Ethnic Succession in the Eastern Townships of Quebec

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RÉSUMÉ

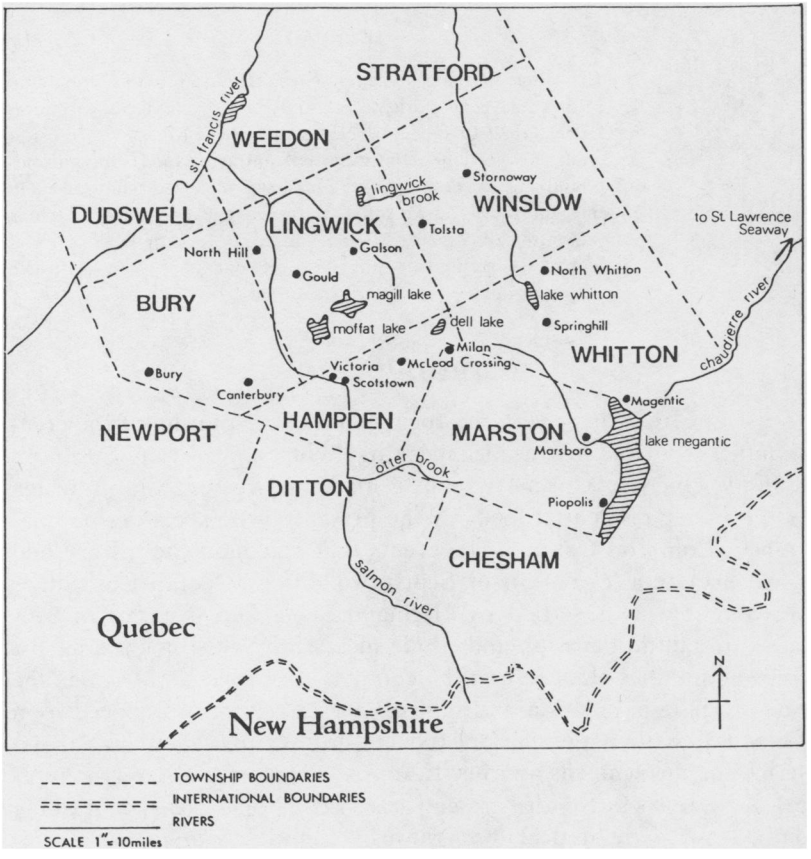
Cet article présente une analyse de l'évolution socio-économique des colonies de gens d'origine gaélique dans le comté de Compton au Québec (1829-1976). L'arrivée des Canadiens français et l'érosion des solidarités gaéliques sont mises en contraste avec les mécanismes qui maintiennent encore un certain degré d'identité culturelle. On présente un profil de l'identité culturelle gaélique dans le temps pour montrer que même si une conscience culturelle persiste, il n'y a pas de mécanisme pour assurer une continuité culturelle à ce segment du milieu culturel québécois.

INTRODUCTION

This article deals with the socio economic evolution of the communities founded by gaelic speaking Scots pioneers in Compton County, Quebec. A primary focus is made on Scotstown itself, which is the major residential locus of the present gaelic speaking population in Compton County. The events that surround the history and socio economic evolution of Scotstown differ in detail from other surrounding areas settled by Highland Scots, but in terms of processes of cultural erosion and ethnic succession Scotstown is a mirror for communities elsewhere in the county. The processes by which the Scots Gaelic population and milieu have largely been replaced by a French Canadian population and culture are discussed; and I describe the mechanisms and institutions that preserve a sense of cultural consciousness for the present descendants of the gaelic speaking emigrants. A theoretical discussion of identity maintenance is fol-

lowed by the construction of a profile of gaelic culture which analyzes the properties of cultural distinctiveness that still serve to differentiate the present Scots population from other populations. This examines the changing significance of factors such as extended kinship, agricultural mode of production, patterns of mutual aid, language use, presbyterianism, poetic tradition and mysticism for the present Scotstown population in terms of the way in which day to day activities are organized. In this way the elements of gaelic culture which have become redundant are identified and the remaining mechanisms that reinforce a sense of common identity and shared consciousness are isolated.

