

# Cultural Diversity

## My Story

The Cultural Diversity series is for the preservation of traditional and indigenous cultures and the ageless wisdom held dear by their people.

By Frank A. Mills  
Contributing Writer

There are many stories about my ancestors.

There are those times spent with my paternal great-grandmother Lane as she tended her roses; talking with them, blessing them with prayers that I wish I had learned. And there was my maternal grandmother, Nana 'Byrne, leading me as a small child into her garden early in the morning to look under the snowdrops and buttercups and a myriad of other flowers for fairies, even to set out

a bit of milk or a crumb or two for them. To this day, I believe that the fairies found these tiny morsels set out for them, and know I saw a fairy or two. Perhaps they were in my imagination, but I learned following my grandmother through what became "our garden," that imagination is as real as anything we might perceive with our rational minds.

Today I am reminded as I think back on these times, how often the stories told to me reminded my that my name, Frank Arthur Mills is in itself a story, a story that must be lived.

I learned something else as I listened to the stories told in my family, I became aware that the teller was reliving the story, even reliving the story. Even though the story happened to a distant relative or some grandparent in the past, it was the story of the teller. In some mystical way the

teller was making the wisdom of the past his or her own in the present, and passing it on to those of us who listened so that we too could make it ours and thus keep it

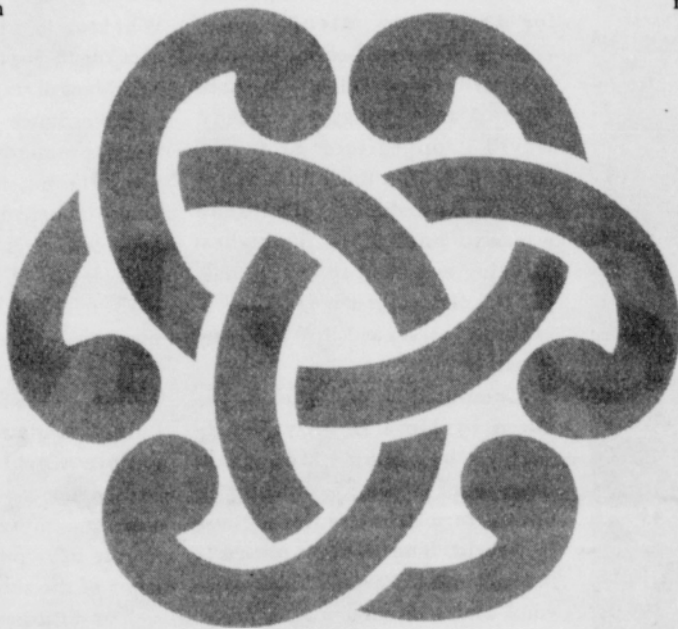
tors but to guarantee the future. My story - these stories told to me by my grandparents and others - is not a collection of past events, but people, ancestors, living here and now in the stories found in my spirit.

When I was a child, on occasion one of the males in the family would sing the Oran Mór, the Celtic Great (blessing) Song over the meal. In tradition, the blessing song sung by the Scottish clan chieftain following a banquet. The Oran Mór is the Great Song of Creation with which the numinous created, and blessed that which was created, Creation.

The Oran Mór, the song of Creation, continues to be sung and in its singing draws all songs, all stories - in the Celtic tradition all stories are songs - to herself, and then, according to the myth, sings them to me,

alive.

Now that I'm older, I'm beginning to make sense of all of this. Our stories are not told to keep alive the memories of dead ances-



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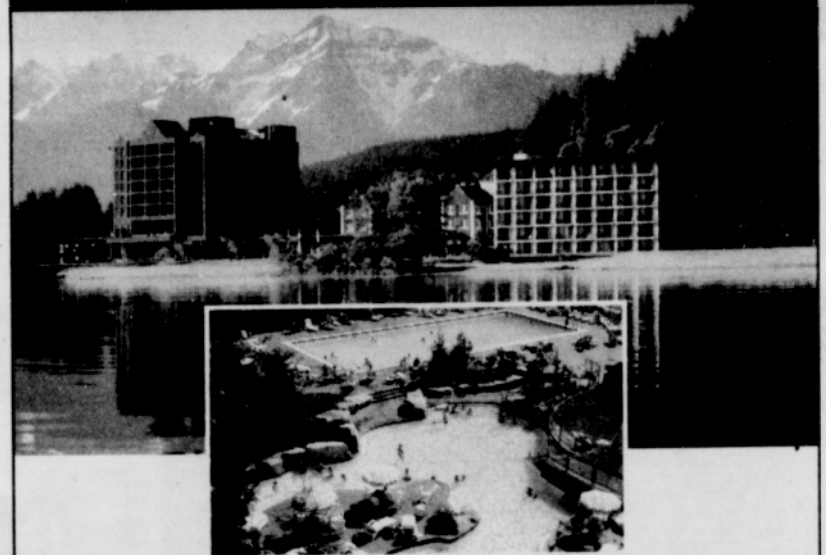
Larry Matthews  
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to become by story. This collective song is nothing else than Wisdom, numinous Wisdom that has been given shape and purpose in the lives, stories, of my ancestors and now collectively, these wisely shaped purposes become my story, my shaping of divine Wisdom, to pass on. The Gaelic word is *nulrt*, which really has no English equivalent. The *nulrt* is the Wisdom Song, that is, the Oran Mór, my shaping and purposing of that Wisdom, and what maybe best described as my soul, all combined in one, and as we Celts believed passed from one generation to another.

Nana Byrne, use to hum a lot, sometimes the humming was a bit

of nonsense, at least to the ears of a small child. Nana Byrne use to say, when questioned about her humming, "It is the sound which gives meaning to Wisdom, not the imposed words." Or, at least, that's the way I remember it now. This is a very Irish, Celtic if you will, understanding of how words receive meaning. If pushed, she might add, "It's about giving and receiving blessing." Growing up, we kids were frequently reminded that blessing is about holiness and holiness is spelt with an "i" and a "w". Wholeness is holiness, and holiness is wholeness. That is exactly what all families are about, the continued holiness and wholeness of family.

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