

Baile nan
Gaidheal
Highland Village
MADE OF STORIES



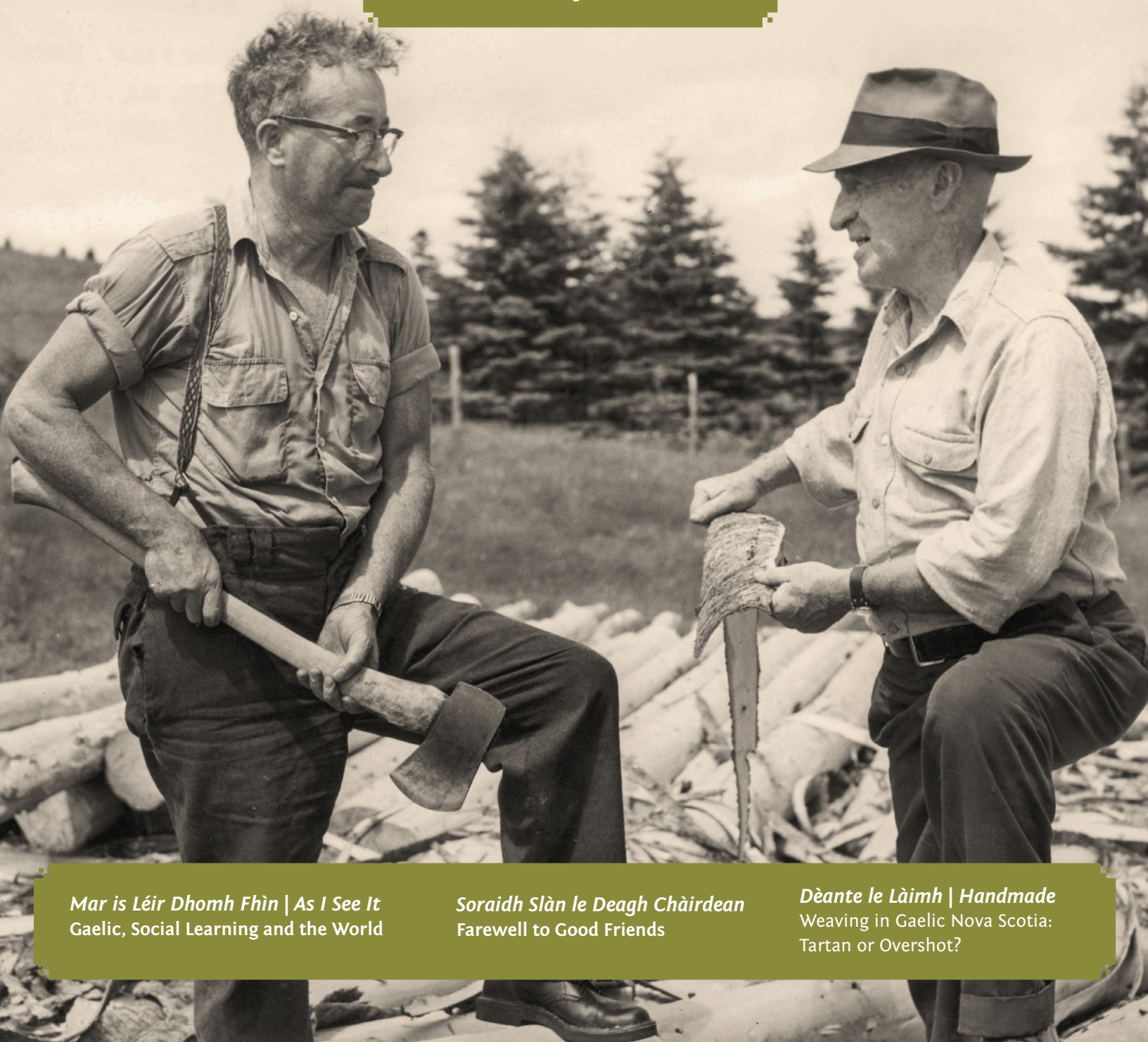
The Highland Village
Gaelic Folklife Magazine

an rubha

HIGHLANDVILLAGE.CA

VOLUME 17 • NUMBER ONE

A' Comharrachadh 60 Bliadhna
Celebrating 60 Years



Mar is Léir Dhomh Fhìn | As I See It
Gaelic, Social Learning and the World

Soraidh Slàn le Deagh Chàirdean
Farewell to Good Friends

Dèante le Làimh | Handmade
Weaving in Gaelic Nova Scotia:
Tartan or Overshot?

Are you looking for your
Cape Breton ancestors?



Sinnsearachd

Có ris a tha do dhàimh?
Who are your relatives?

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Stòras na h-Òigridh | Treasures of Youth Scholarship Fund provides financial support and assistance to up-and-coming Nova Scotia youth between the ages of five and twenty-one, who are keen to advance their skills in the Gaelic tradition including: fiddle, pipes, piano/guitar accompaniment, language, storytelling, song, and dance.

The Fund welcomes donations. A downloadable brochure with details and a pledge form is available on our website. Donations may also be made on line through Canada Helps.

www.treasuresofyouth.ca



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2019 Scholarship Winner



Fiddler Kaj Ubdy, of Christmas Island was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship.

Kaj has proven a commitment to the rich Scottish Gaelic traditions of Cape Breton.



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Hughie B. MacNeil and John Malcolm
MacNeil peel logs for the first Highland
Village Museum building in 1962. Abbass
photo from the Highland Village Collection.

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Facal bhon Neach-stiùiridh | From the Director's Desk

A' COMHARRACHADH 60 BLIADHNA | CELEBRATING 60 YEARS

Six decades ago, this past November, the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society was born. An incorporation charter, signed by Hugh F. MacKenzie, Earl MacInnis, William McCormack, Rev. A.D. MacKinnon, Major C.I.N. MacLeod, Rev. A.A. Ross, and Stephen MacKinnon, was approved and stamped by the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, officially incorporating the Society under the Societies Act of the Province of Nova Scotia. This was a significant milestone in the history of *Baile nan Gàidheal* | Highland Village, as it provided the structure from which the Highland Village would be established, developed, and grown.

The concept of a Highland Village in Nova Scotia dates back to 1938. Then Nova Scotia Premier Angus L. MacDonald visited the United Empire Exhibition in Glasgow, Scotland where he saw an exhibit called "The Clachan," which was a replica of a "typical" Highland village that showed "the buildings and conditions of life during the 18th and early 19th centuries" in Scotland. The Premier and his delegation were inspired to see the development of a similar attraction here in Nova Scotia, to promote and preserve the province's Scottish Gaelic heritage.

With the onset of World War II, the concept of a Highland Village here in Nova Scotia was shelved. In the early 1950s, representatives of the Nova Scotia Association of Scottish Societies (NSASS) met with Premier MacDonald to discuss a number of initiatives related to Scottish heritage, including the Highland Village proposal. Unfortunately, MacDonald passed away a few months after the meeting, and as a result the project lost a key supporter. Undeterred, the Association decided to champion the project, and established a site selection committee in 1955 to oversee a province-wide competition to select a host community for the museum.

The Grand Narrows & District Board of Trade responded with a proposal for the Highland Village to be located in Iona. Their pitch was that the area was 99% of Highland descent; land was available with "Highland ambiance" and great views of the Bras d'Or Lake; and Gaelic language and other customs were all practised and very much alive in the area. The presentation to the site selection committee was made entirely in the Gaelic language by Hugh F. MacKenzie and Rev. A.D. MacKinnon, a move which

impressed the committee.

By March 1956, the NSASS site selection committee had narrowed the options down to a site in Pictou County or a site on Cape Breton Island. After lengthy discussions, a tie vote, and continued debate, the following motion was passed: "...that the first Highland Village be on Cape Breton Island, and a second Highland Village be in Pictou County." It was reported that at the meeting a cheque from millionaire Cyrus Eaton for building the Highland Village was torn in half after the announcement that Cape Breton was chosen over Pictou County.

With the decision made that the Highland Village would be located in the centre of Cape Breton Island, the Grand Narrows & District Board of Trade and



Hon. Rodney MacDonald, Minister of Tourism and Culture (left) and Bruce MacNeil, Highland Village Society President (centre) sign the proclamation to officially recognize the Highland Village as a part of the Nova Scotia Museum on June 17, 2000. The event was emceed by Jim St. Clair (right).

the Iona community quickly got to work to make the Highland Village a reality. They identified the location for the museum at Hector's Point in Iona, an old farm site that became abandoned in 1937 when its former owner Stephen Urban MacNeil passed away. With the cooperation of Stephen Urban's heirs, the land was transferred to the NSASS which held on to the property until after the incorporation of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society in 1959.

Now that the project had land, legal structure and supportive people, it needed money to create and construct the Highland Village. In 1962, primarily through

the efforts of volunteers, a log building (the first museum) and outdoor stage were constructed. Artifacts were acquired for display in the new log museum. The first annual Highland Village Day concert was held to raise money for the construction and operation of the Village. The following year Stephen Rory MacNeil was hired as the first curator to look after the collection and encourage more donations. By the late 1960s, the Highland Village as we know it today began to take shape.

During the decades that followed, the unwavering commitment and pure tenacity of the Society's board, volunteers and supporters ensured that the Highland Village dream became reality. Funding was accessed for both operations and projects. The first operational grant was received

from Victoria County in 1971. Period buildings were added to the site, some of which were relocated from other communities on the Island. Artifacts were gathered from all over eastern Nova Scotia. As the period museum took shape, costumed interpreters were hired to share the history of the Gaels with visitors.

In addition to physical buildings and artifacts, the Society also focused on the intangible aspects of the Gaelic story, in particular, language, culture and kinship. A Highland Village Pipe Band toured communities all over Nova Scotia. A Gaelic language program was developed, providing training for staff. Cultural programming was offered. Highland Roots (now Roots Cape Breton) family history centre was introduced to help those doing genealogical research. A Gaelic pre-school program was also offered at the museum for several years. By the late 1980s, the Highland Village site and programming were well established.

The 1990s saw a focus on renewal, including physical improvements to the site, targeted marketing, increased museum standards, and lobbying efforts to have the Highland Village become a provincial museum. While much was achieved during this period, declining operational budgets and increased operational costs made it a difficult decade for the Village's board and staff. This hard work paid off, though, after a popular Cape Breton fiddler, who sat on the black house roof for the "Funky Museum Roadshow", became Minister of Tourism and Culture for Nova Scotia. That takes us to our next milestone.

20 Years in the Nova Scotia Museum

Forty-seven years after Nova Scotia Premier Angus L. MacDonald expressed his support for the Highland Village, Nova Scotia Tourism and Culture Minister Rodney MacDonald (that popular fiddler from Inverness County) officially declared Highland Village a part of the Nova Scotia Museum family. That milestone took place 20 years ago on June 15, 2000.

Becoming a part of the Nova Scotia Museum was a game changer for the Highland Village. New resources enabled us to focus efforts on growing and deepening our animation & interpretation, our cultural programming, community outreach and capacity building. The presence of Gaelic language and cultural arts grew in all aspects of Highland Village programming. Interpretation evolved from third person descriptions of history and artifacts to first-person animation focused on telling the story of the people and the Gaelic worldview. We added new events and programs including Gaelic feast days, and workshops. We also provided leadership in the Gaelic community with the creation of the *Stòras a' Bhaile* Gaelic Folklife School; published *An Rubha*; created online resources including the *Céilidh air Cheap Breatunn* virtual museum site, *Cainnt mo Mhàthar* (with the NS Gaelic Council), and *An Drochaid Eadarainn*; sponsored Finlay MacLeod introducing the Total Immersion Plus teaching method to Nova Scotia (which became *Gàidhlig aig Baile*); and much more. Our current name and brand, *Baile nan Gàidheal* | Highland Village: Made of Stories, was adopted. We also made international headlines by moving the former Malagawatch Church across the Bras d'Or Lake to our site.

All of this activity and hard work has paid off. We have increased engagement with our community, through visitation, volunteerism, and partnerships. We are recognized internationally for our work with Gaelic interpretation and outreach. We have received awards from Destination Cape Breton and multiple Trip Advisor Certificates of Excellence. We achieved a score of 90.8% in the 2017 Association of Nova Scotia Museums Evaluation Program, the highest of any museum in the province. 2019 marked a new visitation milestone for Highland Village with 25,980 visitors. It was the third consecutive year of record visitation and the fifth consecutive year of visitor growth. We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved over these past two decades with the support of, and in partnership with, the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Next Chapter

We are not done. There are many opportunities ahead for *Baile nan Gàidheal*. Last fall, the Board of Trustees adopted our latest strategic plan. The plan has five main goals: (1) strengthen and share the Gaelic Nova Scotia Story through innovation and modern-day living culture; (2) develop innovative human resources policies and practices that will assist with recruiting and retaining team members; (3) build on existing programming to create an interactive cultural site filled with immersive, relevant and dynamic experiences; (4) pursue creative industry and community-based partnerships to address challenging factors including staff succession and housing shortages, while pursuing opportunities for growth; and (5) enhance the visitor experience through site logistics and visitor-centric tour options. We'll have more on the implementation of this plan in future issues of *An Rubha*.

