

**Comhairle na Gàidhlig Language Development & Education Committee
Open Meeting, Feb 21, 2010**

In attendance: Carmen MacArthur, Frances MacEachen, Ashley MacKay, Emily MacKinnon, Lewis MacKinnon, Jamie MacNeil, John MacNeil, Meaghan O’Handley, Catriona Parsons, Caroline Cameron

C. Cameron began the meeting by opening the floor to general comments about Gaelic education at the community, school and university level. Discussion followed about issues in the school system.

- It was noted that the Wikipedia site for Gaelic resources is blocked from the school system, and this can likely be addressed easily. Questions on how to use the system led to the suggestion that Susan Cameron could be asked to offer a workshop at some point on its use, perhaps in a workshop day in May.
- The general assumption that we need to see Gaelic in more schools was challenged from the perspective that given that offerings are weak in some schools, we should focus on ensuring that better Gaelic programming is offered where it already exists.
- While the need to focus on better programming was uniformly accepted as an important goal, it was also noted that as long as there are schools in Gaelic areas without programming, and there are Gaelic language teachers being produced who do not have employment, we should still work to increase the numbers of schools offering Gaelic – or Gaelic teaching opportunities.
- The group reviewed and discussed data on current Gaelic school offerings in Nova Scotia which C. Parsons presented. This material will be tabulated and circulated.
- The need to continue communications with school boards was discussed, we should work to establish positions at both the school board and Dept of Education level for Gaelic representatives/mentors who would work with Gaelic teachers. We have received good support from the past Program Coordinator, and need someone in that position who is supportive of Gaelic.
- It will be important to organize parents to lobby for Gaelic programming in schools in order to effect any changes. It was suggested that GAB groups be asked to act as a contact within the community. For school system programming to be effective, local community groups need to be present and there should be a rapport between the school and the community. Specific schools were discussed: Inverness, Baddeck, Mira Gut, North Nova.
- We should collectively ensure that language offerings do not amount to tokenism.
- The merits of encouraging parents to lobby for Gaelic to be offered opposite to French language offerings in the school system was debated.

- Regarding school system offerings, we will benefit by identifying the desired outcomes from the program, and consider the importance of developing speakers and encouraging motivation to continue to study Gaelic.

The Comhairle needs to see that more is articulated about what resources are available to the public, such as materials available through the library system.

There was great concern expressed over the current enrollment of only four students in first year Gaelic at St.FXU.

C. Cameron presented a table which broke down the recommendations arising from the December 6, 2009 LDE Meeting into general areas of work, identified assets, specific needs and potential solutions posed. This was reviewed with the group and clarifications and corrections were discussed.

Several comments had been submitted before the meeting for discussion:

- Michael Newton expressed concern about the content of the Celtic Culture Course offering, and it was suggested that he submit his concerns to the Comhairle na Gàidhlig for review.
- Angus MacLeod submitted a comment of his success with using card-playing as a natural social activity that people can use between classes to work on Gaelic.
- Mairi Parr notified the group of the after-school programming for parents with Children taking Gaelic, which is being offered in Antigonish.

L. MacKinnon discussed some of the work of the OGA regarding Gaelic language.

- Bun 's Barr mentorship Program is being prepared for a second round. Another similar but unrelated program is being developed by a group of students in Antigonish. It involves four advanced learners who commit six hours per week with experienced instructors and their activities will include outings and activities tailored to their level of fluency.
- The value of a 6 week immersion in a home setting was discussed, as well as ways to consider developing the St. Ann's Gaelic College offering for effectiveness as an immersion setting.
- The responsibilities of the Field Officer position will be as a resource person to community tutors, support for the Bun 's Barr program and to continue work on the Tutors Guide which is currently being developed.
- The potential of a Pilot Nursery School project developed in conjunction with the School system in the Antigonish area was discussed. C. Parsons described the project that is underway in Pomquet which partners the community and the French School system.