

RED DAHLIA PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2022

WELCOME BACK

Extending the Invitation

Four years ago, Richard opened up the family trunk, and we began the process of purposely maintaining our connection to a shared place - the small family farm in St. Catherine's - and to each other. Everyone's contributions at that time helped me obtain an M.A. degree, and I thank you so much for your help.

I didn't want the project to stop there, though. I was anticipating a larger family gathering in the summer of 2020 where things could really take off. We all know how 2020 went! The pandemic did allow some family members to take the time to contribute recollections and photos to our shared website. Ernie and Richard outdid themselves with descriptions of farming and household implements. Jean shared cherished photos of the potato harvest that evoked the smell of the earth and the satisfaction of getting the crop out of the ground.

A project like this requires encouragement to keep rolling. Unfortunately, I have been dealing with a chronic health condition for many years now, but things really went downhill as I worked to finish my degree. I limped through a final year of working in the north and retired in 2021. I have been resting since then, and while I am still not much better physically, I have recovered the ability to think and put words to paper, so I hope to check in with you regularly and extend invites for you to participate.

Patricia



Weddings

It is close to a century since George and Esta MacAulay married in the fall of 1929.

It was a Wednesday, the usual day for a wedding in the country when life revolved around the milking schedule. The ceremony typically happened at 8 a.m. in the side chapel of the church, with a breakfast at the bride's family home afterwards, a day of socializing to some fiddle tunes, possibly something to eat at the groom's family home, and then back to the barn, likely in a pretty tipsy state.

When I started attending family weddings in the late 60s and early 70s, the program had altered. With more people in 9 - 5 jobs, weddings happened on Saturdays. The ceremony generally started at 11:00 a.m. and would be followed by a cold plate lunch and an afternoon of dancing and drinking at a hall or a gym, with various after-parties always a possibility.

None of this could happen during Lent.

Weddings (continued)

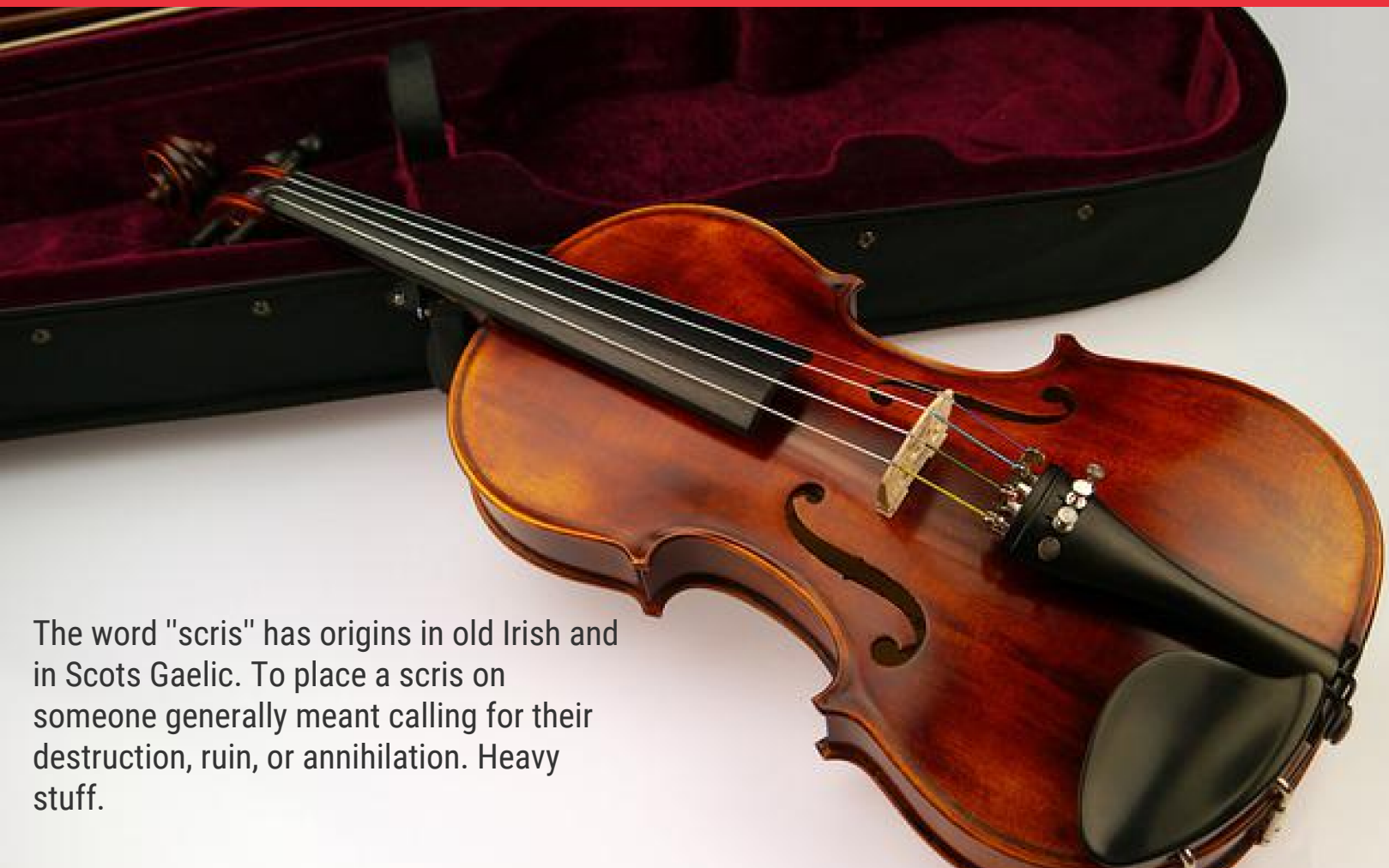
Lorraine told me a great story about a wedding that took place when Esta was a girl.

