

Naidheachd a' Chlachain

(THE VILLAGE NEWS)

Nova Scotia Highland Village Society



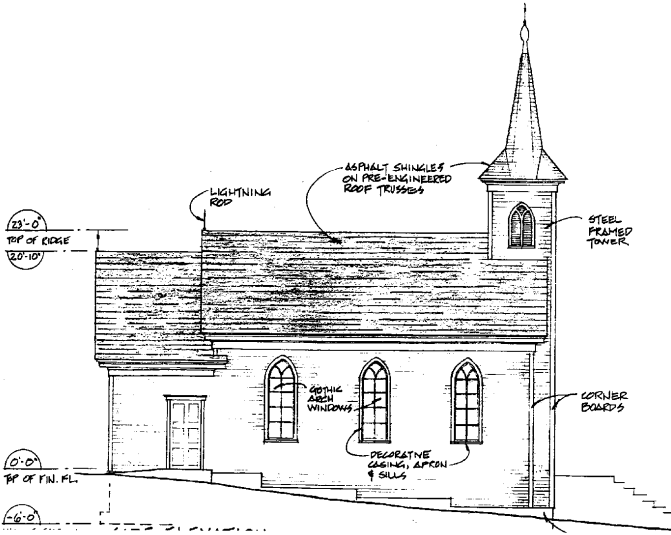
A Time to Celebrate !

- *A New Relationship with the Nova Scotia Museum*
- *A 40th Anniversary Look at the History of the Highland Village*
- *An Interview with Vince MacLean on Highland Village Day*
- *Roots Cape Breton moves into the 21st Century*

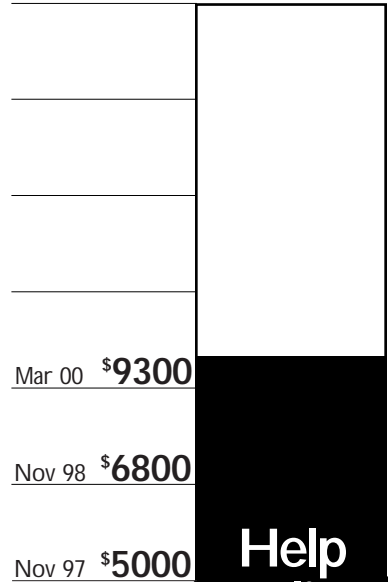
HIGHLAND VILLAGE PIONEER CHURCH FUND

A Pioneer Church has been for many years a dream of the Highland Village. We are now working towards the fulfillment of that dream. A fund has been established to aid with the construction of the Church. Already, over \$ 9,000 has been collected for this project.

Your support is needed to make this dream a reality.



This design by Trifos Design Consultants of Sydney is one being considered by our Design Committee. We are looking for your comments and suggestions.



Help realize this dream!
Please donate to the Highland Village Pioneer Church Fund

Take Out A Membership

Join the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society is a non-profit Society registered under the Societies Act of the Province of Nova Scotia. The Society is made up of a membership which elects the Board of Trustees (from their ranks) to operate the Society on their behalf. Members can attend meetings, elect the Board, sit on committees, receive and approve annual reports including audited financial statements, receive *Naidheachd a' Chlachain* (bi-annual newsletter), receive notices for events, and feel a sense of pride in contributing to Nova Scotia's Scottish Gaelic Culture.

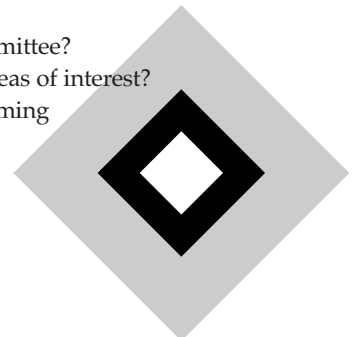
Membership is open to anyone.
Individual memberships are \$15.00 per year.
Family memberships are \$25.00 per year.
Life memberships are being developed.
Watch for more information.

**Support the Highland Village!
Join today!**

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/Town: _____
 Province/State: _____
 Postal/Zip Code: _____
 Country: _____
 Home Phone: _____
 Work Phone: _____
 Fax: _____
 E-mail: _____

Want to become more involved? Serve on a committee?
Volunteer for a special project? What are your areas of interest?

- Museum Interpretation & Education Programming
- Genealogy & Family History/Research
- Gàidhlig/Gaelic
- Entertainment
- Fund-raising
- Site Development





The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society was incorporated on November 3, 1959 under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia with the purpose of constructing a replica pioneer village at Iona.

The Mission of the Society is: to protect, interpret and further the collection of buildings and artifacts at the Nova Scotia Highland Village site at Iona; and to preserve and promote the Scottish Highland and Island Culture as found in Nova Scotia.

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society operates a 43-acre Museum and Cultural complex including the Highland Village Outdoor Pioneer Museum, Roots Cape Breton Genealogy & Family History Centre, Highland Village Gift Shop, and outdoor entertainment and theatre facility.

The Society is a member of the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage (FNSH), Canadian Museums Association (CMA), Iona Connection, Còmhairle na Gàidhlig Alba Nuadh (Nova Scotia Gaelic Council), Council of Nova Scotia Archives (CNSA), Genealogical Association of Nova Scotia (GANS), Nova Scotia Genealogy Network Association, Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada (SSAC), Association of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM), Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS), and Tourism Cape Breton.



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On the cover: Main photo - a milling frolic in the MacDonald House parlour with (L-R) Anna "Hector" MacNeil, Joan Gillis, Rod C. MacNeil, Maxie MacNeil, Jamie MacNeil and Curator Charlene Kosick. Left inset (L-R) Peter F. MacLean, Stephen Rory MacNeil, Albert MacDonald, and Hugh Murphy. Right inset (L-R) two unknown visitors, Rev. A. D. MacKinnon and Rev. A.A. Ross.

Naidheachd a' Chlachain

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From the
**MANAGER'S
DESK**

By Rodney Chaisson

Welcome to the Winter 2000 edition of *Naidheachd a' Chlachain* (The Village News). The title of this issue is "A Time to Celebrate!" It is a time to celebrate our 40th Anniversary as an incorporated Society. It is also a time to celebrate our achievements over those 40 years. And, it is a time to celebrate our new relationship with the Nova Scotia Museum. That's right, over the next few months the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum will become part of the Nova Scotia Museum. As a result, the focus of this issue is a look back at our past achievements as well as a look ahead at a positive future.

History of the Society

The history of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society is a fascinating one. Against all odds, a dedicated corps of volunteers has taken the concept of the Highland Village from an idea to reality.

In 1938, Premier Angus L. MacDonald and his colleagues from Halifax visited the United Empire Exhibition in Glasgow, Scotland. There they saw a model *Chlachain* or Village which depicted the lives of the Scots in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the late 1700's and early 1800's. They thought that it would be most appropriate to create the same exhibit in Nova Scotia. However, as World War II started the proposal was put on the back burner until the mid 1950's when interest in the project was renewed.

At that time, the Nova Scotia Association of Scottish Societies

promoted the Highland Village concept as part of a series of Scottish heritage initiatives designed to promote the culture. They held a province-wide competition. As a result of the efforts of the Grand Narrows & District Board of Trade, which made its presentation in Gaelic, Iona was chosen as the site. However, while the community got behind the project and started to move forward, the rest of Nova Scotia seemed to lose interest. As a Highland Village Past President Rod C. MacNeil once told me, the Iona group was essentially told that it's all yours, but you are going to have to build it yourself.

They did just that. Over the forty years that followed the Highland Village developed from a concept to reality - which could not have happened without the sheer determination (and quite frankly - stubbornness) of the volunteers who wanted to see the dream realized. We owe much to those individuals who put their heart and soul towards creating what exists today.

This past winter, Cheryl Sullivan has searched through boxes and boxes of Highland Village correspondence, minutes, proposals, newspaper clippings and more to pull together a more comprehensive history of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society. I am hopeful that you will enjoy this special look at what can be considered as the story of "the Society that could."

Cheryl Sullivan comes to us from the LaHave River on the South Shore of Nova Scotia - although she has roots in Cape Breton through the Johnstones of the Johnson Road

in Bras d'Or. Cheryl is a MA (Master of Arts in Atlantic Canada Studies) student at St. Mary's University in Halifax. She is with us until January 2001 through the Heritage Skills Apprenticeship Program of the St. Francis Xavier Enterprise Centre in Antigonish. We are fortunate to have Cheryl with us and you will hear more from her in future newsletters.

Highland Village Day

In addition to Cheryl's look back at the development of the Highland Village, we also have a special conversation with Vince MacLean on his 21 years at the helm of Highland Village Day as its producer. Vince is an example of the type of people that made the Highland Village what it is today. Although the interview focuses on Vince's Highland Village Day duties, he has also served as President as well as participated in committees and other activities. I want to personally thank Vince for his time in preparing for the interview. And on behalf of the Society, I want to thank Vince for his leadership in putting together 21 quality Highland Village Day concert programs. Tapadh leibh Vince.

Roots Cape Breton Enhancement Project

The highlight of this past fall and winter has been the Roots Cape Breton Enhancement Project. This project will see the Roots Cape Breton Genealogy and Family History move in to a 21st century leadership role for family history research. It is supported through the partnership of Human Resources Development Canada, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, Nova Scotia Depart-

ment of Economic Development and the Municipality of Victoria County.

This is a very important project. It provides Roots Cape Breton with the equipment and personnel required to put all of its genealogical data in a database format. It will then enable Roots to expand its services to CD-ROM production and the internet.

Nova Scotia Museum

As I began writing this column, I started to say that 1999 was going to be a hard year to beat. We saw our best year yet in terms of visitation. We placed first out of 60 community museums in Nova Scotia through the standards-based evaluation process. We received recognition from many groups and individuals for our efforts.

Well, I was wrong. We are four months into the year 2000 and we have 1999 beat already. In February we were awarded the "Outstanding Promotion Award" from the Federation of Nova Scotian heritage for our "We Remember When Campaign." Two months later the Municipality of Victoria County presented a Community Achievement Award to the Society for improving the quality of life in the County.

To top it all off, the Hon. Rodney MacDonald, Minister of Tourism & Culture just recently announced that the department would adopt the Highland Village into the provincial museum system to strengthen the Nova Scotia Museum's role in Cape Breton.

We are thrilled with this decision and the prospects for the future. We have a new partner and a new lease on life. The next few years are going to be exciting ones for the Village. Watch future newsletters for more as the new relationship unfolds.

