

# STÒRAS A' BHAILE

## HIGHLAND VILLAGE GAELIC FOLKLIFE SCHOOL AND CELEBRATION

AN CLACHAN GÀIDHEALACH / HIGHLAND VILLAGE, IONA, PROUDLY PRESENTS A FOUR DAY IMMERSION  
FOLKLIFE CELEBRATION FEATURING DOMESTIC ARTS, STORY, SONG, MUSIC AND DANCE OF GAELIC  
NOVA SCOTIA CONCLUDING WITH OUR ANNUAL HIGHLAND VILLAGE DAY SCOTCH CONCERT.



STÒRAS FEATURES SOME OF GAELIC NOVA SCOTIA'S BEST KNOWN RESEARCHERS, ARTISTS AND TRADITION BEARERS, INCLUDING UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH'S DR. JOHN SHAW, GAELIC RECORDING ARTIST MARY JANE LAMOND, SUSAN CAMERON, GAEL-STREAM DIGITIZATION CHAIR, THE HIGHLAND VILLAGE INTERPRETIVE STAFF AND GAELIC FRIENDS. JOIN US FOR SONG, STORYTELLING, HANDS ON IMMERSION SESSIONS & DISCOVER HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN ENHANCE OUR GAELIC LEARNING WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GAEL-STREAM DIGITIZATION PROJECT

## JULY 29<sup>TH</sup> - AUGUST 1<sup>ST</sup>

REPORT TO: OFFICE OF GAELIC AFFAIRS  FROM: NOVA SCOTIA HIGHLAND VILLAGE

AUGUST 2009

# Stòras a' Bhaile 2009

## Event Design

**Stòras a' Bhaile 2009 convened three days of workshops, July 29, 30 and 31, focusing on language acquisition through living Gaelic culture. During this time, sixteen individuals registered to participate in activities based in the experience of Gaelic Nova Scotia's tangible and intangible cultures. In addition Stòras a' Bhaile drew attention to technical support for Nova Scotia's Gaelic culture through Sruth nan Gàidheal; the online portal containing a comprehensive representation of the province's Gaelic tradition in story, song and local history.**

Stòras a' Bhaile participants numbered sixteen in total (See Appendix A Names of Participants.) Three native speakers representing dialects from Central Cape Breton, Catalone and Inverness County conducted sessions on cooking and farm related work over the three days. As well Gaelic speaker and fiddler Joe Peter MacLean of Boisdale supported sessions conversationally and musically. Dr. John Shaw directed morning classes on telling Gaelic

stories known in Nova Scotia and accessible on-line from the *Sruth nan Gàidheal* portal. Each day ended with a ninety minute gathering in the schoolhouse, which allowed all an opportunity to dance, sing, tell a story and play an instrument.



Immersion activities were inclusive of language arts, music, dance, home care, gardening and the preparation of Gaelic food fare such *maragan*, *iosban* and *bonnach*. Workshops



and activities were designed to engage individuals in a non-threatening language environment that allowed for participation in social settings familiar to Gaelic speakers who acquired their

language abilities by way of generational transmission. Instruction on use and content of the *Sruth nan Gàidheal/ Gaelstream* digital website was made available throughout the folklife school in the Highland Village Tuning Room.

**(See Appendix B Schedule Brochure)**



Photos: Allan MacLeod works in the garden with the participants (top)

Catherine MacNeil guides participants through the process of making marag gheal (above)

Joe Peter MacNeil on the fiddle (left)

# Gaelic Language Through Social Transmission

## Approach to Gaelic Language Transmission

*Stòras a' Bhaile* philosophy is grounded on the concept that Gaelic language renewal in Nova Scotia depends on restoring a group identity based in shared cultural expressions. For emerging secondary-bilinguals expecting to use Gaelic as a natural medium for social affirmation, the supporting environment must offer an associated identity culturally and linguistically distinct. The mission for *Stòras a' Bhaile*: 2009 was to encourage common Gaelic usage in ways which have typified Gaelic world view to the present.

It is the consensus of project organizers that progress in Gaelic renewal is evident in Nova Scotia's community-based Gaelic initiatives now in place around the province. This is particularly so in the area of adult education through the *Gàidhlig aig Baile* methodology. Much work remains to be done, however, to reintegrate Gaelic language and culture to its familiar social domains. *Stòras a' Bhaile* intends to contribute at least one approach to normalizing Gaelic language as a medium for daily life. The usual platform for Gaelic experiences in Nova Scotia is most often through community classes. As a program concerned with language acquisition through social interaction, *Stòras a' Bhaile* is not structured, or delivered as a formal class. Its format is inclusive - regardless of Gaelic skills - of all wishing to have an immersion experience by way of cultural transmission in a social environment.

