

# The Glengarry News

## Glengarry Pioneer Museum: A Stitch in Time

July 11 2018 BY TARA MACDONALD News Staff

### Hooked on Fibres

Visitors were herding in to Dunvegan this weekend for ‘A Stitch in Time’.

Begun in 2012, the biennial event features a textile exhibit of colourful antique and contemporary quilt designs as well as woven blankets, hooked rugs, wool penny rungs, crochet, knitting, smoking, and bunka (a Japanese style of punch embroidery).

“We try to combine textiles from the museum collection of historical artifacts and mix it in with more contemporary pieces,” said museum curator Jennifer Black. “We’ve got some amazing pieces on display; they are truly an artform.”

A number of textile guilds took part in the event, helping to put together displays and demonstrate their crafts such as the Twistle Guild of Glengarry, Highland Quilters Guild, Vankleek Hill Quilt Guild, Wild and Wooly Rug Hookers, and the Swedish Weaving Guild of Glengarry.

### Memories of by-gone days

For many visitors, the event brought fond memories of bygone times watching mothers and grandmothers stitching quilts or spinning wool.

“It reminded me of my grandparents and living on the old farm,” said Bert Mathieu from St. Isidore.

For others, it was a keen reminder of how hard people worked in the past and how fortunate we are today to have so many modern conveniences.

“It makes you realize how hard people used to have to work before,” said Pierre Bouetter from St. Isidore. “It’s incredible really. You really appreciate what you have when you see all of this.”

### All Wool and No Shoddy

“It gets bigger and better every year,” said Event Chair Eleanor Sides. “The wool is new this year. We had a felting workshop, educational displays, fleece competition and an auction.”

“The event provides a venue for local fibre artists to come together to display their work and create awareness for heritage crafts,” added Ms. Black. “But it’s also a great opportunity for spinners, weavers, and other fiber artisans to network with shepherds and buy local fleece”

Partnering with the Ontario Sheep Farmers and the Heritage Livestock Club of Eastern Ontario, booths were set up to showcase heritage breeds -- such as Cotswold, Tunis and Shetland -- and to answer questions about breed differences and the types of wool on display.



Bert Mathieu and Pierre Bouetter visiting from St. Isidore with Marianne and Sylvain L'Heureux from Sherbrooke, Quebec. TARA MACDONALD

"We like talking to the people. We like the breeds and we enjoy educating people about the heritage breeds," said sheep farmer Bob Garner of Hawk Hill Farm just outside Dunvegan. Along with his partner Laurie Maus, Mr. Garner raises heritage certified sheep and poultry.

### **Woolly Times for Heritage Breeds**

High-value, meat-producing sheep dominate today's market. As a result, wool is often considered to be a waste product from meat-producing sheep.

"Heritage breeds don't necessarily come to market as fast as other breeds do," explained Pegi Holtz, farmer and Heritage Livestock Club representative. The other issue, added Mr. Garner, is that it's difficult to obtain quality fleeces from the abattoirs.

"Most commercial production is not focussed on fleeces," agreed Ms. Maus, "but spinners and weavers need good quality fleeces. So if we - as a heritage livestock club - don't preserve them, we'll lose them and the fleeces that they need to do their craft will be gone."



Bob Garner of Hawk Hill Farm in Dunvegan won first prize for the naturally white fleece competition.

### **A Close Shave**

Twenty fresh-shorn fleeces were on display during the competition which was open to naturally white and naturally-coloured fleeces.

The judging was held on Saturday by Nathan Pappas-Barabe, an apprentice wool grader with the Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers.

Mr. Pappas-Barabe looked for uniformity of the fleece, staple length, luster, and presentation. All fleeces were available for sale during Sunday's live auction.

"The spinners and weavers always rave about my fleece," said first prize winner of the white fleece class and Show Champion winner Edith Caviezel of Silverbirch Farm in Hawkesbury. "The Cotswolds have beautiful, silky curls. I was really pleased about winning."

Ms. Caviezel -- who has been raising Cotswold exclusively since 2012 -- is a strong proponent of heritage breed preservation. "I'm not selling any meat on my farm," she said. "I always find someone who's looking for fibre animals and someone looking for grazing lands."