FIG. 1: GAELIC SPEAKING SETTLEMENTS IN COMPTON COUNTY, QUEBEC



HISTORY AND FIRST SETTLEMENT

There were two main waves of emigration from the gaelic speaking areas of Scotland to the eastern townships (Gravel, 1967). The first occurred in the mid 1820's when settlers migrated to Beauce and Megantic counties (Blanchard, 1937). This population was mostly drawn from Arran and Mull. The emigration that concerns us most is the second wave, which occurred between 1838 and 1855, when small groups of gaelic speaking Highland Scots predominantly drawn from Lewis, were brought to Canada and settled in areas of Compton County opened up by the British American Land Company.

The root causes of both waves of emigration are found in the economic and social conditions of Highland Scotland in the 18th and 19th centuries which are examined in detail elsewhere (Prattis, 1977; Hunter, 1976; Prebble, 1963).

In the mid 1820's the Duke of Hamilton cleared his Arran estates of small tenants and in 1829 assisted with the passage of 12 families — 89 people in all — to Canada. The emigrants were originally bound for Renfrew County in Upper Canada but were diverted to Megantic County in lower Canada on arrival in Montreal (McDougall, 1960, 37). They settled at Inverness and were joined by other emigrants from Mull and Bute. The apparent success of the foothold gained by these emigrants in lower Canada prompted Lord Aylmer, then Governer of Canada, to recommend to the British Secretary of State that the eastern townships in Quebec could support an additional 500,000 people. His 1831 report gave impetus to the formation of the British American Land Company (MacDougall, 1960). Established in 1833 this colonization company was ceded large tracks of land in the Eastern townships by the British Government and was instrumental in opening up the eastern part of Compton county to settlement (Day, 1869; Caron, 1927).

The adverse social and economic conditions in the Western Highlands of Scotland proved to be a fertile soil for the efforts of company recruiting agents. They found little difficulty in persuading people in Lewis to move to Canada where there was the prospect for crofters to own the land they worked upon. In 1838 the first group of Lewismen — 8 families in all — were brought to Compton County by the company and settled in Lingwick (see Fig. 1). The second group of settlers — 27 families — arrived in 1841 and settled in the

Lingwick area and thereafter small groups continued to follow this particular emigrant route till the 1860's. The experience of the first group of settlers in clearing land, building cabins and raising crops alleviated some of the pioneering problems that faced subsequent waves of settlers. The emigrants followed the same route to Port St. Francis on Lake St. Peter, from where they trekked along the St. Francis road to Shipton, Sherbrooke and thence by Craig's road to the Lingwick settlement area.

To the south and east of Lingwick there was little or no settlement prior to 1849 (MacDougall, 1960) but after that settlers from Lingwick moved to these areas of Compton County and quickly dominated the townships of Marston (1854), Winslow (1851) and Whitton (1859). By 1880 there were upwards of 450 Highland Scots families distributed over the townships of Lingwick, Winslow, Hampden, Marston and Bury (Channell, 1896).

In 1874 the township of Hampden was separated from Whitton and Winslow, and it was from the Hampden municipality that Scotstown was formally incorporated in 1892. Prior to incorporation by act of the Quebec legislature, Scotstown had developed into a thriving village. The abundant water power from the Salmon River and the thickly forested environs made it a natural location for saw mills and a pulp industry. For a time Scotstown was the terminus of the International Railway and the completion of the railway line from Montreal to Halifax brought added prosperity to the community.

Lovell's gazette of 1888 gives Scotstown a population of 600, 3 saw mills, a tannery, carriage factory and 4 churches. By 1917 the population had increased to 850 and the directory of business, professions and farmers (Rioux's Gazetteer, 1888-1917) shows an overwhelming preponderance of Scots names. Similarly land registration in Hampden (1867-1890) shows that 95% of those receiving land are Scots (Langelier, 1891, 336).

This is in marked contrast to present day Scotstown where all the businesses are French owned and most of the land. By 1948 the population had grown to approximately 1400 but this increase was due to a steady French Canadian influx since the mid 1920's. The present population of Scotstown is just over 800 and is predominantly French Canadian. At present there is very little industry in the area and employment opportunities are scarce. The Scotstown econ-

omy is largely based on welfare with the service industry the major employer. The only replacement industry is that of tourism but this is on a small scale. This is a marked contrast to the origins of the community. The descendants of the Highland Scots settlers had out migrated at a high rate and were replaced by incoming French Canadians. The reasons for this population change and ethnic succession will be discussed in the next section on socio-economic evolution.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC EVOLUTION

The replacement of the Scots Gaelic speaking population of the Scotstown area by French Canadians is part of a process that has affected the eastern townships of Quebec as a whole (Ross, 1943; 1954). This process will be illuminated in the following brief discussion of the changes that have occurred in educational, religious, political and economic institutions in Scotstown (cf. Ross, 1954).

