

A' Ghàidhlig

When the Gaels first came to this area in the early nineteenth century, they brought with them their language and their rich musical culture. Although under threat and in spite of the outside world's former indifference and at times outright hostility, the Gaelic language survives to this day and is regularly taught in the surrounding schools.

Mabou was fortunate in that a great number of its early settlers happened to be gifted poets and musicians, especially those who came from the Highlands of Lochaber in Scotland. One such musician and poet was Alexander the Ridge MacDonald who spent his youth in Mabou before moving to Antigonish County in 1847.

Near the end of his days, Alexander composed Duanag do Mhàbu in praise of his birthplace:

Se fàth mo mhulaid gun d'fhàs mi duilich
Nuair dh'fhàg mi buileach an t-àite;
Gur ann mu thuath, taobh thall a' chuain
Tha 'n t-eilean san d'fhuair mi m' àrach.

The reason for my sadness
Is that I left that place forever;
In the north, across the sea
That isle where I was raised.

Is far an d' àraicheadh mi 'n tùs
Bu mhùirneach bha mo chàirdean;
Thar gach àit' an d' fhuair mi iùil
Gun tug mi rùn do Mhàbu.

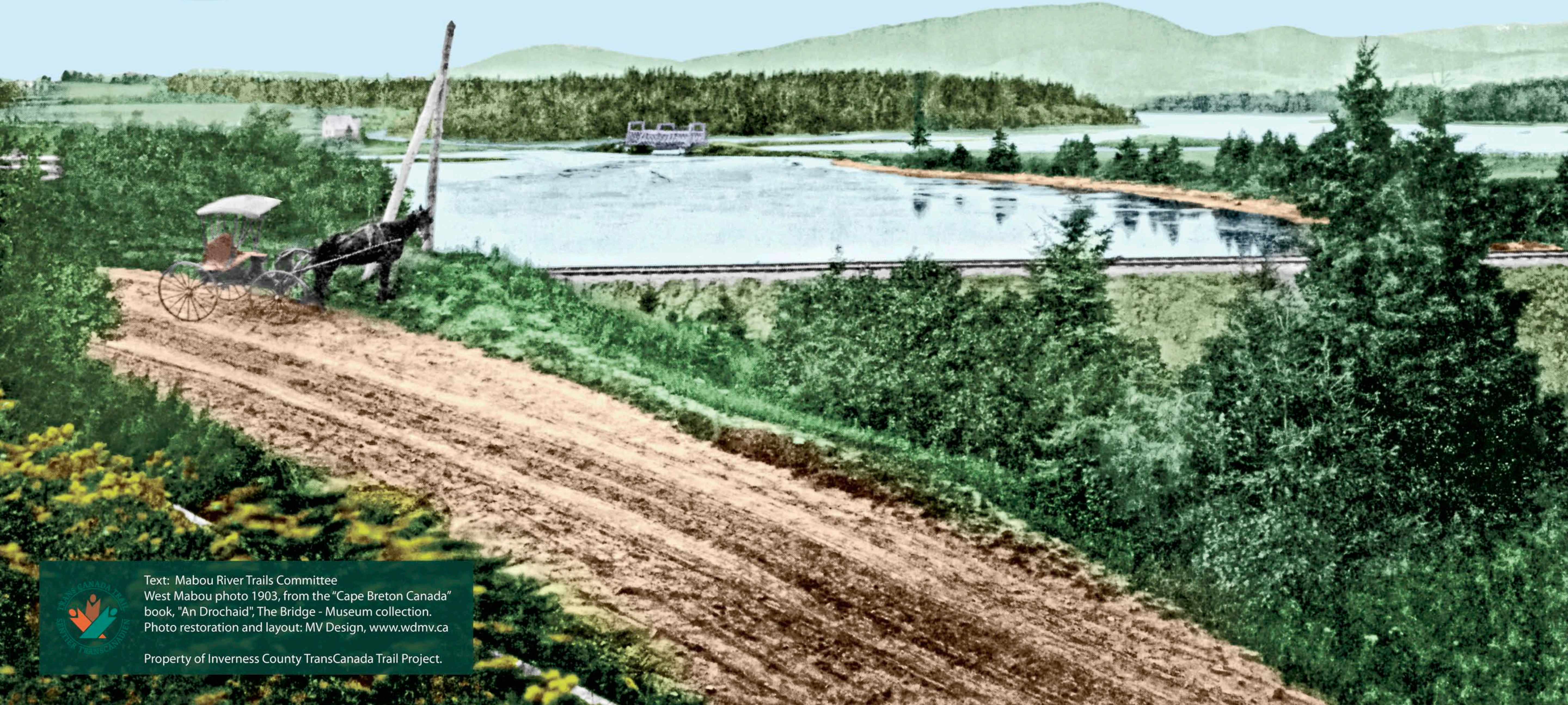
Where I was first brought up
My people were happy there;
Of all places I ever visited
I gave my heart to Mabou.

Bu tric a choisich mi le sùrd
A null gu ceann an t-sàile;
Far am faighte mire 's mùirn
Le sunnd aig Drochaid Mhàbu.

How often did I walk gladly
Over to the headland of the sea;
To find merriment and joy
At Mabou Bridge abounding.

Bhon a fhuair iad rathad iarainn
Ni mi triall gun dàil ann;
A shealltainn na bheil beò de 'n t-sìol
A dh'fhàg mi shìos am Mhàbu.

Now that they have the railroad
I shall go there forthwith;
To see all those who survive
Of those I left behind in Mabou.



Text: Mabou River Trails Committee
West Mabou photo 1903, from the "Cape Breton Canada"
book, "An Drochaid", The Bridge - Museum collection.
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