To better enable *Baile nan Gàidheal* to meet its operational needs and future growth, we are implementing the most ambitious site development program in our history. The \$3.6 million program will see the completion this spring of a new washroom building on the top of the hill as well as a new building to house shingle mill equipment from the Cash Family in Irish Cove. Over the next two years, we will construct a new welcome centre with improved public and support spaces, including exhibitions, library/archives, artifact storage and a new year-round multi-purpose space. These improvements will better position us to increase the visitor experience and expand our service offerings. Stay tuned for more news on this exciting project.

In closing, I wish to salute everyone who played a role in the Highland Village story over the years, including our board members, staff, volunteers, partners, supporters and visitors. Our story is one of determination driven by the spirit of a people and pride of place, and the rich legacy handed down to us from our ancestors. *Móran taing dha 'n a h-uile duine*. Thank you everyone for your support over the past 60 years. ©

Rodney Chaisson,
Director of the Highland Village.

A more in-depth history of the development and first 40 years of the Highland Village, prepared by Cheryl Sullivan for the 40th Anniversary of the Society, can be found in the Winter 2000 issue of Naidheachd a' Chlachain, available on our website.



Leanaibh dlùth ri cliù bhur sinnsir.

Commun Baile Ghàidheal na h-Albann Nuaidh | The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society was incorporated on November 3, 1959 under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia. Its purpose was to construct and operate an outdoor folk museum dedicated to the Scottish Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia.

Since 2000, the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society has operated *Baile nan Gàidheal* | Highland Village, A Part of the Nova Scotia Museum, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Museum (Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage).

**Baile nan
Gàidheal**
Highland Village

MADE OF STORIES

A PART of THE NOVA SCOTIA MUSEUM

Our vision is to be the leading Gaelic folklife centre, recognized in Nova Scotia, nationally and internationally as an essential institution for continuing development and representation of a vital and sustainable Gaelic community.

Our mission is to grow as a Gaelic folklife centre that bilingually nurtures, communicates and celebrates the heritage and cultural identity of Nova Scotia's Gaelic community.

We are a member of Association of Nova Scotia Museums (ANSM), Canadian Museums Assoc. (CMA), Heritage Cape Breton Connection, Council of NS Archives (CNSA), Genealogical Assoc. of NS (GANS), Cape Breton Genealogical & Historical Association, Assoc. of Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM), Celtic Heart of North America Marketing Cooperative, Tourism Industry Assoc of NS (TIANS), Baddeck & Area Business Tourism Assoc. (BABTA), Sydney & Area Chamber of Commerce, Strait Area Chamber of Commerce, and the Cape Breton Partnership.

Mar is léir dhomh fhìn | As I See It

GAELIC, SOCIAL LEARNING AND THE WORLD

Given our own unique history, that Gaelic should have survived into the present day in Nova Scotia in all its richness of expression and transmitted cultural skills is a remarkable achievement. From the experience of recording traditions in Gaelic communities all over Cape Breton since the early 1960s, it is clear that the efforts and dedication of ordinary Gaelic speakers over generations (and often in humble circumstances) have made the crucial difference in maintaining a unique culture and language regardless of outside policies. Gaeldom is a culture whose monuments are not primarily in the form of inspired architecture, or even expressed through visual arts. Instead, they have existed in the minds of the common people, carried with them everywhere, as songs, tales, tunes, folk beliefs and their associated registers of language, all of it transmitted and renewed by constant social contact. Such oral traditions have been the intellectual lifeblood of the community. The wealth of songs, stories and music, often time-tested over centuries, has been transmitted in the rich social context of the *taighean céilidh* | ceilidh houses. The *céilidh* house with its local legends, songs incorporating social commentary and humour, and the all-pervasive web of genealogy has been a primary forum of mutual exchange and support, as well as a training ground for the young in how their society functions. These events took place in every Gaelic settlement; their focus was on the life of the community with an emphasis on cultural continuity, rather than the nostalgia and retrospection often portrayed by patronising writers little acquainted with Gaeldom.

In this *Gàidhealtachd* the legacies of institutional learning and values imposed from the outside, combined with widespread economic hardship, have led to hard questions within the communities themselves that are familiar to most readers and should not be ignored. Some examples:

'What's this Gaelic business good for anyway? It never put food on the table.'

'Gaelic culture is backward looking. What does it have to offer the present or the future?'

'What's all the fuss about? Isn't Gaelic culture already provided for?'

'Don't you see that things change? They can't remain static. That's the way the world is.'

Up until the last two decades or so, questions such as these have served as effective conversation stoppers whenever the subject of Gaelic came up. It was seldom pointed out that in the past, activities through the language from rural agriculture to Sunday sermons put plenty of food on tables; that government-funded provision for Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia was primarily a replication of British Victorian state culture of little relevance to Gaeldom anywhere; and that while it is true that change is inevitable, the important question is who benefits?

More recently, things have begun to change. With support from government and institutions within the Province a series of effective programs have appeared, viewing Gaelic tradition as based on the same 'brilliant social culture' that has sustained it in small communities. An informal, socially centred approach, emphasizing participation through the language in a variety of activities featuring local culture instead of top-down 'book learning', has produced some dramatic results. Although the number is small, people have gained (or regained) the ability to function through the language and once again become part of their own culture. Traveling around former Gaelic speaking areas of the province, the number of people from that generation speaking Gaelic is surprising. Younger people of the post Gaelic generation(s) have come to feel more grounded, and older people are respected. Information

technology has played its part, providing universal access through digital archives to the oral traditions of areas where they have gone out of usage.

What we are experiencing now in Nova Scotia is by no means unique. Other endangered language/culture groups throughout the world have begun to question the wisdom of ethnocide (the systematic eradication of a smaller culture by a dominant one), noting that issues of cultural diversity are the mental equivalent of the present global issues of biodiversity. Akin to this are emerging issues of social damage resulting from linguistic and cultural repression – a list that can be easily replicated in former Gaelic speaking areas here at home. At the root of these disasters is the imposed ideology that 'only one way of living is correct' and it has had a devastating effect on Nova Scotia Gaelic communities as well as hundreds of other small but vital groups throughout the world. The solution for endangered cultures seems to lie in the strengthening of traditions from the inside, each according to its own style.

From the Lakota-Ogalala Tribe of South Dakota: 'I asked an elder once, "How can we preserve our culture?" His response was, "You have not understood your own question: we need our culture to preserve us."' ©

Dr. John Shaw, Honourary Fellow, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh.



Stóras a' Bhaile | Gaelic Folklife School: Stóras a' Gheamhraidh participants with John enjoying a hike during the Gaelic immersion week held near Halifax, February 2020.

Naidheachd a' Bhaile | The Village News

ON 'N UAIR SIN | THEN TILL NOW

November 3rd, 2019 marked our 60th anniversary as the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society. Much has changed since 1959 but the desire to share our story as Gaels, as well as our language and culture has remained strong.

The first visitors to the Highland Village were welcomed in the 1960s to a small log building. Curator, Stephen Rory MacNeil, was hired and an operating grant was obtained. This building housed artifacts on display, many of which were locally donated. This was the first step in how the tangible stories of the Nova Scotia Gaels were told. As years went on, more buildings were added to the Village, and more artifacts were collected. Board member, Bert MacLeod, played an important role in gathering many of the artifacts that still make up much of the collection today.

In the early years, visitors were invited to explore the houses and farm at the Village. In the beginning, there was no chronological timeline for visitors to follow, like there is today. Guides in the houses greeted guests as they entered and shared their stories, in a form of third-person interpretation. They would provide historical accounts of the houses and buildings while visitors learned interesting details about the artifacts. Some of our first guides were Kathleen MacLean, Anna 'Hector' MacNeil, Mary Dan D. MacNeil and Rita MacDougall. These women were deeply steeped in their own cultural heritage and provided visitors with a glimpse

not only into their own past but that of their ancestors.

The Village continued to grow and visitation to the site increased allowing for more guides to be hired. Guides continued to educate visitors about Gaelic life in third-person until the early 2000s.

Shortly after joining the Nova Scotia Museum in 2000, the Highland Village began to look at how we presented our Gaelic story, our language and our culture to visitors. Consultant John Vereka was hired to begin the process of shifting our presentation from third-person interpretation to first-person animation. This initial process took place over the space of two years, with John training staff in 2007 and again in 2008. His work led to a new approach on how we told our Gaelic story to the visitors in a way that immersed them in the experience on site. In 2011, consultant Peter Pacey was then brought in to further the animation training. Peter worked with staff for three consecutive years to complete the transition to full first-person animation with staff.

As a result of this transformation, animators portray a character in a particular time period that allows them to animate daily life rather than simply interpreting historical facts. Visitors are welcomed to suspend their disbelief as they travel through four eras of time while they hear stories of Gaelic life from the *Gàidhealtachd* of Scotland to the *Gàidhealtachd* of Nova Scotia. This shift



Anna 'Hector' MacNeil weaving in the MacDonald House.

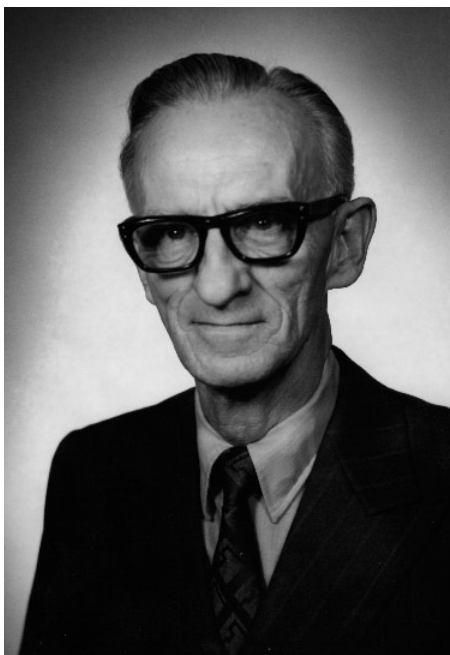
saw tangible interpretation take a step back and allowed for intangible culture to be the primary focus, bringing our Gaelic culture and language to the forefront. Visitors now feel as though they are walking into the homes of our ancestors where they can make a *céilidh* | a house visit as they learn about daily life through songs, stories and anecdotes shared by animators. Our story on site currently begins in the early 1800s and ends in the 1920s.

As yet another season quickly approaches, we are in the process of designing a new visitor centre. We have spent much of the 2020 winter looking at how we can continue to provide the visitor with the best possible experience at *Baile nan Gàidheal*. The new centre will include an introductory exhibit. We hope that this exhibit will help set the stage for visitors before they make their way on site, by providing them with a framework, and outlining key factors, that led to our Gaelic Nova Scotia story. Animation on site will remain the same with first-person characters telling the stories and folklore of our people. We hope, by providing a better context of the story before emigration, it will heighten visitor experience and their understanding of who the Gaels are.

The last component of the new centre will be an exit exhibit. This exhibit will help to tell the rest of our story onward from 1925 to the present. This is currently a missing piece in our interpretation. We hope that telling our stories and what has led us to where we are today will help the visitor to better understand who we are as Gaels and why it is so important to maintain our culture. ©

Katherine MacLeod,
Manager of Interpretation.

Photo credit: Tom MacLeod.



Past NSHVS Board member, Bert MacLeod



Kathleen MacLean in the MacIver-Nash House.

Sgeul ri Aithris | The Storytelling Tradition

GUN DÒCHAS OIDHCHE | WITHOUT A NIGHT'S WISH

The common belief held by Gaels concerning an *spiorad beò* | the living spirit cautions against making wishes after dark. If a person dared to do so, saying "I wish I was at the dance" or "I wish I had a bottle", the consequences could be dire. A person would be sure to follow any wishes made after dark with an utterance of protection like '*Gun dòchas oidhche*.' The following story was recorded from *Annag ni'n Iain Alasdair 'ic Aonghais Ailean* | Anna MacKinnon of Sight Point, a wonderful mentor and champion of Gàidhlig.



© Photograph by Frances MacEachen

Shay visiting with Anna at Broad Cove Banks in 2019.

Annag: Uill, tha mi 'dol a dh'innse an naidheachd seo mu dheidhinn Ceannadach a bha á Rubh' an t-Seallaidh agus ghluais 'ad sìos gu Inbhir Nis. Bha 'ad a' fuireach a' sin. Bha na gilleann ag obair 's a' mhéinn. Fear a bha seo, bha caraid aige. Agus bha 'ad glé mheasail air a chéile. Ach thuit, bha seachdain eile a bha seo agus gun do dh'fhàs ise tinn. Cha robh i 'faireachdainn math idir. Bha danns shuas na *Coal Mines* agus co dhiubh bha 'ad an deaghaidh a bhith bruidhinn mu dheidhinn an danns. Bha an dithis a' dol a dhol ann.

Co-dhiù, bha esan a' studaigeadh gu robh e 'dol a dhol ann. Fhathast, bha e 'dol dh'ionnsaidh an danns. Ach, bha ise tuillidh 's brònach airson a dhol ann.

Chaidh esan astaigh dh'ionnsaidh an taigh aca 's thuit i, bha 'ad a' bruidhinn agus thuit ise ris, "Chan eil thu 'dol a dh'ionnsaidh an danns a-nochd 's na *Coal Mines*."

'S thuit e, "Tha."

Thuit i, "Chan eil mi airson thu dhol ann."

Agus, thuit e, "Carson?"