Until the next issue, I wish all of you the best.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES (1999-2000):

Bruce MacNeil, Iona (President)
Walter MacNeil, Sydney (Vice-Pres)
Dan E. MacNeil, Iona (Sec./Treas)
Jim St. Clair, Mull River (Past President)
Donald Beaton, Little Narrows (Mem-at-Lg)
Fonce Farrell, Washabuck
Brian Hussey, Sydney
Michael B. MacKenzie, Christmas Island

Dr. Richard MacKinnon, Sydney
Mary Margaret MacLean, Whycocomagh
Mary K. MacLeod, Dominion
Janet MacSween, Jamesville
Hugh Webb, Antigonish
Daniel Chiasson, Legal Advisor Pro-Bono, Baddeck

Committee Chairs:

Museum: Jim St. Clair
Genealogy: Jim St. Clair
Highland Village Day: Quentin MacDonald
Site Development: Walter MacNeil
Audit: Dan E. MacNeil

VILLAGE STAFF:

Administration
Rodney Chaisson, Manager
Patricia MacNeil, Admin. Assistant

Museum

Charlene Kosick, Curator
John MacDonald, Blacksmith
Stevie MacNeil, Farm Hand
Colleen Beaton, Interpreter
Marie Chey, Interpreter
Carmella Farrell, Interpreter
Beth MacNeil, Interpreter
Kaye Anne MacNeil, Interpreter
Vicki Quimby, Interpreter

Roots Cape Breton Genealogy*

Pauline MacLean, Coordinator
Josie Bonaparte, DE Clerk
Amanda Campbell, DE Clerk
Mary Ann Crane, DE Clerk
Helen MacDonald, DE Clerk
Lois MacDougall, DE Clerk
Ann Marie MacKay-MacNeil, DE Clerk

Sharlene MacLean, DE Clerk
Beth MacNeil, DE Clerk
Patricia MacNeil, DE Clerk

Gàidhlig (Gaelic Program)

James Watson, Coordinator

Gift Shop/Reception

Gerry MacNeil, Supervisor
Sadie MacDonald, Clerk

Maintenance

Tim MacNeil, Worker

Interns

Betsy MacNeil, Public Service Intern
Cheryl Sullivan, Heritage Skills

* Includes staff working on the Roots Cape Breton project as of April 2000.



The

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From J. Bruce MacNeil

The Honourable Rodney MacDonald, Minister of Tourism & Culture, has recently announced that the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum will become part of the Nova Scotia Museum family this coming year.

I am very pleased with this announcement. It has been something that we have been working on for a long time through direct discussions with government and

through our efforts to improve our operation. Recently we have been recognized for museum standards, outstanding promotions, and for improving the quality of life in our community. The decision of this Government to proceed in making the Highland Village a part of the Nova Scotia Museum is the ultimate recognition for all that we are doing.

Over the next few months, and indeed few years, we will see how this announcement and the new partnership that results from it comes together. We are very excited about the possibilities for the Highland Village as the 26th member of the Nova Scotia Museum family. The Nova Scotia Museum has renewed their commitment to the Cape Breton museum community

and to the Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. We are very pleased to be a part of that.

There will be more on this new relationship in the fall issue of *Naidheachd a' Chlachain* as well as our website.

It is timely that we achieve this goal during our 40th anniversary as an incorporated Society. It is a legacy for all those who dedicated their lives to the creation and growth of the Highland Village dream.

This June we will celebrate. The Highland Village is planning to host a 40th Anniversary Dinner and Dance. This is an event where we will celebrate our achievements and thank those who made it happen. We will let you know as soon as the plans are finalized.

Also this summer, we will have

an event to celebrate the transition of the Nova Scotia Highland Village from a community museum to part of the Nova Scotia Museum family. We will advise you all of this once plans have been confirmed.

On behalf of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society, I want to thank all those who have helped the Highland Village dream to grow to what it is today. Becoming part of the Nova Scotia Museum is an important milestone in our development. There is still much work to do. But now with the partnership of the Nova Scotia Museum that work will be much more exciting and achievable.

Sincerely,
Bruce.

Special Thanks

The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society wishes to acknowledge its funding and marketing partners:

Operational Funding: Nova Scotia Department of Tourism & Culture through the Nova Scotia Museum and the Cultural Affairs Section; as well as the Municipality of Victoria County.

Special Project Funding: Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation (ECBC), Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development, Human Resources Development Canada, Municipality of Victoria County, Treasury Board of Canada (through the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site), and the St. FX Enterprise Centre.

Marketing Partners: ECBC, Icon Communications, Highland Heights Inn, Castle Moffett, Atlantic Cruise Ship Services, Celtic Colours Society, Bannockburn Tours, Inverary Inn, Telegraph House, Silver Dart Lodge, and Gisele's.

In Memory of - Dedication



John P. MacNeil (right) with Jim St.Clair and Donald Beaton

This issue of the *Naidheachd a' Chlachain* is dedicated to **John P. MacNeil** from Sydney who passed away last fall. Most people will remember John P. for the successful swing raffles that were held in support of the Highland Village. He not only built the swing, he transported it around the island to different venues as promotion for the sale of tickets. In 1988, the Society presented John P. with their Volunteer of the Year Award for his dedication to the Highland Village and for going above and beyond the call of duty with the swing raffle. We send our sympathies out to his family.

Also, the Cape Breton music community has lost two members - **Lee Cremo** who passed away last fall and **John Morris Rankin** of The Rankin Family who passed away this past winter. These two men were great ambassadors for the music and the culture. The legacy of their contribution to the music will live on. Our sympathies go out to their families.

AR DILEAB'S AR DOCHAS:

Forty Years of the Nova Scotia
Highland Village Society

By Cheryl Sullivan

The Mission Statement: "The Nova Scotia Highland Village is a non-profit Society with the mission: to protect, interpret and further the collection of buildings and artifacts at the Nova Scotia Highland Village site in Iona; and to preserve and promote the Scottish Highland and Island culture as found in Nova Scotia."

One of the definitions The Canadian Oxford Dictionary gives for the word "society" is "an association of persons united by a common aim or interest or principle." For the past forty years, the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society has been focused on the preservation and the promotion of Scottish culture in Nova Scotia through the creation and maintenance of Highland Village. It is without doubt that the Highland Village would not be where it is today without the dedication and stubbornness of the many volunteers and members of the Society.

CONCEPTION

The Nova Scotia Highland Village was created during a time when history and culture were beginning to have major economic potential. Starting in the 1880s, Nova Scotia had a period of economic prosperity, with a rise in manufacturing and primary industry. But by the 1920s, the province was going through economic uncertainty marked by labour unrest, large layoffs, and people moving away to find work elsewhere. People began looking for other ways of boosting the economy, and tourism seemed to be an ideal method. Nova Scotia was promoted as a clean, safe, unspoiled place to visit, with hospitable people willing to share their culture and history. Angus L. MacDonald, who became Premier in 1933, was particularly interested in promoting Scottish heritage, and

it was during his time in office that the Gaelic College was founded (1939) and the official Nova Scotia tartan was created (1953). It was also under his leadership that the idea of a Highland Village was begun.

In 1938, Scotland hosted the British Empire Exhibition in the city of Glasgow.

One of the main purposes of this particular Exhibition was "to direct attention to Scotland's historical and scenic attractions." As a result, Dr. Colin Sinclair, an architect and Gaelic scholar, designed a "Clachan"—a replica of a typical Highland village that showed the buildings and the conditions of life during the 1700-early 1800s. It was a cross-section of Highland housing, and contained nine buildings of various nature, including a castle and a post office. Not all were happy that the Clachan was part of the Exhibition—some people felt that it was not authentic or historically accurate, or that it did not fit into the overall modern theme of the Exhibition. However, the Clachan proved to be very popular with visitors from overseas and with Highland Scots, and by the end of the year, over 1.5 million visits had been made to the Village.

Among these visitors was a delegation from Nova Scotia, including local residents, government officials, and Premier Angus L. himself. He was inspired by the Clachan and was convinced that it would be an ideal

way to promote and preserve Scottish heritage in Nova Scotia, as well as generate some tourism dollars. However, the onset of World War II prevented precious resources from being used for anything but the war effort and little attention was paid to anything else. Secondly, Premier MacDonald had resigned to become Minister of National Defense for Naval Services, and did not return to Nova Scotia until 1945, so plans had to be put on



Rod C. MacNeil presents the 1994 Highland Village Award of Merit to Archie Alex MacKenzie, author of the *History of Christmas Island Parsh.*

hold.

The idea of a Highland Village remained in the background until August 17, 1953, when W.L. Fillmore and Major C.I.N. MacLeod met with the re-elected Premier Angus L. in his home in Halifax. The initial thought was to commemorate Scottish ancestry in Nova Scotia by reproducing some original Scottish homes and buildings, like those that would have been found in Scotland. The other part of the plan was to create a museum called "The Scot in North America", dedicated to the experiences of Scottish immigrants to the "New World". Mr. Fillmore was

encouraged to contact Dr. Colin Sinclair, the designer of the original Clachan, to ask for designs and assistance.

Premier MacDonald passed away suddenly a few months later in 1954, and the project lost a key supporter, especially in government. However, Fillmore and MacLeod continued on with the initial stages of planning, and received copies of the Clachan blueprints from Dr. Colin Sinclair in May, 1954. They took the blueprints and their idea to the November 3rd meeting of the Nova Scotia Association of Scottish Societies (NSASS), a group devoted to the promotion of Scottish heritage all over the province. Serious discussions were then begun to study the possibilities of such an ambitious project. In early 1955, a "site selection" committee was set up to consider possible locations and interest, made up of the following people: Rev. D.A. MacKinnon, Pictou Landing; Rod MacDonald, Sydney; W.L. Fillmore, Amherst; Steven J. MacKinnon, Antigonish; and Major C.I.N. MacLeod, Sydney (non-voting Chairman).

COMPETITION

While the site selection committee did its research, the NSASS prepared a series of briefs to present to Premier Hicks and the provincial government. The second presentation, made on May 3, 1955, suggested that the ultimate aim of the Highland Village project was "to house an educational and cultural centre for our Scottish heritage and traditions, containing the following sections and facilities: Library, Displays, Short Courses, Gatherings, Pageants, Plays." It also recommended

that the site be built up gradually, perhaps over a period of 25 years, and could contain replicas of blackhouses, an log cabin that the first immigrants would have made upon arrival in the province, and a museum about Scottish immigrants and their descendants in Nova Scotia. The government expressed support for the idea, but could not commit any fund-

The Nova Scotia Highland Village is a non-profit Society with the mission: to protect, interpret and further the collection of buildings and artifacts at the Nova Scotia Highland Village site in Iona; and to preserve and promote the Scottish Highland and Island culture as found in Nova Scotia.

