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Monthly Newsletter
2024 Fulbright Project

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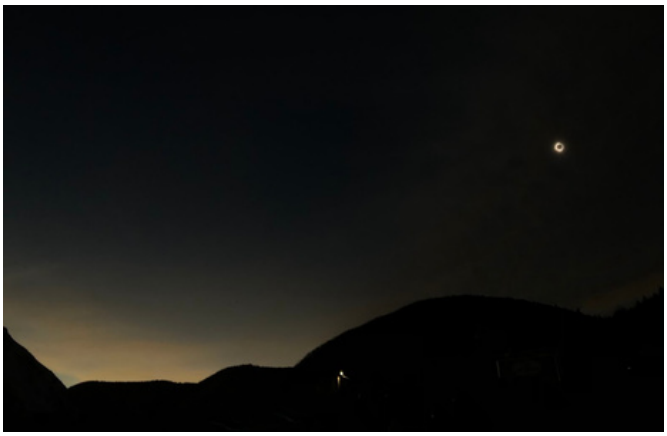
Meat Cove, NS

A' Ghiblean [April]

Monthly Recap

Another month in the books here in Cape Breton! This month I've been focusing on collecting interviews and I've had many great conversations with musicians and cultural caretakers in the Cape Breton musical community. From Gaelic language instructors and singers to fiddle and piano players, I've been collecting interviews and perspectives from a variety of individuals of differing ages and backgrounds. I'll be continuing to record interviews as well as collecting field recordings throughout the month of May and look forward to many more music centered conversations. So far I've had conversations with 15 individuals for this project - more to come!

April's highlight had to be traveling up the coast of Cape Breton Island and meandering through the Cape Breton Highlands National Park to catch the solar eclipse on April 8th from Meat Cove, the only place in Nova Scotia within the path of totality.



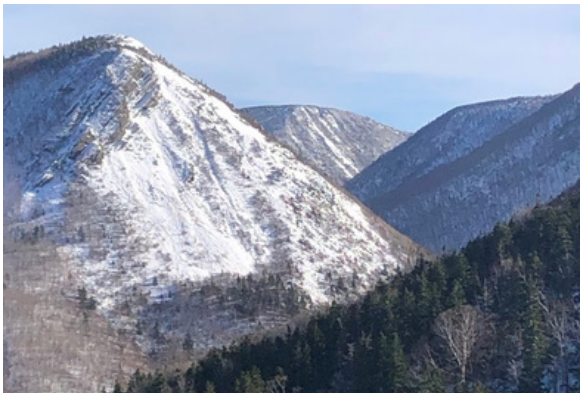
A glimpse of totality during the solar eclipse.
Photo by Vincent McDonald



A crowd gathers in Meat Cove, NS waiting for the eclipse to begin.

It can still be quite cold in April in Cape Breton, with average high temperatures being around 40˚(F) and lows around 24˚(F). Snow was still very much on the ground throughout the drive through the Highlands National Park on April 8th. I didn't want to get my hopes up that I'd even be able to view the total eclipse, but luckily the day was clear and sunny for the most part making for ideal eclipse viewing conditions. Cars lined the roadways into Meat Cove with hundreds waiting to glimpse about 90 seconds worth of totality. With the ocean waves on one side, and cold mountains on the other, this was a serene and unforgettable place to view this astronomical event. In case you missed it, the next total solar eclipse in North America will be August 23rd, 2044. Plenty of time to get that on your calendar!







Scenes from eclipse day in Meat Cove.



Milling frolic in Skye Glen, NS

Aside from extraordinary cosmic events, this month I attended a milling frolic at Skye Glen & Centreville Community Hall in Skye Glen, NS. A milling frolic is traditionally a social gathering and form of communal labor where neighbors joined together to mill a piece of wool cloth that's been prepared on a loom so it can be used. With many people gathered around a table, each person grabs the cloth and beats it atop a surface to a milling rhythm while singing and passing the cloth clockwise to the next person until the fabric shrinks and is felted together. This was often a laborious task, and the singing of songs helped keep everyone in rhythm while doing the work and passing the time. Milling frolics were usually held at the end of Fall after harvest before the Winter sets in. These gatherings were not only practical, but they were also social events. While it's no longer a necessity to prepare cloth, milling frolics still occur as social events in Cape Breton and Nova Scotia as a means to share traditions, Gaelic songs and tunes. These gatherings are intergenerational events and there are many milling songs originating from Nova Scotia. In Scotland, these types of songs are known as waulking songs, and were sung at milling frolics and could be heard during other work related tasks.