According to Ms. Caviezel, there are less than 35 registrations a year in Canada. "My job is to try to bring up the breed before it becomes extinct," she said. "People don't know what's in the area and who has what," said Ms. Caviezel. "Events like this are great for bringing people together and creating awareness."



Purebred Tunis Wether on display by Bob and Laurie Maus from Hawk Hill Farm in Dunvegan.

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### **Promoting Forgotten Flavors: American Tunis**

Winners of the white fleece competition, Bob Garner and Laurie Maus, were accompanied by a purebred Tunis Wether.

The Tunis is a reddish tan breed of sheep developed in the United States from North African sheep which date back to

biblical times. Although well adapted to hot and humid climates, the breed also fares well in colder areas.

The Tunisian Barbary sheep were gifted to the U.S. government by His Highness the Bey of Tunis in 1799. The Tunis became very popular throughout the Southeast and mid-Atlantic states, however the breed was almost lost during the Civil War.

While the Tunis is slowly making a comeback after having been nominated to the Slow Food Ark of Taste, the Tunis' breed status continues to be listed between critical and endangered.

The meat from the Tunis sheep is tender and flavorful without having a strong mutton taste. By promoting and eating endangered heritage meats, we help ensure they remain in production and on our plates.

### **Ewe and Me: Wet Felting Workshop**

One of the more popular events was the Wet Felting Workshop.

"The workshop went really well," said instructor Mitch Corriveau of Cornerstone Farm in Green Valley. "We were supposed to cap it at 12 but in the end we had 15 participants."

This hands-on workshop provided an opportunity for beginners to learn the complete wet felting process while creating their very own wet felted flower that could be later used to decorate a hat or used as brooch.



Ruthanne Edward, Sandra MacPherson, Hannah Mullin, Mitch Corriveau, Makena Dyer. TARA MACDONALD

"I've been doing fibre arts for more than 40 years," said Mr. Corriveau. "It was almost a dead art but lately there's been somewhat of a resurgence. Events like this help to build on that. We even had three teenagers learning how to felt today. Seeing interest and being able to teach the younger generations how to felt is really great."

The workshop was a hit with old and young alike. "It's my first time felting. I really like it," said 11 year old Hannah Mullin from Vankleek Hill. "I like getting messy!"

Teenagers Kinnon Lajoie from Lochiel and Makena Dyer from Arizona also enjoyed the experience. "I learned how to felt with needles before, but this is a new way to felt," said Kinnon Lajoie. "I've never tried wet felting before, I'm really enjoying it."

### **Spinning a Yarn**

The Twistle Guild of Glengarry had all hands on deck over the weekend demonstrating a variety of different spinning tools including drop spindles, folding wheel treadles, electric and old fashioned spinning wheels, as well as hand-carders, combs, bobbins, and a number of other accessories.

"It's a good opportunity to share your knowledge," said Twistle Guild member Mary Ellen Gowland. "The people who come to this event are really interested."

Visitors enjoyed learning about the various tools and methods and had the chance to try their hand at spinning wool.

Brigitte Grimes, a sheep farmer from South Mountain, took advantage of the opportunity to learn. "I've never picked up a spindle before," she said. "I wanted to see how it was done."

Having had the opportunity to learn more about the various forms of fleece and spinning, Ms. Grimes says she's now considering raising different varieties that appeal to the hand-spinner's market in addition to meat breeds.

It wasn't just the adults who were attracted to the spinning demonstration. Pointing to a young girl practicing using a drop spindle, Ms. Gowland exclaimed: "Oh that's the best! Seeing the young kids like Meredith come by."

Keen to learn how to spin from the professionals, young Meredith Fraser and her father Drummond Fraser from Vankleek Hill attended both Saturday and Sunday's demonstrations.

"We used to have Shetland sheep and we help out at a sheep farm," said Mr. Drummond. After attending a similar event last year, young Meredith came up with a plan. "Meredith put all of that together and said that she really wanted to learn how to everything from sheering the sheep to ... weaving or knitting a garment," he said.

Over the past year, Meredith has been focussed on learning and taking lessons from various fibre artists. "Today we got some expert instruction in spinning and you can see the results," said Mr. Drummond with pride, "Meredith is getting really really good."



Meredith Fraser from Vankleek Hill -  
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