"HIGHLAND VILLAGE DAY"

Iona, N. S. August 4th, 1962

Official Opening 2.00 p. m.

Square Dance Competition Scottish Entertainment

— Log Cabin Museum —

Dancing At Night Under The Stars

Lunch and Refreshments Available On the Grounds

Admission Adults \$1.00 -- Children Under 16 50c

Located on Route 23 Overlooking Beautiful Bras d'Or

Newspaper advertisement for the first Highland Village Day in 1962.

ing to the project at that time.

Meanwhile, the Highland Village project was being discussed in communities all over Nova Scotia that felt they deserved to have Village in their area. The members of the newly-formed Grand Narrows and District Board of Trade were keen on improving the area and promoting economic development. At the April 14, 1955 meeting, "all were in favour of making every effort to bring this tourist attraction to Iona" and the Secretary was given the responsibility of preparing a brief to send to the NSASS outlining the area's assets, "stressing the fact that the only hindrance was the backward condition of the roads." On October 29, 1955, Hugh F. MacKenzie and the Rev. Dr. A.D. MacKinnon presented the brief on behalf of the Grand Narrows Board of Trade to the site selection committee. They offered many reasons why the Iona area should be chosen, including: 99% of the current resident population were of Scottish descent; land was available that had the Highland ambience with a great view of the Bras d'Or Lakes; the Gaelic language and other Scottish customs and traditions were all practised and very much alive in the area; there was a need to encourage economic growth in this particular region of Nova Scotia to prevent out-migration of the youth; and it had the potential to encourage more tourists and visitors to

stay longer in Nova Scotia, and perhaps even persuade more people to visit the province in the first place. It was, by all accounts, a very sound presentation spoken entirely in Gaelic, which impressed the committee members. The Board of Trade minutes from November 10, 1955, reflect the optimism felt after the presentation:

"The Rev. Dr. [A.D. MacKinnon] gave a very elaborate report on the proceedings which satisfied all present that an able presentation had been made in favour of Iona as a site for the Highland Village. Rev. Dr. MacKinnon was warmly applauded for his presentation and as a token of gratitude a large sized hat was passed around to defray the delegations expenses on the trip to New Glasgow."

The Grand Narrows group knew that the Pictou area had a strong case for being chosen for the project—the first Scottish immigrants to Nova Scotia were at that time believed to have been brought there on the *Hector* in 1773—so they continued to work diligently in the months following their presentation to gather support and to provide

Moved by W.L. Fillmore and seconded by Rev. D.A. MacKinnon that the first Highland Village be on Cape Breton Island, and the second Highland Village be in Pictou County. Motion unanimously carried.

1956, the minutes of the Board of Trade reflect that the membership were urged again to spread the word: "Referring to the Highland Village project, the President stated that we should endeavour to have the idea sold to everybody. As long as we are convinced that it would be a good asset to the area, we should go all out to get it." People in the area got the message, because by the critical March 10 meeting of the NSASS Site Selection Committee, it had received the following on Iona's behalf: a brief by the Grand Narrows Board of Trade (already presented); a resolution from the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 (Iona); a resolution from the Municipality of Victoria County that endorsed the Iona district above all other potential sites in the area; a motion from the local Home and School Association; and six letters from individuals, five of which were written in Gaelic.

Other communities, such as Pictou and Antigonish, also expressed interest and prepared information for the site committee, which held meetings throughout 1955 to sift through the applications. The key and

decisive meeting was held on March 10, 1956, at the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture office in Antigonish. By this point in time, the committee had narrowed down the options between choosing a site in Pictou County, or a site somewhere in Cape Breton. Lengthy discussion ensued, with the first vote ending up a draw at 2-2. At that point, a suggestion was made to either consider a compromise location (Antigonish, for instance), or for the committee to recommend getting an outside arbitrator since it seemed like they could not settle the issue themselves. Neither of these options went over well, and Rev. D.A. MacKinnon eventually decided "that in order to break the deadlock and settle the matter he would reconsider his opinion and vote for Cape Breton." After finally deciding that the location of the Village would be in Iona, Rod MacDonald and Major C.I.N. MacLeod were appointed to pick out an appropriate site in the Iona District and the following motion was made to pass on to the membership of the NSASS:

"Moved by W.L. Fillmore and seconded by Rev. D.A. MacKinnon that the first Highland Village be on Cape Breton Island, and the second Highland Village be in Pictou County. Motion unanimously carried." The general membership of the NSASS endorsed the site committee report on March 13, 1956.

(An interesting side-bar: W.L. Fillmore was strongly in favour of Pictou, and supposedly had a cheque for building the village in his pocket from the millionaire Cyrus Eaton, who also wanted it in the Pictou/Pugwash area. When the vote came through, Fillmore with a flourish ripped up the cheque—no one was really sure if it was a legitimate cheque or just a scrap of paper, but as Rod C. MacNeil said "the drama of it was good"!)

CREATION

Now that the initial excitement about the site competition was over, it seemed that the only people still really interested in turning the plans into reality were the citizens of the Iona Dis-

tract. Between 1956 and 1962, the group that eventually became the Highland Village Society gradually assumed all the responsibility for the project due to fading support from the NSASS and the provincial government. The NSASS liked the idea of a Highland Village and had sponsored it, but they did not have any money to help with the actual construction. The project had also lost a key pro-Scottish supporter in the death of Angus L. MacDonald and by this time the Highland Village project was not a high priority on the new government's agenda. However, these obstacles did not deter the Grand Narrows group from moving on with the next order of the business, which was to obtain a piece of land for the project. By May 23, 1956, Rod MacDonald and Major MacLeod had settled on the general site area in Hector's Point, just outside of Iona. This particular piece of property was ideal since it had been abandoned since 1921, it had the ideal Highland-like landscape (lots of hills), and some of the land was already cleared from previous farming.

On September 8, 1956, a meeting was held about the legal status of the land. It was found that since there were \$280 of back taxes owing on the property, someone or some group would have to pay them. The other problem was that the owner of the property, Stephen Urban MacNeil, had died on July 22, 1937 and left behind no legal will. Members of the Grand Narrows Board of Trade would have to track down the heirs of Stephen Urban and get them to sign a

quit claim deed handing over the land. They were advised to pursue this avenue rather than encourage the land be sold at public auction, because there was

On June 20, 1959, the Incorporation Charter was 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, and the Nova Scotia Highland Village was officially incorporated on November 3, 1959... The dream of the Highland Village was one major step closer to reality.

always the risk of somebody with outside or nefarious interests driving up the bid price. On September 10, 1956, a meeting

was held with some of Stephen Urban's heirs (Murdoch MacNeil, Lexina MacLeod and Florence MacDonald) and their families. The heirs agreed to the idea of signing the quit claim deed and giving

the land to the project at no cost, and they also decided that Murdoch, as logical heir of the land if there had been a will, would pay the \$280 in back taxes and would eventually be reimbursed by the NSASS or another sponsoring group. For the next year, the rest of the heirs were contacted and signed the deed,

which took some time since some of them lived as far away as British Columbia, and the Board of Trade also had some difficulties in locating the exact boundaries of the almost 50 acre site. On September 12, 1957, all eight of Stephen Urban MacNeil's heirs—Mary Hughena Rutherford, Murdock Alexander MacNeil, Mary Johanna Cameron, Lexina MacLeod, Margaret Pauline Allen, Mary Monica Parks, Katherine Teresa Peters, and Annie Florence MacDonald—transferred the land over by deed to Rev. Daniel E. MacDonald, parish priest of Iona.

Two months later, on November 2, 1957, the first

meeting of the Highland Village Planning Committee meeting was held. The recommendations from this meeting were then

passed on to the November 23rd meeting of the NSASS, who agreed to the following: that the Highland Village become incorporated by the Nova Scotia Legislature, that a legal advisor be appointed to assist with legal matters, that the quit claim deeds to the Hector Point land be handed over to the NSASS as interim Trustee, that the Planning Committee be allowed to appoint more members, and that future plans regarding layout of the site, costs, and a fundraising campaign be defined. The quit claim was then transferred from Father MacDonald to the NSASS to be held until the Village was incorporated. Another later result was the official naming of project as "The Nova Scotia Highland Village", and the first slate of officers:

President W.L. McCormack, Iona
1st Vice S.J. MacKinnon,

Antigonish
2nd Vice Bert MacLeod, Sydney
Sec/Treas Earl MacInnis, Glace Bay
Trustees Rev. A.A. Ross, Christmas Island; Rev. Dr. A.D. MacKinnon, Little Narrows; Doug Wornell, Sydney; and other area representatives from across the province.

Gerald Murphy, LLB, was appointed as legal counsel.

The next step was to set up the legal procedures and structure for the project, which were critical and needed to be appropriate for a project this size. In the summer of 1958, Edward Russell (a part-time resident of Iona with extensive American



The first Highland Village Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Margaret "Mungie" MacNeil in 1984 by President Roddie Farrell.



Hughie B. MacNeil and John Malcolm MacNeil peel logs for the first Highland Village museum building in 1962.

connections) contacted two similar historical villages in the United States on behalf of the Highland Village group. Administrators from Colonial Williamsburg (Virginia) and Old Sturbridge Village (Massachusetts) sent Mr. Russell by-law and incorporation information to assist in properly setting up the Highland Village structure. Using these documents, Russell drew up some provisional by-laws and gave them to the lawyer, Gerald Murphy. After some adaptations and changes, Murphy submitted them to Halifax for incorporation. **On June 20, 1959, the Incorporation Charter was 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, and the Nova Scotia**

Highland Village was officially incorporated on November 3, 1959. Papers to authorize the transfer of land from the NSASS back to the Nova Scotia Highland Village were signed on June 25, 1960 and registered three months later. The dream of a Highland Village was one major step closer to reality.