This month I was also included as a guest as part of Beinn Mhàbu's interview series this month. You can check out the video interview here.



Music at the Antigonish Heritage Museum.

Fulbright Project Updates

It's been a busy month recording interviews! To recap, for this project I'll be collecting interviews along with field recordings to create a series of audio podcasts and a short companion documentary focusing on capturing how musicians in the traditional music community are at this moment in time are using contemporary technologies and looking at how the increase in use of these technologies plays an impact on the traditional music community of Cape Breton. Be sure to check out full bios of the individuals below by clicking on the embedded links.

Here's who I've spoken with this month:



Mary Jane Lamond is a sharer of songs, stories and spirit. She is a renowned Gaelic singer who has dedicated her musical career to the preservation of Scottish Gaelic songs, garnering numerous JUNO and East Coast Music Award nominations, critical acclaim, and a worldwide audience for her music.



Kenneth MacKenzie is a piper and fiddler from Mabou, NS. He grew up in a Gaelic speaking household and Gaelic culture has been an integral part of his life from the early years. Kenneth is Director of Education at Colaisde na Gàidhlig [The Gaelic College] and Vice President at the college's Beinn Mhàbu campus.



Bradley Murphy is a Gaelic singer, fiddler, and multi-instrumental musician born in rural Unama'ki. He has been breathing new life into traditional Gaelic songs showcasing their relevance and beauty and his most recent release, "beul" is a collection of songs collected at home and also from Scotland.



Joanne MacIntyre is a Gaelic language educator from Mabou Coal Mines, Inverness County where she was raised in a culture-rich environment of Gaelic music, dance, and language. She has sung on stages around Cape Breton since her teen years, bringing the Island's distinct style and "swing" to appreciative listening audiences.



Carmen McArthur is from Gillisdale, Cape Breton. Originally from Pictou County, she became interested in all things surrounding the Gaelic culture during a gap year as a L'Arche assistant in Whycocomagh. She studied Gaelic at St. F.X. University in Antigonish, then traveled to Memorial University in Newfoundland to take an MA in Folklore. She currently teaches Gaelic classes from her home, as well as at Cape Breton University.



Andrea Beaton is an award-winning fiddler, composer, and recording artist who tours and teaches internationally, and is in great demand as a teacher at music camps and fiddling/dancing workshops. Coming from a long line of musicians, composers and dancers, the Mabou native is known for her powerful bow and driving style.



Peter LeBlanc operates Front Porch, a small working farm located in the Margaree River Valley on Cape Breton Island. Peter hosts numerous concerts at his farm and organizes and promotes square dances and other musical events in and around Cape Breton.





Melody and Derrick Cameron live in Mabou, Cape Breton on the property of the small dairy farm where Derrick was raised. They have been performing music together throughout Canada's Maritime Provinces and the New England States to very receptive audiences for years. They have performed alongside other Cape Breton musicians at festivals, taught workshops and play for many dances, pubs and concerts throughout Cape Breton Island. Melody is also an accomplished Cape Breton style step dancer and hosts the Mabou Step Dance School each summer in Mabou.







Betty Lou and Kinnon Beaton have been playing the Cape Breton style for decades. Betty Lou Beaton began playing the piano at the age of five learning mainly by ear. At age 14, she started playing dances with her brother Buddy MacMaster and has been accompanying fiddlers for dancers ever since. She has played on numerous recordings including the Smithsonian Folkways recording The Beaton Family of Mabou: Cape Breton Fiddle and Piano Music and with her daughter Andrea Beaton. Kinnon Beaton is a left handed fiddle player and has composed and published a book of violin music called The Beaton Collection. The Beatons have released numerous albums and recordings over the years.

