."

"We've always known it would be a multi-year commitment to get it all finished," Meagher-Beaton says. "I would say the focus for phase two would be from 2025 to 2026. But of course that depends upon timing for completion of phase one, and on securing grant funding to offset the capital cost. There are a lot of moving parts, but we're determined to get to the finish line."

The multicourt project is being built in response to the need for access to non-structured physical activity, which Inverness County residents communicated to the municipality through a recent recreation and wellness survey. It was conceived to serve all Inverness County residents, visiting sports teams, as well as seasonal visitors to the county.



Above: Potted bulbs bring a dose of spring cheer to a winter day. Opposite: geraniums are an old reliable standard, and for good reason!

Hunkering down for winter

BY CAROLINE CAMERON

On the hearth of the new year, we look toward to next year's garden, but what can the gardener do at this time, but consult the seed catalogues and scheme? Well, there are actually many things we can do over the winter to keep connected to the world of plants.

The first item on the list is to ensure that the garden is well put to bed. If the snow has not settled in for the long haul, we can clean up our gardens and mulch around tender plants. They say that we had best leave most of the litter on the beds through the winter, and mulch after the ground is frozen, so that the roots stay frozen, rather than thawing frequently through the winter when the temperatures rise.

Myself, I do neaten the garden beds a bit, so that the litter is easily removed in the spring. I leave any attractive seed heads standing, and there is much more to say about the importance of mulching – particularly during bare winters – but that is for another time.

If you want to open up a new bed, you can gather materials to mulch the area now, or as soon as there is bare ground. Grass that is prevented from sprouting in the spring will not recover, except by seed.

Pruning is another late-winter task for many trees, although spring-blooming shrubs like forsythia and lilac would lose all their blossom buds if pruned now. It's best to prune these after they finish blooming and before the next years' buds develop.

For the benefit of the last-minute Christmas shoppers, or for next year, I can't pass up a chance to talk about plants as gifts. Here is some guidance on some popular gift plants.

House plants are often perennial, and can survive for years indoors, but they cannot survive our cold winters outside. However, a few of the popular Christmas gift plants can be enjoyed in the house, and then can be planted outside permanently. Potted tulips and daffodils are examples, and paperwhites offer especially showy winter blossoms, and can be moved out to the garden permanently in the spring.

Some articles recommend hellebores, or Christmas rose, which I have no experience with as houseplants, but they are wonderful in the garden. If I come upon one potted for the holidays, I will certainly give it a try.

Of the Christmas gifts that certainly can't be put out for the winter, a favourite is the boxed amaryllis bulb. When planted, the bulb sends up a blossom first, and then its leaves, which subsequently die back before its next season. It provides a great show during January as it sprouts its massive blooms. Amaryllis can spend the summer outside but must come inside in the fall. If allowed to go dormant each fall (less water until its leaves die back), it will come back to bloom for years.

Christmas cactus is an old-fashioned favourite because it was easily shared among friends. It provides a flush of blossoms and, after it blooms, it benefits from being placed in a cooler, drier state for a few months, to simulate winter in its natural desert habitat.

Poinsettias provide such a show during the Christmas season, but I have never yet succeeded in bringing them back to bloom for their second year. Maybe it would require a little more attention and fussing from me.

Other easy and popular houseplants include the coleus, with its multi-coloured leaves, known as Jacob's coat, or Coat of many colours. Rose-scented geraniums also provide pretty foliage with a lovely scent. The geranium that we are most familiar with (actually named pelargonium) is a reliable favourite that can travel out to the garden for the summer. Begonias of all styles can be dependable, and it is pretty difficult to slow down the trailing spiderwort, or the dainty spider plant. All of these can spend their summers outside but, with the exception of the geraniums, they enjoy a shady spot.



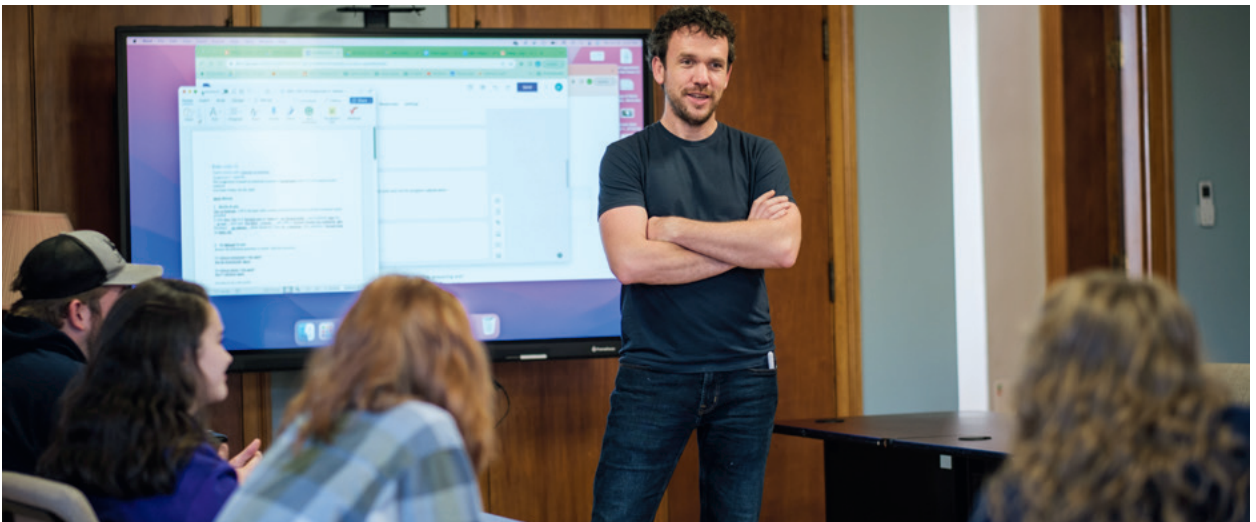
I have found it difficult to establish a good watering routine for some houseplants, swinging between too-wet conditions, and then drying beyond recovery. My experience with cyclamen, rosemary, Norfolk Island pine, and English ivy have been disappointing, simply because they sometimes require just a little more attention, or perhaps the conditions in my house are not quite right.