Meanwhile, the Iona Branch of the Caledonian Society of Cape Breton was formed in December 1957 to be a contact group for the project with the NSASS. One of the best-remembered things that the short-lived group accomplished was what could be called the Highland Village's first marketing plan. They erected a sign on the Hector Point property after going to the trouble of getting official permission from the NSASS. Father Alex Ross recently told a humorous story about the day he, Peter F. MacLean and Murdoch MacDonald went and placed the stakes for the sign: "On a certain little hillside we drove the stakes, and that's where it started from there...The other fellows had some sandwiches.....they didn't have any tea, they didn't have anything else, but I had a little flask of Johnnie Walker...Peter F. and I took a few sips, oh, and Murdoch MacDonald said "I never touched that in my life." Peter F. replied, "Never too late to do good."....

and that's what I remember." On the sign was the message "Hector's Point / Iona / Highland Village Site / ar dileab's ar dochas (our heritage and our hope)". People passing by the site would catch site of the sign and stop to take pictures and ask questions of any volunteers that would be there working. This helped to spread the word about the project, which seemed to work because the following appeared in Will Bird's travel book These Are the Maritimes, published in 1959:

" 'They're to have a Highland Village in Iona,' announced the

third of the trio, a dark and swarthy fellow with hair in his ears. 'You know they speak the Gaelic there as they did one hundred and fifty years ago when the Scots came there from the Hebrides. They've had a real battle over the site for those Pictou Scots and their tales of the Hector seemed in line for it. But it's in Iona, down the "Road to the Isles" that they'll put up an authentic old Scottish town with cottages of field stone, a miniature castle, a post office and a museum. The roofs will be straw and heather, and it's fitting. For Iona is a spot where the Gaelic is really a fireside tongue.' "

third of the trio, a dark and swarthy fellow with hair in his ears. 'You know they speak the Gaelic there as they did one hundred and fifty years ago when the Scots came there from the Hebrides. They've had a real battle over the site for those Pictou Scots and their tales of the Hector seemed in line for it. But it's in Iona, down the "Road to the Isles" that they'll put up an authentic old Scottish town with cottages of field stone, a miniature castle, a post office and a museum. The roofs will be straw and heather, and it's fitting. For Iona is a spot where the Gaelic is really a fireside tongue.' "



Rev. A.D. MacKinnon performs on the Highland Village stage for the 1967 Highland Village Day Concert.

CELEBRATION AND CONSTRUCTION

Now that the project had land, legal structure and interested people, it required money and some hard work. Over the next six years, the Highland Village group continued its efforts to obtain government funding while assembling various building plans and attempting to start some modest construction on the site. In order to draw attention to the project and raise



Stephen Rory MacNeil, Michael Dan MacNeil, Kenny Matheson, Arthur Campbell and John P. MacNeil sing Gaelic songs for the Highland Village Day Concert in 1968.

some money, an outdoor Scottish concert was held on August 4, 1962. This was the first Highland Village Day, which turned out to be a great success and has been an annual event ever since. Those who attended (approximately 1500 people in total) remembered the first Highland Village Day as a "really beautiful (sunny) day" filled with Gaelic music and dancing. People came from all over— Nova Scotia, Scotland, Indiana, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and more. The purpose of the day, as it always has been ever since, was to promote Gaelic culture, to give young and/or amateur performers experience and exposure, and to raise money for operational programs at the Highland Village. An outdoor stage was constructed for the concerts that summer, as well as a log building that was stocked with locally- collected artifacts. This cabin became the first artifact storage building and in the following summer Stephen Rory MacNeil was hired to look after the collection and encourage more donations. Bert MacLeod was a key figure in donating a large number of artifacts to the Highland Village, and his generosity and collecting nature encouraged others to donate objects as well. Many people brought things voluntarily or through word of mouth— Walter MacNeil remembered his father going out through the countryside looking to see what

people had and trying to convince them to donate appropriate things to the Village. The Society also obtained ten and a half acres of land from Rod A. MacNeil for three hundred dollars in 1964, which is the area known as Redden's Hill. A few years later, thanks to federal Centennial Year funding, a larger museum building was constructed, and plans were made to have the museum open at least a few hours a day from June to September. The first funding grant for the Highland Village came from the Victoria County Council in March 1971.

In the early 1970s, the Highland Village group were working on three major issues—site planning, land deals, and construction. At first this was difficult due to the sudden deaths of two key members in 1971— President William L. McCormack in January, and Secretary Hugh J. Murphy in April—the Society had to regroup and reorganize their development plans. At this point in time, the concept of what the completed Village should look like was changing. A majority of the members felt that there should be more to the layout than several buildings depicting life in Scotland, which had been the original plan. They felt that at least half of the Village should be devoted to the experiences of the Highland settler in Nova Scotia. This shift in focus resulted in a meeting with Barry Diamond of the Technical Division

SQUARE DANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

CAPE BRETON ISLAND

HECTOR'S POINT, IONA

SATURDAY, AUG. 4th

Starting at 2:00 P.M.

Sponsored by The Nova Scotia
Highland Village.

Three Classes of Competition

'A'—up to and including 12 years of age.

'B'—12 to 18 years of age.

'C'—over 18 years of age.

ENTRY FORM

Name of Team

Name of Leader

Address

Class "A" "B" "C"

Mail Entry To

W. L. MacCORMACK. IONA. N.S.

1962 newspaper advertisement for Square Dance Championship.

of the Department of Industry and Development in October, 1971. It was determined that a "Master Plan" was needed to design the required buildings, the layout of the site, and to ensure that the representation of content on the site was historically documented and authenticated.

"The content of the Master Plan should be as follows: a short history of life and conditions in Scotland prior to the departure of the people

who emigrated to Nova Scotia, including a description of buildings, landscape and conditions which forced them to move; an historical account of the conditions which these people faced upon arriving in Nova Scotia, as well as what they did for food and shelter, etc. during the early years; an historical account of the frame building village which were eventually constructed, including detailed descriptions of buildings, living conditions, etc. and decisions must

be made regarding the nature and content of each of the three sections of the proposed Highland village, such as number of buildings, and the relationship of the buildings to one another. All of these things should be documented were (sic) possible and where this isn't possible, the memories of the people involved will have to suffice." Letter to R.C. MacNeil, dated Oct 8, 1971, from Barry N. Diamond (Dept of Dev)

As a result of this advice from the Technical Unit, many provincial historical institutions (such as the Nova Scotia Museum and the Public Archives) were contacted for available information about Scottish immigration and life. There were some difficulties in tracking down historical documentation to use as reference for the Village—at that point in time, immigration patterns and settlement in Nova Scotia were not topics studied in-depth, so the members had to make do with what information they did have. In April, 1972, the Technical Unit released their "Concept for Development" Report, which contained a detailed plan of the physical layout of the Village. At the same time, a letter-writing campaign was started to appeal to people of Scottish descent and major companies for financial contributions. Many "ordinary" people responded to the idea of the project, much more so than the large corporations.

While this was taking place, the Highland Village group were also in the midst of negotiating a land deal with the Cape Breton Development Corporation (Devco). On February 17, 1972, Alex MacLean and Rod C. MacNeil met with J. Alton MacLean of Devco, who proposed the idea of purchasing some Highland Village land to build a restaurant and motel. The executive of the Highland Village were contacted and quickly agreed to the then confidential idea. Two day later, surveyors for Devco went to the Highland Village site to check the deeds and to scope out a possible site for their motel. The deed for four acres of land adjacent to the Village site was signed on July 19, 1972, and the Highland Heights motel and

restaurant were opened the next year.

1973 was also the year that two major capital grants were awarded to the Highland Village. An L.I.P. grant of \$32860.00 was awarded in January and a Devco grant of \$57000 was given in June. Both of these grants enabled the Village to begin construction. Much of the money was used to buy old houses in the area for their lumber to reconstruct or recondition buildings for the site. The lumber from the store came from the home of George MacKenzie in Cain's Mountain, and the counters and the doors came from A.D. Morrison's store on the road to Loch Lomond Mountain. The schoolhouse and barn were pretty much reconstructed from their own original lumber. The McIvor/ Nash house was rebuilt in the c.1900 style from lumber from other houses: Nash (St. Columba), MacIvor (South Cove), Alex P. MacNeil (Grass Cove), Barra Glen School, Stephen M. MacNeil (Barra Glen), Michael R. & Joseph MacNeil (Barra Glen). During this time, the Board felt that a Manager was needed to oversee the site development, so in 1973 Brian McCormack was hired for this position. Major capital grants also came from the Department of Regional Economic Expansion in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which helped with the construction of a new outdoor stage and amphitheatre, as well as a new administrative/welcome centre. By the end of 1978, the following buildings could be found on the site: interpretation centre & museum, carding mill, 1880-1900 frame house, schoolhouse, forge, country store, barn, frame house (1830-1875), log cabin, stone (black) house, canteen, public washrooms, outdoor performance centre, and log storage building. All of these developments would not have happened without thousands of hours of volunteer work. On Oct 27, 1979, the name of the organization was officially changed to "The Nova Scotia Highland Village Society".

Another area that the Society was focusing on was the official "status" of the museum in provincial terms. From the very

beginning of the Highland Village project, very little operational monies came from the provincial government through the provincial museum funding system. The Society were usually quite successful in their funding applications for capital projects, but had a tougher time with operational funding. From as early as 1974, the Society sought to change their status as a community museum to a branch or provincial museum, but as of May 1976 the highest level that the Village was able to obtain was "year-round museum". Although the Highland Village had special status and their level of museum assistance was protected, the Society felt that the Village needed and deserved Branch status and would continue to pursue this issue for many years.

CONCENTRATED COMMITMENT

The 1980s and 1990s saw the Society highly involved in all sorts of economic and cultural consultations in their efforts to support their community with regional development, as well as to persuade the Nova Scotia Museum to accept the Village as a Branch Museum. In the first half of the 1980s, a number of studies were commissioned and completed.

In April, 1984, the Highland Village Society adopted the "Phase II Development Plan for the Nova Scotia Highland Village".

The Society newsletter of Feb 1984 described this study as one that "focuses on both the need to develop educational programs for our members and employees as well as the local community, a number of physical site improvements and an overall marketing

strategy." A direct result of the Phase II plan was the implementation later on the same year of a Gaelic training program initiated for staff and community. The purpose of the program was to give people increased fluency and comfort levels with the Gaelic language and to increase participation with songs/music/conversations. Assistance came from the Nova Scotia Dept. of Culture/Recreation/Fitness and the federal Secretary of State. James Watson was hired to co-ordinate this program. Another result of the Phase II plan was the commissioning of a marketing plan in 1986 that was produced by Pierce Associates to help set some goals for the Society and museum. The genealogy service now known as Roots Cape Breton was one of the goals produced from this project.