Agus, thuit i, "Uill, chan eil mis' a' faireachdainn ro .."

"Uill, bheil thu tuillidh 's tinn gus a dhol ann?" thuit e.

Agus thuit i, "Tha. Agus chan eil mi airson thusa dhol ann."

Agus, thuit e, "Uill, tha mise airson a dhol ann."

Thuit i, "Uill, tha mis' airson a dh'fhuireach aig an taigh. Ach co dhiubh," thuit i, "ma tha thu 'dol a dhol ann, tha aon nighean nach eil mise airson 's gun danns thusa còmhla rithe, ma théid thu ann."

Agus chan eil cuimhn' agam dé an t-ainm

a bh' air an nighinn, ach co dhiubh, chaidh a h-ainmeachadh. Chaidh esan a dh'ionnsaidh an danns. Agus nuair a ràinig e an danns ...

Thuit ise ris an toiseach, "Geall dhomh nach danns thu còmhla rithe!"

"Geallaidh," thuit e.

Dar a ràinig e an danns, có bha roimhe aig an danns ach an té a bha seo. Agus dé rinn e ach thug e 'dhanns i. Dhanns e, cha chreid mi car tric, còmhla rithe.

Ach co dhiubh, air a' rathad dhachaigh, thachair e air a spiorad, aig a' charaid aige.

Agus thuit i ris, "Dhanns thusa còmhla ris an nighinn a dh'iarr mis' ort gun danns còmhla rithe."

Agus thuit e, "Cha do dhanns."

Thuit i, "Dhanns!" Thuit i, "Tha fhios agam-asa gun do dhanns thu còmhla rithe." Agus thuit i, "Dh'iarr mis' ort gun dhanns còmhla rith' 's chaidh thu 'nam aghaidh."

Agus thuit e, "Cha do dhanns! Cha do dhanns mise còmhla rithe ..."

Agus thionndail i air! Bha i 'ga bhualadh le 'dùirn. Agus bha e air a ghearradh. Bha fùil a' tighinn às a' chraiceann aige leis a' phrionnadh a thug i dha. Agus thuit e cha mhór nach d' rinn i an gnothach air, nach do chuir i crìoch air leis cho fiadhaich 's a bha i.

Agus cha b' urrainn dha sian a dheanadh dhi. Bha do spionnadh aice. Cha ghabhadh sian deanadh dhi. Bha i fairis air a h-uile sian a rinn e. Cha mhór nach robh e toirt suas mu dheireadh. Agus, mar e rinn Dia, fhuair e falbh.

Agus bha e tachairt air pàirt dha 'n fheadhainn a bha 'dol a dh'obair dha 'n mhéinn a' mhadainn ud. Agus bha 'ad a' faighneachd dheth, "Dé ach Dia nan gràsan a dh'éirich dhut-as? Tha thu làn

fuil. Tha thu air do ghearradh suas." Agus, 's ise a rinn e. 'S e a' spiorad aice.

Agus tha 'ad ag ràdhainn ma chuireas tu dòchas 's an oidhche ort fhéin gun téid agad a bhith an àiteigin airson cron a dheanadh nam biodh tu ann.

Seigheag: Agus gu dé a bu chòir dhut a bhith 'g ràdhainn?

A: Gun toil oidhche.

S: Agus chuala mi cuideachd, "Gun dòchas oidhch'."

A: Bheireadh Da (a h-athair), "Gun dòchas oidhche." ©

Translation

Anna: Well, I'm going to tell a story about a Kennedy man who was from Sight Point and they moved to Inverness. They were living there. The boys were working in the mine. This fellow, he had a girlfriend. And they were very fond of one another. But it happened this week that she took sick. She wasn't feeling well at all. There was a dance up in the Coal Mines (Mabou) and anyway they were after talking about the dance. They were both going to go.

Anyway, he was thinking that he was going to go. Still, he was going to the dance. But, she was too grieved to go.

He went to their house (the girlfriend's parents' house) and they were speaking and she said, "You are not going to the dance tonight in the Coal Mines."

And he said, "Yes, I am."

She said, "I don't want you to go."

And he said, "Why?"

And she said, "Well, I'm not feeling so..." (he interrupts)

"Well, are you too sick to go?" he said.

And she said, "Yes. And I don't want you to go."

And he said, "Well, I want to go."

She said, "Well, I want to stay at the house. But anyway," she said, "if you are going to go, there is one girl I don't want you to dance with, if you go."

And I don't remember what her name was, but anyway, she was named. He went to the dance. And when he arrived at the dance...

She said to him in the first place, "Promise me that you won't dance with her!"

"I promise," he said.

So when he got to the dance, who was ahead of him but this girl. And what did he do but he took her to dance. So, he danced, I believe, with her quite often.

But anyway, on the way home, he met her spirit, his (girl) friend's spirit.

And she said to him, "You danced with the girl I asked you not to dance with."

And he said, "I didn't."

She said, "You did!" She said, "I know you danced with her." And she said, "I asked you not to dance with her and

you defied me."

And he said, "I didn't. I didn't dance with her ..."

And she turned on him! She was striking him with her fists. And he was wounded. He was bleeding with the pounding that she gave him. He said she nearly did him in, she nearly finished him, she was so wild.

And he couldn't do anything to her. She was so powerful. Nothing could be done to her. She excelled against everything he did. He almost gave up at the end. As fate would have it, he got away.

And he met some of the fellows on the way to work the next morning. And they were asking him, "What in the name of the God of Graces happened to you? You're full

of blood. You're scraped up." And that's what she did. It was her spirit.

And they say that if you put a wish on yourself that you'll travel, you'll be in a place to do harm if you're there.

Shay: And what should you say?

A: Without a night's wish.

S: And I've also heard, "Without a night's wish."

A: *Da* (Anna's father) would say that, "Without a night's wish." ©

This story was recorded, transcribed & translated by Shay MacMullin, Ban-chleasaiche | Cultural Experiences Coordinator.

Naomh Eòs is Deagh Bhiadh | St. Joseph's Blessing & Good Food

CURRAC A' RÌGH | THE KING'S HOOD

Nuair a bha sinn a' bruidhinn ris na seann Ghàidheil mu dhéidhinn biadh (airson Na Drochaide), chuir gach neach cudthrom air nach rachadh rud sam bith a dholaidh; mar a thuirt Alasdair mac Sheòrais 'ic Iain 'ic Iain, "bha a' h-uile sian 'deanamh feum." Dh'innis Alasdair mu dhéidhinn biadh coltach ris a' mharag gheal agus 's e Currac a' Rìgh an t-ainm a thug 'ad oirre. Chleachd 'ad stamag bheag as a' mhàr mar a chleachadh 'ad na caolain leis na maragan. Bhiodh 'ad 'ga lìonadh le uinneanan, salann, piopair, geir agus min-choirce, min bhuidhe neo buntàta. Bu tric a ghabhadh 'ad seo aig àm na Nollaig.

Modh bìdh: Currac a' Rìgh

Maodal bheag
Uinneannan
Salann
Piobar
Geir
Min-choirce

(Mura bi min-choirce air làimh, nì min-bhuidhe air neo buntàta a' chùis.)

Glan 's tiormaich a' mhaodal. Measgaich na stuthan eile ann am bobhla. Lìon a' mhaodal leis na stuthan agus dùin i le sreang. Càirich i ann am pana-rostaidh 's a bheil uisge goileach. Leig leatha bruich mu thuaiream uair gu leth. Dean toll oirre le snàthad los nach sgàin a' mhaodal. Nuair a bhios i bruichte, tog le spàin i agus càirich air truinnsear i. Air neo slisich 's fraighig i agus cuir air a' bhòrd i le buntàta agus tuirneapan, air neo sgonn do dh'aran, na rola.

*Coltach ri iomadh rud eile, bu tric a bha modhannan bìdh ann gun mheudachd nan stuthan. B' ann o ghlùn gu glùn a chaidh an toirt seachad. Gheobhte beagan do dhi-far o thaigh gu taigh. ©

Translation

When talking about food with Gaelic Welders (for *An Drochaid Eadarainn*), all emphasized that nothing would be wasted when food was prepared. In an interview with Alex George MacLean, he talks about a dish similar to white pudding known as *Currac a' Rìgh* (The King's Hood/Hat), in which a small cow's stomach would be used as a casing. The stomach would be filled with onions, salt, pepper, fat, and either oatmeal, cornmeal or potatoes. This dish would often be enjoyed at Christmastime.

Recipe: Currac a' Rìgh

King's Hood (the small stomach)
onions
salt

pepper
suet or lard
oatmeal

(If you don't have oatmeal on hand, cornmeal or potatoes will do.)

Clean and dry the stomach. Mix the other ingredients in a bowl. Fill the stomach with the ingredients and close with a string. Put it in a roast pan filled with boiling water. Let it cook (on the stove) for about

an hour and a half. Pierce the pudding with a needle to prevent the stomach from bursting. When it is cooked, spoon it out onto a plate and enjoy. Or slice and fry it and put it on the table with potatoes and turnip, or with a piece of bread or a roll.

*No quantities were provided for this recipe — like many other things, recipes were learned from knee to knee, and would vary a little from person to person. ©

To listen to the interview with Alasdair Sheòrais discussing *Currac a' Rìgh*, please visit <http://www.androchaid.ca/currac-righ>

Written by Seumas Watson based on interview with Alex George MacLean by Shay MacMullin and Emily MacDonald. Translated by Shay MacMullin,



Alex George MacLean at his house in Gabarus Lake.

© Photograph by Ryan MacDonald

Is treasa dithis a' dol thar na fad' o chéile.
Two should stay together when crossing a ford.

MAG-TALLA

An Similear October 14, 1893

Bha coinneamh-chonnsachaidh aca ann an ceàrn air choir-eiginn de 'n eilein seo. Air oidhche àraid 's e a' cheist a bh' aca: "Cò a 's fheàrr an similear no 'n stòbh?" 'S ann 's a' Ghàidhlig a bha 'n connsachadh a dol air adhart. Labhair fear do 'm b' ainm Ailean MacGhill'Eathain air taobh an t-similear anns na briathribh a leanas:

Mo shimilear gur laghach thu,
'S gur loinneil leam do dheann;
Is tu nach fàgadh tinn mi
Ged a bhithinn ìseal fann.
'S ann thàirneadh tu gach fòtus bhuam
Am mach 'measg cheò nam beann,
Cha dug thu fàth air gearan dhomh,
'S cha dealaich mi riut ann.

A' bhocsa ghreannaich iaruin;
Gur a h-iargainneach do ghreann
Le t' amhaich chaoil gun èireachdas,
Tha spògan dubha, lorcach ort,
Mar mhathan olc nan gleann;
'S chan fhaigh mi deàrrsadh soluis
bhuat
Ged bhristinn riut mo cheann.

An urrainn neach sam bith innse dhuinn
càit' a robh am fear a rinn na rannan seo
a' fuireach?

Bho Amhainn Dhennis October 28, 1893

A charaid ionmhuinn,
'S fhad' o 'n tha dùil agam focal a chur do
d' ionnsuidh, ach an diugh, nuair thàinig
Mac-Talla agus a chunnaic mi ceist air a
faighneachd a b' urrainn dhomh fhreagairt,
smuainich mi nach deanainn dàil na b' fhaide.

Tha sibh faighneach air son Ailean MacGhill'Eathain a chur ri chèile na rannan mu 'n t-similear. Feudaich mi innse gum b' e dlùth choimhearsnach dhomh bha ann. Rugadh e ann an Colla agus thàinig e dha 'n dùthaich seo 'na ghille òg. Bha e 'na sgoilear math Gàidhlig agus bha toil mhór aige an cànan sin a bhì air a chumail suas. Bha e fad an aghaidh cuid de nithean ùr an latha 'n diugh, agus choisinn sin dha an rann a dheanmh mu 'n t-Similear oidhche thachair dha bhì ann 's a' choinneamh-chonnsachaidh a bha ann an taigh-sgoile 's a' choimhearsnachd seo mar dh'ainmich

sibh 's a' Mhac-Talla. Bha meaghar math aige agus tàlann neo-chumanta deanamh rann, agus is duilich leam nach fheil móran dhiubh an diugh ri faotuinn, oir cha do sgriobhadh riamh iad. Chaidh iad gu tìr na dì-chuimhne, chaidh esan a bhàthadh aig caolas an Narrows Mhór mu dhà bhliadhna us iad a' pilleadh bho Shidnidh le bàta luchdaichte le gual.

Chan eil móran naidheachdan agam ri innse às an oisinn iomallach seo do Cheap Breatuinn, ach feumaidh mi aideachadh gu bheil comh-thional a' Bhàgh an Iar aig an àm seo a chur dorrann orm le bhì cho foillaiseach a briseadh air an deicheamh àithne, le bhì toirt gairm dha 'r ministear a tha ro mheasail againn fhìn.

Bha mi ro thoilichte litir fhaicinn ann 's a' Mhac-Talla bho "Khatag" mo sheann ban-chompanach sgoile a tha 'nise còmhnuidh an Columbia Bhreatunnach. Tha i 'nochdadh nach do dhì-chuimhnich i an cànan a labhair sinn gu tric ri chèil' aig taigh-sgoile bonn na bruthaich.

