ONCE UPON AN ISLAND

Traditional Tales from New Cape Bretoners
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TRADITIONAL TALES FROM NEW CAPE BRETONERS

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INTRODUCTION

The storytelling tradition in Cape Breton is a rich and diverse way to share history and culture. In the spirit of this tradition, we bring you “Once upon an Island: Traditional Tales from New Cape Bretoners.”

Within this book, we will share with you stories of Cape Bretoners who were born outside of Canada. These stories are recalled from their country of origin, and many may be new to you.

This project has been coordinated by the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP), an initiative through the Cape Breton Partnership, and is supported by our partners at the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, and the Cape Breton Regional Library.

The 11 collected stories have been compiled into a collection of world folklore, showcasing the diversity of storytelling traditions that exist in Cape Breton. The goal of this project is to provide newcomers with an avenue for sharing their cultures through story, while providing the wider Cape Breton community an opportunity to better understand the cultural diversity that exists across Cape Breton Island.

We have no doubt you will enjoy each story, as much as we did. Enjoy!

Kathleen MacLeod, Rosalie Gillis, Tara MacNeil, Faye MacDougall, Ronald Labelle and Kailea Pedley.
China

Big Fish and Begonia

As told by Jessie Yi Chai

Jessie is a proud alumnus of the MBA program at Cape Breton University. Originally from China, Jessie decided to make Cape Breton her home after completing her studies and is very active in her community.

Beneath the sea, there is another world yet to be discovered by the human race. Another race of beings inhabit this world. They are responsible for controlling the tides, and seasons of this undiscovered world. These beings possess many similar characteristics of humans – including similar motivations and emotions.

Chun is one of those beings. Chun’s specialty is that she can call up the collective power of the plants and flowers, having the ability to grow a mighty oak tree from an acorn in mere seconds. At the age of 16, Chun, joined by a group of her peers were sent on a special mission to the mortal world. To avoid being discovered by humans, the youth were disguised. Community elders gave them a magical elixir – transforming them into beautiful red dolphins. The group said their goodbyes and swam off into a maelstrom summoned by a sorceress.

Chun was immediately captivated by what she saw in the human world; boats, fisherman, and many
species of marine life unknown to her world. The human world is full of excitement and magic of its own. Chun was quick to learn however that not unlike her world, this place possessed its own evil.

A group of pirates had captured some dolphins in their net. Chun quickly decided it was her duty to try and rescue her fellow dolphins, only to be captured within the netting herself.

If almost by fate – a young man witnessed to the entire situation and jumped into the ocean in an attempt to try and save Chun. As the young man hit the water, he was immediately sucked up into the maelstrom surrounding Chun, connecting her to her world. Chun followed him back to her world, transforming back into her original form.

In exchange for the young man’s life, Chun had to sacrifice something of hers to the soul keeper. As always – there is a catch. The young man transformed into a red dolphin, who Chun had to care for and nurture until he was strong enough to return to the human world.

Chun named the young man Kun. She knew he was destined to become one of the largest dolphins this world would ever see. As time went on, Kun continued to grow and grow, making it difficult for Chun to keep up with him, and he soon outgrew the swimming pool she’d been keeping him in. As Kun continued to grow, Chun was left with no choice other than to bring her best friend Qui in on the secret. While Qui was surprised and skeptical, she graciously agreed to help. With Qui’s help, Chun brought Kun to a secret pool hidden behind a mountain not far from their home. Kun remained there for a number of months, continuing to grow in size.

An unexpected flood devastated their village, taking with it everything it touched; homes, crops, and herds of animals. It wasn’t long before the villagers started pointing fingers at the young man Chun had convinced that Kun was some sort of strange creature, not really a dolphin. Perhaps Kun was full of evil they
thought, bringing this devastating natural disaster with him. For the community there was only one thing to do, kill Kun. Before they had the chance to attack, Chun jumped between them and the young man, as he had done for her not so long ago.

When Chun’s grandfather, a one hundred year old begonia tree heard what happened, he knew he had to intervene. While all of this was happening, the flood continued to ravage their world, killing their people.

Chun had a plan. She would use her special energy to unite her body and spirit with her grandfather’s begonia tree. Chun summoned the powers of the plants and flowers to unite herself with the begonia tree, and within seconds, the tree grew and grew to a never seen before size. The tree was large enough to stave off the angry flood, saving the rest of the world from devastation.

By some form of unknown magic, Kun was catapulted into the air, simultaneously growing wings and flying into the sky – allowing him to find the gateway back to the human world. Although his memory of Chun and this world have been erased, he spends the rest of his life with a new found admiration for red dolphins and begonias.
Nigeria

Chidinma
The Girl with the Beautiful Hair

As told by Louisa Esangbedo

At the age of 17, Louisa Esangbedo made the big decision to move to Cape Breton Island from her hometown in Lagos, Nigeria to attend Cape Breton University. Louisa is now a Legal Assistant for Sampson McPhee Lawyers and plans to continue her studies in the field of medicine.

