

Comhairle na Gàidhlig – The Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia

Annual General Meeting Minutes Saturday, June 14th, 2025, 1:00PM on Zoom and Rm. 2030
Mulroney Hall, St. F.X. University, Antigonish

Present: Ed MacDonell (Chair), Rob Pringle (Vice Chair), David Spencer (Treasurer), Lili Watson (Secretary), Carol Anne MacKenzie, Peter Armstrong, Ranke de Vries, Nathan Bishop MacDonald, Catriona Parsons, Wendy Murray, Ella Hanson (Mios nan Gàidheal Coordinator), Kieran Walker (Administrator), Victoria Rankin, Dawn Miller, Sarah McGean.

Regrets: Aleen Stanton, Joe Murphy, Monica Ragan

1.0 Fàilte agus Tòiseachadh | Welcome and Call to Order

- Ed calls meeting to order at 1:01

2.0 Aontachadh air a' Chlàr | Approval of the Agenda for the day

- See below

3.0 Aontachadh air a' Gheàrr-chunntas | Approval of Minutes from last year's AGM

- Peter points out on page six of the minutes from last year's AGM that some text is missing
- Ed says that was his report. The sentiment of the sentence was to thank our Administrator for work during Mios nan Gàidheal.
- David motions to approve minutes and agenda, Rob seconds, passed by consensus

4.0 Iomraidhean - Reports

4.1 Report from President

-Busy year for the council. There are over 700 licence plates in the province which is about 20,000 dollars for GAA.

-Mios nan Gàidheal was successful as well. The committee met regularly for several months.

-Latha nan Gàidheal was a success at STFX as well. Thank you Ranke for getting us a room to put this on.

-Advocacy work continues. Letters sent to request funding and support for GABI and Taigh Sgoile na Drochaide

-We continue advocacy for support for Gaelic School teachers

-Our board is large, active, and dedicated

-Thank to OGA, Scottish government office, and CCTH department for their support and funding.

-It has been a privilege to be in this role as chair for the past three years

4.2 Report from Treasurer

-Not a ton to go over, we'll look at the statement of income and expenses

-So this is showing our ins and outs. We got funding from feds for Alasdair Cameron's position

-Funding from the license plate fund about \$20,000

-Funding from the OGA and HST rebates

-2100 from ??

-Outs are wages for Ella, Alasdair, Kieran etc

-We spend about 50,000 dollars a year on MNG

-Miscellaneous expenses for our website

-\$19,150 was given out with GAA

-Our balance sheet is the remaining money at the end of the year

-Our current liabilities is money to pay our staff and money we need to pay out for MNG and there are a few GAA grants yet to disperse

-We have about \$17,000 left of working capital

Peter: On the income statement there is a license plate for income and expenditure. What is the expenditure side for?

David: It's for GAA

Ed: Could you say a bit about Sandy's report?

David: It's a great thing we can get so much government support. Our grants are much larger now. We must go through a financial review each year to show the money is being spent responsibly. The review ensures that what I report to the council accurately reflects what our bank statements are saying. Not a formal audit but similar.

-There were two CRA over payments which have been submitted for a refund. This was really our only issue. It was about \$1800.

4.3 Report from Administrator

Advising & Advocacy:

-We wrote and sent several letters to the Minister for Gaelic Affairs and had a meeting with him on February 4th 2025. The meeting went well and served primarily as an introduction between the new Minister, Dave Ritcey and Comhairle na Gàidhlig representatives. The contents of those letters, which were sent prior and in follow-up to the meeting, included requests such as:

- Continued support for Taigh Sgoile na Drochaide and the Gàidhlig aig Baile Institute (now Cala Cainte);
- The creation of a Gaelic Services Division at the Department of Education;

- Increased funding for Office of Gaelic Affairs programming both for apprenticeship and project funding programmes; and,
- Additional positions within the office to bolster its capacity;

-We were informed that some bolstering of programming will happen through Cala Cainnte, also while there was no commitment to increased staffing we were informed that the existing positions filled in 2023 have been made permanent. While we were pleased to learn this, we will continue advocacy on the above topics.

-The committee has also met on organizing a series of Gaelic community development days. Though this is still in development, we met with staff at the Office of Gaelic affairs and drafted a proposal for a series of four planning days for the community to come together, talk about the issues that it is facing and develop the community's capacity for advocacy.

-The organization has also continued work regarding a survey to gain insight into the current status of Gaelic language and culture in the province. This is being done in partnership with the Office of Gaelic Affairs and the Highland Village Museum. I have been meeting with partners over the past year to review and plan the survey and it is hoped that it will be launched soon. Comhairle na Gàidhlig will have access to the collected data as a partner organization.

