

Hello Members and Friends:

The Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association continues to grow and flourish! One of the main catalysts, of course, was our 50th anniversary celebrations that went on for the entire year! In the following year, 2024, the Association would not have been so successful without the wonderful financial support of the Nova Scotia Government, Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage. A sizable grant from "Building Communities through Arts and Culture" helped the *Festival of Cape Breton Fiddling* immensely. Last, but not least, is the constant support and assistance the Association receives from Destination Cape Breton Association. The CBFA is so thankful for the continued support offered to our members through DCBA and all other agencies and sponsors.

For the members of the CBFA, the absolute highlight in 2025 was the honorary degree it received from Cape Breton University. A magical convocation ceremony took place on Sunday, August 19th, in the historic Hall of the Clans at the Gaelic College where Cape Breton University bestowed an honorary Doctor of Letters to the Cape Breton Fiddlers' Association. This event had a capacity crowd of members of the Association who came to experience this momentous occasion. It truly was one of the highlights in our history.

Our Celtic Cultural Experiences were smashing successes for the last two years, and our Eddy Rodgers' Legacy series has taken on a life of its own. As mentioned earlier, the Nova Scotia Government has played an integral part in these two initiatives. Musicians are very, very happy with these sessions because it reminds them of practice sessions in our past history of the Association. Money was transferred from our General Fund to help defray the costs of the CCE's and the Eddy's Legacy programs.

During a day-long planning session in January, the Board of Directors reviewed a number of items including membership, updating the by-laws, event planning for the next two years as well as our beloved annual festival. After much discussion, it was decided there would be changes to the festival in an effort to bolster attention. This includes moving the "Gala Concert" to Saturday. It will be a full day of events including workshops, concert, square dance/jam session to finish the day and night!

Revenue from registration fees was a little bit higher this year, but that was the result of a ten-dollar increase per person in 2024. As you are aware, the yearly fees are one of our major sources of income for our association. Several people have already sent their 2025 fees into the office; if you have not done so, please fill in the registration form in this issue. Thank you very much!

Our financial statement reflects the increase in administrative costs (telephone, internet, postage, etc.). The monies received from various performances (Sydney Ports, Kitchen Fest, Celtic Colours International Festival, and Port Hawkesbury Ceilidhs) helped cover the increased costs incurred. There are two major factors involved in these performances: it is an honour for the CBFA to be invited to participate in these prestigious concerts; as well, it is a welcome addition to our financials.

The musicians on our Board have worked together to produce some very innovative ideas that you will see happening as early as our first practice in April! There will be two directors for each practice—one downstairs for the larger group of musicians, and one upstairs for youth musicians. We are very happy to welcome Margie Beaton and Doug Lamey as our youth directors. They will conduct three practices each throughout the year. All practices will be on the first Sunday of each month; however, we do not have the final date for our overnight Christmas ceilidh yet. There are a few factors that have to be confirmed first. Dates are listed in this issue. As well, thanks to Kyle MacNeil for creating a separate binder with tunes that are familiar and well-known.

Sadly, two of our board members resigned from the Board because they felt they had too many work and performance commitments. Both John Pellerin and Lauren MacDonnell are extremely talented musicians, and they are also very involved in their jobs and their communities. Thanks to both of them for their dedication to

the Board while members. We wish them the best of luck and hope to see them at our practices and our festival.

Twenty-seven hardy music lovers in the Association experienced a wonderful week of music and camaraderie in July when they attended two major events: the 75th anniversary of the Glengarry Highland Games and the 40th anniversary of Donaldson MacLeod and Isabel Clarke. The Games were phenomenal because of the pageantry and the magnificent pipe band presentations. Members of the Association performed as a group and also played solo numbers in a concert organized by Ian MacLeod. To add to this excitement, imagine a concert by our very Barra MacNeil's! If that wasn't enough, all trip participants were invited to spend Sunday celebrating Donaldson and Isabel's 40th anniversary at their lovely farmhouse in Dunvegan! We were treated like royalty! Thanks so much to our host and hostess for this celebration.

Plans have been ongoing for our "trip of a lifetime, *Fiddling for Remembrance*" in 2027; however, most of the details are just beginning. We have a tentative schedule we want to follow, but there are many protocols that must be addressed along the way!

Per usual, there were many highlights during 2024 for some of our members. Congratulations to:

Father Eugene Morris on the occasion of his 90th birthday

Taya MacDonald on receiving the Lieutenant-Governor's Education Medal for Grade 11

Nina Tubman on receiving the Lieutenant-Governor's Education Medal for Grade 11

Joella Foulds for being inducted into the Cape Breton Music Industry Hall of Fame. It was wonderful to see the late Winston Fitzgerald and the late John Allen Cameron inducted posthumously.

Stephanie MacDonald and Liam Morley on their engagement.

Burton MacIntyre, Wendy Bergfeldt, and Betty Matheson on receiving The King Charles the Third Coronation Medal for lifetime service to their communities.

Congratulations to Margie MacIntyre and Gaston Aucoin who underwent major surgeries and got along extremely well. We hope to see you at our practices when they begin again!

Sadly, the CBFA lost some valuable members and friends in 2024. Our condolences are extended to the families of the following members. Jackie Nicholl was a faithful member of the Association who helped the Association in many, many ways over several years. She struggled bravely through cancer with a positive attitude. Many of the older members would remember Francis MacDonald and his wife, Corrine. He passed away several years ago, and Corrine passed away recently. Lionel LeBlanc was a multi-instrumentalist with a special love for the fiddle. In fact, he was a fiddle maker. He and his wife were very generous with their talent. Eileen MacKinnon was a member of the Pictou County Fiddlers and also a member of the Arisaig Fiddlers. She performed with the Arisaig group during our 50th Anniversary Gala Concert in 2023. She truly loved coming to Cape Breton. She and her brother, Fr. Colin, made many trips to the island. ***May all the deceased rest in peace.***