According to Nigerian legend, there once lived a girl named Chidinma, who was without a doubt, the most beautiful girl in her village. Chidinma was known for always having the best hairstyles. Every day she had a new hairstyle, more beautiful than the day before. All the men in the village loved Chidinma, and all the girls envied her for her incomparable beauty and extraordinary hair. The village was painfully curious, asking Chidinma where she had her hair styled. But Chidinma would never answer.

Nigerian legend has it that one night, while everybody in the community was sleeping, two jealous and curious girls snuck into Chidinma’s house to learn the secret of her beautiful hair. As the two girls peeked into Chidinma’s mud house, they were shocked by a supernatural sight. A headless Chidinma sat down on a bench holding her own head in her arms while a hundred supernatural hands were hard at work stroking, combing, and pressing Chidinma’s hair swiftly into a beautiful pattern.
The two girls ran away screaming, desperate to tell the other villagers what they had seen. As the girls let the village people know what had happened, they became distressed and set out to hunt down Chidinma. However, when the village people got to Chidinma’s home, she was nowhere to be found. They searched and searched, but there was no sight of Chidinma. It was as if she had disappeared into thin air.

Until this day, Chidinma has not been found. It is believed that if you see a beautiful girl on the street with an extraordinary hairstyle, you may just be looking right into the eyes of Chidinma.
Gisèle Blanc Lavoie, originaire du Sud de la France, est expatriée depuis longtemps en Acadie. Elle vit dans la région de Sydney, où elle a été enseignante de français. Passionnée par les cultures locales, l’indigène et l’acadienne, elle a essayé de décrypter au fil des années leurs langues, leurs littératures, leurs histoires, les officielles et les réelles, leurs coutumes et leurs valeurs... toutes fascinantes.

Gisèle Blanc Lavoie, a native of the South of France, came to Acadia many years ago. She lives in the Sydney area, where she taught French. She has a passionate interest in local cultures, both Indigenous and Acadian, and over the years, she has explored their languages, their literature, their stories (both the official versions and the actual ones), as well as their customs and values.

Au centre du vieux village de mes ancêtres dans les Alpes, au sud de la France, se trouve une imposante église. Elle est très ancienne et date du 12e siècle; son unique clocher carré doté d’une immense horloge est coiffé par un toit en tuiles qui protège des intempéries quatre immenses cloches en bronze. En Acadie ou au Québec par contraste, les églises catholiques ont très souvent deux clochers, mais pas de cloches.

Comme vous devez le savoir, ces énormes cloches immobiles, si modestement lovées dans leurs abris qui datent du moyen âge, jouent un rôle fort important dans le village et aux alentours pour les petits hameaux éparpillés dans la campagne.
Ces quatre demoiselles très disciplinées, souvent silencieuses puis parfois bruyantes, rythment la vie des villageois depuis des siècles. Avant c’était le bedeau, assistant du curé, qui effectuait les manipulations pour cette tâche répétitive à partir du bas du clocher... Lorsque j’étais enfant, en vacances, j’étais médusée, nous pouvions les admirer quand elles se balançaient et virevoltaient allégrement sans nous assourdir, et ce pour diverses occasions. Dans le quartier de la ville où nous habitions il n’y avait pas d’église ancienne donc pas de clocher et pas de cloches musiciennes.

Quand jouaient-elles ? Souvent, le matin à sept heures et le soir à six heures, c’était pour l’angélus quotidien. Elles sonnaient les demi-heures et les heures solennellement avec une lenteur délicieuse et savoureuse dans notre monde constamment agité.

Elles signalaient aussi les moments heureux du village : les baptêmes, les mariages, les diverses célébrations religieuses au cours des années et surtout les messes dominicales. On ne pouvait pas oublier d’aller à la messe, les cloches vous appelaient bruyamment. Les moments malheureux et tragiques aussi étaient toujours signalés à tous les habitants et ils le sont encore tous. Les décès, par le glas très sombre et solennel, le nombre de coups signifiant si c’est un homme ou une femme, les obsèques aussi. Les cloches accompagnaient même le corbillard jusqu’au cimetière et elles renseignaient aussi les habitants pour les victoires et les défaites pendant les guerres. Maintenant depuis les années 1960, elles fonctionnent automatiquement avec un compteur, mais j’ai eu le grand plaisir d’essayer de tirer les quatre gros cordages pour les faire tinter. Quelle musique majestueuse! Il fallait alors se suspendre à la corde... Chaque cloche avait un son distinct, nous nous faufilions par la porte du clocher laissée ouverte et nous tentions chacun à notre tour de les faire sonner à des heures incongrues pour étonner les villageois. Est-il utile de préciser que nos parents n’appréciaient pas du tout notre espièglerie et nous étions
grondés par plusieurs personnes aussi...