Fundraising:

-We continued to be successful in our regular operational funding with \$50,000.00 in operational funds being received from the government of Nova Scotia through the Department of Communities Culture Tourism and Heritage. We also released our notice of this operational funding in May of 2025.

-We were also successful in specific project funding applications which further supported our yearly activities. These included:

- Grants supporting Mios nan Gàidheal from The Office of Gaelic Affairs and The Scottish Government Office in Canada for \$50,000.00, and approximately \$14,000.00, respectively;
- A grant supporting Latha nan Gàidheal | Gaelic Day from the Office of Gaelic Affairs, \$5,450.00;

-We were very pleased to receive this support, which has been ongoing, for our yearly activities. In particular Mios nan Gàidheal which has become one of our Flagship offerings. However, we were unfortunately unsuccessful in our application for a federal Summer Jobs Programme Grant.

We will continue to apply to the programme in the coming year and hope that we will once again be able to benefit from it.

-In the past year fundraising priorities switched from operational funds to growing the Gaelic Community Development Fund in response to our more stable operational situation. This is a permanent endowment fund that was created after the dissolution of the Friends of Barra Society and is held on our behalf by the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia. We released information regarding this fund in our FIOS Newsletter and information is available on our and the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia's websites. We are currently in the process of organizing fundraising through a 50/50 draw and have most questions answered and hope to move forward over the summer.

-We are also thankful to community member Alexander MacDougall who donated the ticket sales of his February Céilidh in Bedford to the fund. This also served as an informal public launch of the fund with information circulated to attendees.

Gàidheil air Adhart:

-The Gàidheil air Adhart programme was again successful. I worked to support the committee in the programme's processes in the 2024-2025 fiscal year. This included drafting and updating application documents, tracking and supporting applicants to the programme as well as following up with applicants to notify them of the final status of their applications and to distribute final report documents. I also worked to collect previous year's reports and completed the final report of the previous year's round of funding that is submitted to the Office of Gaelic Affairs annually.

Mios nan Gàidheal:

-Planning for Mios nan Gàidheal began in October of 2024 with a call for volunteers to sit on the planning committee and preliminary meetings with our partners in the Office of Gaelic Affairs and the Scottish Government Office in Canada. These early actions and discussions were fruitful and led to a solid direction and foundation going into 2025. The committee was meeting on a weekly basis and as mentioned above funding was successfully acquired to implement our plans. In early 2025 the marketing firm Rhyme and Reason was again contracted to provide marketing services during the month.

-That said there were complications that arose, primarily around marketing assets. It was the original intention of the working group to have real individuals from the community featured in the marketing assets for the month, as this was both something that the group as a whole wanted to see and this is something that has been received as feedback in previous years. This

however did not end up happening. We received two draft options which could be utilized in the way that we wanted, however neither were seen as workable options by the committee after several revisions. So, due to concerns over time, the plan to have real community members included had to be abandoned.

-Overall, as will be reported in the Mìos nan Gàidheal report, we did have a successful year overall. This was highlighted by events, engagement, and feedback received from community members regarding events and our final assets.

Nova Scotia Teachers' Advocacy:

-Various letters were sent to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, Brendan Maguire, to advocate for the needs of Gaelic language teachers in the public school system. These letters focused on the following issues:

- The creation of a Gaelic Services Division at the Department of Education;
- Developing a strategic plan to promote Gaelic as a teachable subject and to foster the accreditation of more Gaelic teachers;
- Continuing to expand online offerings of Gaelic content;
- Ensuring funds for Gaelic going to the Centres for Education are being utilized for Gaelic programming;
- Increasing the ways that Mìos nan Gàidheal is promoted;

-The result of this advocacy has been mixed. While a Gaelic services division has not been created, there is now an individual who is responsible for Gaelic at the department, Alexander MacDougall, who has taken Gaelic programming on as a part of his wider responsibilities as a Director within the Department. We are happy for this development, however we did emphasize the need for someone with a strong knowledge of the language and culture to be present at the department level to advise on curriculum. It was also said by both Alexander and fellow Director at the Department, Dr. Jennifer Burke, that it would be investigated as part of ongoing restructuring as to how effectively funds allocated to Gaelic are being used to support programming.

-Other points will continue to be advanced and will need significant community engagement to see real movement. For example, coordination with the Department, Universities, and importantly parents and students will be key for increasing the availability of Gaelic language as a taught subject in Nova Scotia schools. It should also be noted that the online Gaelic class offered through NS virtual schools, which Comhairle na Gàidhlig advocated for previously,

has been very successful in its first year with 10 students. Which we are told is very good for a first offering of an elective course.