A second set of consultations happened in 1984 and in May, 1995, a Community Economic Development Study was published for Central Cape Breton regarding the communities on or adjacent to Route 223. The project was sponsored by the

Society and the purpose was to assess the current economic situation of this region and the potential for new development. It eventually resulted in some specific community development projects, such as the rebuilding of the Federal wharf

in Iona, improved telephone services, study of Bras d'Or Lakes & watershed area, and the transportation of the MacQuarrie/Fox House by truck and barge to the Highland Village in 1989 (with funds from governmental sources, ACOA and private donations).



Bernie Campbell of Iona steps dances for the 1966 Highland Village Day Concert.

Perhaps the most important report that was commissioned by the Highland Village Society was presented in 1988. The Society retained Doane Raymond Management Consultants to develop a better business plan

Was the Highland Village Society going to be a cultural entity with a museum "on the side", or would the Society concentrate on making a museum of excellence with cultural activities being a natural outreach from that?

for the Highland Village and their recommendations were brought to the Society on June 4th. As reflected in the Society's minutes, two major points emerged from the report:

1) Doane Raymond strongly recommended a review of what the museum's operation funds were being spent on. They felt that the museum's resources were being stretched too thin by extra projects.

"These programs [Gaelic language program, Highland roots] need to be supported by external sources of dedicated revenue and not from the Society's operational budget. The report identifies the "Village" as its major product and all other products such as Entertainment, Gaelic language and Highland Roots as secondary products that reinforce the integrity of the Village."

2) They also strongly recommended that targeting Industrial Cape Breton and Metro Halifax with concentrated and focused marketing—Highland Village needed to get the word out better and farther, and the two major population centres would be a good start.

This presentation and the discussion that resulted was a specific turning point for the Society and the Village. Was the Highland Village Society going to be a cultural entity with a museum "on the side", or would the Society concentrate on making the Highland Village a museum of excellence with cultural activities being a natural outreach from that? Jim

St.Clair, President of the Society at that point, remembers this time as a real renewal of energy and focus, as plans were made to concentrate on the site and its needs as a museum.

The members of the Society were so optimistic about these new possibilities that on November 6, 1988, the Board of Directors voted to apply again for Branch status with the Nova Scotia Museum. In early 1989, the application was denied due to lack of extra available funding and personnel resources. The NSM Board of Governors recognized the relevant lack of Scottish culture represented in museums in Nova Scotia, and encouraged the Highland Village with their mandate. The issue was "deferred to a future time and set of conditions". Despite this set-back, the Society pressed on with changes and improvements to the museum.

In June 1989, Charlene Kosick, a graduate of the Museum Studies program at UCCB, was hired as the Curator/Education Officer and began to concentrate on tighter artifact collection policies and preservation methods. A new building, the MacQuarrie-Fox House, was moved in its entirety from Troy, Inverness County to the site in September. 1990 saw the Highland Roots Genealogy Project formally introduced as a growing database of information on Scottish families in Cape Breton, and a site plan was researched and developed for improvements and upgrade to the Village itself. All of these plans naturally needed extra money to keep running, so the Society then sought to increase the level of their base (operational) funding. In January 1991, a meeting with the provincial Minister of Tourism & Culture (Roland Thornhill) and the Minister of Education (Ron Giffin) resulted in a verbal agreement that the level of base funding for the Highland Village would be increased. However, the Society was soon severely disappointed when the verbal agreement was negated by the new Minister of Tourism & Culture (Terence Donahoe) three months later. Despite intense protest, the original decision was not reinstated,

and left the Society more frustrated than before. Although they received some extra "one time only" funding that year, this did not make up for what they had hoped for. All of these matters had to be set aside for a time, because in the summer of 1992, the Society's Board had to shift attention to operational matters. After almost twenty years of dedication and service to the Society in various capacities, Brian McCormack decided to leave his position as Manager. A period of uncertainty occurred while the situation was ironed out and the process begun to find a new Manager. In June 1993, Rodney Chaisson, another graduate of UCCB's Museum Studies program was hired.

With the election of a new government in Nova Scotia, the Highland Village Society felt that there might be new opportunities to pursue with regards to operational funding. The Society prepared and presented a report in May 1993 entitled "A Heritage Society for the 1990's".



Construction of the MacCallum House, blackhouse in 1995.

Another application for Branch status was given to the NSM in October 1994, this time taking a different approach. The Society felt that the Highland Village could become a regional branch of the Nova Scotia Museum to support the Cape Breton museum community in areas such as leadership in provincial or heritage issues, museum services, research/resources, education and training. In other words, the Highland Village was proposing being the arm of the Museum Services Division in

Cape Breton. The Society also made the valid points that the Highland Village was one if not the only museum in the province that actively promoted and preserved Gaelic culture, and that the Nova Scotia Museum was severely under-represented on Cape Breton, having only one provincial museum in Sydney and a tiny amount of its overall budget going to museums on the Island. Although this was a sound and reasonable approach, the idea was not at all considered at the time by the Nova Scotia Museum Board of Governors, since their financial situation had not changed from the last time the Society had applied. This process was extremely frustrating to Society members, for they felt that they were being overlooked by the provincial government, despite strong support from the local community and museums within Cape Breton. Regardless of this, the Society pressed on with their plans for the Village site to make it into a first-class museum not to be ignored.

1993 marked the start of some more major changes for the Society and the Village. In October, the long-awaited bridge across the Barra Strait opened, replacing the car ferries that had been used for so many years. This provided more convenient and quicker access to the Village for local residents and tourists alike. In addition to the hiring of a new Manager, this was also the year that a major site development project had begun at the Village and would continue on until the spring of 1999. During this time period, the following was accomplished: renovation/spruce up of interior/exterior of all site buildings; completed reconstruction of Black House and MacEachern log dwelling, and both were

relocated to different spots on the site; rearrangement of the walking plan so that visitors could go through the site in chronological order; new and better pathways which were more accessible to visitors; new landscaping and gardens; improved

In January 1999, the Board of Governors of the Nova Scotia Museum approved the Nova Scotia Highland Village as the 26th member of the Nova Scotia Museum family.

drainage; improved technology, both for administration and for the Roots genealogy program; Roots Cape Breton program mandate expanded to include genealogical information for all of Cape Breton, as well as parts of Antigonish and Guysborough Counties; paving and expansion of parking lots; improvements to canteen, workshop, stage, and washrooms; improvements to reception/administration building; production of a new orientation video, interpretive panels, and signage; establishment of a Pioneer Church fund to raise funds to build a replica inter-denominational church on the site; and establishment of a website.

The Society also focused on strengthening their heritage programming with the implementation of the Living History Program in 1997, better collections management and preservation, effective marketing, and sought to co-sponsor archaeology field research to begin collecting primary research about early Highland settlers in Nova Scotia and in Cape Breton specifically.

All of this hard work and commitment by staff and Society volunteers has paid off in a variety of important ways. In January 1999, the Board of Governors of the Nova Scotia Museum finally approved the Nova Scotia Highland Village as the 26th member of NSM family,

contingent on new and sufficient funds being made available to cover increased new costs as a result of this decision. In other words, there has to be new monies put into the NSM budget by the provincial government before the transition can occur. In September 1999, the Highland Village received a score of 90.9% on the Museum Assistance Program evaluation, which was top in the province for 1999. This is a direct reflection of the positive improvements that have been made by the Society and Village staff on the site and its operations. By the end of 1999, the Highland Village saw almost 24,000 visitors for the year—a considerable increase from 15,000 just two years before. The fall of 1999 also saw the start of a major three year project to computerize all available genealogical data onto one database, including approx. 140 boxes of school class register lists, which will help to solidify Roots Cape Breton as a major genealogical resource in Cape Breton. Last, but not least, the Highland Village won the Outstanding Promotions Award for 1999 from the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Since the bulk of the reconstruction and renovations have been completed, the primary emphasis now for the Society and Village is the programming and interpretation of the site—the visitor experience. Cultural activities have always had a special place at the Highland Village and are of major importance to the Society. This is only a partial list of things that the Society has been involved in over the years:

- preservation of the Gaelic language through staff programs, community classes, school classes, Gaelic Immersion Day (Nov. 1985), Eilean nan Og program (1999), supporting the Gaelic playgroup program
- have helped various staff members who have gone to Scotland with trip preparations, etc.
- Codfish suppers
- fundraising events and activi-

- ties for the Village, such as the swing raffles organized by John P. MacNeil
- facilitate Clan gatherings on-site
- Highland Village Day
- highly involved in presenting Scottish culture/info/music to community (local, schools, museum, conferences)
- special concerts: the Rankins, the Barra MacNeils, Evans & Doherty, etc
- leader in the Iona Connection: a group of museums and heritage organizations in Cape Breton that support each other—started in July 1984
- members have participated in FNSH committees and activities, Museum Studies workshop
- members are active in organizations, etc. that promote local community development
- milling frolics
- participation in other festivals like Celtic Colours, Gathering of the Clans
- genealogy workshops
- promoting Gaelic Day and Gaelic Cultural Awareness Month (May)
- special museum programming—ie. Candlelight tours with Jim St. Clair
- launching of the first book in *Following the Path: The Highland Village Series* The MacCallum House-1798 in 1999, using houses found in the Highland Village for background to the storyline

The Society has also been proactive to recognizing contributions by individuals and organizations to the preservation of the Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia, either through their work at the Village or through other means. In 1979, the annual Highland Village Award of Merit was started to honour a “person or organization that has made an outstanding contribution to the Highland Village or to Scottish Culture in Nova Scotia”. In 1984, the Highland Village “Volunteer of the Year” award was begun to recognize the valuable contributions of Society members. There has also been a considerable number of special honours throughout the years for different occasions.

- **1976**—Highland Village store dedicated to Bert MacLeod (former Society president and collector of heritage)—now known as MacLeod’s General Store
- **1979**—on Highland Village day, sawmill dedicated to Tom Cash of Irish Cove (donated sawmill building in late 1970’s)—known as Cash’s Sawmill (Note: this building no longer exists on the site)
- **June 5, 1988**—President Jim St. Clair announces congratulations to Rod C. MacNeil at a Society meeting for winning the “President’s Award” from the Federation of Nova Scotian Heritage. The award is given annually “to any individual who had given invaluable service resulting in the success of projects and the efficient functioning of their organization” and have to be nominated to be considered for the award.
- **Dec 1988**—first Gaelic Heritage Award presented to Cape Breton Magazine and its publisher Ron Caplan. This is a “... a special award to be given occasionally to an institution, organization or person who promotes, records, preserves, encourages or documents the Gaelic culture of Cape Breton—without that person or institution necessarily being part of the Gaelic culture.”
- **1990** Highland Village Day—special award was given to stepdancer Aggie MacLennan of Benacadie who had danced at every Highland Village Day to that point—“unfailing dedication to the art of stepdancing and her willingness to share that talent.” (CB Post Aug 9/90)
- **Dec 1990**—reception and plaque to the Rankin Family (John Morris, Jimmy, Heather, Cookie, Raylene) recognizing contribution to Gaelic song and CB music—a plaque was also given to Kathleen Rankin, their mother
- **April 30, 1994**—Roast in honour of Hector MacKenzie, sponsored by the Highland Village Society—Special Award of Merit
- **May 15, 1994**—Dedication of kitchen in MacQuarrie-Fox House to Sarah (Sadie) and Margaret (Mungie) MacNeil

- **Oct 24, 1996**—evening reception to honour the late Margaret MacPhail (Women’s History Month programming)
- **May 1997**—tribute night to honour Maxwell twins—black men from Marble Mountain who sang and composed Gaelic songs (part of Gaelic Culture Awareness Month)
- **May 1998**—CD release party and tribute to the late Joe MacLean (fiddler from Washabuck)

It is obvious that the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society has had a profound and lasting impact on the community of Iona and the region of Central Cape Breton, and has the poten-

tial to reach even higher goals. It is the strong, sustained support and interest of “ordinary” citizens that has made all of these things happen, as is the case with so many community museums all over the province. It is obvious when one looks over the records of the Highland Village Society the amount of time, effort, energy, and enthusiasm that has been given to this project by hundreds of volunteers interested in preserving Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. Take some time this year to enjoy what you as the Highland Village Society have accomplished. Happy 40th Anniversary! - CS

Highland Village Award of Merit Recipients	1987 - James H. MacNeil
1979 - Tom Cash	1988 - John P. MacNeil
1980 - Major C.I.N. MacLeod	1989 - Malcom S. “Maxie” MacNeil
1981 - Rev A.D. MacKinnon	1990 - Hector MacKenzie
1982 - CBC Sydney	1991 - John Stephen MacNeil
1983 - Stephen Rory MacNeil	1994 - Archie MacLean
1984 - Rev A.A. Ross	1995 - Catherine “Honey” MacNeil
1985 - Peter F. MacLean	
1986 - Capt. Angus MacNeil	Presidents of the Nova Scotia Highland Village Society
1986 - Hugh J. Murphy	William McCormack
1986 - Hugh F. MacKenzie	1959-65, 1967-71
1986 - Bill McCormack	Peter F. MacLean
1987 - John D. & Catherine MacNeil	1965-67
1988 - Joe Neil MacNeil	Alex C. MacLean
1989 - Dr. Donald Ferguson	1971-72, 1980-81
1990 - Descendants of Francis H. & Mary MacNeil	Ellen MacNeil
1991 - Archie & Margaret Chisholm	Dec 1972-July 73
1992 - Rev. John Angus Rankin	Bert MacLeod
1993 - Donnie Campbell	1973-75
1994 - Hector MacKenzie	Evan Lloyd
1994 - Archie Alex MacKenzie	1976-78
1995 - Rev. Donald Sutherland	Vince MacLean
1996 - Malcolm S. “Maxie” MacNeil	1978-80
1997 - Alex C. MacLean	Rod C. MacNeil
1998 - Evan Lloyd	1981-82
1999 - Ray “Mac” MacDonald	Rod Farrell
	1984-87
Highland Village Volunteer Award Recipients	Jim St.Clair
1984 - Margaret MacNeil	1987-93
1985 - Alex MacLean	J. Bruce MacNeil
1986 - Rod C. MacNeil	1982-84, 1993-present



An Interview with

VINCE MACLEAN

on Highland Village Day



Vince MacLean, August 1999

Highland Village Day began in 1962 as an event to celebrate the culture and to raise funds for the construction and operation of the Highland Village Museum. Over the past four decades it has become a community celebration and one of the best known Scottish events in the Province. The success of Highland Village Day could not have occurred without the dedication of its volunteers. Vince MacLean of MacKay's Point, Washabuck, is one of those volunteers. For over twenty years Vince served as the concert producer. This past summer, after producing over half of all the concerts held, Vince decided to move on and pass the torch to someone new. Recently Manager Rodney Chaisson spoke with Vince about Highland Village Day and his experiences.

Rodney Chaisson: How would you describe Highland Village Day?

Vince MacLean: Well, it is a family day of celebration - a thirty-eight year tradition. It is a coming together of our Cape Breton peoples and others to share in the enjoyment and promotion of our Island's music, song and dance. It is a six-hour-long outdoor Highland Scottish concert extravaganza sited on panoramic Hector's Point in Iona. The day is capped off with a four hour long square dance. It is a day to make sounds of joy!

RC: How has Highland Village Day been important for the Highland Village Society?

VML: In 1962, the Highland Village Day concert was initiated, as I recall, mainly as a source of fundraising for the development and operation of the then recently birthed Highland Village Museum. The Society itself had been created in November of 1959, and Highland Village Day remained just that for the next 3 decades or so - the main source of fundraising for the society. Dur-

ing the past decade the Highland Village has become less dependent on the profits of Highland Village Day itself because of a gradual increase in revenues from different and additional types of events. But in the early decades Highland Village Day was the only source of funding for the museum and the society. I guess the other point I'd want to add is Highland Village Day has also given our people an annual formal site upon which to express, display and foster a greater awareness of the depth and the wealth of our Celtic culture. I think Highland Village Day has succeeded admirably in achieving this goal on behalf of the society.

RC: How has Highland Village Day been important for the community and the people around the Highland Village site?

VML: For the past thirty eight-years, Highland Village Day has been the premier concert during Cape Breton's summer months. It is an occasion of a great coming together at a spectacular site for family, friends, neighbours, and visitors to Central Cape Breton - in particular to Iona. Families have planned their vacations around the first Saturday in August to ensure their attendance at the Highland Village Day concert.

RC: How has Highland Village Day been important to the preservation and advancement of the Gaelic culture of this Island?

VML: Well, I would like to think that Highland Village Day has helped increase the awareness of the culture in both the local and expanded communities. I think it has resulted in the youth of our communities being made more aware at an earlier age of such a thing as "their culture." As a result we all know how Cape Breton Celtic culture has impacted upon the world's music scene. For thirty-eight years the Highland Village stage has played a very positive and prominent role in fostering and showcasing what literally has become an explosion of Cape Breton Gaelic culture upon the world's stage.

RC: What are your earliest memories of Highland Village Day?

VML: Well, I guess rolling down the hill - not always intentionally you know, but we won't go there today. (laughs) I just recall that first concert in 1962. After that I was working away for the next 8 or 9 years. By 1962 the local fall fairs were falling out of vogue and Highland Village Day in 1962

reminded me somewhat of those agricultural 4-H fairs, but with the addition of a panoramic site, a larger crowd,

warmer weather, and of course the whole ambiance of the concert itself. There was a lot less cow shit too! (laughs) All in all, it proved to be a very exciting day for those reasons. I actually participated as a performer in that first concert along with Charlotte, my future wife. We were part of a square set competition. In the words of Hector MacKenzie "I never looked back after that". (laughs) The other thing that I do recall very vividly was so many of the neighbours, my parents included, preparing food the evening before and the next morning.

The women cooked the food and the men peeled the potatoes and vegetables and readied the barbecue. Everyone worked under what we would consider today as pretty primitive conditions on site. They were all volunteers. I believe this has been the secret of the survival and success of the Highland Village. That volunteer effort is still very much in evidence today.

RC: How has Highland Village Day changed over the years in both style and content?

VML: Well, if you mean by style - format, then a dramatic change occurred about four years ago when the Entertainment Committee, the Society's Board and Executive agreed to change from the two concert and outdoor square dance on site format to the one concert on-site and square dance off-site format which I think happened in 1996. It had been suggested first in 1990 by then Manager Brian McCormack. But I, and others strenuously opposed it initially because we feared it would seriously detract from what was then a thirty year tradition. It had been essentially twelve hours of Celtic entertainment.

The first concert ran from 2 to 5 pm, which usually ran until 5:45 pm, and the second from 6 to 10:30 pm. This was followed immediately with the outdoor square dance on the same stage from 11 pm to 2 am.

Now this had proven to be an extremely popular and successful format and some of us, including myself, hesitated to tamper with it. This format also provided room for about sixty numbers versus the current thirty-eight or so during the concert.

But again, other factors were at play. In 1996, we relented for much the same reasons that had come up in 1990 - some of us with trepidation. Those reasons included a real concern about injuries occurring after dark; fear of fire to the museum buildings during the night; rowdiness and

vandalism after dark; and the stance taken by some visitors who felt that the grounds could be used as a campground and an after-hours party site. These were all valid concerns and finally contributed to the change in format. We did lose some patrons in the following years — mostly the party crowd, but they have gradually returned and now enjoy the day just as much along with everyone else.

Now as to changes in content - the obvious change that I have seen is the mushrooming in the number of eager, well trained, capable youthful performers — musicians, singers, dancers from within our midst. They perform equally as well and in some cases perhaps even better than the stage veterans. They certainly receive a positive public response and these youthful performers are perhaps more at ease with themselves and are more likely to experiment with more variations and adopt newer expressions of their particular expertise. These arrangements seemed to have been generally well received by an appreciative audience.

RC: *What does Highland Village Day mean to you personally - now and through the years?*

VML: Everything that I have already mentioned to you, plus the fact that since I became involved around 1979, Highland Village Day has given me an opportunity to serve with the promotion of our Scottish culture. I have no musical skills. Nevertheless, I have always loved and enjoyed Celtic music, dance and song, so Highland Village Day has given me that chance to be even closer to the performers and to have some input into the continuing foster-

ing of our highland culture. I would like to think that we have presented a series of well balanced concerts, introducing new and up-and-coming youthful performers and blending them together with the stage veterans for an exciting musical and dance mix.

RC: *So when and how did you become producer?*

VML: I really don't know how. It certainly was not a planned thing. Someone was obviously looking for a sucker and I suppose no one else wanted the task at that particular time. (laughs) All I recall is that I was asked to become President of the Society in 1979 and so on Highland Village Day of that year I felt it only right to lend a hand with the program. I ended up assisting Hector MacKenzie, our perennial and



Verteran MC Hector MacKenzie: quick and ready and dry wit, humour & wicked sense of timing.

masterful MC by attempting to marshal and harmonize the performers backstage and to present them into what hopefully would be an appealing program and it just sort of evolved from that point. Remember, I was just one of six to eight individuals

who were members of the Highland Village Entertainment Committee. Each one of us brought our ideas, suggestions, criticisms and improvements to a series of meetings where we usually reached a consensus and I took that input from there.