Donc ces cloches centenaires sont une partie prépondérante de la vie du village, elles sont là pour tous et ravissent tout le monde. Mais certaines personnes ne savourent pas leur puissant apport. Nous avons des estivants l'été, soit des familles qui viennent passer leurs vacances dans le village et elles ou ils ne peuvent pas
supporter ce bruit répétitif au milieu de la nuit. Des personnes angoissées se font réveiller et ne peuvent plus se rendormir... des gens stressés comme nous en connaissons tous. Comment ont-ils essayé de résoudre leurs problèmes personnels ? En se plaignant auprès de la municipalité, qui a une politique commune de faire plaisir aux croisiéristes et autres touristes afin d’aider à l’économie locale... donc la municipalité a décidé d’arrêter les cloches sans consulter les villageois.

Tout le village était étonné et fâché : nos cloches silencieuses? Ce n’est pas possible ! Plus de cloches soudaines ! Les protestations ont fusé rapidement et les cloches ont très vite recommencé à tinter à la grande joie de tout le monde, car elles sont primordiales à la vie villageoise, pour la communication, l’information, l’entraide toutes nécessaires à une communauté vivante et vibrante.

Éventuellement, une solution, pas très réussie à l’avis de plusieurs villageois, a été trouvée et les cloches ont été cachées à la vue des gens en bas par des volets gris à claire voix pas très esthétique et anachronique.

Maintenant, lorsque je suis dans le village, je répète à ma petite fille ce que me contait mon grand-père qui n’était pas religieux du tout, mais qui était fier de son église et de son clocher. Il admirait ces cloches qui l’avaient accompagné pendant toute sa jeunesse et sa vie entière. Au moment de la semaine sainte de Pâques, il me disait chaque année, tu vois les cloches sont silencieuses parce qu’elles sont parties, mais bientôt elles vont revenir. Écoute bien, elles sont allées à Rome se promener et se faire bénir. J’attendais alors impatiemment de les entendre encore sonner joyeuses le samedi saint. Ma petite fille elle aussi adore ces cloches qui sont part entière de la vie villageoise... Pas besoin de montre, on regarde le clocher, l’horloge indique l’heure et si on est loin le tintement nous renseigne agréablement ou pas sur la fuite du temps.
Once upon a time, Gudo the Baboon and his nephew Tsuro the Hare were close buddies, just like twins. One day, early in the morning before dawn, Gudo went down to the high field to cut down some trees for firewood. As time went by, Gudo became very hungry. At that moment, Tsuro arrived with a gallon of milk on his shoulders.

Gudo asked, “What are you carrying on your shoulders?”

Tsuro replied, “I’m carrying milk.”

“Is it drinkable milk? Does it taste good?” Gudo asked.

Tsuro replied, “This is the best milk ever!” He then gave Tsuro a taste of the milk.

Gudo really liked the milk and said, “Why don’t you add more milk to my cup?” But, Tsuro didn’t want to give him anymore because he was saving it for his father-in-law.
Gudo wanted more milk so he thought of a trick to get it from Tsuro. He knew which way Tsuro would take to his in-laws house so Gudo said, “When you’re on the way, you’ll see one of your uncles who also cuts down trees behind that hill.”

As soon as Tsuro left, Gudo took a short cut to the hill and started cutting down a tree. Soon after Tsuro arrived, he saw Gudo and mistook him for his uncle.

Gudo said, “Hello nephew! What are you carrying on your shoulders?”

Tsuro replied, “I’m carrying milk.”

Gudo asked, “Milk? Does the milk taste good? Can you drink it?”

Tsuro said. “It tastes very good. It’s rich and creamy.” He then gave Gudo a taster and Gudo really liked the taste.

“Can I have some more?” Gudo asked.

Tsuro refused because he was saving it for his father-in-law.

Gudo continued trying the same trick on Tsuro to make sure there was no more milk left. But Tsuro finally discovered that he was being tricked and he came up with a trick of his own. While Gudo was busy drinking the milk, Tsuro put some milk on Gudos cheeks as a mark.

Gudo again took a shortcut to get ahead of Tsuro. Tsuro saw Gudo and said, “How are you, uncle?”

Gudo replied, “Hello Tsuro, what is it you’re carrying?”

Tsuro said, “I’m carrying milk.”
Gudo then said, “Milk? What kind of milk? Is it drinkable?”

Tsuro then responded, “Yes, it’s drinkable but what’s on your cheeks, uncle?”

At that, Gudo realized that he had been caught. Very embarrassed, he walked away.

Tsuro was frustrated and said, “What goes around comes around, you shall see one of these days.”

THINGS CHANGED FOR MANY FAMILIES IN OCTOBER OF 1917 WHEN THE COMMUNISTS AND BOLSHEVIKS BECAME
leaders and took over many parts of the Ukraine including this small beautiful countryside. This meant many changes to this small Ukrainian village. Many of the poor families became leaders in the community which included the Savchenkos. They were able to go to the richer families and take their animals, property and whatever else they wanted. This left the Karpenko family only two days to pack up their belongings before being sent to live in Siberia, in Northern Russia. They were put on old trains and taken through the huge country to the cold north to start over, leaving everything behind. It was like punishment for these families.