-Finally, our Latha nan Gàidheal | Gaelic Day event, which has become a regular offering of the organization in supporting student engagement with Gaelic culture, was successful again this year taking place on May 30th. Highlights of the day included:

- The attendance of 150 students from different parts of the province;
- The attendance of Kyle MacQuarrie Ministerial Assistant to the Minister of Gaelic Affairs, who spoke to students at the beginning of the day and praised the event; and,
- The attendance of the Siar agus Aniar ambassadors, who attended sessions and enriched them through cultural exchange.

-While the day is considered a success, there were challenges around scheduling conflicts that led to fewer schools and students attending than anticipated (in large part due to provincial track and field competitions). This along with issues of administration changes and transportation meant that we had about 25-35 fewer students and two fewer schools attending than anticipated. We do strive to continue to improve the event and preliminary feedback and reflection points to several ways to do this in the future. Those are primarily:

- Restructuring the day to maximize contact hours between instructors and students; and,
- Investigating if we, as the inviting organization, might be able to support bussing where shortages have meant many students have had to leave early;

Other:

-We have also continued to offer other pieces of programming such as our Newsletter FIOS which has grown to have a subscriber base of almost 630 individuals. This reach also extends farther through our social media platforms. We also plan to augment this service through the use of our Mios nan Gàidheal calendar which will become a year-long service keeping track of community events.

-Likewise, support has continued for the Cainnt mo Mhàthar online archive. This continues to be an important tool for Gaelic teachers and learners with transcription and editing ongoing. Likewise the physical display has continued to be used by Comhairle na Gàidhlig at various events as a teaching tool, though it unfortunately was not rented out by community

organizations this year.

-General communications and administrative work has also continued. Social media followers have continued to increase over the past year with particular growth centred around Mios nan Gàidheal, which is to be expected. Also, updates to our website specifically to the learning and teachers resources pages were made to include as many online and Nova Scotia based resources as possible for learners and instructors.

Ed: The Gaelic community development fund. We have not yet had a dispersal but Nova Scotia communities... say that in accordance with the CRA we will have to distribute funds each year at 4%. The endowment fund has about 14,000 as it currently stands. By December 31st we'll have to have a dispersal.

4.4 Committee Reports

Mios Nan Gaidheal -Ella

-It was our most successful yet as the council took over the main part of planning. Gaelic lives in Nova Scotia was our theme.

-We worked with rhyme and reason again this year to reflect this idea in advertising assets for the month.

-We had 95 total events for the month of May on our calendar.

-Our committee consisted of about 13 members from OGA, the council, and community members

-I was on boarded in April and we met weekly.

-Our social media assets received significant engagement

-Rhyme and Reason gained more of an understanding of Gaelic in Nova Scotia and the council itself

-We sent posters to MLA offices, schools, libraries and museums

-We pushed a submission option on our website

-We had our wrap up meeting the other week. It was suggested we start meeting up to ten months prior and we continue to add and update our media contact list.

-Think about broader funding for traditional media like Tv and radio

-This will all come out in a more detailed by the end of June with more specified statistics

-Our engagement and reach was about 2 million impressions excluding billboards. Just over the 1.9 million we had last year.

-Our meta ads resulted in about 10,000 clicks to Gaelic.ca

-Our social media budget was elevated this year which is reflected in our clicks and engagement of the ads

-We had ads on youtube and spotify this year

-We continue to see exponential growth each year in our social media engagement and in community events

Carol Anne: The month was almost over by the time we received posters so just something to keep in mind

Ella: We've made a note for next year

-Motion made to accept reports

5.0 Nomination of Board Members

Three calls were made seeking nominations from the floor. None received.

6.0 Election of the Executive

David staying on as Treasurer. Lili staying on as Secretary.

Calls made for a nomination for Chair. David nominates Rob as chair, Peter seconds, passed by consensus

Calls made for a nomination for Vice Chair. Rob nominates Nathan as vice chair, Carol Anne seconds, passed by consensus

7.0 Election of a Financial Auditor

The Executive to explore a financial audit in months ahead.

8.0 Gnothaichean Sonraichte - Special Business

Carol Anne: Defective licence plates can be replaced for free at Access Nova Scotia just so people are aware

9.0 Sgaoileadh | Adjournment

Carol Anne motions to adjourn, passed by consensus

Lili Watson

Secretary for the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia