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Monthly Newsletter
2024 Fulbright Project

Toni Doman-Vandyke
Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, Canada



A winter scene along the Celtic Shore Coastal Trail, Mabou, NS

Fáilte! [Welcome!]

CEUD MÌLE FÀILTE! *[PRONOUNCED KEE-AT MEE-LA FOWL-CHA] IN SCOTTISH-GAELIC, THIS MEANS "A HUNDRED THOUSAND WELCOMES"*

I've created this monthly e-newsletter to keep folks up to date on my Fulbright project and time spent in Cape Breton throughout 2024. Thanks for signing up, I'm happy you are here!

Monthly Recap

KT and I set out on the journey driving up to Nova Scotia all the way from Virginia right after the holidays and arrived on New Year's Eve. Within minutes of arriving, we were met with a warm welcome and invited into several homes with new friends to celebrate and ring in the new year. Mabou, Nova Scotia is a small rural village on the west coast of Cape Breton island, and despite it being wintertime, there are many musical gatherings and activities happening close by, including regular weekly events at the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre and at An Drochaid, the Mabou Gaelic & Historical Society. It's been a wonderful experience so far getting to meet so many people in this close knit community. We've kindly been invited into many homes for endless suppers so far!

Along with the research I'm doing for this project, this winter I've been welcomed to sit in on some courses offered at Beinn Mhàbu, a former convent that's recently been renovated into an education center by the Gaelic College in Cape Breton in partnership with Cape Breton University. The program offered here is a post-secondary educational experience that focuses on living Gaelic culture and traditions. Luckily for me, the "Folklore of the Gael" course was available this winter and dives into folklore of the Scottish Gaelic communities of Nova Scotia.



Cèilidh on January 11th, 2024 at Mabou Gaelic & Historical Society-An Drochaid

Beginning in the late 1700's and over time many Scottish-Gaelic peoples immigrated to the province of Nova Scotia for several reasons, from the results from the Highland clearances to those seeking better lives and opportunity in the 19th and 20th centuries. The town of Pictou has become known as the "Birthplace of New Scotland" for being the landing site of the ship The Hector which carried the first Scottish emigrants directly from Scotland to Nova Scotia in 1773. In Latin, Nova Scotia literally translates to "New Scotland". Nova Scotia is rich in Gaelic culture and traditions, but the region is also home to many different cultural groups, including the indigenous Mi'kmaq people, the region's first and original inhabitants and the Acadians, French settlers who first colonized the area in the 17th century. Today these cultures and communities are found throughout Cape Breton and visitors to the island can experience and learn more about them.

***A CÈILIDH** [PRONOUNCED KAY-LEE] IS A GATHERING OR SOCIAL VISIT USUALLY WITH MUSIC, DANCE, STORYTELLING OR OTHER ENTERTAINMENT*

Fulbright Project Description

The Fulbright program is an international educational and cultural exchange program that is available to students, scholars, and professionals in all backgrounds in more than 160 countries worldwide and provides the opportunity to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to mutual understanding. Fulbrighters get to live, work and learn from the people of the host country and share daily experiences. I found out about this grant program back in 2014 and was selected as a finalist this round after multiple application submissions (at last!). Thanks again to everyone who has supported or assisted me during the process!



Outside of Brook Village Grocery, a rural general store located just outside of Mabou in Whycocomagh, NS. Fellow Fulbright recipiant Dr. Lela Rankin (left) with Toni Doman-Vandyke (right)



Sea glass found on Inverness Beach

During my time in Canada, I'll be researching and documenting the traditional musical communities of Cape Breton and observing how technology is interacting within the community. Specifically, I am focusing on traditional music connected to Scottish and Gaelic influences. Contemporary technologies - like internet access and sites like YouTube - have the ability to help us connect with music and cultures outside of our own. Through this project I'll be documenting how the music makers and tradition bearers of Cape Breton are using and interacting with modern technologies and seeking to uncover how this use is impacting and influencing the region's traditional music. Modern day musicians have access to music globally via the internet, where individuals can share, learn remotely, and promote content within and beyond genres. These technologies have the ability to connect music styles to broader global audiences, in this case making Cape Breton's unique Maritime music styles more accessible and better known to "outsiders."

In short, I am researching how the use of these technologies aid in the preservation of Cape Breton's music, how it could be changing how people perceive its authenticity and how its use could be playing an impact in other ways. This project will also compare its findings between Cape Breton's music to Appalachian music styles, a region that has similarities to Cape Breton, including both historically being geographically isolated regions settled by the similar groups of people during immigration.

For the project, I'll be interviewing a variety of musicians and others working in the fields of music and culture. The outcome will be a series of audio stories/podcasts featuring sounds, stories and voices of participants and a companion documentary film and a website featuring this media content.



Saint Mary Catholic Church in Mabou, NS



Check out the video below - or click here to access

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



Looking Ahead

Now that January is in the books and I've had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people here in Cape Breton, I'll be setting up and recording interviews starting in late February. Stay tuned for more project updates in next month's newsletter!

This e-newsletter and blog is not an official component of the Fulbright Program or the U.S. Department of State. The views expressed here are entirely those of its author, Toni Doman-Vandyke, and do not represent the views of the Fulbright Program, the U.S. Department of State, or any of its partner organizations or Cape Breton University.