After living in the North for over 20 years, the Karpenko family decided to return to the Ukrainian countryside in the hope that life had changed. They returned back to the same village they had left some time ago. The Savchenko family was still living in the village. Time never healed the past and there was still a great deal of hurt between the two families, but life continued on and they avoided each other. In 1941, the Savchenko family welcomed a handsome baby boy who they named Misha. They were so proud to welcome a son. Just a few years later in 1945, the Karpenko family welcomed a beautiful baby girl whom they named Oksana. She was tiny but mighty. Over the years, the families continued to live and work hard in the small Ukrainian countryside, never becoming friends.

As Misha became a young man, he decided to join the army of the Soviet Union and get an education as an aviation mechanic. It was a wonderful career for this young man. He decided to stay in Kiev, the largest city of Ukraine. Misha still loved his homeland and would travel to the countryside to visit his family on occasion. During these years, the beautiful, tiny Oksana grew up into a strong, young independent woman with a mind of her own. She, like her family, was a very hard worker.
During the summer of 1960, Misha travelled to the countryside to visit his family. During his visit, he noticed beautiful Oksana. He took a chance, knowing well the history between the two families, and introduced himself to her. They decided to secretly spend time together on his visit home. They soon fell in love but knew that they couldn’t let their families find out, as they would not approve. The two families never did get over the past and there would never be approval for these two young souls who had fallen in love. As time went on, their feelings for each other became stronger and stronger. Their love was bigger than they had ever imagined.
Soon, Misha convinced Oksana to travel outside of the village to marry him without their families’ approval. He then quickly moved Oksana to the city of Kiev so they could start their new lives together. Just a few years later, the family delivered a beautiful blonde haired, brown-eyed baby girl of their own in December of 1971. They named her Anichka. It was a sign of true love by these star-crossed lovers. Shortly after their daughter’s second birthday, they moved to a place just outside of Moscow, where they continued to live their lives for many, many years. Life was good and love prevailed.
Mexico City, one of the largest cities in the world is home to two of the highest volcanoes in the hemisphere: Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl. The presence of these enormous volcanoes has been of great significance and importance to the people of Mexico and surrounding areas, being a source of inspiration for the many legends of their origin and creation.

One legend says that thousands of years ago, when the Aztec Empire was in its prime, it was common practice to subject neighboring towns to a mandatory tax. It was this that caused the chief of the Tlaxcaltecas, bitter enemies of the Aztecs, to decide to fight for the freedom of his people.

The chief of the Tlaxcaltecas had a daughter by the name of Iztaccihuatl. She was the most beautiful woman in Mexico. She had professed her love for a young man by the name of Popocatepetl, her father’s right hand man, and the most handsome warrior of their time. The feeling was mutual for the handsome warrior
Popocatepetl. Before leaving for war, he asked the chief for the princess’ hand in marriage.

The father gladly agreed and promised to welcome him back with a big celebration and his daughter’s hand when he returned victorious from the battle. The brave warrior accepted and departed for war, keeping in his heart the promise of marriage and a life of happiness once he returned.

Not long after Popocatepetl left for war, another young man named Tlaxcala, ripe with jealousy, came to Princess Iztaccihuatl to alert her that her beloved had died in combat. Crushed by such tragedy and overwhelmed by sadness, Princess Iztaccihuatl took her own life, without even considering the possibility that the news she had heard might be untrue.

The noble warrior Popocatepetl returned victorious to his people. Upon arrival, he received the terrible news of the death of Princess Iztaccihuatl. Devastated by the news, he wandered about the streets for several days and nights, coming to the decision that he had to do something to honour her undying love and to assure that the princess would never be forgotten.

He ordered his men to construct a great tomb built under the sun, bringing ten hills together to form a mountain. He carried his deceased Princess in his arms, taking her to the summit and laid her on the great mountain. The young warrior lovingly kissed her cold lips, lighting a fiery touch, before taking his own life in front of his beloved, so he would be able to watch over her eternal sleep. From then on, they would be together. Eventually the snow covered their bodies, forming two majestic volcanoes that would remain joined until the end of time.

The legend goes on to say that when the warrior Popocatepetl, whose soul remains within the volcano, thinks of his beloved, his heart preserving the fire of eternal passion, shakes and smokes. That’s why, even today the Popocatepetl volcano continues spewing hot lava.
As for the coward Tlaxcala, overcome with repentance for the tragedy that ensued, he went off to die in solitude. He also became a mountain, Pico de Orizaba, another one of the region’s volcanoes and now, from afar, watches the eternal dream of the two lovers, never again to be separated.

