

Eveline MacLeod and Daniel MacInnes. *Celtic Threads: A Journey in Cape Breton*. (Sydney, NS: 2014, Cape Breton University Press. Pp. 120. ISBN 978-1897009796).

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others that songsters (including, but not limited to, garlands) were also important vehicles for the transmission of older songs, including ballads. Buchan's work, valuable as it was and still is, antedated these more recent scholarly developments. His lens brought one corner of the picture into sharp focus, but that corner was part of the much broader and more varied vernacular song culture of the British Isles that we are only now beginning to reconstruct.

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I am not a weaver, although I have tried weaving in its most rudimentary form. I have moved a shuttle back and forth across the warp to create a border pattern or a twill. I have never warped a loom, nor am I sure I fully understand the process. I am, however, fascinated by the tradition and process of creating fabric. It was with this in mind that I read *Celtic Threads: A Journey in Cape Breton Craft* by Eveline MacLeod and Daniel W. MacInnes.

Celtic Threads is unique in the small body of literature that examines the history of weaving in the Gaelic Cape Breton tradition. Most of the seminal books on weaving in Cape Breton, such as Harold B. Burnham's *Keep Me Warm One Night* (1972), Florence Mackley's *Handweaving in Cape Breton* (1967), and Mary Black's *New Key to Weaving* (1957), examine patterns, equipment, and materials used in weaving. Eveline MacLeod and Daniel MacInnes, however, take a different approach. *Celtic Threads* focuses on the weavers who introduced the traditions that still survive in Cape Breton in an attempt to recognize the craftspeople too often ignored in the study of material culture. This is not surprising, given that MacLeod is herself a weaver who has been practicing and studying the tradition for more than sixty years.

Parts of *Celtic Threads* seem to be a response to Ian McKay's popular work, *The Quest of the Folk* (1994). McKay argues that the folk identity of Cape Breton's rural people was fabricated by Helen Creighton and Mary Black to generate interest in craft products. MacLeod and MacInnes, however, assert that the practice of weaving is far from contrived and that traditional Cape Breton weaving is a continuation of traditions passed down from generation to generation, tracing its roots back to the original Highland Scots. For MacLeod and MacInnes, the innovation of Creighton and Black is in the marketing of traditional craft, not in the practice itself. The authors dedicate almost an entire chapter examining the rise of tweed in Scotland and how it pushed out the practice of overshot weaving, before also discussing the rise of the tartan both in Cape Breton and in Scotland. They are careful to note that the development of the tartan was an attempt to create a marketable aspect of Scottish culture. The authors identify various weavers, including MacLeod, who were involved in creating various tartans throughout Nova Scotia.

In *Celtic Threads*, weaving is linked to the very survival of the Gaels in Cape Breton. Rather than being a hobby, weaving was a subsistence practice which enabled them to create winter clothing and keep warm in the harsh climate. MacLeod and MacInnes note that while weaving might have provided an opportunity for individual expression, its foremost goal was to ensure the survival of the early settlers.

Included in *Celtic Threads* is a list of the people, organizations, and mills relevant to the history of weaving in Cape Breton. The approach, however, is lacking in depth. While the authors' focus remains on the weavers, their lives are only briefly touched. A valuable continuation of this work would be to interview these weavers to further reveal their stories, skills, and motivations. There is also a clear need for further research into the weaving industry in Cape Breton.

There are persistent typos and errors found in this edition. Despite this issue, the book will serve as the foundation for future work on the weavers of Cape Breton and their traditions. Future generations will use *Celtic Threads: A Journey in Cape Breton Craft* as a springboard for continued research on gender roles, heritage crafts, and settler life.

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