RC: *Over your twenty-one year career as the producer of Highland Village Day, what have been the highlights or high points for you?*

VML: Certainly meeting, working with and sharing fun times, music, song and dance with the

performers themselves has always been a highlight for me. Many of us were friends before I became involved but, I have been privileged to become close friends with many of the newer performers over the past 20 years.

Seeing so many of the real young performers graduating from the Highland Village stage and gaining prominence and moving onto the world stage that has been gratifying. But, equally gratifying and even more important is just knowing and realizing that the culture is alive and well and being pre-

served and handed down, and handed on and enjoyed just for enjoyment sake; that to me is really much more important than the world stage. The fact that the Highland Village Day performers have been paid - not very much, mind you— but paid nonetheless, that again is gratifying and I think it means a lot, especially to youthful performers.

One last thing I will mention is the fact that for many years now the entertainment committee members have received numerous inquires from would be performers— requesting a possible placing in the day's program. That is a reflection of how Highland Village Day concert rates in the minds of Cape Breton artists. That too has been gratifying.

RC: *Have you felt any disappointments about Highland Village Day over the years?*

VML: Oh yes. My biggest disappointment performer wise was that I never requested Rita MacNeil to perform. Circumstances somehow just did not permit it and I really regret that fact. But hopefully she will perform yet at the Village. "Loch Mhor" have performed for us and they are her nephews and nieces, up-and-coming musicians — a fine group.

The other real disappointment is that I neglected to insist on having these concerts videotaped for historical and archival purposes. That was a terrible, terrible oversight on my part and I will always regret that too. Perhaps though there may be readers out there who would be willing to donate copies of their Highland Village Day videos to the Highland Village for archival preservation and that would help address this oversight.

We have presented a series of well balanced concerts, introducing new and up-and-coming youthful performers and blending them together with the stage veterans for an exciting musical & dance mix.

A third disappointment resulted from the fact that as members of the Highland Village Day Committee we always anticipated that

with the completion of the Barra Strait Bridge that we would realize a significant increase in the day's attendance. Unfortunately, after waiting thirteen plus years for the bridge's completion from 1979-1993, other factors had come into play in the meantime which impacted on the attendance figures in that they have remained essentially the same. Factors like new or competing events on the same day or weekend and corporate sponsored events with low and even free admission have really blunted the obvious advantages of the bridge. I can think of at least four competing events like Centre Bras d'Or Festival in Baddeck, Chestico Days in Port Hood, the Boardwalk concerts on the Sydney Harbourfront, and the Granville Green concerts in Port Hawkesbury - these all fall into that above category. This fact, coupled with a dramatic decrease in our local population during the past fifteen years, has resulted in Highland Village Day attendance remaining essentially the same rather than increasing.

RC: *What kind of challenges do future producers face when putting together the Highland Village Day program?*

Continued on page 12...

◆ *An Interview with Vince MacLean continued...*

VML: The late Mickey "Bean Nilleig" MacNeil of Iona, God, be good to him! used to say that "challenges were simply opportunities in work clothes!" That new person will have to continue to disappoint performers and have to say "no" to many of them due to the time

and balance constraints. With the

new concert format since 1996, there is only time now for about thirty eight

numbers and that permits maybe 7-8 minutes

per number for a six hour concert from 2-8 p.m. and with a bit of leeway for MCs to do their thing. Its really a much tighter schedule than one would first think but most of the performers now understand the various checks and balances that are at play here. The concert presents an opportunity in achieving a balance between the young and the not so young and among the various types of performances while attempting to fuse at the same time an enjoyable musical and dance blend. By my striving to present a balanced concert I think I have been overwhelmingly successful in infuriating many patrons and even a few artists at one concert or another. Of course, each one of us has his or her own preference and would rather hear and see, and enjoy more fiddling, or piping or singing or whatever it is that tickles one's fancy the most. You cannot please everyone

The producer will, in addition, be challenged with not really knowing how the concert is being projected and being received by the audience. We have a very sophisticated and knowledgeable audience out there today and backstage there is much hustle and bustle and tuning and it is difficult to evaluate the performance as it unfolds.

Other challenges to the producer, besides selecting, reconfirming an artist's presence and time of appearance, involves working with some of them who have same-day commitments.

The first Saturday in August has always created a special source of conflict for certain performers booked by love sick couples determined to commit wedlock on Highland Village Day. I would simply suggest to the new producer that he or she should act quickly and firmly to establish their own stamp on the concert's future direction. That, and

banish those Highland Village Day marriages! (laughs)

RC: *What do you see as the future direction for this event?*

VML: Well, truthfully, I would like to see

Highland Village Day continue on very much like it has during the past with a continuing emphasis placed on it being a family oriented day featuring Celtic Cape Breton performers. We have witnessed over the last few years more patrons from "away" in the audience and this is encouraging. As I mentioned earlier the local population in Central Cape Breton has decreased dramatically over the past fifteen years so I would suggest the Highland Village could direct its marketing efforts and dollars more towards the visitor from away. They really do appreciate the day too and every thing that it offers! Perhaps more timely and pointed marketing will assist in projecting even more awareness to a regional, national and even international clientele.

The other opportunity which comes to mind for Highland Village Day is that of corporate sponsorship. Other sites with other venues have capitalized quite successfully on corporate sponsorships. I think that the Highland Village should explore this avenue more completely and perhaps sooner rather than later.

RC: *What one band or group of individuals or individual has impressed you most during your twenty years backstage?*

VML: Oh, you really want to put me right into the fire don't you! (laughs) You know just over the last twenty years alone there were probably well over one

thousand numbers performed on the Highland Village stage. Numbers like the Rankins, the Rankin Sisters, Slàinte Mhath, The Barras, The Beatons, The MacMasters, The MacKenzies, all the MacIsaacs, The Highland Village Pipe Band, Stephanie Wills, Joe MacLean, Archie MacKenzie, The Stubberts, The Grahams, Jackie Dunn, The Damsha Breacan Dancers, the MacDonald families. Then you have pipers like Paul K. MacNeil, John MacLean, Jamie MacInnis, Barry Shears, Allan MacKenzie, Matt MacIsaac Hamish and Fin Moore. And of course Honourable Rodney MacDonald, our current Minister of Tourism & Culture, an excellent step dancer and fiddle player. Stan Chapman, Tommy Basker, Charlie

MacCuspic, Monica MacDougall, Calum Kennedy, Kimberly Fraser, Melanie Craig, Donnie Campbell, The MacLellan Trio, Wilfred Prosper, Doug MacPhee, Lee Cremo, Junior Fraser, Tracey Dares, Harvey Beat-

on, Gordon MacLean, Natasha Roland, The Pellerine Brothers, The Warner Sisters, Ray Ellis, Marc Boudreau, The Gillis Sisters, The Iona Gaelic Singers, Buddy MacDonald, Gordon and Dwayne Cote, Kiffy Carter, MacGinty, Allie Bennett, J. P. and Hilda Cormier, David Greenberg and his wife Kate Dunlay. Now I have just rhymed off enough cast for 2 concerts and I could just as easily continue on and list as many more numbers just as good.

I have to say, and I want to say while I have this chance, that the Highland Village entertainers were just the finest of individuals and performers. They were flexible, professional, agreeable and a

pleasure to work with and I will always be grateful to them and I salute them all and I thank them for sharing their talent and their cooperation and their patience in a setting backstage that could at times be harrowing and hectic.

Now, to come back to your question - yes there is a person, a lady who has always impressed me greatly and she is Aggie "Red Rory". Aggie MacLennan our neighbour from Benacadie. She is a wonderful step dancer, a terrific sport and a lady full of confidence, poise and class, and a real looker too. She has been a fabulous promoter of Scottish culture all her life. She has been a great-grandmother since a number of years but yet she has performed in all but two of our thirty-eight Highland Village Day concerts

since 1962. She was probably having babies on those two occasions.

(laughs) So yes, for my money Aggie "Red Rory" takes the crown, the sweeps and the derby.

RC: *Over twenty one years you must have experienced a number of amusing incidents. You probably have a list that would take us the next*

4 hours to relate, but what amusing incidents do you recall occurring during the concerts?

VML: Ah, you know, and this was more likely to occur when we still had the 2 concert format. You would have by the late evening the occasional individual who by that time would be feeling full impact of our ancestral weakness and he'd be totally uninhibited and needing badly to demonstrate his dancing abilities. One particular occasion I recall occurred while Archie MacKenzie of Ottawa Brook was playing a fiddle number on stage. Archie was just a terrific individual and he had a great sense of humour too and he was a darn good dance fiddler. He



Aggie "Red Rory" MacLennan: Takes the crown, the sweeps and the derby.

had two speeds fast and faster. You had to be in darn good shape to keep up with Archie's music. As our neighbour Marie MacLean would say "Tha wicked". Anyways, this fellow had been apparently lurking in the shadows obviously watching his chance and he eventually slipped through security and onto the stage from in front. He was devoid of shirt, shoes and socks and it was quite evident that he hadn't a shave or a hair cut—well—in a long time. But, like the Messiah, he knew his time had come and this was it and he had no intentions of blowing his chance. Archie of course twigged right away as to what was happening so he slipped "Patty on the Turnpike" into passing gear and tramped on it—as if he needed to! Well that poor soul he ended up just a toenailing it for everything he was worth. He didn't need clickers as his toenails were doing just fine—thank you very much, and you couldn't be sure if it was smoke or dust that was rising from the dance wax as he attempted to keep up with Archie. He must have given the soles of his feet a terrible scalding that night. He sure got all that he ever hoped for and he'd be well blistered before morning. Security finally arrived and pulled the switch on the trap door but not before he received a great round of applause probably as much in appreciation for his stamina as for his performance. Archie got a great charge out of it himself. It was one of those spontaneous situations that proved harmless but yet was terribly amusing to witness.