This legend has been passed on from generation to generation since the time of the Aztec Empire, in the XIVth century, and the importance given to the volcanoes is clear, for the names have not been changed over time.
Tales of Mullah Nasruddin

As told by Saba Moshin

Saba was born in Pakistan, having moved to Canada almost 15 years ago. She, her husband and three boys have called Cape Breton home for the last 14 years. Saba is a freelance Graphic Designer, with a studio in the New Dawn Centre for Social Innovation.

The Sermon

Once Mullah Nasruddin was invited to deliver a sermon. When he got onto the pulpit, he asked, “Do you know what I am going to say?” The audience replied, “No.” Prompting Nasruddin to announce, “I have no desire to speak to people who don't even know what I will be talking about!” and he left.

The people felt embarrassed and called him back again the next day. This time, when he asked the same question, the people replied “Yes.” So, Nasruddin said, “Well, since you already know what I am going to say, I won't waste any more of your time,” and left.

Now the people were perplexed. They decided to try one more time and once again invited the Mullah to speak the following week. Once again he asked the same question—“Do you know what I am going to say?” Now the people were prepared, so half of them answered “yes” while the other half replied “no”. So Nasruddin said, “Let the half who know what I am going to say, tell it to the half who don’t,” and left.
Nasruddin Almost Falls into a Lake
One day, Nasruddin slipped and nearly fell into a lake, but was caught by a friend walking next to him.

From then on, every time Nasruddin encountered the friend, he was sure to bring up the incident and make a big deal about it.

After months passed and Nasruddin could take no more of this, he led the friend to the same lake, and with his clothes and shoes still on, deliberately jumped right into the water. As he lay in the water, he remarked to the friend, “Now I’m as wet as I would have been if you didn’t save me that day, so for goodness sake, please stop reminding me about it!”

Did You Enjoy the Stew?
Nasruddin was invited to the royal palace for dinner one night. During the meal, the King asked Nasruddin if he enjoyed the stew.

“Yes,” replied Nasruddin, “it was fantastic.”

“Really?” said the King. “I thought it was pretty bad.”

“Yes,” replied Nasruddin, “you’re right—it was quite awful.”

“Wait a minute,” remarked the King. “You just said it was fantastic a few seconds ago.”

“That’s correct,” explained Nasruddin, “but I live in and serve the town of the King, not the stew.”
The Crowded Home
Nasruddin was talking to his neighbour one day, and the neighbour lamented, "I'm really having trouble fitting my family into our small house. It's me, my wife, my three kids, and my mother-in-law all sharing the same cottage.

"Mullah Nasruddin, you are a wise man, do you have any advice for me?"

"Yes." replied Nasruddin. "Do you have any chickens in your yard?"

"I have ten," the man replied.

"Put them in the house," said Nasruddin.

"But Mullah," the man remarked, "Our house is already cramped as it is."

"Just try it," replied Nasruddin.

The man, desperate to find a solution to his spacing woes, followed Nasruddin's advice, and paid him another visit the next day.

"Mullah," he said, "things are even worse now. With the chickens in the house, we are even more pressed for space."

"Now take that donkey of yours," replied Nasruddin, "and bring it in the house."

The man bemoaned and objected, but Nasruddin convinced him to do it. The next day, the man, now looking more distressed than ever, came up to Nasruddin and said, "Now my home is even more crowded. Between my family, the chickens, and that donkey of mine, there is barely any room to move."
“Well then,” said Nasruddin, “do you have any other animals in your yard?”

“Yes,” the man replied, “we have a goat.”

“OK,” said the other. “Take the goat in your house too.”

The man once again raised a fuss and seemed anything but eager to follow Nasruddin’s advice, but Nasruddin once again persuaded him to put yet another animal in the house.

The next day, the man, now full of anger, came up to Nasruddin and exclaimed, “My family is really upset now. Everyone is at my throat complaining about the lack of space. Your plan is making us miserable.”

“OK,” Nasruddin replied, “now take all of the animals back outside.”

The man followed his advice, and the next day, he dropped by Nasruddin and exclaimed, “Mullah, your plan has worked like a charm. With all the animals out, my house is so spacious, everyone is happy and have no complaints.”
The Fox and the Crane

As told by Rashida Agaeva

Rashida has been a proud resident of Cape Breton Island since 2013. Having a fond love for both winter activities and sandy beaches, Cape Breton is the ideal home for Rashida, her husband and their Jack Russell Terrier, Cindy.

The fox made friends with the crane and had the idea to treat the crane to dinner. The fox went to invite him to her house.

"Come godfather! Come dear! How I'll entertain you!"

The crane went to the dinner party where the fox had cooked farina cereal and spread it over a plate. She served it and urged the crane to try some, "Eat, my friend-godfather, I cooked it myself."

The crane went peck-peck with his bill, knocked and knocked at his plate, but got nothing.

Meanwhile, the fox licked and licked the cereal until she had eaten it all.

When the cereal was all gone, the fox said, "I hope you're not offended dear godfather, but there is nothing more to offer you."