"Cia cho sgapta 's am bi sinn measg dhùthaichean céin,
Tha smuaintean ar cridhe mar ghathan na gréine
A' gearradh troimh 'n astar 's a' sracadh troimh 'n cheò.
'S 'gar giùlain 's an spiorad gu làithean ar n-òig."

'S e seo a' chiad litir Ghàidhlig a sgrìobh mi riamh agus mìle beannachd air Mac-Talla bho 'n d' ionnsaich mi am beagan seo fhéin. Buaidh us piseach air gach àm!

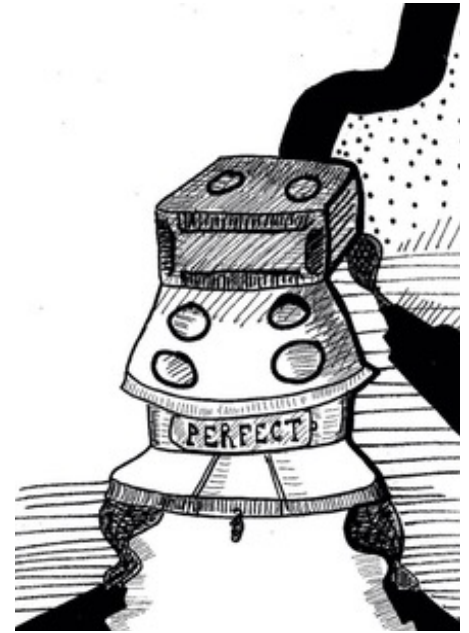
Is mise, do bhana-charaid dhìleas.
E.D., October 21 ©

Translation

The Chimney October 14, 1893

They held a debate in some areas of this island. On this particular night, the question they had was: "Which is better, the chimney or the stove?" The debate was conducted in Gàidhlig. A man by the name of Allan MacLean, who took the side of the chimney, said in these words:

My chimney you are fine,
Your swiftness is splendid to me



© Illustration by Emily MacDonald

You would not leave me unwell
Though I would be weak and low.
You would draw each ailment from me
Out to the mist of the mountains,
You never gave me cause to complain,
And I will not part with you.

You gloomy iron box;
Your angry look is afflictive
With your unbecoming slender neck,
You have black, deformed paws,
Like a wicked bear of the glens;
And I don't get a gleam of light from you
Though I would break my head on you.

Is anyone able to tell us where the man
who made these verses was living?

From River Denys October 28, 1893

My dear friend,

It's been a long time since I've intended to write to you, but today, when Mac-Talla arrived and I saw the question asked that I was able to answer, I thought I would not delay any further.

You are asking about Allan MacLean who put the verses together about the chimney. I can tell you that he was a close neighbour of mine. He was born in Coll and he came

to this country when he was a young boy. He was a good Gàidhlig scholar and he had a great desire for that language to be maintained. He was completely opposed to the new things of today which prompted him to make a verse about the chimney the night he happened to be in the debate at the schoolhouse in the community, as you mentioned in Mac-Talla. He had a good vocabulary and an uncommon talent to make verse, and I regret that there aren't many of them to be found today, because they were never written down. They've gone to the land of forgetfulness. He drowned at Grand Narrows about two years ago when they were returning from Sydney with a boat laden with coal.

I don't have much news to tell from this remote corner of Cape Breton, but I must admit that the West Bay congregation at this time is angering me by so obviously breaking the tenth commandment (Thou shalt not covet.), with giving our own very much esteemed minister an invitation.

I was so pleased to see the letter in *Mac-Talla* from "Katag", my old school friend who is living in British Columbia now. She shows that she didn't forget the language we so often spoke together at school at the foot of the hill.

"How greatly dispersed we are among foreign countries,
Our hearts' thoughts are like sunbeams
Cutting through the distance and
tearing through the mist.
And carrying us in spirit to the days of
our youth."

This is the first Gàidhlig letter I have ever written and a thousand blessings on Mac-Talla from which I learned the little written here. I wish you good luck!

Your faithful friend,
E.D., October 21 ©

While reading *Mac-Talla* in the Store at Baile nan Gàidheal as part of our regular animation on site, the *Cleasaichean* | Cultural Animators came across this excerpt. Though written in 1893, there is still frequent commentary about whether the stove or the chimney is the finest, among staff and visitors alike. One might also consider the impact of modernity on Gaelic language and way of life reflected in this piece.

An excerpt from *Mac-Talla* translated & edited by Shay MacMullin, Ban-chleasaiche | Cultural Experiences Coordinator with many thanks to Stacey MacLean and Mary Jane Lamond.



Mac-Talla, published in Sydney, Nova Scotia, was the longest running Gaelic weekly paper and ending as a bi-weekly (1892-1904). Eòin Aonghais Chaluim | Jonathan G. MacKinnon was a life-long promoter of Gaelic and was involved in other publications including Gaelic translations of English literature.

MAR CHUIMHNEACHAN | DEDICATION FOR JOAN



Joan & John Gillis sing at the Highland Village with Jim Watson.

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the passing of *Joan ni'n Iain Steabhain Theàrlaich Alasdair an t-Saoir* | Johnena "Joan" Gillis. Joan was a great friend and supporter of the Highland Village and the Central Cape Breton community. Born and raised in Washabuck in the musical MacKenzie family, Joan was a tradition bearer noted for step dancing and singing. She was generous to share her talents whether it be at a house *cèilidh*, around the milling table, or on the Highland Village stage. Joan volunteered with a variety of organizations in our community, including serving on the Highland Village board. In 2000, Joan was presented with the Highland Village Volunteer Award for her many contributions to the organization (which included making many bottles of chow for our codfish suppers). Joan will be remembered for her love of her community and culture, her generosity, and her great sense of humour. *Sith dha*

DUAIS CLIÙTHA | AWARD OF MERIT



Rodney Chaisson, Charlie Cash and NSHVS President, M.A. MacPherson.

Each year since 1979, the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society honours those who have been strong supporters and promoters of the Village, and the culture and identity of Nova Scotia Gaels. Our 2019 *Duais Cliùtha* | Award of Merit was awarded to Charlie Cash of Irish Cove, in recognition of his support of the Highland Village through the donation of his family carding mill, encouraging the donation of the other family mills from his brothers (shingle and grist), and his efforts in preserving the stories and material culture of those mills, which served Gaelic communities all over eastern Cape Breton Island. ©

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society gratefully acknowledges the support of its government partners. In addition to our core funding from the Province of Nova Scotia through the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage (Nova Scotia Museum), support has also been received from:

Government of Canada through the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Departments of Canadian Heritage, and Employment & Social Development Canada;

Nova Scotia Departments of Transportation & Infrastructure Renewal, Labour and Advanced Education, *Iomairtean na Gàidhlig* | Office of Gaelic Affairs.

Municipality of Victoria County through District 1 and the Recreation & Tourism Department.

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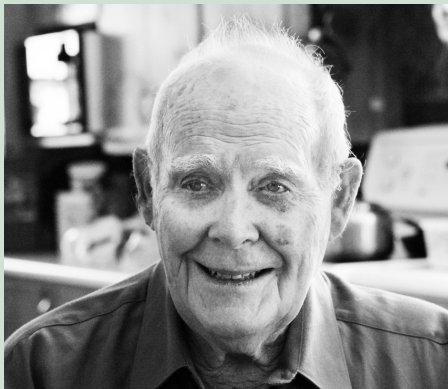
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Soraidh Slàn le Deagh Chàirdean



Am bliadhna, chaill saoghal na Gàidhligdithist ghaigeach, dithist bhràithrean-fala a chur seachad am beathannan a' studaigeadh air cànan is dualchas nan Gàidheal agus a' toirt seachad an t-aon ionnsachaidh do dhaoine eile mu 'n timcheall.

This year, the Gaelic world lost two heroes, brothers who spent their lives studying the language and culture of the Gaels and passing that learning on to others around them. Born in Barra Glen, a small Gaelic Community close to Iona, Cape Breton Island, Rod C. and Jamie MacNeil were proud to say that they were of Barra descent.



© Photograph by Ryan MacDonald

**Ruaraidh Iain Dhòmhnail
Sheumais Dhòmhnail Òig
Iain Ruaraidh**

Rod C. MacNeil

Chaidh Ruaraidh agus Seumas MacNill a bhreith 's a thogail ann an Gleann nam Barrach, baile beag Gàidhealach faisg air Sannraigh ann an siorramachd Bhioctoria air Eilean Cheap Breatainn. Bhuineadh iad do shliochd nam Barrach air ana dà thaobh dha 'n teaghlach. 'S ann a mhuinntir Bhàgh a' Chaisteil, Ceap Breatainn, a bha an athair, Iain Dan MacNill (Iain Dhòmhnail Sheumais Dhòmhnail Òig Iain Ruaraidh), agus chaidh am màthair, Anna Catrìona NicNill a bhreith 's a thogail ann an Gleann nam Barrach fhéin.

Chaidh Ruaraidh MacNill a bhreith ann an 1924 ann an Gleann nam Barrach agus chaidh àrach 's a' cheart àite. Thogadh e air a' bhaile-fearainn còmhla r' a thriùir bhràithrean is còignear pheathraichean. Chaidh Ruaraidh dha 'n airm nuair a bha e fichead bliadhna, a' seòladh à Halifax air Oidhche na Nollaig, 1944, a' tilleadh dhachaigh aig deireadh a' chogaidh ann an 1945. Choinnich e ri a bhean, Éilidh, nuair a bha e 'g obair 'na mheacanaig ann an *Toronto* is phòs iad ann an 1953. Ann an 1957, chaidh iarraidh air tilleadh dhachaigh a choimhead as deaghaidh a' bhaile-fearainn. Thill e a Ghleann nam Barrach còmhla ri Éilidh agus an teaghlach agus chuir iad seachad am beathannan a' sin, a' togail sianar do theaghlach agus a' cumail fear dhe na tuathnasan a bu bhuadhmhoir anns an sgìre sin.

'S iomadh duine a fhuair fàilt' is furan aig doras-taighe Ruaraidh agus Éilidh. Na dhuine fialaidh, laghach, socair, bha Ruaraidh an còmhnaidh deiseil cuideachadh a thoirt do dhuine sam bith a bha 'sireadh ionnsachaidh anns an dualchas agus anns a' chànan a bha e daonnan a' meas cho luachmhor. Leis an stòras do dh'fhios a bha aig Ruaraidh, thàinig iomadh duine thuige thar nam bliadhnachan a' lorg fiosrachaidh air eachdraidh na coimhearsnachd gu h-ionadail. 'S e seinneadair air leth a bh' ann an Ruaraidh. Bha a ghuth binn ceart cho freagarrach a' seinn anns a' chòisir, air an àrd-ùrlar le Seinneadairean Shannraigh,

no 'gabhail òran aig a' chléith-luaidh. Cha do dh'fhàs Ruaraidh riamh sgìth dhe bhith a' toirt na h-uimhir dha choimhearsnachd agus cha robh oidhrip-choimhearsnachd ann nach do chuir e taic ris thar nam bliadhnachan, a' toirt a staigh gu h-àraid, Baile nan Gàidheal agus Roinn-Smàilaidh Shannraigh. Cluinnear seinn Ruaraidh air an *CD, Còmhla Cruinn*. Gheibhear tuilleadh dhe 'n t-seanchas aig Ruaraidh air Caintnt Mo Mhàthar. ©

Born in 1924, Rod C. was a steadfast supporter of his community and of the Gaelic language and culture that he cherished. A veteran of the Second World War, Rod C. spent a number of years in Ontario before returning to Barra Glen with his wife, Helen, to take over the family farm. Steeped in the culture, traditions and values of his community, Rod C. gave tirelessly to his church and to local organizations, particularly the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society and the Iona Volunteer Fire Department. A singer of no small ability, Rod C. was equally comfortable performing with the Gaelic choir, singing onstage with the Iona Gaelic Singers or taking the lead on a song at the milling table. Learners of all stripes will miss his gentle, easy manner and his enthusiastic encouragement and support. Rod C.'s singing can be heard on the *CD, Còmhla Cruinn*. He can also be heard online at *Caintnt Mo Mhàthar*. ©

Farewell to Good Friends



**Seumas Iain Dhòmhnaill
Sheumais Dhòmhnaill Òig
Iain Ruaraidh**

Jamie 'John Dan' MacNeil

Rugadh Seumas MacNill anns a' bhliadhna 1929 ann an Gleann nam Barrach agus 's ann a' sin a fhuair e àrach. Bha Seumas naoidh bliadhna deug nuair a dh'fhàg e am baile-fearainn airson na ciad uair is chaidh e gu Eilean a' Phrionnsa a dh'obair aig tuathanach ann a' sin. A' bhliadhna as deaghaidh sin, rinn e cùrsa anns an innleachdas ann an *Halifax*. Thill e gu Gleann nam Barrach agus

as deaghaidh bliadhna eile air a' bhaile-fearainn, chuir e roimhe gun rachadh e dha 'n fheachd-adhair agus thòisich e 's an dreuchd, teicneolaiche-dealain. Phòs e Louise NicNill às a' Chùl Bheag, baile beag faisg air Gleann nam Barrach, ann an 1953 is thog iad ochdnar do theaghlach. Dh'fhàg e am feachd-adhair ann an 1972 is thill e dhachaigh do Cheap Breatainn. Dh'obraich e an uair sin anns a' Phlant-Stàilinn ann an Sudnaidh gus a' bhliadhna, 1989, nuair e leig e seachad a dhreuchd.