Another incident that comes to mind involved Highland Village Day rather indirectly. I

remember it was a cold winter's night in January, that was twelve to fifteen years ago, when we still used to have winters. We were after going to bed. It was 11:00 p.m. It was snowing hard and blowing a gale from the north-east and the phone rang. This guy in a squeaky voice asked me if I was involved with Highland Village Day production and when I replied that I was he stated that he was a budding entrepreneur and he was getting an early start on his summer schedule and he questioned me if I thought he would be permitted to sell cotton candy on the grounds on Highland Village Day. Well, I couldn't believe my ears and I did my best to restrain myself as I replied that I would broach the subject with the committee at our first meeting of the season. I literally laughed myself to sleep that night and still managed to smile the next morning as I shoved out the car and headed off to work. As I recall he never did show up that following August. The show went on without the cotton candy man—the day probably proved far too warm for him. But, I always smile and chuckle whenever I think of that January phone call.

RC: *On a wider scale as a long time volunteer with the Highland Village you served as President, you have been involved in the entertainment committee; you have been involved with the executive in negotiations with government and so on. What are the most significant challenges for the future of the Society?*



Vince MacLean preparing the line up for the concert.

VML: Oh, I think there exists a challenge to integrate as much as possible state-of-the-art technology into the Highland Village Museum operations, while at the same time insuring the integrity of our Scottish heritage that has brought the Highland Village to where it is today.

It is a tremendous compliment to the Highland Village staff, volunteers, its board and executive that during the past five years or so the Highland Village has risen from I guess 5th place to 1st among Nova Scotia's fifty-seven community museums. I think back to forty years ago and I doubt very much if many of the volunteers that were so active at its outset could have ever imagined the Highland Village that exists today. They would be so pleased.

What the Highland Village has achieved and what it has become without financial bequeaths, without corporate donations and with really just the minimum of government funding is a lasting testament to the foresight, the sacrifice and the tenacity of its staff and volunteers over a span of forty years.

I think the Highland Village has done a remarkable job fostering and showcasing the highland culture of the Island here and preserving the heritage of its artifacts and buildings. It has been successful perhaps to a lesser extent

with the promotion of the Gaelic language.

But, yet again the Highland Village is currently on the leading edge with its genealogical "Roots Cape Breton and Family History" endeavours.

To me the other obvious opportunity which yet exists is for the preservation of Cape Breton music, language, song, and dance and I think that the Highland Village should and must play a leading role not just in its preservation but, with the sharing and distribution of all that culture world wide via new technology. Again, that is why I regret so much not having video-

taped our concerts for posterity. It would have meant so much for future generations.

RC: *Any final comments Vince?*

VML: Well, I just want to thank many people. First, the sound people. You can have the best performers in the world, but if you can't get quality sound out there then you have nothing. Because of the hill and natural amphitheater setting the site can be a difficult one in which to project good sound. So I thank all those sound people for a job well done over the years.

Again I want to thank all the performers. They were always most cooperative and made my tasks easier. I salute them gratefully and wish them continued success.

I want to thank those individuals who officially opened each Highland Village Day for us. I must thank all those wonderful MCs - they were all great. I particularly want to acknowledge Hector MacKenzie - he was always there for all of us with his MCing skills, his quick and ready and dry wit, his humour with his wicked sense of timing.

I want to thank all the members of the entertainment committee. including Chair Hector MacKenzie, Rod C. and Maxie MacNeil, Joan Gillis and Quentin MacDonald. They were all very faithful and capable people. In addition, thanks to Beth MacNeil who assisted me backstage for many of those concerts. And Beth, Maxie and Roddie of course are prominent Gaelic singers as well.

I want to thank the Village Managers, Brian McCormack and Rodney Chaisson for complete cooperation and support over the years. Both made my responsibilities much easier.

Stephen Rory, (S.R.) MacNeil, from Barra Glen was the first curator/manager of the Highland Village. He had retired from that position by the time I became involved. But I did have the good fortune of working with him in a very minor way together with Dr. John Hugh Gillis, from MacKinnon's Harbour and St. F. X., as S. R. laboured on his genealogical publication All Call Iona Home, but that can be another story for another day.



ROOTS CAPE BRETON

moves into the 21st century

This past winter, Roots Cape Breton Genealogy & Family History Centre embarked on an exciting new project that will take it into the 21st Century. With the partnership of Human Resources Development Canada, Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development and the Municipality of Victoria County, all of the genealogical data that Roots has in its archives will be transferred from paper and microfilm records into a digital format on a computer database.

Over the next two years Roots will see its database grow from 90,000 to over 700,000. When completed it will include the census from 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901; birth, marriage, death, and land grant records from the late 1800's; and school records from the late 1800's to the 1980's. The data will cover all corners of the

Island.

Digitizing the records is an important step as it will allow more efficient research for clients. It will also enable the sale of read-only data on CD-ROM or via the internet.

One of the most exciting things about the new database is the program itself. Roots has teamed up with xwave Solutions (an Aliant company) and the Nova Scotia Museum to transform their MIMS (Museum Information Management System) into a powerful genealogical tool. Once set up researchers will be able to do much more than just search for a name. We will be able to link that name to other family members, communities, and files such as photos, maps, audio and video recordings. Even artifacts donated by family members to the museum can be connected with a mouse click. It will also print out family tree reports. The power and potential for this program is second to none. It will move Roots Cape Breton to the forefront of genealogical services.

Uses for the software go beyond just those doing genealogical research. Historians and other researchers will also find many advantages to the power of the program. For exam-

ple, an enhanced reporting tool will enable researchers to get statistics on the various religions in a certain area (or the entire Island) in a given census year and the number of persons claiming membership in each. Or if a researcher wanted to know what kinds of occupations existed in Mabou in 1881 and the number of persons working in each area, the reporting tool will provide that information.

In addition, the versatility of the software package will allow us down the road to set up a fully searchable on-line database. It will also allow us to add on a GIS module which will give the program mapping capabilities. A researcher will be able to find a name in the database and then connect to a series of maps to show the exact location of the property. These two features will not be available at first. We are, however, investigating them for the future.

In the meantime, we have a two year commitment from Human Resources Development Canada to provide Roots Cape Breton with the personnel to carry out the data entry process. From November 1999 to the time of publication our 9 data entry clerks have entered over 80,000

records which is in addition to the 90,000 records that we already had in the database. Roots is well on its way of realizing its goals.

To support the data entry process and the new software package, Roots has also invested in new equipment including a microfilm reader/printer, new computers, a new server, a CD-ROM writeable drive, and more. The equipment was purchased through the assistance of our other partners including ECBC, the Province and Victoria County.

Over the next two years, as the data entry process moves forward, Roots will be working on developing its product line including research services, data sales (via CD-ROM & internet), publications, workshops, memberships and other services identified in the business plan prepared by Dan White & Associates.

It is an exciting period for Roots. The Society would like to thank all of the funding partners, our consultant, our staff and genealogy committee for working so diligently to make this project happen.

For more information on this project and on Roots Cape Breton in general, please contact Pauline MacLean, Genealogy Coordinator.

Highland Village Calendar - Summer 2000

HIGHLAND VILLAGE LIVING HISTORY MUSEUM

- Opens for Season on May 28
- Open Daily 9 am to 6 pm (May 28 to July 9 and August 20 to October 15)
- Open Daily 9 am to 8 pm (July 10 to August 19)
- Last Day for Season is October 15

HIGHLAND VILLAGE GIFT SHOP

- Open same hours as Museum

ROOTS CAPE BRETON GENEALOGY & FAMILY HISTORY CENTRE

- Open year round.
- Open daily 9 am to 6 pm
- Please phone ahead for appointment

HIGHLAND VILLAGE DAY

- Saturday, August 5 (Concert 2-8 pm, Dance 9 pm-1 am)

CODFISH SUPPERS

- Saturday, July 15 & August 26 (3-6 pm)

PIONEER DAY

- Saturday, September 9 (noon- 5 pm)

LIVING HISTORY PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN

- Wednesdays in July & August (10 am- 4 pm)
- Reservations required

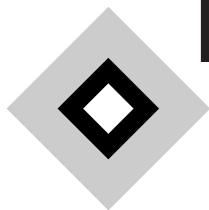
CANDLELIGHT TOURS

- Every second Thursday in July & August (8 pm)
- Reservations required

ALSO WATCH FOR OTHER EVENTS

- 40th Anniversary Dinner & Dance
- Celebration of Nova Scotia Museum status
- Celtic Colours Events

For more information on these and other events call us at (902) 725-2272, e-mail us at hvillage@highlandvillage.ns.ca or check out our website at www.highlandvillage.ns.ca.

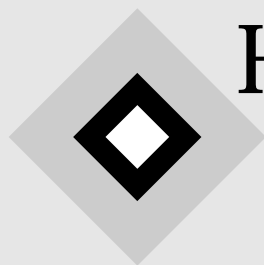


Results of the Funky Contest We Remember When...

Last issue we introduced our "Funky" Contest. We were looking for funky ideas for our "We Remember When..." ads. The Hood Family from Sydney, Nova Scotia went all out and came up with 10 different "We Remember When..." concepts. They are wonderful. Congratulations and thank you for taking part in our contest.

- .. "Overhead" was where your brother slept.
- .. You beat the rugs, not the clock.
- .. Mowing the lawn was not a sit down job.
- .. To dig something, you had to use a shovel.
- .. You really "MADE" your bed ~ with straw & wood.
- .. Tide washed ashore, not your clothes.
- .. To "tie the knot" referred to securing the horse.
- .. Windows were things you opened to let in fresh air and Apples were for eating.
- .. A beetle was something that crawled on the ground.
- .. You want the bread to rise again, not the people.

Looking for the perfect present?



Highland Village Giftshop

Visit our Gift Shop for a range of high quality gifts and local crafts. You will find the Island's largest collection of Celtic Music and Gaelic books. The Gift Shop is located in our Visitor Centre. It opens for the season on May 28th, 2000.

You Can Contact the Gift Shop:

e-mail: hvillage@highlandvillage.ns.ca
phone: (902) 725-2272 fax: (902) 725-2227

We are working on developing an on-line catalogue on our website. Watch for it coming soon at www.highlandvillage.ns.ca



We Remember When...



Horsepower wasn't found under the hood!

Come experience the simple pleasures and hard work of Scottish Pioneer life on Cape Breton Island. *June 1 – October 17.*

- Outdoor Pioneer Museum
- Roots Cape Breton Genealogy and Family History Centre
- Highland Heights Inn & Dining Room
- Gift Shop

*Come Feel the Spirit
of Our Pioneer Ancestors...*

Highland
VILLAGE

Iona, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia

(902) 725-2272

 **Naidheachd a' Chlachain**
(THE VILLAGE NEWS)

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