We tend to kill house plants with kindness and, by that, I mean overwatering. Another pitfall is not watching for signs of distress. Pale leaves can mean too little or too much water, but also that it is time for a bit of fertilizer, if it is in an actively growing phase.

Winter homes pose very dry conditions for plants, and as the days lengthen in March, monitor for aphids, or the fine webs of spider mites. Both pests can be controlled easily with soap and water, and the plant may be moved to a cooler spot.

Happy indoor and outdoor gardening!

Caroline Cameron lives in Strathlorne, and offers gardening and guiding services around Cape Breton Island. Please submit any gardening tips, questions, and news to strathlorne@gmail.com and visit Facebook at Nature/Nurture Gardening & Hiking.



(Clockwise from top left): Ryan MacDonald is manager and director of CBFM, an internet-based radio station owned by Colaisde na Gàidhlig and broadcasting from the Beinn Mhàbu campus. Leslie and Phil Cormier operate the dining room at Beinn Mhàbu, which has also begun serving the wider community with takeout and eat-in options. James MacIntyre of Mabou and Sarah Turnbull are two of the 11 students currently enrolled at the campus. Kenneth MacKenzie is a Gaelic language instructor at the campus, along with being its Director of Education. Rodney MacDonald, President of Colaisde na Gàidhlig, addresses the official opening of the campus.

Beinn Mhàbu opens doors, looks to become economic catalyst

BY DAVE MACNEIL

As Beinn Mhàbu enters the second half of its first year in operation, Gaelic College president Rodney MacDonald recalls a plan he envisioned 25 years ago to someday establish a school in Mabou.

“When I was teaching at Mabou Consolidated in the late 90s, I was taking a master’s course at StFX and I did a paper on putting a school in St. Joseph’s convent. I looked at the costs associated with it,” MacDonald remembers. “At the time I was thinking more of a traditional high school, but with the ability to also house international students.

“It wasn’t the same as what we’re doing now, for sure,” he laughs, noting that the money involved in getting the Mabou campus up and running went well beyond his original estimates as well.

“Little did I know at that time that a couple of years later I’d be in government, and that 20 years after that I’d be at the Gaelic College,” says MacDonald, who served as Nova Scotia’s 26th premier from 2006 to 2009 before taking the helm of the college.

Beinn Mhàbu officially opened its doors in September to 11 first-year students who are enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies program in partnership with Cape Breton University (CBU). The Gaelic Foundations and Living Cultures students, who are registered with both CBU and Beinn Mhàbu, come from Maine, Alberta, Manitoba, the regional municipalities of Halifax and Cape Breton, and from Inverness, Victoria and Antigonish counties.

“I’ve always had a belief in this building, and it’s potential,” MacDonald recalls, noting that virtually everyone in the community and surrounding areas had some sort of relationship with the Sisters of Notre Dame, who occupied the convent since it was erected in 1952.

When the sisters decided to sell the building in 2018, MacDonald approached the board of the Gaelic College as well as CBU with what he had in mind for the building.

“My understanding is that there were more than 25 groups interested in purchasing the building,” MacDonald says. “We were one of them and put forward a proposal, so we weren’t just putting forward a bid to buy the building.”

“And the sisters, to their credit, took an interest in the proposals,” he adds. “So the educational and cultural aspects for us were a nice alignment with their mandate over the years, and what they did in the village for education and culture.”

The sale to the Gaelic College was finalized in December 2019, with funding support from ACOA, the Municipality of Inverness County, and East Coast Credit Union. And then, in the spring of 2021, the Province of Nova Scotia announced \$1.9 million in funding to support the renovations required at the former convent.

The new school received yet another boost in May of this year, when Port Hawkesbury businessman Joe Shannon and his family announced a gift of \$1 million, which was to be used for the benefit of students at the campus.

“I’m certain that Beinn Mhàbu can be a catalyst for not only Mabou, but central Inverness County.”

“It’s all geared towards students – bursaries, the artist-in-residence program, and enhancements for the classrooms, like technology,” MacDonald says of the gift. “They were very clear on that. They wanted it to be for students and to grow the opportunity for the local students as well. So, the bursaries gave us a good starting point.”

He says all the students currently enrolled were supported by bursaries, noting that another bursary was established in the name of Fr. Angus Morris, who grew up in the Port Hood area, and also served as parish priest in Mabou.

“Following his passing in 2018, there was a generous donation made to the college,” he notes. “That’s a \$5,000 bursary over the next 10 years.”

The Gaelic College’s partnership with CBU is not new, MacDonald points out.

“We also offer a Gaelic immersion opportunity for second and third year students at CBU at the college in St. Ann’s each May, so students can come to the school and live for a month, and they take a full six credits, in just four weeks,” he explains, adding that same opportunity will be available to Beinn Mhàbu’s current students.

“When they’re finished in April, they can come for the month of May and get a full course in St. Ann’s.”

MacDonald says the students’ departure in April will provide Beinn Mhàbu with another opportunity to help the local community, as it’s planned to offer lodging for seasonal workers, noting he’d like to see all 28 rooms full from

May through August, before students return for classes in September.

“There are 28 rooms with their own washroom,” he says. “We hope to fill all the rooms, and we’re working on that now. We’ve been working on this since we purchased the building, in talking to some different operators who are quite interested in the facilities.”