Riamh 'na dhuine tuigseach, tùrail, rinn Seumas sgrùdadh mionaideach air a' chànan is air an dualchas. Mar a rinn e air na h-innleachdan-dealain anns an fheachd-adhair, sin mar a rinn e air a' Ghàidhlig fhéin, a' dèanamh sgrùdaidh air gach mìr dhi, a' sìreadh tuigse iomlan oirre. A dh'aindeoin na tuigse domhain, farsaing a bh' aige fhéin, bha Seumas riamh 'na fhear-ionnsachaidh. Bha e glé eòlach cuideachd air a' cheòl 's an dannsa. Bha an cànan, na dòighean-labhairt is mion-diofaran a' chànan luachmhor dha ach b' e na h-òrain a bu phrìseile dha chridhe. Aig céilidh, seisean, consart, no luadhachd, far a robh na h-òrain 'gan gabhail, bhiodh Seumas ann agus e air a dhòigh. Leis a' spéis a thug e dha na h-òrain, bha e daonnan deònach is déidheil cuideachadh a thoirt do dhuine

sam bith a bhiodh a' feuchainn ri òran a thogail agus fhuair iomadach ionnsaiche meantor fialaidh, puingeil, dileas ann an Seumas. Cluinnear seinn Sheumais air an CD, *Còmhla Cruinn*. ©

Jamie MacNeil was born in 1929 and grew up on the family farm in Barra Glen. He spent twenty-one years in the Royal Canadian Air Force as an electronics technician and then went on to work at the Sydney Steel Plant where he retired in 1989. A lifelong learner, Jamie devoted himself to a study of Gaelic and had a deep understanding of the language, songs, music and dance. Jamie's love for Gaelic songs and Gaelic singing made him a valuable and valued addition to any occasion where people gathered to celebrate in song. Singing at a *céilidh*, session, concert or milling frolic, Jamie took pleasure in sharing the songs that he held close to his heart. That pleasure extended to helping others learn the songs as well, and many a learner benefited from Jamie's careful and thorough mentoring. Jamie's singing can be heard on the CD, *Còmhla Cruinn*. ©

Written by Hector MacNeil. Hector is a noted storyteller, singer and Gàidhlig mentor who lives between Castle Bay and Sydney River.



Photos left to right :

- 1) 50th anniversary celebration of NSHVS. (l-r) Rod C. MacNeil, Jamie MacNeil, Mickey MacNeil, Hector MacNeil and Maxi MacNeil.
- 2) Rod C. at his home in Barra Glen.
- 3) Jamie attending an afternoon event at the Highland Village.
- 4) Rod and Jamie with their sister, Marie, in Iona.
- 5) Jamie and Rod C. along with other members of the Iona Gaelic singers performing at a Highland Village Day Concert.

Ag éirigh air Òrain | An Rubha Song Selection

NIGHEAN DONN BHÒIDHEACH | BEAUTIFUL BROWN-HAIRED MAIDEN

Photograph by Janet MacNeil



Rod C with grandchildren, Hannah and Rory MacNeil.

To anyone that knew him, he was Rod C., but to me, he was Grampa. He was my hero and I was his 'dear little Hannah.' Grampa taught me so many life skills. I know how to bake biscuits, make a real Cape Breton cup of tea and most of all, to be kind and respectful to all those I meet. When I was a toddler, he would lay on the kitchen floor with me while we watched the fire in the wood stove. He would sing, tell stories and just simply spend time with me. I was amazed with his stories and so proud of his kindness and willingness to help others. It didn't matter who they were or what they needed. He and Gramma opened their hearts and their home to anyone in need. I have heard countless stories from people he helped along the way. Each one held a special place in Grampa's heart, just as he holds in mine. Because of his dedication and passion for his Gaelic culture and heritage, I continue to keep this passion alive in my studies and life. I would like to share with you one of my favorite songs he learned from his mother's singing, *Nighean Donn Bhòidheach*. I had the pleasure of singing this with him many times and it remains one of my most treasured memories. ©

Nighean Donn Bhòidheach was composed by Dòmhnall MacPhàrlain | D.D. MacFarlane of Southwest Margaree and was printed in *Smeòrach nan Cnoc 's nan Gleann* | *The Songster of the Hills and Glens*, compiled by Bernard Gillis and the Rev. Dr. P.J. Nicholson, edited by Hector MacDougall, 1939.

Hannah MacNeil is a grade 8 student at Sgoil Mhic Fhraing a' Chaolais and volunteer at Baile nan Gàidheal. Song translated by Hannah Krebs and Shay MacMullin.

FONN

Hug hoirionn ho ro bha ho,
Nighean donn, bhòidheach;
Hug hoirionn ho ro bha ho.

Gura mithich dhomh gluasad
Agus cuairt thoirt air òran.

Los gu seinn mi do bhuadhan
Bho 'n a fhuair mi ort eòlas.

Tha thu modhail, ciùin, sìobhalt'.
Tha thu rìomhach, neo-phròiseil.

Tha thu iriosal, stuama,
Smiorail, fuasgailteach, seòlta.

Inntinn shoilleir gun fhoill innt',
'S tha thu coibhneil an còmhnuidh.

'S do chòmhradh glan, suairce,
Chuir na h-uaislean an tòir ort.

Tha do phearsa deas, dìreach,
Cuimir, finealt', grinn, beòthail.

Falt dualach, trom, cuachach,
Mu d' ghuaillan an òrdugh.

Gura binn leam bhith t' éisdeachd
Nuair a ghleusas tu 'n t-òrgan.

Meur a chuireas an sgrìobhadh
Cainnt bhrìoghail an òrdugh.

Deanamh fuaigheal le snàthaid,
Chan eil fàillinn 'ad eòlas.

Leat bu mhiannach 's a' Chéitean
Tional spréidhe thar lònintean.

Bhith 'gan iomain do 'n bhuaile,
Seinn dhanagan bòidheach.

CHORUS

Hug hoirionn ho ro bha ho,
Beautiful, brown-haired maiden;
Hug hoirionn ho ro bha ho.

It's time that I begin,
and attempt to compose a song.

So I can sing of your virtues
Since I have made your acquaintance.

You are mannerly, gentle, courteous.
You are elegant and unpretentious.

You are humble and meek,
Spirited, open-minded, skilful.

A bright mind without a fault in it,
You are always kind.

It's your pleasant, good-natured speech,
That sent the men in pursuit of you.

Your appearance is handsome, perfect,
Neat, refined, alluring, vivacious.

Hair thick with waves and curls,
Neatly about your shoulders.

It is sweet listening to you
When you put the organ in tune.

A finger that expresses language
Of meaning and beauty.

Sewing with a needle,
There is not a flaw in your skill.

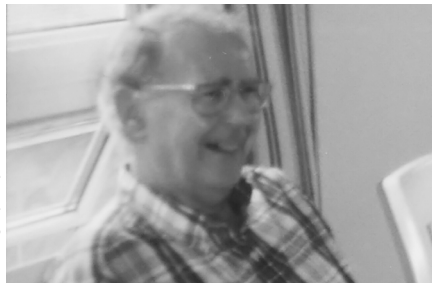
In May you would long
to gather the cattle over the meadows.

Herding them to the cattle fold,
Singing to them pretty little songs.

'San Taigh-Chéilidh | In the Céilidh House

NIGHEAN BHÀN GHRÙLAINN | THE FAIR-HAIRED MAIDEN OF GRÙLAINN

Photograph by Lorrie MacKinnon



When I think of Jamie, I think of how present he was at everything. He was at every immersion event at *Colaisde na Gàidhlig* | the Gaelic College, every milling frolic, every Gaelic event at *Féis an Eilein*. He had a wry sense of humour — I remember the first Gaelic immersion week at St. Ann's and how hard it was to stick to Gaelic — we were all standing around and not sure what to say next, "Well, well...". "*Tobar*," was his reply (*tobar* being the Gaelic word for a well). And although he could appear gruff at times, he had a core kindness — I remember being low on gas and needing to drive back from Christmas Island to the Gaelic College, and not realizing there were no gas stations that would be open at the time of night I was going through. He insisted on my coming to Boisdale and he filled my tank and refused to take a penny. He never availed himself of the 'free for native speakers' opportunities, but always insisted on making a financial contribution to any event he attended.

Jamie had learned a lot of songs which he shared at the milling table. A favourite song, which was always requested late in the night at the Gaelic immersions, was the fun song *Òran na Mohawks*. I never heard anyone else sing it. It was made by *Iagan Iain Òig MacPhee*. His people were the original settlers on the property which they sold to Peter MacLean's father Jack when they moved back to the Highlands as a result of the 1909 Glace Bay Miners' strike and the fallout from it.

Although Jamie sang this song at the Gaelic College late at night, most people would not think of that song when they think of Jamie's repertoire. One of his milling table songs was *Nighean Bhàn Ghrùlainn*. This version was published in *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia* from the singing of Hugh MacKenzie. It is also found in *An t-Òranaiche*. It is a somewhat formulaic love song, but we always enjoyed hearing Jamie sing it, and lament its, and his, absence from the milling table. ©

Lorrie MacKinnon is a Gaelic enthusiast living in Oakville, Ontario.

FONN

Thug mi rùn, 's chuir mi ùidh
'S an té ùir a dh'fhàs tlàth;
Maighdeann chiùin dh'an tig gùn,
Cha b' e 'n t-iongnadh leam d' fhàilt'.

'S ann an Grùlainn fo 'n Sgùrr
Tha mo rùn 'gabhail tàimh;
Maighdeann ùr a tha ciùin,
'S i mo rùn-sa thar chàich.

Gun do bhruadair mi 'n raoir
A bhi 'd choibhneas a ghràidh,
'S 'n uair a dhùisg mi a m' shuain
B' fhada bhuam thu air sàl.

Tha do shlios mar chanach lòn
No mar eala òig air tràigh;
Gruaidh a 's deirge na 'n ròs,
Beul a 's bòidhche nì gàir'.

Pearsa dhìreach gun chearb,
Aghaidh mheanbh-dhearg a ghràidh;
Mar ghath gréine 's an fhaig'
Tha do dhealbh a measg chàich.

Dosan lìobharra, réidh,
'S e gu h-éibhinn a' fàs;
Tha e sìos ort 'na chléit,
'S air gach té bheir thu bàrr.

'N uair a rachainn-sa gu féill,
Bu leat fhéin seud no dhà;
'S bhiodh tu cinnteach a gùn
As na bùithean a b'fheàrr.

Ged bu leamsa le còir
Na tha dh'òr anns a' Spàinnt,
Liùbhrainn bhuam e le deòin
Air son pòig' o 'n té bhàin.

Dh'aindeoin tuaileis luchd-bhreug,
Tha gach céill riut a' fàs,
Tha thu firinneach, réidh,
O 'n là cheum thu air làr.

CHORUS

I loved and I was attentive
To the young girl who was gentle in upbringing
A modest maiden who suits a gown,
It was no wonder that I made you welcome.

My love lives in Grùlainn (Eigg)
Under the peak.
She is fair and placid
She is my choice above all others.

I dreamed last night, beloved,
That I was in your affectionate company;
When I awoke out of my deep slumber,
You were far away from me on the sea.

Your side is white like meadow cottongrass
Or like a young swan on the beach;
Your cheeks are redder than the rose,
Your mouth smiles beautifully.

Your frame is erect, without defect,
Your face slightly blushing, beloved;
Like a sunbeam on the ocean
Is your outstanding figure amongst others.

A glossy, well-arranged fringe
Growing delightfully
In pendant strands on your forehead
Excelling all women.

When I would go to a Fair,
I would buy a jewel or two for you;
You would be sure to receive a gown
From the best shops.

Although I possessed, by right,
All the gold in Spain,
I would give it up willingly
For a kiss from the fair-haired maiden.

In spite of slanderous liars,
You are prudent in all things
You are truthful and rational
Traits that remained with you
From your first steps.

Seinn fo Sgàil nan Geugan Uaine | Songs from the Greenwood

AN TULACH BHÒIDHEACH | THE PRETTY HILLOCK

This song was composed by *Eàirdsidh Sheumais* | Archibald MacKenzie of Christmas Island. You would often hear *Seumas Iain Dhòmhnaill Sheumais Dhòmhnaill Òig Iain Ruairidh* | Jamie John Dan MacNeil sing this song as he sat around many milling tables all over Cape Breton. Jamie was partial to this song because it extolled the beauty of 'the Grand Narrows', better known today as the Barra Strait. This was a place Jamie knew very well growing up in nearby Barra Glen.

Jamie would make a great effort to help anyone learning Gaelic songs. I learned the chorus of this song from Jamie. He would sit across the milling table from anyone and make sure that they knew the words to the choruses. Jamie and I lived in the same area and would often travel together to milling frolics and to the Gaelic Society in Sydney. We were invited to sing Gaelic songs at a fundraising concert for Highland Village hosted by Don Hyslop in the Annapolis Valley. We made the trip along with Jamie's wife, Louise. While we were at the concert, Louise went to a nursery to pick up a magnolia tree that I wanted. Now, many years later, when the tree blooms in spring, I think back to that trip and the many trips, good times and Gaelic songs we shared together. *Gun robh fois ann an sìth.* ©



Beth MacNeil is a Gaelic singer and animator at Baile nan Gàidheal.