Building on *Stòras* discussions and programming for 2007 and 2008, *Stòras a' Bhaile* 2009 saw a Gaelic only rule in place for all sessions, including lunch. Not only was the rule strictly observed by all participants during the on-site program schedule, but seemed to carry over to after hours socializing among younger participants as they gathered on the Jamesville beach and in cottages following the day's end at Highland Village. Perhaps, as much as anything else important about the program, it was obvious that Gaelic language and culture can have a substantive role to play in social interactions taking place outside organized learning situations. In this sense, the program's objective shows promise for growth and development. **(See Appendix C - Participants Remarks)**

## *Stòras a' Bhaile* Coordinating Partnerships

*Stòras a' Bhaile* is a partner-based initiative. Coordination of resources and event planning was carried out by Highland Village staff members Jim Watson, Eòsag Nic an t-Saoir and trustee Hugh MacKinnon along with Susan Cameron, librarian for the Father Brewer Celtic Collection, St. Francis Xavier University, Dr. John Shaw, Senior Lecturer, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh and Gaelic singer Mary Jane Lamond.

Funding support from the Office of Gaelic Affairs is gratefully acknowledged by Nova Scotia Highland and the organizing committee.

Overall objectives for *Stòras a' Bhaile* 2009 were as follows:

1. Inform on and transmit Gaelic arts and folkways indigenous to Nova Scotia;
2. Educate on uses of the *Sruth nan Gàidheal* website that compliment and reinforce Gaelic folklife skills and language transmission through the medium of a social environment;
3. Identify, explore and experience Gaelic cultural expressions relevant to Nova Scotia;
4. Encourage participation in Gaelic cultural expression by individuals, community groups and educational institutions;
5. Bring detailed awareness to specifics of Nova Scotia Gaelic language and culture in a social environment designed for transmission of arts such as music, dance, singing, storytelling and home culture;
6. Celebrate and share Nova Scotia's Gaelic traditions as a social resource owned by its inheritors and community of interest.
7. Encourage the maintenance of Nova Scotia's Gaelic cultural assets as a renewable resource for community economic and social development.

# Contributing Nova Scotia Gaelic Speakers

While the secondary bilingual community of Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia continues to expand, the province's older native speakers continue to shrink in number. Nevertheless their contributions to Gaelic renewal in Nova Scotia remains significant from past to present. Their presence is measurably felt in their generous support of community-based language initiatives and through their recorded voices in digitized on-line collections such as *Sruth nan Gàidheal* and *Cainnt Mo Mhàthar*. *Stòras a' Bhaile* was very pleased to have been able to feature the following presenters during the 2009 program:

**Catherine MacNeil** (*Catriona ni'n Iomhair Mhicheil 'An Shaothair*) Christmas Island, Cape Breton County

Catherine (nee MacNeil) has given much in the way of Gaelic language support to her surrounding community. A stalwart whose knowledge of traditional Gaelic cooking and excellent Gaelic provides a rich source of vocabulary and cultural insights, Catherine has been a regular contributor to projects such as TIP classes, archival recordings, *Cainnt Mo Mhàthar*, *Féis an Eilein* activities and *Stòras a' Bhaile*. She directed this year's *marag* making sessions through instruction carried out by participants and taking charge to clarify any doubt as to properly administering ingredients. *Stòras* very much looks forward to working with Catherine in the future.



**Allan MacLeod** (*Ailean mac Ruairidh 'ic Aonghais 'ic Dhòmhnail 'ic Iain*), Catalone, Cape Breton County

Allan is one of the few remaining Gaelic speakers from south eastern Cape Breton Island. He is native to New Boston. Well-known as a singer with a repertoire of locally composed songs, Allan is a skilled interpreter of Gaelic rural life and former employee of Fortress Louisbourg where he worked for many years as a carpenter. Allan has given of his considerable talents freely to Gaelic social events such as church choirs, milling frolics and concerts including performances with the Cape Breton Gaelic Show at the Vancouver Folk Festival. His excellent Gaelic guided participants through open hearth fire building, garden weeding, turnip thinning and singing "MacVicar" songs during an afternoon *céilidh* in the schoolhouse. *Stòras* hopes to invite Allan back for its next program.



**Theresa Burke** (*Tréasag ni'n Pheadair Mhóir Steabhain Mhicheil*), Sydney, Cape Breton County

Theresa Burke, and sister Martha (nee Mac Neil) were born and raised in Glen Garry, rear Big Pond. They are exceptional tradition bearers in the Cape Breton Barra vintage. It was very unfortunate that Martha was unable to attend this year's *Stòras* due to illness. Theresa, along with daughter Marion, brought a wide range of Gaelic perspectives to *Stòras* participants. An expert in *bonnach* making in the wood-fired oven, Theresa interspersed instruction with reminiscences about her childhood years in Glen Garry and memories of Gaelic song and music in their household, including the piping of their uncle Neil R. MacIassac. *Stòras* looks forward to Theresa and Martha returning with Marion for *Stòras a' Bhaile 2010*.