He says he’s already talking with CBU about how to grow the school beyond this term.

“The initial focus is on growing this program in the second year, and then beyond that adding additional programs,” MacDonald explains.

“This year is almost like a pilot year, getting things started,” he says. “Next year, we want to fill our rooms, so we’d want to have 25 or 30 students. Within five years, we could grow it quite substantially. Twenty-five students could quite quickly turn into 100 students.”

“I’m certain that Beinn Mhàbu can be a catalyst for not only Mabou, but central Inverness County,” MacDonald notes. “We have a challenge. September rolls around and our young people leave. This will bring the young people to the region during that September to April time period, which is really important.”

He says the school can accommodate a growth in programs but can’t grow the student population without the support of the local community.

“We’re going to have people who are going need rooves over their heads, no different than in Antigonish and communities like that,” he explains. “It might be boarders. It might be people renting out houses. It could be local accommodations. It could be many things.”

“This will be part of the discussion with the community,” MacDonald adds. “In the next couple of years, we’ll be wanting to sit down with the leadership in the community to talk about that.”

“We’re planning to grow. Our plans have started. That will include ourselves, but also involve the community.”

An t-ionnasachadh ionadail, an t-ionnsachadh bòidheach

While the opening of Beinn Mhàbu as the first university level institution here in Inverness County is a major stride for Nova Scotia Gaelic culture and language, it's a reflection of the numerous grass-roots initiatives that help local people, and those from further afield, to reconnect with their Gaelic roots.

One such initiative is *Bidh sinn a' seanachas*, (pronounced roughly: bee shin a shennahas | translation: we'll be telling stories) a weekly series of workshops that took place this summer. *Bidh sinn a' seanachas* focused on exploring the wealth of Gaelic cultural resources available locally, and on allowing participants to connect with local tradition-bearers through songs, stories, folklore and remembering.

At one time it's estimated that the number of Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia would have been as high as 100,000. And in the days when many people lived their lives within walking distance of home, local variations in language remained strong. It's said that Gaelic speakers visiting from Scotland in the 1970s were able to identify, just by the accents and dialects of Cape Bretoners' Gaelic speaking, the precise places in the old country where their people would have emigrated from, generations before.

As so many Gaelic speakers were living, until quite recently, in the *an Cùl* (or 'rear') area of Chestico/Port Hood, *Bidh sinn a' seanachas*, hosted by Chestico Museum and Historical Society, encouraged a connection with Gaelic language and culture locally in the Port Hood region.

Tuesday* night cèilidhs were a part of the series, and on any given Tuesday they saw up to 65 folks filling the museum, which houses an extensive collection of artifacts evoking the area's rich and varied recent past. Visitors had the chance to interact with local historians, elders, singers, dancers and language reclaimers as the weeks went by.

*Tuesday – di-màirt – Mars day (compare with mardi in French)

**Monday – di-luain – moon day (compare with Monday in English)

Monday** workshops, by contrast, developed a safe space where primarily local people came together to explore their memories of the Gaelic language and culture which they knew in youth or childhood, a period when those ways of being were sadly being suppressed.

Local Gaels, children of fluent Gaelic speakers, were among those who gathered with a particular focus on local language, recalling and sharing what they used to hear in and around the home.

Participants were fascinated week by week to find subtle differences in the way they remembered certain expressions. Together, they discovered the meaning of individual words that made up an expression they remembered the sounds of. They enjoyed the realization that they were children of fully bilingual parents.

For some, the workshops were the first time that they had publicly attempted to reclaim their Gaelic knowledge once again. It was a powerful experience to feel a living connection with the vibrant culture and language that has shaped so many of today's Inverness County residents.

Activities such as *Bidh sinn a' seanachas* are often supported by funding from the Nova Scotia Office of Gaelic Affairs, and frequently rely on behind-the-scenes organization work from local volunteers. Locals and visitors are grateful to all who contribute to initiatives like these which keep a living link with such a rich past, and provide fertile ground for new generations to reclaim the language and culture that has shaped them.

For those wishing to know about activities near to them, the FIOS newsletter from *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* (NS Gaelic Council) is a good resource. Email comhairlenagaidhlig@gmail.com and ask to be included on the email distribution list.

An acupuncturist's new beginnings in Inverness County

BY JOSEFA CAMERON

When Jenece Gerber was crossing the Canso Causeway with her partner in late October 2018, she found herself surrounded by falling snow. This was her introduction to a new life in Inverness County.

When *The Participaper* sat down with her in October, she'd been practising as a registered acupuncturist for almost a year at the Inverness Chiropractic and Wellness Collective.

The health centre was established by Dr. Kristen Sutherland in 2014 and offers chiropractic treatment, massage therapy, mental health counseling, and nutritional consulting.

"It's a multidimensional space that works really well," Gerber said.

Gerber became fascinated with acupuncture after a friend convinced her to try it for her chronic pain.

"I walked in with a lot of pain, and I walked out pain-free," she recalled.

She received a couple more treatments after her first visit, and has been pain-free for 10 years. Now, she hopes to share access to acupuncture with other people.

Aside from acupuncture, Gerber is also a Reiki master and practices sound healing. She is also a musician and has a PhD in music composition, a master's degree in both vocal performance and in composition, as well as an undergraduate degree in ethnomusicology.

"To me, the connection is music, it has always been a healing thing," she said.

She moved from Ohio to Buffalo, NY to study at the University at Buffalo. Her original plan was to stay in Buffalo and teach at the university, but her plans shifted, she said, because there isn't a lot of room for a career in that field. Academia also didn't allow her the kind of creativity that she craved.

She then worked in banking for 10 years, but it wasn't what she wanted long-term either.