Initially in Scotstown there was only an English speaking protestant school. In 1890 the first French speaking catholic school was established in the village. Separate schools were established in Quebec by the Act of 1875 which divided the school system into Catholic and Protestant committees with each committee having complete jurisdiction over their own educational institutions. Thus from the beginning of the 20th century there were 2 school systems in Scotstown; since 1969 there has been only one — French speaking Catholic. The two educational systems are separated by language and philosophy.

The protestant system, particularly in Scotstown, stressed a purely secular approach. The obvious Calvinist influence "to work to better oneself" was a major goal in the education of Scotstown's young Scots protestants. The ambition of parents was for their children to achieve higher occupational and social positions than themselves. The indirect result of this was to educate children to fit into an urban world and to eventually leave the community.

The Catholic schools in Scotstown, with nuns as teachers since 1909, tended to a more sacred emphasis. Education was viewed not in terms of equipping children for life in a highly secularised society, but rather as encouraging them to accept a way of life which emphasises spiritual rather than material values. The educational aspira-

tions of French Canadian parents for their children, at least prior to the 1950's, were radically different from those held by Scots parents. One consequence of this difference was that there was a movement of protestant educated children out of Scotstown and an influx of French Canadians into the township. With fewer pupils the protestant schools had to consolidate and the protestant educated children in the remoter areas had to travel further to school. In 1952 the protestant school in Milan was closed and the children were bussed to Scotstown. The protestant secondary school in Scotstown closed in 1963 and in 1969 the primary school shut down, and the few remaining pupils were bussed to Lennoxville and Bury. This process of protestant school consolidation led to a large number of Scots families leaving the area as bussing, under these conditions, was too high a price for education. Thus many Scots families left, selling houses, businesses and farms to incoming French Canadians.

The process of consolidation also affected the French catholic system, as since 1972, secondary education has been located at schools in La Patrie and East Angus. The Scotstown primary school, however, has not been touched by consolidation and presently has an enrollment of over 150 pupils. Staffed by nuns and lay teachers it serves the immediate French Canadian community and provides a central focus and basis of solidarity which the Scots community cannot emulate.

Just as educational institutions produce different solidarities in the French and Scots community in Scotstown, so do religious institutions. Divisions within Protestantism in Scotstown — Presbyterian, Anglican and United churches — in a situation of declining population puts enormous pressure on the financial resources, time, energy and morale of their respective congregations. None of the Protestant churches in Scotstown presently have the congregation or finances to justify a resident minister, and the Scots population is divided within itself on religious grounds. On the other hand the "Catholic church with its resident priest, close integration with all community institutions and its denominational unity, serves as a strong unifying community force for the French Canadian population." (Ross, 1954).

In Quebec the municipal vote is restricted to property owners. The gradual buying of land by the French Canadians in Scotstown

has had a double significance for the Scots population. For it means that with the acquisition of land and property the French not only take over the actual land, but also gain the power to take over the municipal council. In Scotstown the municipal council was dominated by Scots long after they ceased to be the numerical majority. This was by merit of their own control of land and industry. So in the 1940's and 1950's Scotstown municipal council was still dominated by Scots and even in 1960 there was a Scots mayor, but since then with outmigration following the closing of the veneer mill and the Protestant schools, the council has been dominated by French-Canadians.

The coming of industry to Scotstown did not provide the boost to local Scots initiative and drive that one would expect. The large lumber and veneer factories were owned by outside firms who brought in their own management and were only willing to recruit local labour for the less skilled and less remunerative jobs. This did not attract the young Scot in Scotstown who preferred to leave rather than accept conditions of labour and pay that did not match his occupational aspirations. The incoming French Canadians were willing to take the unskilled jobs which the Scots rejected. The Scots who remained quickly worked themselves into the foremen's jobs, but the avenue to management was closed to them. Most young Scots left; they had been educated to expect something better than unskilled industrial employment, and indeed found it elsewhere in Canada and the United States. Also Parker and Jenckes Ltd., on taking over one of Scotstown's large saw mills, recruited former employees from its plant in Piopolus, Quebec producing the first major influx of French Canadians to Scotstown in the early 1900's.

The French Canadians also gradually bought out the local Scots owned commercial enterprises simply because the heavy outmigration of Scots had left no one available to pass the business on to. On retirement the elderly Scots owner had no alternative but to sell to a French Canadian entrepreneur. Farms in the surrounding rural areas followed the same sequence. Little points out that the consolidation that took place on Scots farms as the pioneers expanded their holdings in the latter part of the 19th century eventually benefited French Canadian incomers. The outmigration of the younger generation of Scots and the numerical increase of the French left the Scots farmers with none of their own kind to leave their farms to (Little, 1976).

Thus in Scotstown there has been French Canadian succession and dominance in municipal and business affairs, the maintenance and bolstering of French solidarity in religious and educational affairs with a corresponding decline in Scots solidarity in these areas of social activity. Religious, educational and family institutions provide the core elements for transmitting heritage yet despite the erosion of many institution the Scots still feel their own identity strongly. I now turn to look at what mechanisms of cultural consciousness perpetuates this identity in the face of the overwhelming French Canadian dominance in the community.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CONTINUITY

Ethnicity is usually defined in terms of properties of endogamy and descent. This characterises a particular population as distinct from other populations. Indicators of ethnic identity are generally restricted to members of groups by merit of these properties, but it should be pointed out that ethnic indicators and attributes can be assumed and manipulated by individuals who do not necessarily share common descent. Ethnicity provides one basis for individuals to organise their relationships. Alternative organisational modes are based on ties of occupation, religion, class, sex, age and ideology. These alternative modes of association often overlap with ethnicity but do not always do so. Each set of ties takes on different degrees of importance as social, economic and historical conditions change.

It should be remembered that ethnic categories simply provide an organisational medium that is used for different purposes in varying economic and socio cultural conditions. The categories may be of great relevance to behaviour, but need not be, then may pervade all social life, or they may be relevant to only minor areas of social activity (Barth, 1969). Thus the selection of ethnic identity as a means of organising the meaning of social action depends heavily upon the context and conditions within which the social action takes place. It is important, then, to establish the areas of social and economic activity, where gaelic identity has salience and conversely those areas where it does not.

The remaining major factor in an examination of ethnicity and cultural retention is the idea of community solidarity. One of the basic functions of ethnicity is to bind individuals to a group. Its foun-

dation is a sense of common manners, rituals and values, and the limits of this mutuality set boundaries for group interaction and shared consciousness.

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS re CONDITIONS OF CULTURAL RETENTION

One proceeds at two levels with a study of ethnicity. There is the static and descriptive level whereby one isolates particular traits and cultural traditions peculiar to the population — folklore, language use, legend, etc. Then there is the dynamic level whereby one examines through time the way in which the traits, traditions and symbols change, and the way in which they are or are not used to maintain group cohesiveness and communal solidarity.

This level concentrates on the notion of boundary maintenance and examines the mechanisms and institutions that validate, in symbolic terms, the boundary between the given population and other populations. I maintain that ethnic boundaries can only emerge and persist when there is a continual feedback from everyday experience that bolsters the ethnic categories ideally employed by members of the community. When experience, institutions and activities continually reinforce ideas about difference, then ethnic dichotomies and hence boundaries can be retained and reinforced. However, if experience falsifies the categories, or demonstrates the lack of relevance of the categories for interaction and day to day life, then discrete ethnic identity will not persist because of the lack of a validated boundary (Barth, 1969).

Thus ethnicity refers to descent from ancestors who shared a common culture manifested vis a vis other populations in terms of distinctive ways of speaking and acting. The main defining characteristics are endogamy, descent and community solidarity. Cultural retention refers to activities, institutions and mechanisms that reinforce and maintain a sense of cultural distinctiveness. The gaelic culture brought in by the first settlers from Lewis can be defined as clustering round a number of key elements which are then studied through time. The major elements to be examined are:

1. Extended kinship networks
2. Agricultural mode of production and patterns of mutual aid

3. Language use
4. Presbyterianism
5. Poetic tradition
6. Mysticism

EXTENDED KINSHIP NETWORKS

The method of data collection in this study was primarily geneological. This involved the collection of geneologies of 7-8 generations depth from the time of the first settlers to the present day. The geneologies provided a "skeleton" upon which information was recorded. The data collected gives me language use and marriage patterns through time, residence and migration patterns, family size and educational levels by generation, land holding and religious affiliation through time, occupational change by generation and the extent to which the group retained its own institutions. From the geneologies collected a number of distinct trends can be discerned.

In general, gaelic language was passed down only to generation 3 and was accompanied by high rates of endogamous marriages (gaelic speaking Scot marrying gaelic speaking Scot). The language, however, was rarely passed to the fourth generation due to a marked increase in exogamous marriages, outmigration from the area and a certain stigma that was attached to speaking the language by the younger generation. English was the language of progress and there was no pressure in the home for children to learn gaelic even when both parents were fluent gaelic speakers. The tendency was for the parental generation to speak gaelic to one another but to use English in communicating with their children. In homes where one parent did not speak gaelic, English became the medium of communication.

Outmigration from the area is not a recent phenomenon. It had begun on a large scale by the 2nd generation and settlers moved to three main areas in North America: the urban industrial areas of Quebec (Sherbrooke, Montreal), the prairie provinces of Canada and the border states of the U.S. — Maine, Connecticut and Vermont. With the outmigration, exogamous marriages became the norm and gaelic language use became largely redundant. The genealogies also showed distinct changes in occupation. The first and second generations were primarily farmers but with increasing prosperity, employ-

ment opportunities and educational levels the trend is away from farming, logging and associated activities to business, service and professional occupations in generations 3 to 7. This trend was accompanied by a radical decrease in family size.

The extended kinship network was a vital support mechanism for the first pioneers as they adapted to Canadian conditions and is tied up very intimately with patterns of mutual aid and the agricultural mode of production.

AGRICULTURAL MODE OF PRODUCTION AND PATTERNS OF MUTUAL AID

In the conditions faced by the first pioneers extended kinship ties were an essential mechanism for survival. Tasks of clearing, harvesting and building could only be completed through an individual's ability to call upon kinship and community affiliations in order to get tasks done. Patterns of mutual aid, cooperation and reciprocity and the reliance on extended kinship networks were at their strongest when the Highland Scots communities were agricultural. In this situation extended kinship and community ties provided the reciprocal expectations that integrated and bound individuals to the group. Marriage was much more than a contract between two individuals. During the early period of settlement marriage partners not only represented two sex categories, they also represented two family groups and as such were subject to group expectations and control. The web of kinship and marriage alliances and the mutual aid obligations they reinforced made it possible for the early Scots communities to survive at all.

These networks and attendant obligations were, however, a consequence of the particular mode of agricultural production practiced in Compton County. The farm lots were small, requiring vast inputs of labour at periodic intervals in the annual cycle. The mutual aid of necessity provided a framework for interaction which perpetuated ceilidh and poetic traditions and bolstered the traditional extended family networks. But once agriculture ceased to supply the majority of occupations, and as individuals were less sorely pressed to the margins of necessity than the maintenance of patterns of mutual aid, extended kinship and all that went with it ceased to be of paramount importance. In a sense the very success of the settlers in "making it,"

as it were, created a new set of conditions under which there was less and less recourse to many of the elements that had been definitive of Scots gaelic culture.

The agricultural neighbourhood and common experiences of privation and survival provided a strong integrating force for the Scots pioneers communities. But when faced with French ethnic succession and less reliance on neighbourhood and kin ties the solidarity of the Scots communities — which were no longer primarily agricultural — declined.

This suggests rather crudely that gaelic culture (as classically understood) is closely related to an agricultural mode of production organised in a relatively egalitarian manner. It furthermore suggests that trends away from this organisation of occupation will produce inroads to that culture. It thus comes as no surprise that the few remaining areas of the world where gaelic culture is flourishing are in fact areas of marginal agriculture organised in egalitarian terms — W. Isles, gaidhealtachd in Ireland and rural Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.

LANGUAGE USE

The present residents of the Scotstown area who are descendants of the original gaelic speaking immigrants are elderly. They are in their 70's and 80's and are third generation descendants. Subsequent generations (4th — 8th) are rarely resident in the area and if they return at all it is for holidays and funerals. The extended kinship system has broken down to a large extent, in that elderly parents spend their last years in a nursing home rather than with kinfolk.

Many of the present residents speak gaelic (Scotstown, 24; Milan, 9; Lac Megantic, 3; Bury, 1; Gould, 5; Stornoway, 1) a few fluently, other less so. The language is rarely used, however, in day to day interaction. People will speak gaelic when a social anthropologist asks them to or when a special occasion such as a birthday or homecoming warrants it. English is used almost exclusively as the medium of communication. This again is not a recent phenomenon. Third and fourth generation descendants were not encouraged to learn the language as a certain stigma of backwardness and primitiveness was associated with it.