There was a lady in the community who evoked some fear because it was believed that she had the powers of a witch. A generation before, she had been keeping company with Aeneas MacAulay, who was apparently a bit of a lady killer. He turned his attentions to a girl from the Glen, Susan Mooney, and the two of them married in 1901. Just before their wedding, the disappointed woman put what was called a "scris" on the couple. She cursed them and prophesized that he would find Susan dead in their bed. The fact that Susan did die at home ten years later with a post-partum infection likely cemented the woman's fearsome reputation.

At some point, this woman must have resolved her heartbreak. She married and raised her own family in Little Harbour. Her oldest daughter was all set to marry, but it sounds like she didn't have much of a social circle. Shortly before the wedding, her mother arrived at her neighbour's household looking for a bridesmaid among the many Power girls. Those closest in age flatly refused to have any involvement. Flora took them to the pantry (her usual headquarters) and said, look, somebody has to be a bridesmaid or we'll all be cursed!

The fourth daughter, Esta became the designated bridesmaid. On the wedding day, she and her father, Bill, headed out after milking. It sounds like things went fine until the breakfast was over and the fiddling and dancing started. No sign of the bride, though, so the new husband decided that the bridesmaid would do just as well. With her father outside the rest of the older men, poor Esta spent the day dancing with the groom, very much regretting her role as family saviour.

And where was the new bride? That is the kicker. She was upstairs, sick ... because she was pregnant.



The word "scris" has origins in old Irish and in Scots Gaelic. To place a scris on someone generally meant calling for their destruction, ruin, or annihilation. Heavy stuff.

Wakes

My favourite wake-related story comes from David Weale's book, [A Long Way from the Road](#).

I don't have the book on hand, but this is the gist of the story:

An unfortunate man was at death's door. He was spending his last days in the spare room, which was usually on the first floor, not far from the kitchen.

He could smell some terrific baking, and he called out and asked if he could have some.

"No!," said the lady of the house, "It's for the wake."

I know everyone has a vast store of wake memories. I remember when a group gathered in Prince George, and the conversation topic become, "When was your first wake?" Obviously, a watershed moment in everyone's childhood! You probably have lots of wedding memories too.