When she met her partner, who was in Ontario at the time, and their relationship blossomed, they began looking for a place to start a life together.

"I needed to change up everything in my life and I was willing to try something new, and ready for an adventure," she said.

On their search for a new home, they came across a house in rough shape on a sizable piece of land outside Mabou that was reasonably priced.

"It really called to us, we stepped out of the car and felt like the land was saying 'welcome home,'" she recalled.

They took a leap of faith, purchased the property, and relocated.

The move enabled them to start over. "Here I was with a blank slate to create something different in my life," Gerber said.

It was an opportunity to do something new, and that opportunity presented itself as an acupuncture school in Bedford, NS.

The day after Gerber received her permanent residency, she applied to the Canadian College of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Attending virtual school during the pandemic in rural Cape Breton, however, came with its challenges, but her neighbours came together to support her.



Jenece Gerber recently joined the team at Inverness Chiropractic, offering patients treatments in acupuncture. She is also a Reiki master and practices sound healing.
Photo by Dave MacNeil

When she graduated in December 2022, she knew she wanted to start her practice in Cape Breton.

Acupuncture as wellness

The holistic and body-centered approach to healing drew Gerber to the practice and it was something she was eager to begin offering to people in the area.

“Acupuncture really calls upon the body to self-heal,” she said.

The Western medical approach to health is skilled at working with individual pieces of the body, she said, whereas Asian medicine looks at the system of the body as a whole.

“Both approaches have really important purposes. And I think optimal health and wellness treatments incorporate both modalities.”

She sees a tremendous need for acupuncture in Inverness County.

“I’ve had patients come back after a couple treatments like new people, with a new lease on life,” she said.

It is not a miracle treatment, she underlined, but rather aims to help manage patients’ pain.

“If patients can get to a place where even a couple treatments a year can keep them in a state where they’re able to do the things that they love, then they can see hope for the future. That changes everything in their lives.”

When she started the practice in February this year, she thought it would be a slow start.

“But I’ve been busy from the very beginning. Consistently busy,” she said. “There’s really a spirit of a collective approach to wellness. I get and make referrals from the doctors at the hospital here all the time... We’re developing this beautiful relationship that is patient-focused.”

As for Gerber’s future goals with her practice, she said she is in a perpetual state of growth.

“There are so many different ways to practise acupuncture and Chinese medicine that I’m learning all the time.”

The direction of her practice, she said, is dictated by the needs of her patients. And being able to carry out her passion in Inverness County is an added bonus.

“We find this such an amazing place to be, so inspirational just walking outside the door. And we really love the community here,” she said.



Jenece Gerber, shown here playing the Celtic harp, has a PhD in music composition, a master’s degree in vocal performance and another in composition, as well as an undergraduate degree in ethnomusicology. *Photo courtesy Jenece Gerber*

Hope for Wildlife opens Inverness County clinic

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Hope for Wildlife, a Nova Scotian wildlife rehabilitation and education non-profit, is looking for local volunteers to support its recently opened drop-off and veterinary clinic for injured and orphaned animals in Inverness County.

Hope Swinimer, founder and director of the organization, says they're not looking for a huge commitment - maybe four hours a week - to serve the clinic, located at 954 Highway 105 in Lexington, five kilometres north of the Port Hastings rotary.

"We currently have a team of about 200 volunteers, and they stretch from Cape Breton to Yarmouth," she says. Volunteers can help with the pick-up and delivery of injured and orphaned animals to the clinic, which will eventually be staffed to provide triage of these animals.

Hope for Wildlife takes more than 7,000 wild animals into its care each year, Swinimer says, noting that these triage centres and their volunteers play a key role in the organization's operation. When a call comes into Hope for Wildlife, a volunteer may be dispatched to pick up and deliver an animal to the clinic. She says a similar clinic is operating in Wolfville.

"It really is quite efficient when you get 200 people involved," Swinimer says, noting that it can be a strain on an animal to have to travel hours to get to Hope for Wildlife's main rehabilitation centre in Seaforth, located about 40 km east of Halifax.

"The whole purpose for these facilities is to have triage," she explains, adding that the Lexington clinic will be staffed by a full-time certified veterinary technician. "These animals have already driven an hour, or an hour and a half. They need stabilization. They need to be warmed up. They need oxygen. They need fluids. They may need pain meds. That's what makes the difference."

"We were just finding that so many wouldn't make the trip into us in Seaforth," she adds. "Think of Yarmouth to here. It's four and a half hours. The same with Cape Breton. It's a long haul. So, by having these stabilization spots, it just makes a world of difference. We're seeing so much more success."

Swinimer says it's an unfortunate fact that some animals are injured to the point that they cannot be saved, and a clinic like the one in Lexington can properly assess the animal in a timelier fashion.

"I think triages are helping," she says, noting that part of the triage is determining whether an animal can be saved. "We can humanely euthanize at these stations. That means the animal didn't suffer for another two-hour drive into Hope for Wildlife. And it frees up time and energy and resources so that we can spend more time on animals we know we can nurse through and get healthy."

Swinimer says there's a huge educational component to the work of Hope for Wildlife, and that people encountering a wild animal sometimes may not know what services they offer.

