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Linda MacLellan Visits Archie Neil At 87, Archie Neil Chisholm of Margaree Forks remains an indefatigable resource for Cape Breton his? tory and tradition. Whether it's help with an ephemeral Student paper or a scholar's work toward a book meant to last, or simply the education of people at El- derhostel or entertainment between sets at a con? cert • Archie Neil and Margaret Chisholm are there with seriousness, good humour and time for others. For a while it was the radio program called "Archie Neil's Cape Breton," but always it has continued in the equally valuable, less formal way. We get an exceptional sample of this generosity in what follows. Linda MacLellan visited Archie Neil a few times with some combination of plans for a student paper, preparation for a life committed to Gaelic culture, and the chance for an interesting, pleasant afternoon. Archie Neil gave her material to serve all three. Here is an edited version of that visit. This is Archie Neil speaking: My name is Archie Neil Chisholm and I was born in Margaree Forks in 1907, on May 25. I am the last member of a family of nine, I had five brothers and three sisters and they're all gone and I'm left alone. When I was about four years old I was hit with polio and this left me till I was about nine or ten years of age that I couldn't walk. I was looking at the world, you might say, from the floor. I was crawling. And in those days there was no such thing as radio or television. And the older people would come in--to me they were old; they were probably in their for- w • J?Mt'" • Paint • Wallpaper • Caulking • Accessories COIVIPUTERIZED COLOR MATCHING All Competitors Paint Colors Available 564/5433 165 Townsend Street JOHN R. VIACDONALD LTD. ties or fifties--and they would come in and talk to my mother and my father. My father was a schoolteacher. And the result was that with no television and no radio the art of conversation was big...and the art of storytelling was one of the major sources of entertainment. And I won't say that even at an early age I believed everything, but the more shivery and the more scary the story was, the better I enjoyed it. And the result of all this listening: I'd be listening and sometimes the con? versation would be in Gaelic and some? times it would be in English. But I learned to understand Gaelic when I was quite young. And much of the material that they would use would be stories of the past and also stories of the things that were happening around them. And dealing with the occult: a great deal of forerunners and witchcraft. All this made up part of the folklore of Cape Breton, and it still makes up a large part of the folklore of Cape Breton. I got to the point where I loved it. I loved everything about it. And then I had older brothers and sisters who were going to school--they would be in high school, and several of them were teach? ers- -but I can remember when they would be coming home from high school and learning, as we called it, learning their lessons, in those days. And a great deal of their stuff would be, probably, Walter Scott's poetry. Like 80