You can share anything you wish on the family website: <https://www.phttps://www.peishanachie.com/have-a-visit/community/weddings-and-wakes>. (Just cut and paste the url into your browser.) If you don't want to tangle with the technology, that's okay. You can e-mail me your recollection, and I will post it. Feel free to share on any other topic.

REMEMBERED



Mary Velma Ward
(MacAulay)
1933 - 2019



Louise
Antoinette Cook
(Power)
1925 - 2002

MI'KMAQ

WIKEWIKU'S HISTORY MONTH OCTOBER 2022

Mi'kmaq Beadwork & the Art of Beading

Perfected through process and vision, Mi'kmaq beadwork represents life and creation. Generations of hands, eyes, backs, and fingers have worked for balance in intricate designs and colour palettes. From *wampum* and bone beads to suspenders and peaked caps to contemporary medallions, beauty emerges from skill and love. Ceremonies have a special place to focus the intentions of artists' hearts and minds. In kitchens and *wikuom!* masters have shared their practice with those who were dedicated. In turn, they were asked to share with the next generation.

Agnes 'Aggie Baby' Gould told new beaders "share, please share." We carry that teaching in our hearts as we celebrate this year's poster.



Mary Josephine (MacCloud) Morris, Eskasoni First Nation, 1930



Mall A. (Morris) Syllboy, Eskasoni First Nation, 1930

MOTIFS AND DESIGNS

Beaded designs reflect the patterns in the world around us. Across Mi'kma'k, expressions mirror colours, plants, places, and social life of our communities. Motifs like the double-curve make worldviews visible and shared. Small quahog shell beads woven into patterns (*wampum*) have recorded important decisions. Beading styles and forms signify age and life stage, gender, and social and political roles as well as community.

"I bead with my mood."
— Erica Busby



TECHNIQUES

Integrating traditional techniques with contemporary contexts has given rise to innovative shapes and forms that are uniquely Mi'kmaq. Shifting from moose hair threading to wax thread lacing, from heavily beaded suspenders to elaborate medallions, we continue to ask the question: what techniques will carry our creations into the future?

"That's our people for you: figuring it out."
— Valerie Meader



Ava Skow



Orange shirts honour Phyllis Wapellat from the Sheswaganic Agel from First Nation and all residential school survivors across Canada.



Descendant Paulina Meader uses her beading skills to honour the stories of Phyllis and her grandmother Margaret (Marge) Perry, #60.



Red dresses represent the national movement to highlight response for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirited people (MMIWG2S).



Virginia Sue Pictou disappeared in 1983. Her sister, Agnes 'Aggie Baby' Gould, a master beader, was one of the first to create a beaded red dress.

Beaded poppies honour and celebrate indigenous veterans and raise awareness their experiences.



Killa Abenoo has been dedicated to sharing her teachings and beading across Mi'kma'k for many years.



BEADING IS HEALING

For many beaders, the hands and hearts of our ancestors place each stitch and lay each bead. Designs are sketched. Colours are chosen. Prayers and blessings are given as needles pierce and move. We acknowledge our gifts by letting go.

"It's all about mind, body and soul."
— Nik Phillips



Ava Skow

BEADS!

Beads have been essential to our culture for thousands of years. Beaders often have very particular tastes and needs, creating an enormous variety of styles and materials. Today, the contemporary beading market is global and significant. Specialized historians track minute changes in forms and styles to create timelines for broader cultural and human histories.

Many beaders honour the teaching that "nothing in this world is perfect" by adding an odd or unexpected bead to their creations. These *kepmek'waio'psk* (spirit beads) are often unnoticeable such as using an orange bead rather than a red one. Can you find the *kepmek'waio'psk* in the poster?

"Nothing in this world is perfect."
— Manah Battiste

October is Mi'kmaq History Month. This year's poster honours Mi'kmaq beadwork and the art of beading. Perfected through process and vision, Mi'kmaq beadwork represents life and creation.