Transcription and translation published in Fad air Falbh as Innse Gall | Beyond the Hebrides, Fergusson.

FONN	O, gur toil leam, e gur toil leam, O, gur toil leam fhìn an t-àite; 'S toigh leam fhìn an tulach bhòidheach Air am b' òg a fhuair mi m' àrach.	8	Bhiodh an smeòrach air bhàrr géige A' seinn gu h-éibhinn madainn bhlàth- gheal, Agus banarach na buaile Le cuid duanag a' toirt bàrr air.	4	You would see north of the Narrows Where there are the lofty uplands; You'd be seeing Edward's glen there, Where are people rich and friendly.
1	Fhir a shiubhlas do na Narrows, Thoir mo shoraidh-sa gu m' chàirdean, 'S innis gu bheil mi fo mhulad 'Caoidh na tulaich rinn mi fhàgail.	9	Nuair a thigeadh àm na buana, Cha bhiodh tuathanaich air fàillinn; Gheibheadh gruth ann agus uachdar, Feòil nan uan agus buntàta.	5	Early comes the kindly summer Filling up the fields with flowers, And your woods are clothed in beauty – Often I've been shaded by them.
2	Siod an tulach a tha briagha, Leam bu mhiann gu sìorraidh tàmh ann; Far am bheil na daoine ciatach Sitheil, rianail mar na bràithrean.	10	Gheibheadh 'n t-àran còirce brìgheil, Gheibheadh 'n t-ìm ann agus càise, Gheibheadh sùbh ann agus ùbhlán, 'S cha bhoidh caomhnadh air a' bhlàthaich.	6	Lovely are your winding valleys, Pretty are your sunny farm-lands, Where they're growing oats and barley,
3	Bu bhòidheach chitheadh Loch Bhras d'Or Air an seòl na luingeas àlainn; Agus bàtaichean na smùide 'Gearradh shùrdagan 's an t-sàile.	CHORUS	Oh, I love it, eh, I love, Oh, how much I love the place there; How I love the pretty hillock Where I lived when I was youthful.	7	Wheat that's golden, and potatoes. Early you'd see the lively people Go to work there in that region - Youthful lads will use the harrow, Grey old men will sow the grain there.
4	Chitheadh Taobh-a-Tuath a' Chaolais Far am bheil na raointean àrda, Chitheadh siud 's Gleann Chlann Ìomhair Far 'm bheil daoine fialaidh, saoi bhir.	1	He who travels to the Narrows Take my greetings to my friends there, Tell them that I am sad now Longing for the hillock that I left.	8	There'll be robins in the tree-tops, Sweet their songs on sunny mornings, And the milk-maids with the cattle Singing ditties will surpass them.
5	'S tràth a thig an samhradh cùirteil, Chuir nam flùrs gu dlùth 'ad phàircean; 'S do choill' fo thrusgan riomhach, 'S tric a bha mi fhìn fo sgàile.	2	It's a hillock that is handsome, I would love to live there always, Where there are such pleasant people, Quiet, peaceful, just like brothers.	9	When there comes the time for reaping Then the farmers won't be wanting; Curds and cream then would be found there; Flesh of lamb and dry potatoes.
6	Tha do ghlaican lurach, fiarach, 'S bòidheach, grianach, do chuid phàircean; Far am fàs an còirce 's eòrna, Cruithneachd òr-bhuidh' 's am buntàta.	3	'Twas pretty seeing Lake Bras d'Or Filled with sails of graceful vessels, And with the steamboats as they travelled Cutting capers through the water.	10	You'd find oatmeal bread that's wholesome, You'd find butter there and cheeses; You'd find berries there and apples, Buttermilk there'd be in plenty.
7	'S moch a chitheadh sùrd air daoine 'Dol gu saothair air an àite, Gilleann òga 'dol a chliathadh, 'S bodaich liathadh 'cuir a' ghràin dhaibh.				

An Gàidheal Portmhor | Scotch Music

ÒRAN MHIC AN TÒISICH | ODE TO WHISKEY, JOHN OF BADENYON

Òran *Mhic an Tòisich* is a Gaelic song with a well-travelled melody. The air is shared with a widely known reel, often simply dubbed the first of the 'Old-Time' Wedding Reels, usually played on A, in addition to being played as a G minor strathspey by the name John of Badenyon. While numerous versions of this song exist, they generally seem to follow the storyline described by *Aonghas Eòghainn Aonghais* | Angus Gillis of Mabou Harbour in his account of how *Òran Mhic an Tòisich* came to be:

Bha banais 'dol a bhith an Albainn trup, am measg beinn an Albainn. Is bha *blaze* a' dol ro 'n choillidh, *blaze* dhe na craobhan, bho chraobh gu craobh. Agus chuir 'ad an gille òg a bha seo, cha do dh'òl e boinne riamh, chuir 'ad e a dh'iarraidh galan rùma is coinnlean airson na banais. Thachair e air duine air mullach na beinne, té dha na beinnean seo, agus each is diallaid is buideal cóig galan aig' air a chùl, is tha sheans gun robh an ceangal an deaghaidh fàs car las. Ach thàinig an gille òg suas, thug e tacan a' bruidhinn, is thug a' fear air an eich... bha stoban... sin *tap* na *spigot*, a bh' air a' bharaille. Bha slige aige 'na phòcaid, cha robh soitheach no glainne no cupa ann ach slige. Theireadh 'ad fhéin, na seann daoine, ris - 'an t-slig' a chreach sinn', 'the dish that robbed us.' Ach co-dhiù, lion e do dh'uisge beatha e, is bha e air a tharraing dùbailte, bha e cho math dìreach a ghabhadh a bhi, tha seansa. Ghabh an gille e, chaidh e 'na cheann, is bha a' fear eile cho fialaidh 's thug e dha té h-eile an ceann tacain, is té h-eile, is té h-eile. Is a Dhia, mu dheireadh, seo agad an deireadh aige - bha bodach a' fuireach shios an grunn an uillt, is bha e eagalach math gu bàrdachd, is dh'inns an gill' òg dha a' stòraidh is ceann goirt air an ceann a dhà na trì làthaichean agus rinn am bodach an t-òran dha is seo agad mar a bha e a' falbh...

There was to be a wedding in Scotland one time, in the mountains of Scotland. And there was a blaze going through the forest, a blaze of the trees, from tree to tree. And they sent this young lad, he had never drunk a drop, they sent him to fetch a gallon of rum and candles for the wedding. He met a man on the top of the mountain, one of these mountains, with a horse and saddle and a five gallon cask behind it, and it seemed that the tie was after getting kind of loose. But the young fellow came up and talked to him for a spell, and the man on the horse gave... there was a *stoban*... that's a tap or a spigot, on the barrel. He had a shell in his pocket, there wasn't a vessel or glass or cup, just the shell. They would call it, the old people, 'the dish that robbed us'. But anyway, the man filled it with whiskey that had been distilled twice, it seems it was as good as it could be. The young fellow drank it and it went to his head, and the other man was so generous and he gave him another drink after a spell, and another one and another one. And by God, finally, here's how it ended - there was an old man living down at the end of the brook, and he was a terribly good poet, and the young fellow, told him the story and about the headache he had for 2 or 3 days. And the old man made this song for him and this is how it went...

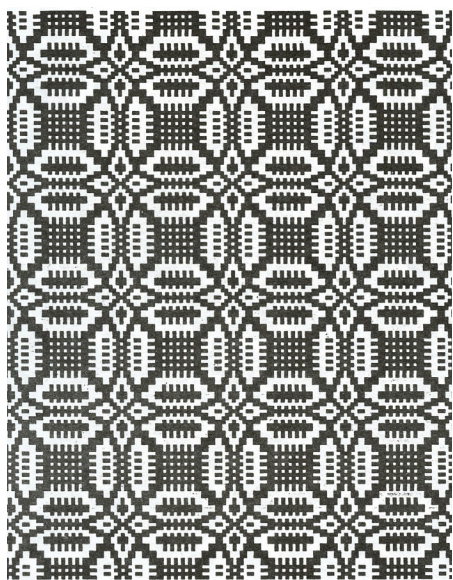
Among the published versions of this song are *Cuach Mhic'Il'Anndrainn* in *Brigh an Òrain*, and *Cuach Mhic'Il'-Andrais* in *An t-Òranaiche*. In *Traditional Celtic Violin Music of Cape Breton*, Dunlay and Greenberg suggest this melody may be related to that of another Gaelic song as well, *Tha Dùthrachd mo Chridhe Dhuit*, found in the Gesto Collection.

It also appears that there was once a *port-a-beul* belonging to this tune, though we have yet to obtain a complete version of it. In any case, it is clear that this melody has long been enjoyed by the Gaels in a variety of forms. Whether known as John of Badenyon, *Òran Mhic an Tòisich*, or the First Wedding Reel, this melody and the story associated with it exemplifies the interconnectedness of Gaelic song, music and storytelling traditions. ©

Written, transcribed & translated by Hannah Krebs,
Ban-chleasaiche | Cultural Animator. Edited by Shay MacMullin.
© Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection, Gaelsteam



Keith Norman MacDonald's Skye Collection, housed in the MacLean Collection at Baile nan Gàidheal.



A favourite overshot pattern known as Monmouth

Weaving was a crucial part of the culture of the Gaels, both in the Highlands and in the new settlements of eastern Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. But the patterns (drafts) that weavers claimed were brought over with their families from Scotland were not, as one might imagine, tartan setts. They were what were known as 'overshot' patterns. It has been said that overshot weaving was the truly traditional type of weaving for the Gaels in Nova Scotia.

Somewhat fortuitously, the Industrial Revolution that began in the late 18th century had been slow to affect the remote Highlands and Islands. Domestic weaving was still necessary, so the Gaels were arriving in the new lands already familiar with the skills for making the cloth that they would need to survive. Many men had been weavers before emigration, but some women also had been weaving in their own Highland communities, supplying the textiles needed by their families and neighbours.

When men became engaged in the exhausting work of clearing land and farming in the Nova Scotian wilderness, women took over most of the weaving, those with the appropriate skills teaching other women, until eventually there was a loom in almost every home and weaving was just another domestic chore. As Mrs. Dan MacLeod, of Loch Lomond, Cape Breton, told Florence Mackley, author of *Cape Breton Coverlet Patterns*, "The women began to weave. They held on to the drafts. My father came from Harris. He was a

carpenter and made the looms for the women."

Early weaving was utilitarian. It had to be done quickly and plainly, out of a necessity to provide warm clothing, blankets, and other textiles in the new, colder climate. As families were more settled, however, there was time to revive the more complicated patterns and there was room for more artistic expression from the weaver. Overshot was the perfect choice. It's a weave that is made up of a tabby (plain) background, with an extra, thicker, weft thread shot over the ground threads to make a more intricate pattern. These pattern threads were usually wool, dyed with indigo or other colours. The ground threads were fine linen, then usually cotton, when it became available.

Overshot bed coverings (coverlets) were more practical than it would seem. While flocks of sheep in the settlements were small at first, and wool was in short supply, an overshot weave would have been very warm for the amount of wool it had in it. There would have been a single layer of wool that shot over and under the linen or cotton ground threads, trapping air in between, somewhat like a thermal blanket. It would have required only about half as much wool as an all-wool blanket. Besides the coverlets, as time went on, overshot designs also began to appear on tablecloths, carpets, or as a decorative border on clothing. Weaving these items, along with the more plain, but necessary, household towelling, blankets, and home-spun (*drògaid* and *clò mór*) continued in many rural homes throughout the 19th century and into the early 20th century.

By the mid-20th century, however, very few women were still weaving on the old looms in their homes and the traditional patterns were in danger of disappearing. Fortunately, there was, at the same time, a growing interest by researchers in preserving what could still be found of the old weaving methods and the textiles of the 19th century.

Florence Mackley was perhaps the most important collector of such information in Cape Breton. She was able to visit with elderly weavers who had grown up in families that had raised sheep and grown flax. These women held memories of the old ways of life and had learned to weave from an earlier generation of women. She published *Handweaving in Cape Breton* in the 1960s, detailing what she had learned.

What she found most often when she visited the homes of the Gaels in Cape Breton, was overshot coverlets. She

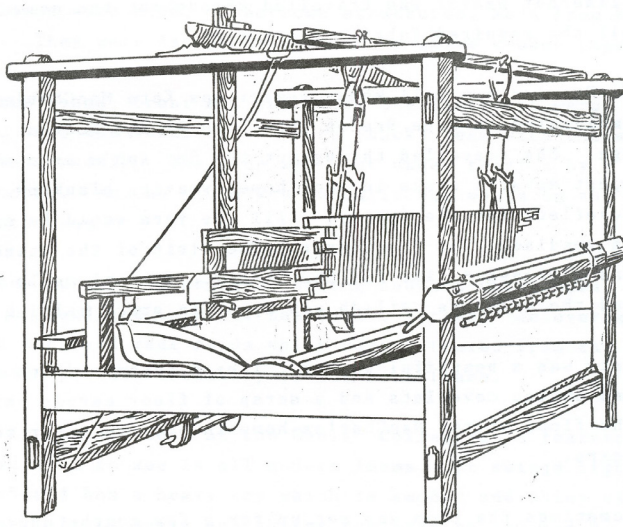
said that almost every family had some, whether draped over the back of a couch or tucked away in a trunk. Worn-out pieces were being used as dog beds or doormats. Stories were told of horses wearing colourful overshot blankets, being tied up outside churches in the wintertime. Because of the strong association of tartans with the Highlands of their ancestors, and later, Nova Scotia, she had expected to see a lot of plaids. She said, "One would probably expect to find many of the old tartan setts in Cape Breton homes. This is not so... Most of the early settlers were not accustomed to tartan weaving."

Other researchers were not finding much tartan either. Harold and Dorothy Burnham of the Royal Ontario Museum did extensive work with 19th century textiles of eastern Canada. Their book, *Keep Me Warm One Night*, includes many examples from the Highland settlements in Nova Scotia. Later on, Eveline MacLeod, from St. Ann's, worked extensively to document whatever 19th and early 20th century weaving she could find throughout Cape Breton and the Antigonish and Pictou areas.

Like Mackley, they were finding a lot of overshot coverlets. Overshot was a perfect technique for weaving on the looms the Gaels had built. Only a very few of these looms had come over with weavers from the Highlands, but the new ones were made following the original design. They had four harnesses (that controlled the patterns), with four treadles (that determined the order of the patterns). This allowed the fairly complicated overshot designs to be woven in the home without the need for a larger, professional loom. Looms used in the neighbouring Acadian communities of Cape Breton normally had only two harnesses, preventing an overshot pattern from being woven on them. For this reason, although overshot was common in the Gaelic communities, it would have been rarely seen amongst the Acadians.

But overshot was not exclusive to Scottish weavers. This technique was also seen scattered throughout much of Europe, but there is no evidence of it appearing anywhere in North America before the arrival of the Scottish in the second half of the 18th century. Dorothy Burnham, author of *The Comfortable Arts*, has extensively researched the origins of overshot and feels that it was brought over by "...those hardy settlers who came by the thousands from the Lowlands, the Highlands, the Isles, and Northern Ireland."

Certainly, by the 19th century it had



A' bheart-fhigheadaireachd | the floor loom was often found in the loft over kitchens in the Nova Scotia Gàidhealtachd.

become primarily associated with settlers of Scottish descent, even though it seemed to have died out in Scotland itself by the 20th century. MacLeod states in her book, *Celtic Threads*, "Wherever Scottish people settled, Pictou County, Cape Breton, Kentucky, the Carolinas, the eastern townships of Quebec or Glengarry, Ontario, the same patterns are found. Sometimes the names are different and regional patterns have developed, but, generally the patterns are similar throughout the Scots diaspora of North America."

When Mackley asked the weavers about the many different overshot patterns, they showed her worn strips of paper on which lines and numbers indicated the order of the threads. These are known as threading 'drafts.' All the women she asked insisted the drafts had come from Scotland with their families. Most could pinpoint the years of arrival (most often between the 1820s and 1840s), and origins, for example, Harris, Lewis, the Uists, or Tiree — almost all from the western Highlands and Islands. These patterns had been given fanciful names such as Rose in a Bush, Carts and Wheels, Ladies Delight, or even Keep Me Warm Nights. And there were

favourites — Monmouth, True Love's Vine, Chariot Wheels, England (or London) Beauty, or Olive Leaf — woven in a variety of colours and with local pattern variations.

Much overshot was woven at home for the family, but there were also itinerant weavers, who travelled from house to house, and weavers who wove in their homes for other families in exchange for a small payment. Mackley, in *Handweaving in Cape Breton*, tells of one itinerant weaver who inadvertently taught another weaver — Mrs. Munroe of Whale Cove, Cape Breton, to weave overshot:

"Mrs. Munroe's mother, Mrs. MacQuarrie, wove clothing materials, druggot and other items for the home. The coverlets for the family were woven by an itinerant weaver, Catherine MacIsaac. This weaver had two coverlets to weave for the MacQuarrie family. She had completed one and was going to do the second one when she returned home after the Christmas holidays. While the weaver was weaving the first coverlet she was being watched very carefully by the daughter of the house. Imagine her surprise when she returned to the MacQuarrie home, to

find some of the second coverlet woven. Possibly she thought that the fairies had been at work."

That young girl went on to become a weaver in her own right, and was one of Mackley's most important informants. She loved weaving coverlets and wove well over a hundred in her long lifetime. Customers supplied her with the warp materials and their own handspun and dyed wool yarn, and she wove the coverlet for a payment of five dollars.

It is not surprising, then, that the preponderance of overshot weaving should be considered a significant part of the culture of the Gaels in Nova Scotia, with the weaving of it lasting well into the early 20th century. Today, however, tartan, which has become so inextricably linked with the identity of Nova Scotia, often seems to have taken over as the only truly Scottish cloth in the minds of visitors to the province. Although tartan has its own complex history within the Highlands, it was not a weave of high priority for the Gaels at the time of settlement, and is a relatively more recent arrival here in the province. Both Mackley and MacLeod worried about the legacy of overshot weaving in Nova Scotia. Mackley made a concentrated effort to use the old overshot patterns in the weaving that she did in her own shop in Sydney. She stated that she wanted visitors to take home items of handweaving in 'authentic' Cape Breton patterns.

And MacLeod always tried to promote overshot weaving. She mused in *Looms and Lore*: "I have always wondered why tartan weaving became the predominant weave... Overshot is the real Heritage weave of the Scottish Pioneer. They brought their cherished patterns to Cape Breton and hundreds of coverlets were woven from home spun, home dyed yarn. The patterns have been lost in Scotland but are well preserved and documented here." ©

Vicki Quimby is a researcher, textile consultant, and animator at Baile nan Gàidheal.

Images used in this article can be found in 'Looms and Lore' by Eveline MacLeod.

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Às an Tasg-lann | From the Archives

THA MISE FO MHULAD AIR TULAICH GUN UAILL | I AM DEPRESSED ON A HILL WITHOUT PRIDE

This song is contributed by The Beaton Institute, a cultural heritage archive mandated to preserve the social, economic, political, and cultural history of Cape Breton Island. The *Stòras Gàidhlig Cheap Breatuinn* collection houses many records pertaining to Gaelic Nova Scotia. *Mòran taing* | Many thanks to our friends at the Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University.



Peadar còmhla ri 'mhàthair, Annag Mhìcheil Nill Mhìcheil, agus a phiuthar, Màiri aig an taigh mu 1917. Peter with his mother, Annie MacLean, and sister Mary at the family home c. 1917. Photo used with permission.

Bha Catrìona Iain Ruaidh, neo Catrìona Bean Iain Ruaidh mar a theirte càch rithe, 'na bàrd ainmeil, cliùteach 's a sgìre a h-àrach, sin Paraiste Eilean na Nollaige. Rugadh athair Catrìona ann an Uibhist a Deas is thathar a ràdh gu robh e fhéin math gu deanamh òrain. Thàinig e dha 'n sgìreachd 's a' bhliadhna 1821 's beagan as a dheoghaidh sin, phòs e Curstaidh ni'n Alasdair a' Ghobha MacGhill'Eathain a bha 'fuireach air Beinn Thearlaich (Beinn Eskasoni). Phòs Catrìona fhéin Iain Ruairidh "Gilleonan" fear do chloinn Nill aig a robh taigh air iar-chriochan a' pharaiste. Tha e coltach gun do phòs iad nuair a bha iad nas sinne na feadhainn eile oir cha robh clann aca is tuigidh daoine, le bhith 'cluinntinn a bàrdachd mus do phòs i, gu robh i fo chùram mu 'n aois aice 's i lorg céile (Peutan T-122). Dh'fhuirich Catrìona is Iain air Beinn Theàrlaich air oir Cùl Eilean na Nollaig agus *Eskasoni* gu math faisg air teaghlach na Goibhnean – muinntir màthar Catrìona.

Dh'fhuirich a' chàraid air a' mho-nadh – facal aig an robh mìneachadh car sònraichte 's an t-Seann Dùthaich ach freagarrach dha 'n fhearann ùr cuideachd, sin talamh àrd aig àrd na beinneadh far nach fhuiricheadh mòran de dhaoine. Bha beatha gu math doirbh aig an dithisd 's tha bàrdachd Catrìona a' deilgeadh ri cus-pairean a leithid beatha chruadail is duilg-headasan na seann aoise.

As deoghaidh bàs an duin' aice, bha Catrìona nas motha is nas motha an urrachd ri nàbuidhean airson taic a

chumail rithe. Uaireannan, rachadh i a dh'fhuireach le Ruairidh Chaluim Ghobha, an nàbuidh as fhaig' air làimh is a co-ogha air taobh a màthar. Uaireannan eile dh'fhuiricheadh i aig co-ogha eile Seoc Pheadair Chaluim Ghobha 'nas fhaig' air Eilean na Nollaig fhéin ach fhathast 's a' Chùl. Bha Jack pòsd' aig Annag Mhìcheil Nill Mhìcheil a bhuinneadh do chloinn Aonghuis á Bàgh a' Chaisteil. 'S e Annag gu sònraichte a ghabh suim às na h-òrain aig Catrìona Iain Ruaidh. A réir Annag, bhiodh Catrìona 'ga meas fhéin mar bhàrd is dh'aontaich i ri òrain a theagasg do dhaoine cho fad 's gum biodh iad aca gu ceart, gun mhearachd neo dearmad. Dh'ionnsaich Annag beagan de na h-òrain a rinn Catrìona Iain Ruaidh ach bha i a' cantail gu robh fada a' bharrachd air sin a rinn i cuideachd (Peutan T-561). Dh'ionnsaich Annag co-dhuibh aon dhiubh dha mac Peadair Seoc Pheadair, 's e siud Òran 's i air a Làmh a Shiachadh neo mar gu tric is minig a dh'ainicheas daoine e, *Bha mi Raoir gu Sunndach, Sunndach*.

Chan eil tiotal air a thoirt seachad le Annag Mhìcheil Nill Mhìcheil air clàr sam bith ris an do dh'éisd mi ach 's e a' chiad loidhn', "Tha mise fo mhulad air tulaich gun uail." 'S ann mu dheoghainn fìor dhroch gheamhradh a tha an t-òran, agus bha Catrìona Iain Ruaidh a' strì airson crua-ch a bha am falach 's an t-sneachda. Tha barrachd air aon chlàr aig Ionad a' Pheutain ach seo an an té far am bi Annag a' gabhail an t-séisd; uaireannan, cha leigeadh i le duine a clàradh mur a robh cuimhn' aice air an t-séisd. ©

Catherine MacNeil, also known as *Catrìona Iain Ruaidh* or *Catrìona bean Iain Ruairidh*, was a well-known and respected bard who lived in the far eastern part of the Highlands, Rear Christmas Island. Catherine's father was born in South Uist and came to Cape Breton in 1821. She married *Iain Ruairidh "Gilleonan" MacNeil*, a native of Barra who was one of the later settlers in Rear Christmas Island. The couple seems to have married late in life and remained childless. Indeed, one of Catherine's songs composed prior to her marriage speaks of her growing anxiety concerning her marital status as she gets older (Beaton Institute T-122). Iain and Catherine settled on *Beinn Theàrlaich* | Charles' Mountain (today known as Eskasoni Mountain) on land also occupied by relatives of Catherine's mother's

relations, the *Calum Gobha MacLeans*.

Catrìona Iain Ruaidh and her husband lived on the *monadh*, a term which in Scotland meant high-lying, often uninhabited moorland. Life was difficult for the older couple and Catherine's songs speak of a constant battle with the elements, poor land and physical limitations due to age.

Following her husband's death, Catherine relied more heavily on the support of neighbours and relatives. She would at times be helped by or live with her cousin *Ruairidh Chaluim Ghobha*, one of her closest neighbours on *Beinn Theàrlaich*.

She would also spend considerable lengths of time living with her other cousin John "Jack" MacLean (a brother to *Ruairidh Chaluim Ghobha*) on land which he had purchased in a less-remote region of Rear Christmas Island. John "Jack" MacLean was married to Annie MacInnis, formerly of Castle Bay. It was Annie who took an interest in the songs of Catrìona Iain Ruaidh. Mrs. MacLean says that Catherine was illiterate but referred to herself as a *bàrd* and offered to teach Annie a few of her songs providing that they would be remembered without any mistakes. Mrs. MacLean learned some songs from Catherine but states that she had made many more (Beaton Institute T-561). Annie taught her son, Peter Jack MacLean the song titled *Song About When She Sprained Her Wrist*, but more commonly known as *I Was Merry, Merry Last Night*.

The song featured here is not given a title but begins with the line, "I am depressed on a hill without pride." It is sung to the air *Ma Phòsas Mi Cha Ghabh Mi Té Mhór* and uses the same chorus. The song concerns a difficult winter experienced on *Beinn Theàrlaich* in which a haystack the bard had been tending to was buried in snow and difficult to access. Several recordings of Annie MacLean singing this song exist but this is the only one in which she sings the chorus; Mrs. MacLean would sometimes refuse to let a collector record a song if she couldn't remember the chorus. ©

Written, edited, and translated by Stacey MacLean, Ban-chleasaiche | Cultural Animator at Baile nan Gàidheal and Gaelic Language Specialist at the Beaton Institute. Transcription provided by Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic (DASG).

FONN

Ma phòsas mi, cha ghabh mi té mhór
Ma dh'fhaodas mi, cha ghabh mi té mhór
Cha phòs, cha taobh, cha ghabh mi té mhór
'S ro bheag an té dh'fhóghnas dhomh-sa.

Tha mise fo mhulad air tulaich gun uail
'S e 's fàth dhomh bhith tuiream le truimead an fhuachd.
Cha dean mi car tuilleadh 's mi 'n diugh air toirt suas,
Le gaoth a' tuath 's i rèòta.

'N àm éirigh 's a' mhadainn gun teine gun tuar,
Bidh gaoirean nam bhonnaibh bheireadh crith air an t-sluagh.
'S e gainnead a' chonnaidh bh' oirnn iomadach uair,
A thug an droch uair seo oirne.

'S iomadh là frionasach bh' agam bha fuar,
A chaidh mi dhan choillidh a ghearradh le tuaigh.
Na deòir gu frasach a' cathadh le'm ghruaidh,
'S nach b' aithne dhomh bualadh seòlta.

A-nis bho 'n a tha mi air glasadh air aois,
M' aodann air seacadh air choltas an aoig.
Bhon thrèig mi bho 'n tapachd a bh' agam bho thùs,
Cha seòl mo shùil ach sgleòta.

'S tha sinne nar breislich le eagal mun sprèidh,
Am beagan dhiubh th' againn gun téid iad fo fheum.
Bidh sgeula na creiche dhuinn uile gu lèir
A bhith anns an éis an-còmhnaidh.

Tha cruach air a' mhaisidh a rinn sinn dhuinn fhìn.
Chan urrainn dhomh chantail gun tarraing sinn i;
Le doimhneachd an t-sneachda falach gach nì,
O mhullach ar cinn gu ar brògan.

Tha mis' anns a' mhonadh a-muigh anns na cùil,
Fad' o gach duine bha cuideachadh leam.
B' e tarraing an eallaich a dh'aindeoin gach cùis,
A dh'fhàg mise brùite, leònte.

'S a chàirdean uileag 's a chuideachd mo ghaoil,
Gur tric bha nam chomann gu carthanntach, caomh;
Nuair bhitheamaid 's a' bharant fo bharran nan craobh,
Gun togamaid fonn nan òran.

'S truagh nach robh mise cho math ris na bàird,
Bha 'n dùthaich na siorrachd a' dèanamh nan dàn.
Gun tugainn dhaibh iorram a mhaireadh gu bràth
Nuair shloinneadh iad bàird gam chòmhradh.

CHORUS

If I marry, I will not marry a large lady
If I may, I will not marry a large lady
I won't marry, I won't have, I won't take a large lady
It's a petite lady that would suit me.

I am dejected on a hill without pride
The heaviness of the cold is the cause of my lament
I can't move any longer today, I give up
With the freezing north wind.

Waking in the morning without fire, with foreboding
The shivering of my feet causes all to shake
It is the lack of wood that we have often experienced
That has landed us in difficult times.

Many vexingly cold days I have spent
Going to the forest with an axe to fetch wood
The pouring tears winnowing my cheeks
Such that I didn't notice the swift blows.

Now since I have greyed with age
My face has withered away revealing a countenance of death
Since I have betrayed the wisdom I once had
My eyes are foggy and of little use.

We are confused and worried about the cattle
What few we have, they might be of no use
Stories of their ravagement have us all
Left eternally in need.

There's a haystack on the marsh that we made for ourselves
I can't say that we can get to it
With the depth of the snow hiding everything
From the tops of our heads to our shoes.

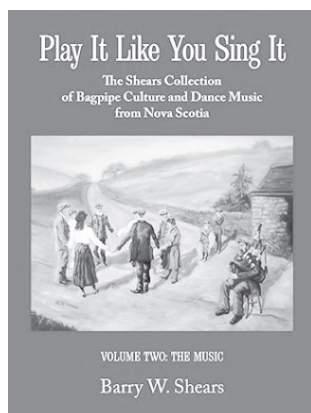
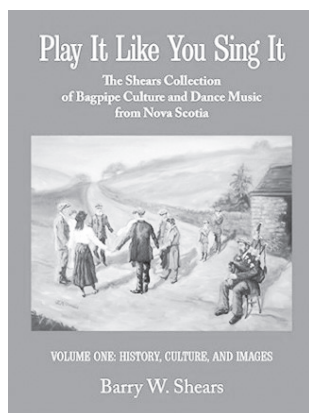
I'm on the high ground far in the Rear
Far from anyone who ever helped me
It's lugging burdens, regardless of the situation
That has left me disconsolate and wounded.

My dear friends, neighbours and family,
Who kept company with me in the spirit of charity and kindness
When we were in the security and protection of the tree tops
We would raise a tune and sing.

It's a pity that I am not as talented as the bards
That are in the land of eternity making songs
I would compose a song that would be everlasting
When they would name the bards speaking with me.

Léirmheas | A Book Review

PLAY IT LIKE YOU SING IT: THE SHEARS COLLECTION OF BAGPIPE CULTURE AND DANCE MUSIC FROM NOVA SCOTIA



I have before me two beautiful books, Volume One and Two of *Play It Like You Sing It* with the secondary title of *The Shears Collection of Bagpipe Culture and Dance Music from Nova Scotia* by Barry W. Shears. Volume One deals with history, culture and images with great detail and wonderful portraits and sketches of many different families of piper-musicians from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The research has been clearly rigorous covering histories of the MacIntyres, Beatons, Camerons, the Keppoch and Benbecula Campbells, Gillises of Margaree (my own relations), Hendersons, Beatons, MacDonalds, MacGillivrays, MacKinnons, MacLeans, MacMillans, MacNeils, MacPhersons, MacPhees, MacQuarries, Mathesons, Morrisons, Nicholsons, Stewarts, Sutherlands, MacKays and MacIsaacs. I list these families simply to show how the book itself provides the evidence of such a widespread dissemination of piping throughout Nova Scotia and Cape Breton.

In a special chapter on early bagpipe making, one family of MacIsaacs came to settle near *Loch an Fhuamhair* | Giant's Lake, Guysborough County from Smirisary in Glenuig in 1843. They were *Angus Bàn* and his family, including his young son *Alasdair Bàn* who made a set of pipes for himself. The writer of the article in *Mac-Talla*, with the nom-de-plume of *An Tuathanach Ruadh*, states that this was the first time he had heard pipes played. I am glad to see this included in this compilation, having Barry's earlier piping history book *Dance to the Piper* (2008) some of which has been republished and expanded here. I hope he will include the extant photograph of *Angus Bàn* and son *Alasdair Bàn* MacIsaac in the next edition.

Volume Two is much more voluminous than Volume One and contains a feast of 249 tunes, many of them with associated Gaelic song texts and cross references to

what settings MacNeil had in his manuscript since the tunes throughout have been arranged by Barry himself, the extent of which is not clear. Maybe I am being a touch pedantic knowing that many pipers, including myself, make a tune 'our own' by way of small divergences from that heard or seen notated. The more variants of a tune extant I believe indicates the extent of its popularity. Chapter 2 introduces Alex Currie (1910-1988) followed by 135 tunes that presumably contain the 50 tunes that Barry had collected from Alex himself. Interestingly the tune *An Caimbeulach Dubh*, adapted to the melody of *Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch* (or *The Ruffian's Rant*), was probably the first satirical piece of poetry written by, arguably, our greatest Gaelic poet, *Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair* | Alexander MacDonald of Moidart. He wrote this while a very young man playing devil's advocate in defence of a Campbell sheep stealer. The words were of a high register, but not of the infra dig level suggested by the port-à-beul text akin to 'Stick your nose up the dog's arse!' So it would appear this melody became the vehicle for much satire and invective!

Interesting too is *The Campbells are Coming* link to *The Wedding* that was in Inverloch. These little differences occur in the oral tradition at times but the cheery Gaelic song to this is about a wedding in Inveraray, Argyll. However, with the raising of the Highland Regiments and the recognition of pipers as a crucial part of this military imperialist expansion post 1756, it became *The Campbells are Coming*, coming as it did from the heart of Campbell country. But another old version of the same melody is the song *An Sean Duine* in Gaelic Ireland and, in reel time, it becomes one variant of Mrs. MacLeod of Raasay. One commonly finds that if a tune is good in one rhythmic genre, it will be good in them all, but there will be a preference! A good example of this, I think, is tune 87

other sources and titles. The first chapter concentrates on 73 tunes that represent the contents of a manuscript belonging to a Cpt. Angus J. MacNeil (1867-1918) who died from the pandemic Spanish flu. As Barry states, some of the tunes were taken from Scottish published collections and the rest from MacNeil's own repertoire from Cape Breton. I sometimes wonder

The Highlanders Farewell to Ireland, most commonly known today as the strathspey *Highland Harry*. This subsequently became a very popular reel in Ireland.

There are another five chapters arranged according to the different regions of Nova Scotia from Cape North and Ingonish, Pictou, and crossing the water to Codroy Valley, Newfoundland. The final chapter has an interesting title, *Fiddle Tunes from the Piping Tradition*, recognising the shared repertoire that allowed fiddlers to expand the range of the pipe tunes and the pipers to be able to top and tail them (or jump the octave in sessions with fiddlers).

I love the artwork by Janet MacDonald — the books are worth buying for the painting and the title alone *Play It Like You Sing It* | *Cluich e mar a Sheinnear e*. Idiomatic Gaelic originally prefixed performances on pipes and *clarsach* | harp only with *a' seinn na pioba* | singing the pipes, and *a' seinn na clàrsaich*, but *cluich na fìdhle* | play the fiddle or any other instrument.

My desire is that the contents of these publications be re-absorbed by their readers: historians, musicians and singers — it will have enlightened us all to these rich matrixes between song, pipes and fiddle. The words of the *puirt-à-beul* | mouth music published here for the first time bestow the melody with yet another poetic and rhythmic snapshot in words that dance along the fiddle and down the pipes — each with different inflections. So the notated text to the *puirt-à-beul* on the opposite page can at best, only be an approximation. I read a dilemma a mainstream piper had, in *Alba* | Scotland, about there being 'too many versions' of a particular tune; the zenith of the music aesthetic presumably being that there should only be one version.

A final suggestion — that you award yourself with the latest CD, released by Greentrax recordings, from the archives of the School of Scottish Studies No. 28 *Dhannsadh gun Dannsadh* | Dance-Songs of the Scottish Gaels, as well as a copy of Dr. K.N. MacDonald's (1901) compilation *Puirt-à-Beul* published by Taigh na Teud. The CD and book were edited by Dr. William Lamb and along with *Play it Like You Sing It* provide an inestimable source of joyous music. Thank you, Barry. ©

This review was written by Ailean Dòmhnallach, from Glenuig, Scotland, a Gàidhlig speaker, piper, composer, musical director, instructor and lecturer. Play It Like You Sing It was published in 2018 by Bradan Press.



Comunn Ar Rùin | Our People

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Shears and in memory of Rod C. MacNeil); Jim St. Clair, Mull River (in memory of Seumas Watson); Beth Toomey & Roger Smith, Christmas Island (in memory of Leon Toomey); and West Kings District High School, Auburn, NS.

Treasures of Youth Financial Contributions (2019)

Rodney & Charlene Chaisson, Ottawa Brook; Charlie & Sandra Ellis, Little Narrows, NS; Jill Franklin/Jill's Chocolates, Iona; Calum MacLean, Dartmouth; Gillis MacNeil, McKinnon's Harbour; Lisa & Boyd MacNeil, Sydney; Mary Leigh MacNeil, Christmas Island.

Congratulations

To staff member Kaye Anne MacNeil on her 35 years service to the NS Highland Village Society.

Retirements

We extend our best wishes and gratitude to Sadie MacDonald who has recently retired from our staff team after 25 years of service. All the best to her as she moves on to the next chapter.

Sympathies

To the families of Ann MacIntosh of River Denys, who was supportive of the moving of the Malagawatch Church to the Village and instrumental in organizing the annual service each summer at the Village; Murdock "Buddy Allan Austin" MacNeil of Gillis Point, who was a great enthusiast of our local square dance tradition; and *Bhionsant MacFhionghain* | Vincent MacKinnon, beloved *Gàidhlig* tradition bearer of Gillisdale. ☹

Help us share Nova Scotia's Gaelic language and heritage by joining the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society!

Join us and support Nova Scotia's Gaelic language and folklife traditions by becoming a member of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society. Membership is open to anyone.

Members can:

- Attend general meetings;
- Elect the Board of Trustees;
- Receive *An Rubha*, our Gaelic Folklife Magazine;
- Receive notices for events.

General Memberships:

Individual: \$10.00* & Family: \$20.00* per year (one household).

*Income tax receipts are issued for general memberships.

Membership Plus:

Individual: \$30.00* & Family: \$40.00* per year (one household).

In addition to general membership privileges, *Membership Plus* members get:

- Free admission for the year to the Highland Village
*excludes special events & programs not part of regular admission
- 20% discount in the Highland Village Gift Shop
- Membership Plus fees are not tax deductible

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Ask about our Sustaining & Lifetime Memberships

- Sustaining Membership - \$200 per annum
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