

# **Review of Gaelic Awareness Month Goals and Initiatives Meeting**

Comhairle na Gàidhlig  
Evergreen Club, Port Hawkesbury  
1 – 4 pm May 30, 2009

Report prepared by Colin Watson and Caroline Cameron

Attendees - Barbara Sutherland-Foote, Emily MacKinnon, Frances MacEachen, Jessica MacLennan, Francie Gillis, Liza Kruffy, Bev Brett, Jeanette Strachan, Colin Watson. Facilitated by Caroline Cameron

Caroline Cameron opens the afternoon: Gaelic Awareness Month is an opportunity to think about raising awareness about Gaelic and how we can best spend our energies. Do the events we hold in May raise awareness, or are these events more for community building? There are lots of questions about this such as 'how to raise awareness?' and 'who to communicate to'. The intent of this meeting is to have an informal discussion and some brainstorming.

## **What events were people involved with for Gaelic Month this year?**

The meeting began with a go-around of attendees introducing themselves and discussing events they attended during May: Grand Mira TIP, teacher conference, this meeting, Lunch and Learns, Church Service, Tutor training weekend all in Gaelic, marag-making workshop which will be televised. Also discussed were public events to entice new learners, ideas for conversation groups at homes to complement TIP classes, and a review of other events that were held in May.

Caroline Cameron gives a brief history behind Comhairle na Gàidhlig, and its interest in building the organization, better serving the community, current activities such as maintaining website with the Gaelic events listing, production of a newsletter that can be found on-line, and developing its membership.

Frances MacEachen of the Office of Gaelic Affairs (OGA) presented a brief history of the and described work to raise the profile of Gaelic Nova Scotia. She noted some success becoming recognized in the same manner that other minority cultures are in the province. Current work is focusing on the production of Posters, Gàidhlig aig Baile Programming, campaigning to the provincial Government for heightened recognition of the needs of Gaelic language initiatives in Gaelic speaking communities, trying to connect with Gaelic development groups, and foster international partnerships between Nova Scotia and other Gaelic communities in Europe ie) Finlay MacLeod T.I.P.

Frances mentioned that the applications of Gaelic cultural development must be more robust in order to increase the rate and quality of learning for Gaelic learners. Therefore, the OGA will concentrate more language acquisition and on Professional Development for those working in the field to further Gaelic language restoration. Also, a researcher is to be hired in the near future for researching ways to enhance Gaelic restoration in the province from the stage that has been created by Gaelic language and cultural initiatives. The researcher will be responsible for establishing new links between OGA and non-affiliated academic institutions, sharing information with other minority language initiatives. The position will also be important in providing statistics on current conditions to demonstrate the need for continuing support of Gaelic development.

## **Examples of Success**

\* Events which participants thought were very successful, and why.

- Involved with concerts held in Grand Mira for GAM. Considered the concerts to be a success. There were full houses for all events, which is approximately 125 people.
- Involved with the Cape Breton Gaelic Choir. The events were well publicized with nice posters and tickets.
- Participated in Highland Village meeting and Céilidh day for Gaelic learners. The story telling portion of the program was entertaining and it was learning in a social setting.
- Involved with the North Shore Story telling Sessions (4 sessions in May). Considers the community to have many recorded resources for conveying Gaelic culture in the region. material from the local community was used, new people turned up, and it seemed to contribute to the community's pride in Gaelic and self-esteem.
- Church services have contributed to longer survival of language in communities, institutions that are important in communities have a great potential to support Gaelic. Also, typically communities that have used Gaelic in the church the longest that have had Gaelic in the community the longest.

The discussion moved on to engaging native speakers in language learning. Gaelic speakers in nursing homes are not often contacted for interviews or visits. They are in every community, and they would be happy to have people come visit. The group discusses the challenges of meeting with tradition bearers, in the nursing home environment, and the difficulty of speaking Gaelic to older Gaelic speakers who have a hard time hearing.

- Language learners themselves can find it awkward
- Activity-focused may be less awkward
- Short-range radio transmission for local broadcast of Gaelic discussions
- In many situations the native Gaelic speaker will not be accustomed to speaking Gaelic with just anyone but reserves Gaelic for certain people, intermediary can be helpful
- Can get a few native speakers together
- There is a device to project your voice louder so that those who have a hard time hearing may hear properly.

## **Effectiveness of Gaelic Awareness Month Activities in raising awareness**

\* Who should we be trying to reach in raising awareness?

Frances MacEachen - Do communities organize events for Gaelic Awareness Month with conscious planning to raise awareness or just because they're fun?

Gaelic Awareness Month Activities do contribute to community-building.

\* How is it possible to raise awareness of Gaelic culture?

