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Praise & Dispraise Two Gaelic Poems of the Rear & the Shore Margarees The following extract is taken from Dr. Charles W. Dunn's book, *HIGHLAND SETTLER: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia*, a book that has been hailed as "one of the best books yet written on the culture of the Gaels of Cape Breton." *HIGHLAND SETTLER* is the product of extended visits to Nova Scotia by Dr. Dunn and his wife, talking in English and Gaelic with descendants of the Scottish pioneers • Cape Breton house? wives and ministers and fishermen, steelworkers and priests. Out of those conversations, plus a lot of dogged research into rare Gaelic publications, came *HIGHLAND SETTLER* • a distinguished portrait of the Scottish Gael's emigration to Cape Breton Island and Eastern Nova Scotia and the life that bloomed in that new home. The book covers pioneer settlement, the crowning of the rural accomplishment, and the beginnings of the dispersion as the children of those settlers were drawn to Cape Breton's industrial areas and beyond. And *HIGHLAND SETTLER* is not simply an outsider's portrait. By drawing on the Gaelic poetry and song the Gaels composed and performed for one another • songs and poetry succeeding generations continued to memorize, treasure, and share • Dunn lets the Highland settler speak for himself, giving us the Scottish Gael's self-portrait. Taken all in all, Dunn's is a gentle, touching performance. There is no other book quite like *HIGHLAND SETTLER*. From *HIGHLAND SETTLER*: Partisan devotion to the native soil could be illustrated by countless Gaelic songs of varying literary merit. One of the most instructive is that composed by a certain Donald MacDonald. To understand the background, one must remember that the Highlanders who came to the new land were accustomed to a ready access to the sea or lake for fishing. Consequently the concessions of land which were taken up first were those convenient to the water. Settlers who arrived too late to acquire these prized shore locations had to content themselves with the remote and often precipitous rear-lands, but although forced to settle there by necessity rather than choice, they and their descendants came to love the mountain fastnesses. Donald MacDonald was one of this group. His parents came from Moidart to Cape Breton and settled on a mountain top in what is known as "the rear" of South-West Margaree. Here in 1830 Donald was born, and here he was raised. Although he never went to school, he managed to teach himself to read both English and Gaelic. In later years he had to leave the "rear" and work for a season at "the shore," as the rival area was called. Here he found life, nature, and the people different from what he had known out back, and in every respect distinctly inferior. His prompt response was to compose a song. Back cover photo from *HIGHLAND SETTLER* Moladh a' Chuil agiis Di-moladh a' Chladaich (Praise of the Rear and Dispraise of the Shore). In the song he explains that he does not belong to the shore: Cha b'ann ihogadh mi as m'oig Ach cul nam morbhcan fiachail' ud Far an goircadh riabhag 's smeorach Maduinn or-bhuidh', ghrianachail. 'S ann do'n chul thug misc run, 'S gu'n duraiginn bhlh 'n comhnuidh ann, Far am fas a' choillc dhlulh, Gu slatach, lubach,

meoireanach; I cho dubhghorm, maolhbhog, sughmhor, 'S duillcach ur 'g a comhdachadh; Failcadh cubhraidh ihar gach Our Th' air fcaadh nan lub 's nan sronagan. It wasn't here that I was raised as a boy but in the rear among those lofty, stiUely mountiins where the lark and the robin sing on sunny golden mornings. It's the rear I gave my affection to, and it's there I'd like to be always where the dense forest grows with its supple branches and twigs • the forest that is so deep green and soft and pithy when the new leafage covers it, and the fra? grance rises from all the trails and groves. He makes it entirely clear to the "bunch of fishermen," as he calls his new neighbours, that their mode of life and their envi? ronment offer none of the attractions of the life he used to know. Though the satiric vehemence of the poet's special pleading probably reflects a genuinely intense allegiance to his home soil, his bantering tone suggests that he is willing to accept a re? tort; and this retort was provided, in the traditional manner of a medieval flyting, by Duncan MacLellan in a song, inevitably CAPE BRETON TRAILER SALES Trans'C'nada Highway 544-0157 ~ YOUR DEPENDABLE TRAILER DEALER ~ Come In and See Our Selection of NEW & USED HARD TOPS & TRAVEL TRAILERS • Visit Our Showroom for a Great Selection > GILLIS 'Kmnecare ?? BUILDING CENTRE! mm'm. THAT NEW HOME CALL US FOR AN ESTIMATE FLOOR & ROOF TRUSSES located behind Foodtown IGA Kings Road & Lewis Drive f'OO HTQQ KINGS ROAD OO''U f OO SYDNEY RIVER