REPORT FROM CAPE BRETON

Well, there isn't a day goes by when you don't learn something down here. You may not have your tape recorder, or be making too many notes, but you're going to find out a lot anyway, and if you have any memory at all, you'll retain some of it. I know, because I have a terrible memory, but I do remember a few things.

I remember the first time I heard of Buddy MacDonald. It was Mike MacDougall, (or was it Dennis and Lori Cox) and we were talking about songs and those who could make a good song. Well, if you want to hear about what is happening on the North Shore, you listen to Buddy's songs, and every word is the truth. Well, since we're up on the North Shore, I'll just mention something; if you care to read about folklore and history, and about now, too, mind you, then there's a magazine by the name of Cape Breton's Magazine which is published up in Wreck Cove by Ron Caplan, and it is without a doubt (in my humble opinion) the most important contribution to the literature of this island in the last 50 years. There should not be one folklorist in this country without this magazine. A good example to all of us as to what can be done. Write to Ron Caplan, Wreck Cove, Cape Breton Island.

Well, well, back to where I was. The College of Cape Breton is considering the addition of an introductory folklore course to its calendar. Persons interested should contact the College (perhaps via Betty Beaton) for more details. It is hoped this program will develop, and eventually, hopefully in the near future, those who have the power will see fit to introduce folklore studies at the grade school level as well, right there next to Benedict Arnold and how high is Mount Everest in meters.

Gaelic has finally entered grade school in some sections of the island - thanks to the determination of John Shaw of Kingsville. We shall be ever grateful to him. While work is being done by the College of Cape Breton, the Gaelic College and the Beaton Institute, the work of individuals such as John in breaking new ground is surely the most difficult and would often be left undone if it were not for efforts of such a dedicated scholar. Thanks are extended. Persons interested in Gaelic culture who are unable to visit the island can get a glimpse of it in the Cape Breton's Magazine, or Helen Creighton's "Gaelic Songs of Nova Scotia," or the recent Collection of Donald A. Ferguson, "Beyond The Hebrides."

Recordings of Gaelic singing from Cape Breton are available on The Music of Cape Breton Vol. I - Topic Records; Songs From Cape Breton Island - Folkways FE4450, Songs of Cape Breton - Celtic CX38. All three are highly recommended. Persons wishing to do more extensive research should contact the Beaton Institute, which houses many rare editions and field recordings of the peoples of Cape Breton.
I am sorry to write that I have little knowledge of what is going on in Acadia studies on the island. I should think that Father Chiasson is the man to contact for such information, and he can be reached through the University of Moncton. There is a study available on the history of Cheticamp, as well as four song books "Chanson d'Acadie" which should be obtained.

Persons interested in Mic Mac studies should contact the Native Communications group in Memberton. The Nat. Com. Library houses many taped interviews available for researchers' use. The "Mic Mac News" is recommended for current affairs, and persons interested in contemporary writers are strongly urged to obtain a copy of "Poems of Rita Joe" (Abanaki Press, P.O. 2104, Halifax). For persons interested in folk remedies, Laurie Lacey's Mic Mac Indian Medicine (Formac Ltd., Antigonish) is a must.

Persons interested in the festival scene this summer should refer to Doug MacPhee's schedule in "Canada Folk Bulletin" Jan-Feb. 1979, p. 27. Note also the Tarbot festival (date unknown). A record album of the Tarbot and the Glendale festivals may be obtained. For Tarbot, write School on the Hill, North River Bridge. For Glendale '77 write the College of Cape Breton Press.

Anyone interested in fiddle music? There are many recorded albums now available. Write Doug MacPhee for further information, c/o Beaton Institute. There is a group known as the "Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association" which is doing much to promote fiddle music on the island. They issue a newsletter to members, and it contains new and old tunes, as well as social news. Write to C.B.F. Assoc., Box 5, Creignish. Also, a must for persons interested in the violin music of Cape Breton are the publications "Highland Heritage" and "Fiddlers to the Fore." Write Box 42, Mabou. Ask also about the collected works of Don Hugh MacEachern, and The Cape Breton Collection of Scottish Melodies; compiled and arranged by Gordon F. MacQuarrie (Beaton, Medford, Mass, 1975).

Artists interested in performing in Cape Breton should contact New Dawn Enterprises, which is an organization with concerns in the area of such cultural activities. Write Tic Butler c/o New Dawn Enterprises, Metro Centre, Sydney, N.S. Well, I guess Tic will be looking for me now to see what I got him into.

Now as I was saying before I got so carried away with my lists and serial numbers, there's not too many days that will pass without something interesting happening down here. I can't think of one myself. As soon as I hitch-hike up to Ingonish I'll get together with Mike and we'll fill you in on some of the songs from that end of the country; and if by the way there's anyone out there trying to find out about the beautiful Margaree, I suggest you drop a note to Francis MacDonald of South West Margaree, who knows the area very well.

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Ronnie would love to hear from anyone with an interest in any of the areas he's touched on in the above report.