"Thank you, godmother and please come and visit me soon."
The next day the fox came for another visit, and the crane made cold soup.

He poured the soup into a pitcher with a narrow neck and put it on the table. He said,

"Eat godmother, the soup is what I have to offer you."

The fox began to spin around the pitcher. She approached it one way, then another. She licked it and sniffed it, but couldn't get anything. Her head wouldn't fit into the pitcher.

The crane on the other hand sucked until he had finished all of the soup.

"I hope you're not offended godmother, but there's nothing more to offer you."

The fox was annoyed, having thought she would eat for the whole week, instead she went home having not eaten a bit.

It was tit for tat! From that moment on, the friendship between fox and crane was over.
Once upon a time, there was a flock of doves that flew from their home in search of food, this flock was led by their king. After travelling a significant distance, the doves grew tired, but continued. One dove took it upon himself to explore, and discovered some grains of rice scattered under a banyan tree.

All the doves were glad to find the food and happily landed on the ground. As soon as they began to eat the grains, a huge net fell over top of them, trapping them. The doves fluttered their wings desperately trying to set out, but to no avail. Just then, they saw the hunter coming towards them. He appeared quite happy to find a huge number of doves trapped inside the net. The whole flock was frightened to see the hunter.

The king dove was very intelligent and clever. He didn’t lose his patience and devised a plan to come out of this adverse situation. He advised the other doves, “In order to get free from the net of this hunter, we should all fly up together clutching the net in our beaks. There is
strength in unity. We will decide our next course of action later. Now come on, let’s fly.”

Hearing their king, each dove picked up a portion of the huge net and they flew up together, carrying the net with them. The hunter was surprised to see the birds flying, along with the huge net. He ran after the birds, shouting madly, but could not catch them. They soon flew high over hills and valleys out of his sight.

When the king dove saw that the hunter had given up the chase, he said to his friends, "Now we all have to get out of this net. A mouse lives on the nearby hill. He is good friend of mine. Let’s go to him for his help." They flew to a hill near a city of temples where the mouse lived.

When the mouse heard the loud noise of the doves approaching, he got frightened and hid himself deeper into his hole. The king dove asked, “Dear friend, I have come, I am the king dove. We are in great despair. Please come out and help us.” Hearing the voice of the king dove, the mouse came out of his hole and saw him and his friends trapped in the net. The mouse asked,” Oh, who has done this to you? “

The king dove explained the whole story to the mouse. He told him that they required the mouse’s help to nibble the net and set them free. The mouse immediately started nibbling the net around him. The king dove said," No, dear friend. First set my followers free. A king cannot keep his subjects in pain and enjoy the freedom for himself."

The mouse understood the king’s feelings and praised him for his nobleness. As per the king’s wish, the mouse nibbled at the portion of the net and one by one all the doves were freed, including the king himself. All the doves were overjoyed as they were once again free. They thanked the mouse for his effort and flew away together happily to their destination.

The moral of the story is that strength lies in unity.
Cao Cao (曹操) was a great hero in ancient China, and he had a little son called Chong Cao (曹冲). Chong Cao was very clever and regarded by many as a child prodigy.

One day, a foreign envoy brought an elephant to Cao Cao as a gift. Elephants were very rare in ancient China, and Cao Cao wondered how much the elephant weighed. Thus, he issued an order to the people in the surrounding area to find a way to measure the weight of the elephant. Everyone made an effort to figure out how to weigh the elephant. Someone suggested constructing a huge scale to weigh the elephant. However, they were unable to agree on how such a scale should be built. While there were many opinions and suggestions put forth, no one could find a solution to this challenging problem, and the arguments about it continued.

One day, Chong Cao, the little son of Cao Cao, came to everyone and told them that he could solve their problem. Everyone including his father doubted that
Chong Cao had a real solution. If the adults could not find a practical solution, how would a five-year-old boy be able to figure it out?

Chong Cao explained his method of weighing an elephant:

1. Take the elephant out on a boat to the middle of the sea. The elephant’s weight will cause the boat to sink to a certain level.

2. Mark the level, remove the elephant from the boat. From there, gradually begin filling the boat with rocks.

3. When the boat again sinks to the same level, stop loading the rocks.

4. Measure the weight of all those loaded rocks, and the total weight of those rocks should be equal to the weight of the elephant.

   Everyone was surprised by such a simple but successful idea, and they praised Chong Cao as a talented boy. Of course, Cao Cao felt very proud to have such a clever son.
Germany

The Work of the Devil, or a Present of the Ice Age?

As told by Sebastian

Sebastian and his wife Claudia are extremely thrilled to be new Cape Bretoners. Beginning as part-time residents, they are now in the process of making the move from Germany to Cape Breton on a permanent basis.

I would like to tell you something about my home region, the so-called Spreewald, in Germany.