The response was centered around activities that were recognized as fun activities for all ages - contributing to popularity, and increased visibility of Gaelic Nova Scotia. It was noted that enjoyable/popular activities do raise awareness by drawing new people in, however there is perhaps not enough awareness between communities about what each other is doing.

The question of where to find classes and how to make Gaelic courses more accessible arose. From this, the need for high speed Internet was noted. Website information, as useful as it is, will not be available to Gaelic enthusiasts that do not have access to the Internet. Recognizing the importance in not excluding these participants, all other avenues of promotion for GAM is required.

## What messages should be presented in attempts to raise awareness about Gaelic?

\* In considering what message we should be communicating to the public, the group discussed why it is that Gaelic learners like ourselves would learn Gaelic in Nova Scotia.

Each attendee described their own reasons for being involved. These were recorded on flipchart paper and each participant then identified their choice of five priority messages through a 'Dotmocracy' exercise to get a sense of which messages could be focused upon.

| Message   | Votes |
|---|-------|
| 1. Ready-made community   | 5     |
| 2. International community * Rebroadcast Early material - Island Echoes*  | 5     |
| 3. Gaelic language learning has hidden benefits - forward thinking activity   | 5     |
| 4. Social Outings   | 4     |
| 5. Gaelic language is a unique cultural asset   | 4     |
| 6. Because it is alive in Nova Scotia   | 2     |
| 7. Because those who have a Gaelic background in their family never to old to regain their command of the language and can teach their grand children | 2     |
| 8. Gaelic keeps the brain active so that elders can exercise Gaelic social practices (ie, story telling, song...)                                     | 2     |
| 9. Keeps the Brain Active   | 2     |
| 10. Language learning leads to better understanding of history and community  | 2     |
| 11. Everybody's grand parents spoke Gaelic  | 2     |
| 12. Gaelic encourages strong bonding  | 1     |
| 13. All ages genders and sectors  | 1     |
| 14. Effects of colonial oppression  | 1     |
| 15. Because it has been popularized by Rankin's/Gaelic road signs/Pop culture   |       |
| 16. Newcomers can be more open to learning  |       |
| 17. There is a genuine attachment to Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia  |       |
| 18. This seems to be best facilitated by language learning and not language learning in school settings though  |       |
| 19. Gaelic is a unique way of seeing and expressing one's self  |       |
| 20. Attached from an early age  |       |
| 21. Gaelic is still an object of ridicule   |       |

## How should we raise awareness of the Nova Scotian Gaelic culture

\* What media/ /methods should we use for raising awareness?

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Website - Events for workers  | 4 |
| 2. Print Media   | 4 |
| 3. SLOGAN - Example - suas leis a Ghaidhlig  | 4 |
| 4. Activities - Advertise  | 2 |
| 5. Bulletin  | 2 |
| 6. Signage   | 2 |
| 7. Family in Home events   | 2 |
| 8. provide wide scale Youth Activities   | 2 |
| 9. * Linkages with Arts community - Planning well for linkages between language and culture (this will enable advertising to be more affective in Gaelic awareness). | 1 |
| 10. Story telling characters could be used to help promote Gaelic culture and language   | 1 |
| 11. Re-broadcasting Material from previous Blogs   | 1 |
| 12. Poster of youth events circulated  | 1 |
| 13. Lecture series   | 1 |
| 14. Food and Socializing   | 1 |
| 15. Cool Facts - Produce a package   |   |
| 16. Image - such as OGA map  |   |

## Some summary points:

- ✍ More highly ranked messages to be communicated about Gaelic
  - Ready-made community
  - International community \* Rebroadcast Early material - Island Echoes\*
  - Gaelic language learning has hidden benefits - forward thinking activity
  - Social Outings
  - Gaelic language is a unique cultural asset
  
- ✍ More highly rated media and approaches
  - Website - Events for workers
  - Print Media
  - SLOGAN – Example - suas leis a Ghaidhlig
  
- ✍ A helpful project for communities would be to produce a template for event organizers to follow detailing things to consider when community groups put on an event - Postering standards, modelling on how to post media, promotions, and not just Internet promotion.
  
- ✍ *WHY hold Gaelic Awareness Events?*
  - Raise Awareness
  - Community Building
  - Fun activities increase in popularity and visibility
  
- ✍ *Issue: Where are events (and classes through the year)?*
  - High Speed Internet
  - Publicity in Media
  - Info in Website
  - Bulletin
  - Awareness requires promotion that is not just internet
  
- ✍ *Next Year:*
  - Get the message to the community - People are looking for it
  - Website - Needs to be inviting, current and interactive web tools (LINKS)
  
- ✍ *Scale of language learning activities:*

A general discussion brought forward the idea that organizing on different geographical scales may be useful in attracting different age groups.

  - Community Level for adults
  - Province-wide for Youth (13 - 18 years)
  - Inter-family for young children (0 – 8?) and parents

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