

## Iona Connection to help determine future of heritage on island

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By Tom Ayers - The Cape Breton Post

Sydney - The umbrella organization representing museums and heritage groups across Cape Breton Island is looking to gather together as many people as possible to agree on ways to make heritage programs and infrastructure sustain able.

The Iona Connection Heritage Co-operative has received a provincial grant and hired a consultant to hold focus group meetings in each of the four counties next month, asking participants for ideas on the future of heritage protection and promotion.

An interim report is expected to be ready at the Iona Connections annual general meeting later in April and a final report is expected to be ready for implementation in October.

“It will provide some direction and how we might be able to implement ideas: said Iona Connection secretary Cathy Gillies, who is also archives co-ordinator at the Chestico Museum in Port Hood.

Gillies said the consultant will ask several questions to lead participants to a consensus on a broad range of important strategic areas affecting heritage. The sessions will be important opportunities for those working in the museums and heritage sector to have direct input into the planning process.

“Funding is always an issue for non-profit societies like museums, but there’s issues around communications, programs, how do you get more people involved. But money isn’t the only issue.

Using the provincial government’s recent heritage strategy report — A Treasured Past a Precious Future — as a guideline, all museums, historical and cultural societies and anyone else connected to heritage are invited to send representatives to these meetings, said Gillies.

Catherine Arseneau, manager of the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University and vice-president of the Iona Connection said some of the questions to be considered in the sessions include: What are quality heritage programs and services? What are adequate and appropriate human and financial resources?

The heritage umbrella group will hold sessions April 6 in Inverness, April 7 in Baddeck, April 8 in Sydney, and April 9 in St. Peter's. For more information, check the Iona Connection web- site, [www.capebretonisland.org](http://www.capebretonisland.org).

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