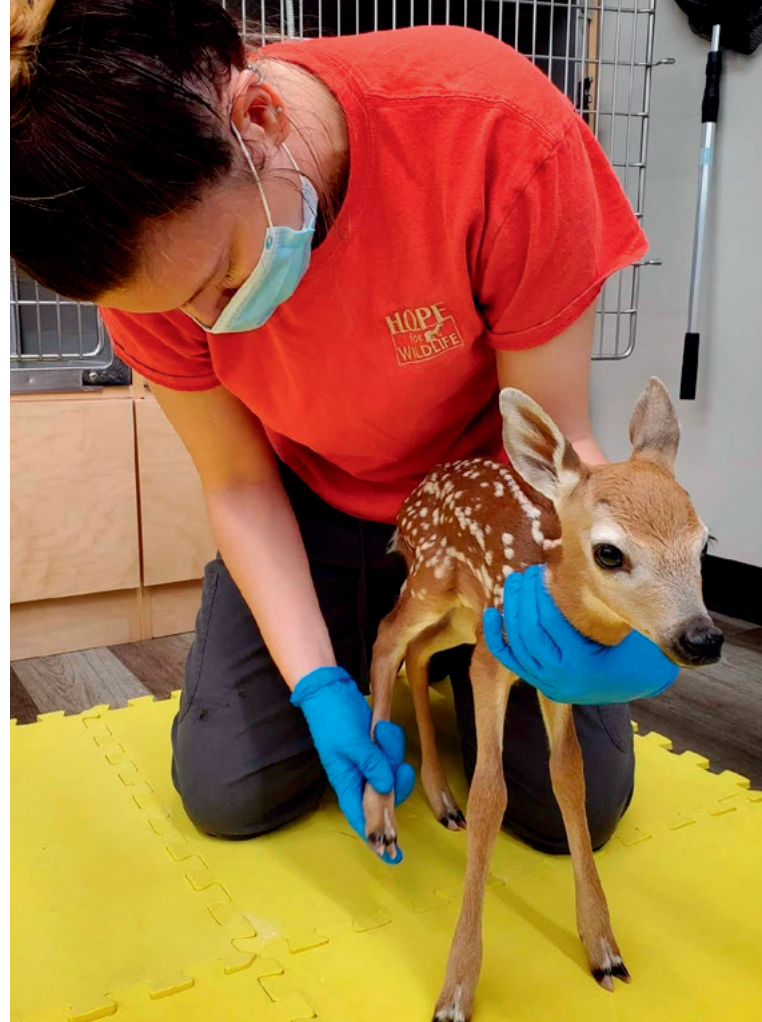
"People get confused," she explains. "They've got a nuisance, and they want it gone. That's not what we do."

"We will give them pointers on how to get that raccoon out of their attic in a humane way, and we'll give them pointers on how to keep birds from crashing into their windows," she notes. "But what we deal with is a sick, injured or orphaned animal."

People looking to volunteer with Hope for Wildlife are urged to go to their website at **hopeforwildlife.net** which also offers a wealth of information about how to determine whether an animal is actually sick, injured, or orphaned.

“We see about 250 different species every year,” Swinimer says. “In Cape Breton we do see a lot of white-tailed deer, lots of birds of prey, lots of songbirds. Two bobcats came in from there this year that had been orphaned. We really do get a variety.”

She says she expects the Lexington facility to at least be operating as a 24/7 drop-off location by early December, and as a staffed triage centre in the weeks that follow.



Hope Swinimer, shown in top left photo, and the staff of Hope for Wildlife tend to more than 7,000 wild animals each year.

Photos courtesy Hope for Wildlife



Blood sugar 101

BY GLENNA CALDER, ND

You may not be too interested in learning about blood sugar, but I would encourage you to read on and see how it affects your mood, weight, and hormones. I think everyone should know the basics. Let's dive into it because your blood sugar actually has a major effect on your thyroid, hormones, and adrenal health.

First, if we're talking about blood sugar, we need to talk about insulin. Insulin is an essential hormone in humans. It's critical for the uptake of glucose into cells where it acts as fuel for the cell. Glucose is a form of sugar that comes from carbohydrates.

In an optimally functioning system insulin is released from the pancreas in response to glucose in the bloodstream. The insulin attaches to receptors on the cell, and this allows glucose to be absorbed into the cell (like a key and lock system). The mechanism is designed so that your blood sugar doesn't rise too high or remain high for a long period of time.

As glucose goes into the cell, insulin production can slow down. The less glucose in the bloodstream, the less insulin is needed to remove it from the bloodstream. So, between meals insulin levels go down.

Diabetes manifests when either insulin isn't being produced in adequate amounts (type 1) or there is resistance in the cells to insulin (type 2). In the case of type 1 diabetes, this is autoimmune in nature – it is non-negotiable. Type 1 diabetics need to take insulin replacement therapy. We need insulin.

If you aren't close to a diabetic diagnosis, should you stop reading now? NO...this applies to you.

Blood sugar and insulin

Blood sugar can wreak havoc with your mood, energy, and hormones. Blood sugar irregularities can exacerbate your anxiety. Yes, you read that right: if you have anxiety, your diet can be making it worse.

Your adrenal (stress) glands thrive on stable blood sugar. They like consistency. They like you to lead a regular, consistent life, at least in terms of diet, exercise, and sleep. We will talk about the ways they like spontaneity in another article.

Blood sugar fluctuations act as stressors, resulting in fatigue, mood swings, and irritability. They are the cause of the "hangry" feeling you get.

Elevated blood sugars can contribute to recurrent yeast infections. Persistent high insulin levels can cause excess fat storage, high cholesterol, and fat accumulation in the liver.

Inflammation can contribute to insulin resistance. When cells become rigid it can be difficult for hormones to carry out their function.

There is an intricate interplay between progesterone, estrogen and insulin, and high insulin can cause cravings, especially when you are more sensitive to insulin during the last two weeks of your cycle.