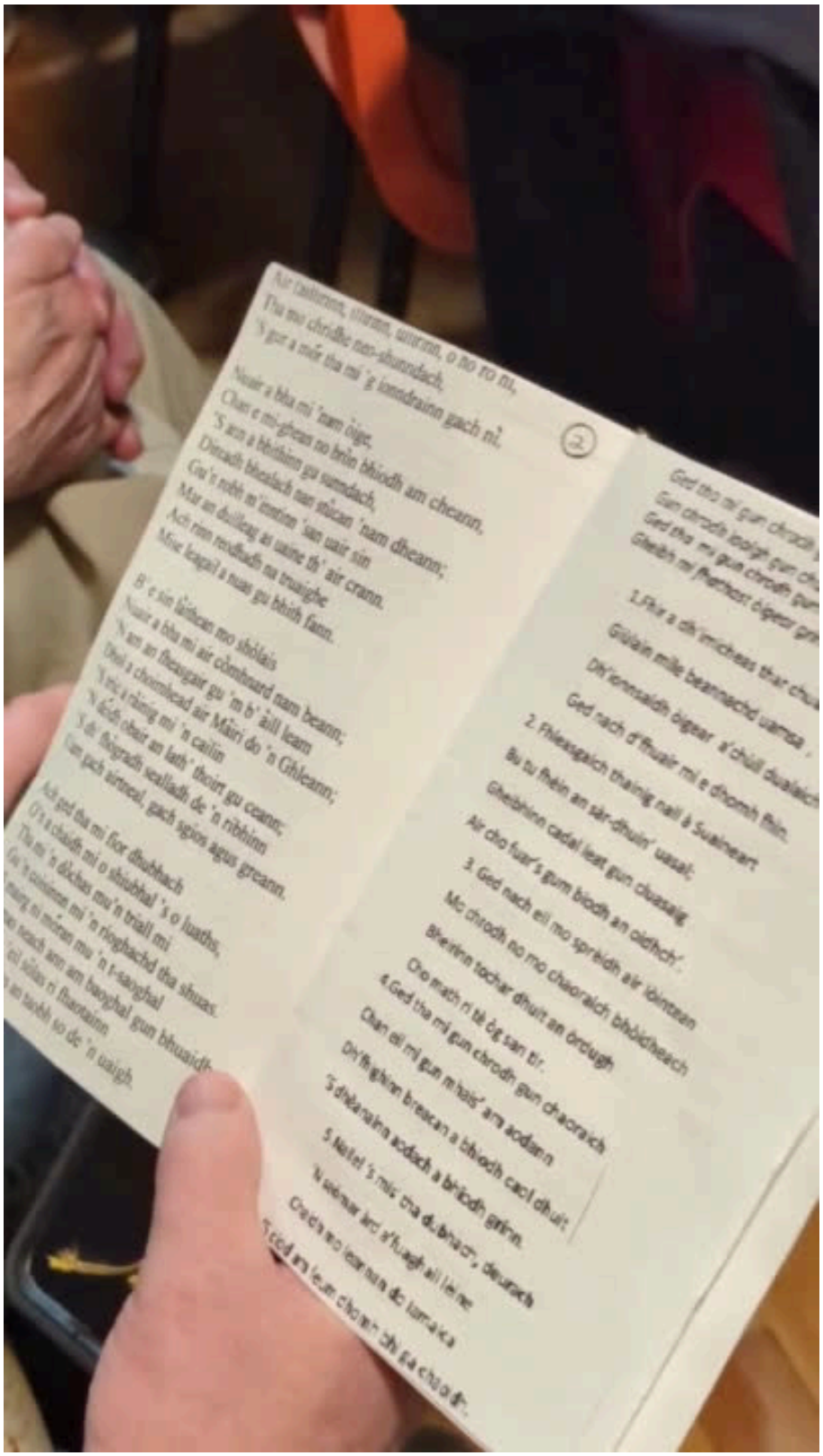
Mary Beth Carty is a multi-instrumentalist and singer from Antigonish, NS. Accordionist, guitarist, and player of pocket-sized instruments, she earned the 2024 Canadian Folk Music Award's Traditional Singer of the Year. Carty's second solo album, Crossing the Causeway, fuses traditional pieces, instrumental tunes, and original songs to create a multilingual tour-de-force that reflects the diverse yet unified roots of her region.



Gypsum Mine Quarry in Grand Chéticamp, NS

Check out the video below - or click here to access

too see what I've been up too during the month of April!





Mabou Harbour Lighthouse

Looking Ahead

In addition to continuing to collect interviews throughout the month of May for the project, I'll also be attending Toiseach-Tòiseachaidh, The First Step, a two week long Gaelic language learning immersion course at The Gaelic College [Colaisde na Gàidhlig] in St. Ann's, Nova Scotia. The course is designed for beginner language learners and those looking to enhance their introductory Gaelic language skills through total immersion. This course is offered at The Gaelic College, an educational non-profit institution which offers year-round programming in culture, music, language, crafts, customs and traditions of the immigrants from the Highlands of Scotland. The Gaelic College was founded in 1938 and is the only institution of its kind in North America where students of all ages come to learn about Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture. May is also Gaelic Awareness Month in Nova Scotia, and is recognized by the Government of Nova Scotia to honor Gaels and promote the language and culture.



A glimpse behind the scenes with yours truly

Dualchas na Gàidhlig,'s ann leibhse a tha e
[Gaelic heritage, it belongs with you]

- Toni

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