

## **Media Workshop: "Getting the Message Right" Ian McNeil, June 26, 2010**

**Present:** Bev Brett, Caroline Cameron, Christina Campbell, Pauline MacDonald, Breanna MacLeod, Lewis MacKinnon, Bernice, Juanita MacDonald, Catriona Parsons, Jeanette Strachan, Barb Sutherland Foote

### **Ian MacNeill introduces workshop:**

Our objective in media work is to use a story to advance a cause. We were each asked to talk about what we do to support Gaelic. These were used for examples throughout the afternoon.

**Some of the current challenges** we have in forwarding a message to promote Gaelic are:

- Gaelic belongs to an older generation and time
- We have resistance to promote Gaelic among our own people
- We feel like we need to have a rational reason to justify our work for Gaelic
- "what good is it?"
- Gaelic could be said to be a culture of shyness, or at least, its suppression has brought this shyness about.
- We overlook that if Gaelic was lost in a generation, it can be gained in a generation (English was gained in a generation)
- Commonly people lack confidence using it in public because they feel that they have a poor command of it.

The stories we want to tell can be **focused into one sentence**, for our own clarity and to effectively communicate with the audience.

- The 'story' is a *person* doing *something* for a *reason*.
- The 'story' is also a fundamental part of Gaelic culture, as an art form, and as a way to convey cultural knowledge and belief. (The *story* is the *story*)

If there is an event that you are trying to promote and you can't come up with the 'appeal', perhaps the event should be questioned.

### **The reasons why we do our work are 'stories'**

- "Needs to get done"
- "Pursuing a dream"
- "all of my life, I was frustrated by not learning" \*\*\* "introduction of TIP"
- "I knew I had to do it now" "why?"
- Gaelic development may need a catalyst such as the Glendale concert in 1973
- Dan R. MacDonald "dared" people to pick up the fiddling cause
  - because "he loved the music"
- (Who is language equivalent?)

Use the focus sentence of the story: '**a person doing something for a reason**'. It will reveal holes in the ideas and gaps in research.

What is the emotional source? Look for ways to arouse the audience's sense of devotion. "Can't bottle it" – describes the very real, but intangible devotion that exists for Gaelic

Instill confidence before the story is told (in preliminary sentences, be strong).

Regarding our “shy’ culture, we should keep in mind that there is a real distinction between **promotion and storytelling**. While promotion is not necessarily culturally valued, we can easily honour storytelling as a way to raise awareness and seek support.

Lewis discusses **statement of the purpose** which he has developed: it can help in understanding our reasons for valuing Gaelic language and culture. This will be circulated to group. What is the *story* for mentorship program?

**Branding:** It is good for the Gaelic movement as a whole, or the Gaelic Council to have the profile such that people will say “Oh, that’s the bunch who ....”. We need to have a clear and powerful phrase for that sentence. Branding evokes a quick reflex perception.

**Some sample stories:**

- Two seniors reconnect through Gaelic, and this influences the lives of others, by bringing Gaelic back into a circle of people: Interview seniors about GAB. Link Press release to Youtube interview.
- World wide, language loss is a serious concern: Here is what Nova Scotia is doing:

**Audience:** What is the audience? The story should appeal to their interest. Need to have all the details in place to follow the simple ‘story’ approach. If the council wants to work at support and fund-raising, what more do people want to know?

- Municipalities would want to know numbers of participants in their area who this directly and indirectly affects (votes), school programming in area, what initiatives we are doing, what kind of a draw these represent.
- Community groups would be interested in the opportunity for senior involvement
- Parents of school kids
  - GAB classes for parents are available and fun
  - If you can interest students at a fairly young age to take Gaelic, there is a very good chance that they will take it in high schools and at least their first year of university. It is something new and exciting for the kids to do, and at higher levels, it is *their choice* to take it. There is a high correlation between those who took Gaelic in high school and those who will take it at least first year in university (Breanna’s comments after workshop)
- Musicians, traditional and otherwise: Language learning would make their work unique, authentic, they are ambassadors of Gaelic (not Celtic)
- People who were immersed in Gaelic as children but do not speak it:
  - It’s not too late
  - Gaelic can be very comforting to seniors – think of palliative care week.
  - Don’t lose it!
  - Give it to your grandchildren, what a gift!
- General population:
  - GAB is fun, learn as you can

- Internet and video provide us with huge advantages in learning
- GAB is a safe learning environment
- It belongs to you
- We have shared histories and stories with other cultural groups
- Middle-age potential learners:
  - You'll never stop learning
  - The stereotype of old and dying is inaccurate
  - Adds to quality of life – it **BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS**
    - parents can share activities with children
    - seniors' involvement
    - connections in communities
    - we are international leaders
- Students at the high school and university level: (Breanna noted that we didn't address this important level)

What is it that compels a person to **let their LOVE of language overcome their FEAR of judgment?** We may now be in a period of reconciliation of these two forces.

***Tips on reaching out to the media***

- There's a need to spoon-feed the media – make it easy for them to follow up.
- If you are going to send out a press release, you need to send it 1 day and 1 week in advance in order for them to react to it.
- The release should only be one page, and every time you send a release it should have the same look to it (logo, or format).
- Consistency in appearance and accuracy allows the development of a relationship. They're going to want to know when they pick up the release that the organization has done their homework. They want trust.
- The media's response is really about what happens to come up that day
- Send out information on where the media can find images, more information, contacts, etc. Don't give them all of the information at once though. They want to feel like they were part of the story. However, at the same time they want a story that they only have to make three calls to check out, and then they feel they've done their research.
- Don't tell the whole story in your release.
- Provide not only *who* to contact, but when is the best time to contact the person. Also, give the media a window of opportunity. Eg. "These people will be available for interviews at such-and-such a time" (A narrow window gives a concrete target which can be helpful when trying to schedule activities, so they will be encouraged to call.)
- When composing your media release, it is best to list everyone who is getting the email/fax/letter at the top. All media want to know they're getting the same story at the same time, and it might foster a little healthy competition.

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