PRESBYTERIANISM

Presbyterianism is perhaps the single most important factor in maintaining a sense of gaelic identity for the present Lewis descendants in the Scotstown area. The succeeding generations that have left the area and assimilated to the North American mosaic reflect the general secular nature of the wider society in their lack of religious affiliation. The Presbyterian church of St. Andrews, Scotstown was built in 1885 and 40 years later it was to become part of a tug of war between Presbyterian and United Church congregations over the 1925 church unification vote.

The strict calvinism of the Presbyterian church was closely associated with gaelicness, by the Lewis descendants and this was seen clearly in the 1925 vote. The proposal in 1925 was that all presbyterian, congregational and methodist churches in Canada unify to form the United Church of Canada. In Scotstown there were no Methodists or Congregationalists at the time and the vote was entirely an internal presbyterian affair. The majority voted for unification and the vote split the Scotstown congregation along age and language lines. The elderly, gaelic speaking members voted against unification, while the middle aged and young members, who were by and large non-gaelic speaking, voted for unification. The gaelic speakers refused to go along with the majority verdict and they left their former church (St. Andrew's) having lost the building and their minister to the United cause. A year later they built their own church (St. Paul's) on Albert Street — which soon became known as "Presbyterian Row." Even to this day discussions of the 1925 vote frequently refer to families that 'turned'. Very bitter feelings were produced by the 1925 affair but it was a clear identification by the Lewis descendants of their gaelicness with their presbyterianism.

The point to note is that in church structure, services and administration the Scotstown United Church was practically indistinguishable from the previous presbyterian church. But this was irrelevant, given that the decision by the gaelic speakers to build a new presbyterian church was a matter of identity that overrode convenience. The present presbyterian congregation numbers approximately 45 (cf. 150 in 1925). The United Church at present has a congregation of 15. The irony is that the student ministers who serve both churches at present, are frequently one and the same person, conducting identical services in the two churches on alternate Sundays!

After the 1925 division of the community by age and language, the presbyterian gaelic speakers relied on student services from the Montreal Presbyterian College. At first the Sunday services alternated weekly between Gaelic and English; the prayer meeting on Tuesday and Thursday were in Gaelic. By 1933, in the Rev. G. Murray's time, gaelic services were held once a month. They were reinstituted on a week about basis by Murray's successor, the Rev. A. D. MacLean. By 1938 the Tuesday prayer meeting had been dropped and the Thursday prayer meeting alternated between Gaelic and English. Gaelic dropped entirely from church use in Rev. Ivor McIver's times (1955-58) as he had no Gaelic. His predecessor, the Rev. Smith was the last Gaelic speaking minister to be in residence, and the Rev. Ross Davidson (1971-3) was the last resident minister. Since 1973 the congregation have relied on student supply from the Montreal Presbyterian College. From 1957 the Presbyterian churches in Milan, Lac Megantic and Scotstown have united to extend calls to ministers to serve all three communities, but since the departure of Rev. Davidson, it is unlikely that any minister will take up a call.

So without a resident minister there is an enormous lack of leadership from the church. Yet despite this, the Sunday service still is the major focus for the Scots remnant, the one weekly occasion when the elderly and infirm try to 'make it' and worship in the company of fellow Scots. The manner in which everyone lingers on the church lawn after the service, talking and exchanging news indicates that this is the one occasion each week when their mutual identity and shared consciousness is ritually reinforced. Visiting patterns during the week are not extensive as old age and infirmity tends to keep people housebound.

At present no prayer meetings are held during the week and there is no Sunday School, simply because there are insufficient children. Other church activities include the Ladies Circle and missionary society. The former hold monthly meetings and organise church suppers, while the latter have teas and study church work in other countries. It is the same group of women who are in both groups. Apart from the Kirk session there are no occasions upon which the men meet for church based association. It is the Sunday service that is the single most important continuous mechanism for validating a sense of boundary and distinctiveness.

An additional symbolic "booster" to the sense of Gaelic identity is the annual memorial service instigated in 1969 by the Rev. Donald

Gillies. These have been held every year since 1969 (with the exception of 1975). The service is in Gaelic and is held at Milan Bethany Church, after which everyone repairs to the Winslow cemetery for a picnic and get together prior to the evening service there. The cemetery at Winslow is set on top of a hill overlooking a lake and is a perfect location for the worshippers to repeople with their past heritage. Headstones mark the resting places of McLeods, McRaes, McRitchies, McIvers, MacAuleys, Camerons, Buchanans, Morrisons, Munroes, McKays and MacArthurs. In the adjacent village of Stornoway, which had been a major commercial and communication centre for the Lingwick and Winslow settlers, no English or Gaelic is to be heard. The French Canadian ethnic succession is complete.

Attendance at the memorial service is mainly local though numbers are swollen by people coming from Lennoxville and Sherbrooke. Elderly kinsfolk in the States and other parts of Canada make the attempt to coordinate their holidays with the time of the memorial service, but it is a geriatric attraction only. The middle aged and young descendants of the 3rd generation residents rarely make an effort to attend the memorial service. However for the elderly, the Presbyterian Church in Scotstown is the remaining focus for gaelic identity. This is bolstered by the annual memorial service and by patterns of social interaction and visiting with other Scots.

POETIC TRADITION AND MYSTICISM

The attention and affection given to poets and bards is an accepted part of gaelic culture (MacLean, 1974). Local poets were formerly very prominent in the Scotstown area. They were rarely known outside their local vicinity and they composed songs and poems which were hardly ever written down. The local residents learnt the poems and songs by heart and sang them in their own homes. When it was known that one of the bards was at a house it would rapidly fill with folk eager to learn of his latest, especially as they expected fun to be made of local incidents and personalities.

The most prominent bards were Finlay McRitchie and his nephew Angus MacKay — Oscar Dhu. They were composing and singing their songs from the 1890's onwards. The Murray brothers from Dell and Alec Nicholson were prominent in the early 1920's as Donald Morrison from Tolsta, and Murdo "Buidh" MacDonald

from Marsboro. With a few notable exceptions none of the songs were recorded or written down. They were part of an oral tradition that coincided with the prominence of kin and community relationships over other kinds of relationships. The last bard of note to take his songs round the houses was Norman Murray from Milan. He is remembered most for his long, scathing and humourous poems on the 1925 church vote. Although Norman Murray would still visit houses in the 1940's the true poetic tradition died out in the 1930's. His last poem — Lament for Milan — was written much later. It was a song about walking to Milan from Scotstown and finding no one to speak Gaelic to. This poem is perhaps an epitome of the situation he described as it lay outside of both the oral tradition and community solidarity that had once characterised the Scots gaelic communities in Compton County. It was recorded by chance by a CBC Radio production team in 1967 when they were collecting background material for a programme on Donald Morrison, the Megantic Outlaw. Shortly afterwards Norman Murray died, and with him went the last vestige of the gaelic poetic tradition. There are present residents of Scotstown who write poetry, but it is in English and largely private.

Second sight and associated phenomena are expected to be found in some kind of conjunction with Gaelic culture (Campbell J. G. 1900), even with a dominant presbyterianism. Stories of supernatural phenomena abound for the early period of settlement but the last person attributed with gifts of this nature was A. D. Morrison who foresaw many local disasters and tragedies right up to his own death in 1942.

MAINTENANCE OF CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

The prominence of factors such as bards, mysticism and ceilidhs within the Gaelic culture reconfirmed for the gaelic Scots population their sense of difference vis-à-vis French Canadian and English populations. The bards were larger than life characters, sometimes given to excess but they provided a constellation of cues and reminders about the culture of which they were a part. It was not just their particular performances that were reinforcers of cultural boundaries but people talking about them shared a mutual and exclusive identity with the cues and reminders of gaelic culture. Even today talk about past bards, mystics, and tragedies has the function of redefining the

cultural distinctiveness of the Scots gaelic remnant in the Scotstown area.

The Megantic Outlaw story (Epps, 1973) and the Pot of Gold legend are told and retold at visits and become more significant as folklorists and anthropologists make enquiries into the cultural heritage of the present descendants of the Lewis pioneers. The observer effects of professional enquiry into the factors and processes of cultural retention is itself a factor than encourages the population to define and re-affirm their cultural distinctiveness. The obvious observer effects are increased levels of interaction between the Scots population with respect to ceilidhs and dinners and the refurbishing of memories and events that are often almost forgotten.