The Spreewald is a UNESCO biosphere reserve that includes wetlands and moors around the Spree River of about 180 square miles. It is located about 50 miles south-east of Berlin and is famous for its abundant flora (oaks, ashes, meadows) and fauna (fish and birds such as swans, storks, cranes and herons, butterflies, dragonflies, wild boars and many more). The area is best explored on a kayak or canoe, the traditional means of transport used not too long ago.

There is a myth that you should know about before you plan to visit the Spreewald.

Before I tell you about the myth, imagine you are sitting on a large boat with fog emerging in the dusk
when all of a sudden you notice that you do not know which stream you are on. You realize that you are lost in the wilderness of the Spreewald. When you ask the boatman whom you do not know very well where you are, he begins to tell you of the legend handed down from the Sorbs; a Slavic tribe who first cultivated the Spreewald in the early Middle Ages and whose traditions and customs are still kept alive throughout the region.

It was probably on a foggy evening like this when, after a long day of work, the devil was pushing his yoke of oxen very hard to widen the Spree River with a plough. He pushed his oxen to a point of near collapse until they stopped working and protested against him. The devil then became very upset and told them his mother would come to fetch them. This prospect was so frightening to the oxen that they tried to escape. With the plough still at the back, they crisscrossed a large area and eventually formed the beds of more than 300 brooks and streams you can still see today. The featured photos should give you an idea of the magnitude of the devils, or rather his oxen's, work.

Now, what do you think? Would you still enjoy visiting my home region of Spreewald? To dispel some of the fear that might have come over you, I can tell you that there is a more rational explanation about the origin of the unique landscape of the Spreewald, and this one dates back to the ice age. According to scientists, glacier waters formed the beds of the river and streams. Isn't that explanation rather dull compared to the legend told by the Sorbs?
Of course, you are free to choose which version you want to keep in your imagination, and maybe tell your friends and neigh bours. The landscape and people of the Spreewald are very welcoming, and tours are generally offered during the day when the sun is shining, most of the time.
Prudent Lass or Wise Woman: What My Grandmother Taught Me

As told by Dr. Pushpa Rathor

Dr. Pushpa Devi Rathor, came from India to Canada in 1967 on scholarship to Brandon University; went on to study Political Science at McMaster University. Her PhD is on Ethics & M.K. Gandhi. For several years, she taught at different universities in Canada, also worked with Aboriginal communities in the remote North. In India, she studied North Indian Classical music, Lyrics of Rabindranath Tagore, Languages, and Arts. She loves to write and research, paint and compose, choreograph and photograph. Storytelling is a passion with her, next only to singing and teaching.

India has based its civilization and culture on the ancient teachings of its wisdom. Such lessons my grandmother instilled in us with her stories. I remember, under the starry summer skies, during dark, thundering, monsoon afternoons, or cold winter nights in front by the fireside, her stories kept us enthralled. In today’s vocabulary, she was illiterate. But her lessons defied our definition of education. Her school was Life itself, and her companion or soulmate was our grandfather.

Once upon a time, long ago in India, there lived a prince in a small kingdom. He had not inherited much from his father. The king had lost everything in waging wars: his treasury, the army and even the trust of his people.
The prince, on the other hand, wanted peace, prosperity and progress. Above all, he craved for a competent, wise companion. The prince asked the prime minister to send messengers in all directions, looking for a suitable bride, while he went out in disguise to seek his fortune.

Not far from this kingdom lived a princess, who had no brother to inherit the throne after her own father had passed away. Other neighbouring kings were gnawing like vultures to swallow her tiny territory. She too wanted to marry a wise and committed companion to serve her loyal people. The princess went incognito to the neighbouring kingdom, dressed as a common woman. Following the directions of his prince, the kingdom’s prime minister quickly identified her as the ideal candidate for the prince to marry.

As decided by the prince and his cabinet, there were four conditions that the royal bride had to perform: to replenish the almost empty treasury; to fill the granary; to refurbish all water resources of the Kingdom; and to have a baby in the royal cradle. The princess, dressed in ordinary garb, was chosen to be the future bride of the prince, provided she competently fulfilled all four conditions by the end of the first year.

Since the prince was away in far off lands, unable to come home for his own wedding, it was acceptable to perform the rituals before the sacred fire with his royal steward. The wedding was celebrated, and the princess in disguise, now the newly wedded royal bride, set out to face the four challenges. First, she sent her trusted spies to locate where her betrothed prince was. Second, she put all able and adult citizens to work, ordering clay bricks be made, baked, and sold to build homes, streets and dams. Third, she got wells, lakes and dams replenished, and had canals built to irrigate fields. And finally, encouraged the teaching of crafts like spinning, weaving, pottery, carving and woodwork.

The royal bride attended meetings with diplomats and foreign representatives, and impressed friends
and foes alike. People begin to take pride in themselves. The women were especially pleased, participating equally in the building of their own society and kingdom. Even the animals felt good, for they were being cared for. The treasury and the granary were filled to capacity.