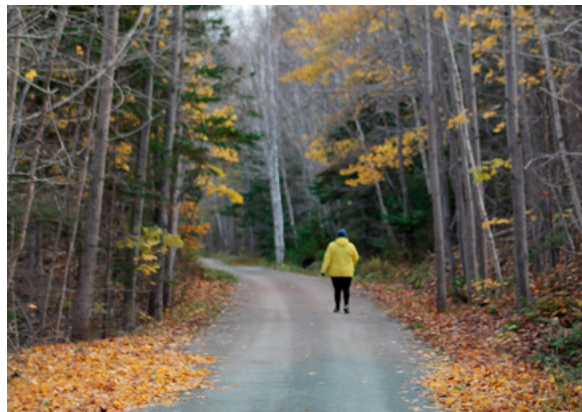
Insulin can also contribute to acne. Topical creams can help, but treating the underlying condition is essential.

What can you do to keep your blood sugar stable?

1. **Protein.** Studies show that this is the most satiating macronutrient. It increases the levels of several satiable hormones like ghrelin. It is hard to overeat protein because it is so filling.
2. **Keep simple sugar low.** Fruit has fibre which slows the release of glucose in the blood stream. Eat the peeling of fruit like apples, pears, plums to increase the fibre in your diet. Processed sugar (white and brown sugar) doesn't have fibre.
3. **Exercise.** One of the most effective ways to stabilize your blood sugar.
4. **Cut down on snack foods** which are filled with sugars. Reach for fruit, veggies, nuts which work well to decrease cravings also.
5. **Keep the three macronutrients - fat, carbohydrates, and protein - balanced in your diet.** Don't omit fat or protein or carbohydrates.

Yours in health,

Glenna Calder, Naturopathic Doctor



Regular exercise can be a great way to control your blood sugar levels.

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The executive team of the StFX Musical Coast Society includes: (seated) secretary Lauren MacDonnell; left, treasurer Alexandra Beaton; (standing) vice-president Keisha Gillis; left, and president Ben MacKay. *Photo courtesy Ben MacKay*

New society to promote Inverness County at StFX, beyond

BY DAVE MACNEIL

Inverness County students attending StFX University have always enjoyed a special bond.

But now that bond is helping to promote the county to other students at the Antigonish school and to young people in other parts of the world.

The StFX Musical Coast Society was recently formed to help promote Inverness County as a place with growing opportunities. Ben MacKay, the society's president, says the idea for the group came from the Municipality of Inverness County.

"This is a project that was brought to us by the municipality, and the municipality wants to make sure that StFX students who are from Inverness County give the county a chance," MacKay explains.

"There are always opportunities everywhere – across Nova Scotia, across Canada and across the globe," he adds. "But it's to give Inverness County a good look, to really give it a chance as far as building a future because it's quite the place, we think, to build a future."

MacKay, who is deputy curator at Inverness Historical Society, operators of the Inverness Miners Museum, is in his fourth year of a political science degree, with a minor in public policy and governance. He is joined on the society's executive by vice-president Keisha Gillis and secretary Lauren MacDonnell, both fourth-year students at StFX hailing from Inverness, and treasurer Alexandra Beaton from Mabou, who is in her third year.

Membership in the society currently sits at about 50, but MacKay says there's no cap on membership, and that the only prerequisite to join is to be a student at StFX.

"They're welcome to join us, regardless of where they're from, what programs they're in," he says. "We want to make sure it's open and accessible to as many people as possible."

"We're very grateful to have such supportive sponsors in the County of Inverness."

MacKay says once the group receives ratification as a not-for-profit society, it will then be able to accept private and corporate donations.

"What we're going to try and do with that money is try and do events on campus with members of the society," he explains. "As well, we're going to do some field trips to the county so that people can get a firsthand experience and appreciation for everything Inverness County has to offer."

As far as his own future is concerned, MacKay says he hasn't yet decided what career path he may choose following university.

"That's not unlike a lot of people," he says, noting that people who are in their final years of university are a key demographic being targeted by the society.

"I think for the first time in a long time, there is a certain sense of optimism about the future for a lot of communities in the county and the county as a whole," MacKay says. "For a long time, a lot of these communities have faced a lot of hardship economically, and there's always been that slow drip, drip, drip of people leaving."

"There seems to be some optimism about what these communities are going to look like going forward – more inclusive, more diverse, more economically capable. I think those are going to be positive attributes for Inverness County, and I think that's what we need to promote here at StFX and all across Nova Scotia and beyond."

"We're optimistic about the spot that we're in," MacKay adds, "especially with the backing of the municipality, which is a big help."

With the entire executive potentially nearing the end of their university years, the society is also looking towards a succession plan.

"We've got a good amount of folks who are interested – who are advisors for our executive team – that are in their second and third years, so hopefully they'll be willing to take on the mantle in future years to make sure it still exists going forward."

He says if the StFX Musical Coast Society's success grows, it might spawn opportunities at other universities in the region.

"We're kind of like the guinea pig here in Antigonish, because if it takes off here, there will be possibilities for such societies elsewhere across the province."

"I think we live in one of the best places in the world, and so we have an obligation to promote that to younger people, to ensure it stays that way for many generations to come."

'That MacInnis feller in Halifax' has his say



Frank MacInnis, right, presents a plaque to Ron MacInnis during the opening of this year's Glendale Scottish Concert, bestowing on him lifetime membership in the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association for his role in helping to save Cape Breton fiddle music with his 1971 documentary, *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*. Photo by Dave MacNeil

In the early days of my work with private radio station CHER in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, I became intrigued by the fact that a vital musical thread of the traditional, ancient Scottish culture of Cape Breton was beginning to unravel, as the allure of modern music and an increasing exposure to modern television was beginning to take its toll.

Traditional Cape Breton fiddlers themselves were getting older and were beginning to die off and there were few young people to take their place, as the familiar echoes of the Saturday night dance halls slipped away into the evening mists.

Being a Cape Bretoner who felt moved by all this, I wrote and recorded, for CBC radio in Halifax, a story I called *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*. To my everlasting surprise, the program caught fire, and caused a minor upheaval in Cape Breton. I was unpopular in some circles but lauded in others.

Immediately, in reaction to the program, there was much chaos and concern: many did not believe what was being said, and they expressed their annoyance or concern about the whole idea. Radio station CJFX of Antigonish created a weekly program called Scottish Strings where Frank MacInnis of Creignish and one Gus MacKinnon of Antigonish fielded phone calls and letters about the apparent “disappearance.” Later, noting the reaction, the CBC produced a television program that was aired across the country.

The program, which I wrote and narrated, was shot in Cape Breton with a whole host of crew and trucks and heavy cameras and sound gear. It was really my and the crews' first intimate entry into rural Cape Breton society. And we were all charmed.

Those were the old days. Compared to today, filming was a clumsy business. The members of the crew, I recall, were fascinated by the character, the hospitality, and the musical ability of the people they met who were in the show. Dan Rory MacDonald was one of those, as were the members of the Rankin family, small (but very musical) children at the time.

I remember that adventure very fondly. The kids, as their parents called them, grew to be very fine musicians. And fine people as well. Their parents were charmed by and proud of them all. And this program sparked another, hosted by CBC's popular Peter Gzowski. The electricity and appeal of the Cape Breton culture spread across the land.

In the end, when the smoke cleared, the half hour national television programs did their job; the controversy continued to rage and a number of people were sparked into action. Two of them were Fr Eugene Morris and Frank MacInnis, fiddle enthusiasts both. Frank vented his frustration on CJFX radio and made it widely known in Cape Breton that there were still fiddlers around and that it might be a good idea if those fiddlers gathered and presented a concert on the island to prove their point. And that the MacInnis feller in Halifax might just be wrong.

And so, with the temperature rising, Frank and Father Gene piled into a little Volkswagen and the rubber hit the road. For the better part of the summer, they scoured the countryside knocking on doors and chasing down fiddlers. There were many funny stories as one might imagine. After many months' work, and with the cooperation of the Glendale parish priest, Fr John Angus Rankin (a fiddle aficionado himself), Frank, Fr Gene and a

(Editor's note: The Summer 2023 edition of The Particpaper featured the story of The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler, a CBC documentary produced by filmmaker Ron MacInnis that shook Celtic fiddle enthusiasts on the Island to the core. Reaction to the film resulted in the staging of the Concert of 100 Fiddlers in Glendale, sparked the organization of the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association and the revival of Celtic fiddle music in Cape Breton. In July, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary concert in Glendale, the association paid tribute to MacInnis, honouring him with a lifetime membership and thanking him for his role in saving what people now realize was a dying art. This article is composed of excerpts MacInnis prepared as he contemplated the initial documentary, reaction to it and the role he played in all of it.)



Fiddlers await their turn to take the stage at this year's Glendale Scottish Concert. The concert was kicked off by a presentation to filmmaker Ron MacInnis, who is credited with helping to save Cape Breton fiddle music with his 1971 documentary, *The Vanishing Cape Breton Fiddler*. Photo by Dave MacNeil

number of volunteers were pleased to present, with fingers crossed, the first Cape Breton Concert of a Hundred Fiddlers.

A massive crowd attended, overflowing parking space and benches, thus underlining the enthusiasm of the local people. Traffic was stopped for miles and the whole show was a resounding success, with cheering and enthusiastic crowds underlining the passion of the people for the beloved music that was their history and their sustenance. There was only one problem: there were very few young people there.

Now as people looked around them, a wave of concern swept Cape Breton Island. Here and there an old hand picked up a bow and struck up an old tune. Teachers emerged here and there, groups of young people formed, and older fiddlers offered their services. A Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association was formed to prove the program wrong or to foil the fates if the program was right. In either case, it was time to take action, whatever that may be. In the end, the association gave birth to not only the encouragement of the art in Cape Breton, but an ongoing series of fiddling concerts that has lasted to this day.

Sobering to me as it may be, five generations after my ancestors landed on Cape Breton Island and 50 years older than I was when all this fiddle business started, and still with a deep and abiding affection

for Cape Breton fiddle music, I have left this document for, as they say, "posterity."

While I am roundly regarded as "the guy who brought the fiddle music back to Cape Breton," I am pleased and grateful to accept a part of that honour, but I am, in terms I hope you understand, at the same time honour-bound to confess that the whole revival came to me as a total surprise.

So I take comfort in saying that I wish to share the credit for all this with those devoted souls who did all the hard work required to gather fiddlers from the island's remote corners, to pull them all together on a given day to have the first massive outdoor concert, and to start a movement that would bring music teachers and fiddlers, old and young and yet unborn, into the fold so the culture could become the unique, vibrant and life-giving force that it is today, which in many ways, is the life blood of the island.

Hurrah for all of you who played a part! To you I say, in gratitude: yes, I was the one who lit the fire, but those of you who worked so very hard were the ones who brought in all the wood! I hereby happily share the award that you kindly gave to me with all of you who made the effort to make this revival happen. Blessings be.

Local event organizer releases fictional book about girls' hockey

With his first book under his belt, Mabou's Wesley Beaton says he hopes to someday get the story on the big screen.

"I wanted to make it a TV show, that was my end dream," Beaton says of *Beer League Girls*, which was published in June and follows the exploits of Kaylee, a young girl who gets her big chance with a local hockey team. "That's still the end dream."

"I'd love for someone to find the book and want to make it into a film," he says, adding that the idea came to him long before enlisting the help of Alberta-based writer Nadine Aucoin, who originally hails from Chéticamp.

"I think it's a great story," he says. "I think it would be a great thing now to turn it into a film, the way girls' hockey is exploding."

Beaton has two daughters, one of whom played hockey, but he says that although he used his younger daughter's name for the main character in the book, it's in no way meant to be autobiographical.

"It's fiction, but it has characteristics of what I've seen growing up," he explains, noting that he reached out to Aucoin after seeing a copy of her latest book.



"I didn't know how to fill out the story – like the conversations and the scenery and the background, little things that she's really good at."

Though they co-authored the book, Beaton and Aucoin have yet to meet in person.

"A lot of emails and a lot of texting," he laughs.

An employee of Port Hawkesbury Paper and a part-time caddy at the Cabot golf courses in Inverness, Beaton is well-known in the area for the hockey and golf tournaments he has organized over the years. He says he likes to dream big, recalling a sports and musical event he staged in Fort McMurray in 2012 after approaching the organizers of the annual WinterPLAY Festival there. That event included a seven-hour concert featuring a number of Maritime musical acts.

Beer League Girls is available from Beaton, through Amazon and at the Freshmart in Mabou.

Remonter dans le temps pour découvrir les anciens habitants du Cap-Rouge

PAR DANIEL AUCOIN

Read an english translation of this article online at participaper.ca/back-in-time-at-cap-rouge

La Société Saint-Pierre et Les Amis du plein air, avec l'appui financier de Parcs Canada, ont organisé des sessions d'animation et des veillées rustiques au Cap-Rouge cet été. Ces activités avaient lieu chaque mercredi de juillet et août à la maison d'interprétation du terrain de camping de Mkwesagtuk/Cap-Rouge situé au Ruisseau des Maurice dans le parc national des Hautes-Terres-du-Cap-Breton.

Betty Ann Cormier et Roland Beaudry interprétaient Zabeth et Charlot afin de raconter la vie des anciens habitants du Cap-Rouge. Les deux animateurs trouvent important de travailler vers la réconciliation et de rapprocher les citoyens locaux et les visiteurs à l'histoire de cette ancienne communauté acadienne.

« On a rencontré tellement de gens de partout à travers le monde tout au long de l'été. On a particulièrement aimé rencontrer et jaser avec les descendants des Cap-Rougiens. Les visiteurs étaient très curieux d'en apprendre davantage sur cette partie importante de l'histoire des Acadiens de Chéticamp. On a maintenant une meilleure



appréciation pour les Cap-Rougiens qui ont vécu une deuxième déportation. »

— Betty Ann Cormier

Lisette Bourgeois, directrice-générale de la Société Saint-Pierre, se dit très satisfaite de cette première expérience d'animation au nouveau terrain de camping du Cap-Rouge. Mme Bourgeois souligne que la communauté acadienne a très bien appuyé le projet tout au long de l'été. Elle souhaite que l'activité soit reprise l'an prochain et que l'on puisse développer davantage le partenariat avec Parcs Canada.

Depuis un certain nombre d'années, plusieurs projets ont été développés pour rendre hommage aux anciens habitants du Cap-Rouge. Des plaques commémoratives portant sur les habitants du Cap-Rouge et leur mode de vie ont été érigées à plusieurs endroits dans le Parc national. Le sentier du Vieux chemin du Cap-Rouge a été réouvert pour permettre aux gens de marcher dans les traces des premiers pionniers acadiens. La Société Saint-Pierre a aussi publié quelques livres dédiés à la mémoire des Cap-Rougiens.



Le nouveau terrain de camping Mkwesagtuk/Cap-Rouge est ouvert depuis le 1 juillet 2022. Le camping rend hommage à la communauté des Acadiens expropriés ainsi qu'aux liens qu'entretiennent les Mi'kmaq avec les lieux. Les bâtiments sont conçus pour refléter le patrimoine acadien distinct de la région. Vous vous sentirez rattaché à la culture locale en vous promenant sur les sentiers côtiers, en explorant la plage de galets et en observant les couchers de soleil spectaculaires sur le golfe Saint-Laurent.

Cap-Rouge était jadis une localité située à l'extrémité nord de Chéticamp. C'est pendant les années 30 que le gouvernement fédéral décida d'ouvrir un parc national dans les hautes-terres du Cap-Breton. Situées à l'extrémité nord de Chéticamp, les localités de Cap-Rouge, la Source de la Montain, le Buttereau, la Presqu'île et la Rigouèche tombaient dans les limites du nouveau Parc national.

Les Cap-Rougiens étaient des gens de la mer et de la montagne. Des générations de Aucoin, de Bourgeois, de Camus, de Chiasson, de LeBlanc, de Muise et de Poirier étaient nées sur ces fières montagnes et dans ces paisibles valons. Cette



communauté comprenait un quai situé à la Bloque, un magasin général, un bureau de poste et une école. Deux homarderies ont été exploitées entre 1900 et 1925.

Quoique plus de 30 familles habitaient cette région, elles ont été chassées de leurs terres lorsque le parc national des Hautes-Terres-du-Cap-Breton a été créé en 1936. À cette époque, il ne semble pas y avoir eu résistance de la part des Cap-Rougiens.

L'expropriation des familles du Cap-Rouge est un événement certainement unique dans l'histoire de Chéticamp. On offrait aux familles expropriées des terrains dans l'île de Chéticamp qui étaient la propriété de la Couronne. Plusieurs ont été transportées à l'île et d'autres se sont installées soit au Havre, à la Prairie ou ailleurs.

Aujourd'hui en 2023, les côtes accidentées et escarpées de Cap-Rouge sont parmi les plus pittoresques du Cap-Breton. Les pâturages en friche et quelques vieux bouts de chemin sont les témoins même des colons acadiens qui s'y installèrent il y a de cela plus d'un siècle.

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take place on the first Thursday of each month and start at 3:00 p.m. These meetings are open to the public.

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