Patterns of interaction between 3rd generation residents also help to reinforce a sense of common identity. Shopping trips, telephone calls for news and gossip weave a web of interdependency and communication that stops short of the French Canadian community. Also kin taking holidays in the area reinforce a sense of common identity, but it is noticeable that the grandchildren that return intermix much more with French Canadians than their elderly relatives, who live there all the time.

The ethnic succession and dominance of French Canadian culture in Compton County described previously, is an additional factor that serves to maintain a sense of boundary. Conflict and hostility between the French and Scots communities has been a continuing feature of ethnic interaction since first settlement. The repatriation and colonisation schemes sponsored by the Quebec government in the latter part of the 19th century frequently encroached upon the land rights of Scots communities (Little, 1976). French resistance to conscription during the first world war, the frequent contempt that Scots had for poorer French Canadian farmers were part of an enduring hostility that has simply been magnified by the fait accompli of French Canadian control of commercial, political and community interests that were formerly a Scots preserve.

It is worthy of note that in reconstructing the changes that had occurred in the last 50 years in Scotstown, my elderly informants could provide me with details of occurrences in 1926 and 1956, yet could not give a complete picture of the present situation, as it is now dominated by a French Canadian milieu. Few of the elderly Scots

descendants speak French and their consciousness and identity does not include consciousness about French Canadian activities. Their identity in fact takes part of its definition from their hostility to the French fact.

Although there are sufficient mechanisms, institutions and activities to reinforce a sense of common cultural consciousness, the events and processes described in the section on socio economic evolution preclude the possibility of providing for cultural continuity. With the outmigration of families and young folk many activities that were formerly worthwhile failed to continue. Up until 1971 the annual church concert in Scotstown would have a gaelic play that would include skits on local events and situations. The problem arose, however, especially after the departure of the last resident minister, the no-one was willing to lead or take part in the absence of leadership from the church. After the 1969 closure of the last protestant school in Scotstown, many families left and there were simply fewer young people around to make the whole effort worthwhile. Gaelic language lessons for children were conducted in Scotstown at this time but when the Scotstown school closed and the children were bussed to school, they were simply too weary after 10 hours away from home to continue a voluntary language course. As the number of children decreased with more and more families moving out of the area the prospect of any kind of cultural continuity was lost.

So while visiting, reminiscing and hostility to the French Canadians are mechanisms that reinforce a sense of identity the single most important focus for gaelic identity is the presbyterian church in Scotstown.

CONCLUSION

I stated earlier that there had to be feedback from experience to validate a sense of difference, otherwise an ethnic boundary could not be maintained. It is true to say that while there is ethnic consciousness with respect to gaelic culture among the present Scotstown residents, there is no ethnic continuity. It must be remembered that the present residents are 3rd generation descendants of the gaelic speaking Lewismen who settled the area in the mid 19th century. The 4th — 7th generation descendants have by and large become assimilated to the North American mosaic. They may state an identity if

asked, but their day to day activities are not ordered or influenced by ties or relationships that pertain uniquely to Gaelic culture.

Ethnic continuity from generation to generation can rarely be achieved on a solely voluntary basis. It is necessary to have institutional and constitutional safeguards which are not present in Scotstown for the gaelic cultural remnant. There is insufficient population of the requisite age to perpetuate institutions that may have preserved the culture, and furthermore, there are insufficient people who agree on the value of continuing with a gaelic identity.

It should be emphaised that the social and cultural fabric of the gaelic speaking immigrants had been subjected to enormous disjunctions and strains. This particular consideration must always be borne in mind in a discussion of the erosion of gaelic culture within the new land of Canada. The society and culture that had sustained the gael through the Highland Clearances were unlikely to remain the same when faced with transportation across the Atlantic to a radically different set of social and economic conditions.

However, with the passing of the present elderly Scots descendants in Scotstown, Quebec will lose all trace of the Gaelic part of its heritage. Some residents recognise this and state that perhaps their contribution to Quebec is to remain true to the style of their ancestors, in order that they give an example to the French Canadians of what Highland Scots pioneers were like. Such a view is stated with courage but little realism, as the vast majority of the French Canadians in the Scotstown area came to the region in the Quebec government's colonisation programme in the 1930's and the 1940's. They have had no reason or opportunity to remember anything about the Gaelic speaking pioneers who opened up an area of Quebec that is now almost entirely Francophone.

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