The biggest challenge the princess faced was to have a baby in the royal cradle. The princess dressed as a young lad and left in search of her new husband. The prince was an avid hunter, but the princess was still surprised to find her new husband about to be attacked by a tiger crouching in the bush. She thus saved his life. Humbled and thankful, the prince offered his jewelled dagger as a sign of deep and lasting gratitude.

Next, the princess dressed as a milkmaid and went to the cottage where the prince lived. She sold him fresh milk, eggs and butter every morning. One day she came sobbing, saying her father had thrown her out of his house. The prince offered to let her live in the cottage. In return, she cooked, cleaned and often provided the prince company. The milkmaid won his trust and soon acquired a silk handkerchief from the prince, as a symbol of his friendship.

One evening, the prince went to visit a courtesan who had recently arrived from far away land. Her voice was sweeter than the sound of a Myna bird, and she danced with the grace of a peacock. When the prince saw her for the first time, he could not take his eyes off her. Her eyes were like two deep pools of the fathomless ocean. Her lips, red rubies full of strawberry glimmer, and her cheeks soft as the pink rose petals of India.

Like the size of the rising moon each night, their friendship and companionship blossomed into a true love affair. Her mission accomplished by the time of the full moon, the princess announced to the prince in disguise, “My commitments require me to leave this town before dawn.” In tears, they parted; exchanging rings as a symbol of their love, and vowing to meet each other in future lives. The princess now returned to her kingdom, where she soon gave birth to a child.
There were rumours about how she could have gotten pregnant without the prince, but the cabinet handled it as a “royal mystery.” They dared not question her authority or legitimacy. Moments turned into hours, hours into days, and days into nights; mango and pomegranate flowers turned into fruits. Months passed by and finally, one day a royal messenger brought the news their prince would arrive on an appointed day, at an auspicious hour.

The prince was greeted with music, showers of flower petals, garlands and screams of joy from the people of his kingdom. The sacred conch shells blown according to custom, and drums sounded his arrival. He entered through the decorated high gate on his royal elephant, in a howdah, followed by a retinue of his procession. His royal mother stood ahead of others to welcome him with a golden tray that held a copper pot of the holy Ganga water with a huge conch shell, some camphor and flowers. He then looked in search for his unknown bride.

He was sure it was the young woman dressed in a red gossamer veil with Banaras brocade and silk attire of exquisite embroidery in gold, silver and precious pearls. Her face was hidden, except her long braid that hung below her knees like a cobra. He did not feel eager to make acquaintance with his new bride, as he was tired and missed his friendship with the courtesan. He retired for the night after the royal banquet, without meeting his bride.

The next morning, he woke up to the sound of a baby crying, “Who dares to bring their child into the royal Bedroom?” The prince wanted an explanation, summoning his new bride. “Whose baby are you rearing in this palace?” asked the Prince. “Your majesty, it is yours!” the princess explained. “What nonsense, I was away from the kingdom for more than a year. How could this baby be mine?” His bride took off her veil and revealed her beautiful face while she bent down to touch his feet, the traditional way of greeting with respect. He noticed at once his own royal ring on her finger.
He realized the bewitching beauty of the courtesan was none other than his own wedded wife.

Later that week, when his wife presented him the jewelled dagger, the prince realized she had also been disguised as a lad in the forest, she was the one who saved his life. He was even more astonished when she produced the silk scarf of the milkmaid, she had also served and entertained him. The princess still had one more secret to disclose. It was time to let him know that she was herself a princess in disguise, and his equal in every way.

Gone are the days of the princes and princesses; but equality without gender bias is the eternal equation of life. Men and women are alike, whatever the field of endeavour may be. They balance each other and maintain harmony, another name for peace or shanti. That is the way a prudent lass is and ought to be, that is the way any wise woman is and ought to be. This, my grandmother taught us.
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About the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership

The Cape Breton Partnership recognizes that immigration will continue to play a key role in the economic future of Cape Breton. To support better immigration outcomes, the Partnership administers the Cape Breton Local Immigration Partnership (CBLIP) – a collaborative, community initiative designed to improve the integration of newcomers in Cape Breton. Launched in June 2017, the CBLIP works at the local level to foster a community that is welcoming and inclusive and to support newcomers to become fully engaged in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of Cape Breton.

This is achieved through three key areas of activity:
- Supporting community-level research and planning;
- Improving the coordination of settlement and integration services; and
- Raising awareness around the needs of newcomers.

About the Cape Breton Regional Library

Established in 1950, the Cape Breton Regional Library provides public library service throughout Cape Breton Regional Municipality and Victoria County. The Region has 12 branch libraries. Bookmobile and/or outreach service is available to many rural communities. The Library celebrates and encourages learning and literacy through the provision of quality collections, access to cultural resources, programmes and services. Cape Breton Regional Library welcomes all newcomers to our community. We are honoured to have the opportunity to participate in this project.