

## Keeping the Dirt Inn: A Fiddling Presentation – Kate Alexander

Cape Breton is a small island located in the province of Nova Scotia in eastern Canada. There are three very different cultures that share the island: Native Mi'kmaq (*Mig-maw*), French Acadians, and Highland Scottish. The music and dance we explore here is from the Scottish community. The Scottish music in Cape Breton was brought by Highland Scots over 200 years ago when they were forced to leave their homes and travel across the Atlantic Ocean to make a new home in Canada.

### Music makes us do what three things?

- Move in specific ways
- Feel emotions
- Think about objects, ideas, people, animals...

### How to do Cape Breton-style stepdancing

Each [BRACKET] is one complete step. RED is the left foot, BLUE is the right foot.

→ The jig

[STEP HEEL-TOE] [STEP HEEL-TOE] [STEP HEEL-TOE] [STEP HEEL-TOE]...

→ The Strathspey

[STEP KICK OUT HOP KICK BACK] [STEP KICK OUT HOP KICK BACK]...

→ The Reel

[STEP HEEL-TOE HOP STEP STEP] [STEP HEEL-TOE HOP STEP STEP]...

### Internet search for Cape Breton-style stepdancing, and looking for clues in the performance:

- Look up a map of Cape Breton Island: what country is it in? Is it far from where you are?
- Go to YouTube and search for 'Cape Breton step dancing Margie Beaton'
  - o What instruments do you see?
  - o How much is the dancer moving around?
  - o Does she look at us?
  - o What else do you notice?

This dancer and fiddler are performing at a *ceilidh* (kay-lee), a social gathering with music and dancing, and even singing and storytelling. This particular *ceilidh* is in Mabou, Nova Scotia.

- Now, look up 'highland dancing broad cove'
  - o How is this dancing different?
  - o Do they move around a lot?
  - o How are they dressed?

This performance is happening at a big annual concert in Broad Cove, Nova Scotia. Performers come from all over the island to dance, play music, sing and tell stories onstage for a huge audience.