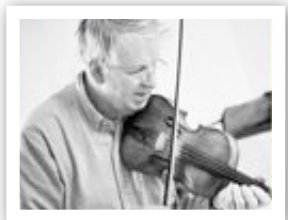
**Anna MacKinnon** (*Anna ni'n Iain Aonghais Ailein*), The Banks, Inverness County

Anna MacKinnon (nee MacDonald) was *Stòras'* only Inverness County contributor in 2009. Anna is well known in the surrounding Inverness area for her contributions to Gaelic classes and occasions. As with the other *Stòras* contributors, Anna is an excellent Gaelic speaker offering a fine example of Moideart-Cape Breton dialect. Anna is a great source of local anecdote and memories of her childhood family in Sight Point (*Rubha 'n t-Seallaidh*.) Her clear speaking style and sense of humor brought a real taste of Gaelic wit and social interaction to the program's sessions during her visit. We were grateful to Carmen MacArthur for bringing Anna to Iona from Inverness and home again. *Stòras* hopes to work with Anna again in 2010.



**Joe Peter MacLean** (*Eòs Theàrlaich Eòis*), Boisdale, Cape Breton County

Joe Peter MacLean is one of Nova Scotia's last Gaelic-speaking fiddlers. In addition to a superb command of Scotch music, Joe Peter is a strong supporter for Gaelic culture in the Province. He is rarely absent from Gaelic events anywhere they make take place in eastern Nova Scotia. Along with Gaelic style fiddling, Joe Peter is a constant source of idioms, *puirt á beul* and *seanachas* reflecting his home area of MacAdam's Lake and Boisdale. *Stòras* organizers look forward to working with Joe Peter in upcoming *Stòras a' Bhaile* gatherings.



# Stòras a' Bhaile

## Coordination and Planning for 2010



Photos: Preparations are made for maragan in the Centre Hallway House (above)

Participants gather in the tuning room for a storytelling session conducted by Dr. John Shaw (left)

*Stòras a' Bhaile 2010* seeks to build further on suggestions arising from *Stòras a' Bhaile 2009*. The current planning team will continue in its role as cross-institutional partnership. Programming will continue to incorporate technical resources and social immersion for transmission of Nova Scotia's Gaelic language and culture. The working group's long-term vision is to establish an advanced community folklife model grounded on immersion social experiences in living Gaelic heritage. *Stòras a' Bhaile 2009* was the first initiative of its kind in Nova Scotia. The planning team envisages it as a template for other such events in the Province.

The planning committee holds the conviction that maintaining traditional arts and folkways can affectively sustain people and communities by continuous

development and growth. From this perspective, the planning committee feels that it is important for community members to be direct participants in maintaining expressions of their own heritage. In doing so, new tradition bearers can enrich the community by interactively sharing traditions held in mutual respect and pride.

Objectives for *Stòras a' Bhaile 2010* include the following:

1. To continue to provide the Nova Scotia Gaelic community with cultural opportunities through oral transmission of its cultural heritage,
2. To continue focusing on Nova Scotia's cultural expression and aesthetics in regional representations;
3. To educate on traditional Gaelic arts, folkways and history as diverse by community;
4. To provide a unique social occasion for sharing and maintaining the vitality of arts and folkways indigenous to Gaelic Nova Scotia;
5. To promote lasting institutional partnerships for immersion programming that can benefit all constituents of the Nova Scotia Gaelic community.
6. To augment the Sruth nan Gàidheal - Gaelstream portal with digital recordings drawn from *Stòras* sessions that can further academic research and community educational applications

## STÒRAS A' BHAILE 2009 - APPENDIX A



### *Organizers*

Susan Cameron, St. Francis Xavier University  
Mary Jane Lamond, Cape Breton Gaelic singer  
Hugh MacKinnon, Nova Scotia Highland Village  
Eòsag Nic an t-Saoir, Nova Scotia Highland Village  
Dr. John Shaw, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh  
Jim Watson, Nova Scotia Highland Village

### *Gaelic Leaders*

Theresa Burke, Sydney, Nova Scotia  
Anna MacKinnon, The Banks, Inverness, Nova Scotia  
Joe Peter MacLean, Catalone, Nova Scotia  
Allan MacLeod, Catalone, Nova Scotia  
Catherine MacNeil, Christmas Island, Nova Scotia



### *Participants*

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# UR BEATHA DO STÒRAS A' BHAILE AN CLÀR ÀMA - SCHEDULE

## DICIADAIN

AN T-IUCHAR 29, 2009

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29<sup>TH</sup> 2009

- 9:30 - 10:00 AM: *CLÀRADH*  
REGISTRATION  
Visitor Centre
- 10:00 - 10:30 AM: *UR BEATHA DO STÒRAS*  
ORIENTATION  
Tuning Room
- 10:30 - 12:00 PM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Naidbeachdan*  
Tuning Room
- 12:00 - 12:45 PM: *DINNEAR - LUNCH*  
Tuning Room
- 12:45 - 2:20 PM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Taisbeanadh*  
*Còcaireachd*  
Traditional Cooking  
i) *Marag geal*  
Centre Hallway House  
ii) *Bonnach*  
Turn of the Century  
Farmhouse
- 2:30 - 4:00 PM: *ANN AN CUIDEACHD*  
*CHÀIRDEAN*  
CÉILIDH  
Gaelic stories, songs,  
dance and music  
School house

## DIARDAOIN

AN T-IUCHAR 30, 2009

THURSDAY, JULY 30<sup>TH</sup> 2009

- 9:30 - 9:45 AM: *UR BEATHA DO STÒRAS*  
ORIENTATION  
Tuning Room
- 9:45 - 10:45 AM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Naidbeachdan*  
Tuning Room
- 10:55 - 11:55 PM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Togail an teine*  
Centre Chimney House
- 12:00 - 12:45 PM: *DINNEAR - LUNCH*  
Tuning Room
- 12:45 - 1:45 PM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Air a' Bhaile*  
On the Farm  
Barn
- 2:00 - 4:00 PM: *ANN AN CUIDEACHD*  
*CHÀIRDEAN*  
CÉILIDH  
Gaelic stories, songs,  
dance and music  
School house

## DI H-AOINE

AN T-IUCHAR 31, 2009

FRIDAY, JULY 31<sup>ST</sup> 2009

- 9:30 - 9:45 AM: *UR BEATHA DO STÒRAS*  
ORIENTATION  
Tuning Room
- 9:45 - 10:45 AM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Naidbeachdan*  
Tuning Room
- 10:55 - 12:30 PM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Taisbeanadh*  
*Còcaireachd*  
Traditional Cooking  
i) *Sgadan is Buntàta*  
Turn of the Century  
Farmhouse  
ii) *Aran Coirce*  
Centre Hallway House
- 12:30 - 1:15 PM: *DINNEAR - LUNCH*  
Tuning Room
- 1:15 - 2:15 PM: *AIG BAILE*  
HANDS-ON GAELIC  
SESSION  
*Obair an Taighe*  
House work  
Centre Hallway House
- 2:30 - 4:00 PM: *ANN AN CUIDEACHD*  
*CHÀIRDEAN*  
CÉILIDH  
Gaelic stories, songs,  
dance and music  
School house

# Participants Remarks

*Following Stòras a' Bhaile 2009, participants having email addresses were contacted and asked to give their thoughts on two questions: What did you like about Stòras a' Bhaile and How would you improve Stòras a' Bhaile? All remarks received are recorded here:*

*A (Bhana) Charaid chòir,*

*As was mentioned during the last day of Stòras a' Bhaile, I am sending out two simple questions to get some feed back from you on the event. In considering your remarks, it may be useful here to reiterate that Stòras a' Bhaile is not intended to be class structured, or delivered. It welcomes all regardless of Gaelic skills who wish to have an immersion experience through cultural expression. Stòras intent is to enhance language ability through transmission in a social environment.*

*We look forward to more Stòras a' Bhaile programming in the future. Your participation was greatly appreciated.*

*Le deagh rùn,*

*Buidheann Phlanagaidh Stòras a' Bhaile*

### Response 1

I appreciated the Gaelic only rule because in a short time it seemed to put people in a "mindset" which was conducive to helping them absorb what was transpiring. I also enjoyed changing venues and hearing from different tradition bearers. It was great fun to be outside in the garden too. The ceilidh at the end of the day seemed to be very natural and people were willing to participate with just a little encouragement. All in all, the schedule was very manageable and it avoided any sort of rushing or logistical stresses.

I might suggest that there be more of the Storytelling, as people seemed to enjoy that part a lot. It might also work better if there were a couple of smaller groups so that more people got a chance to answer the questions or perhaps give a story of their own. In a big group some people are more reticent to speak. I noticed a lot of people were recording during these sessions, it might be an idea to give participants copies of some of the recordings to take with them. From my own perspective, concerning the use of the Gaelstream resource, I have a couple of thoughts. First off, if I was able to function in Gaelic, it might have been good to have some time for people to come and use the resource on their own, and I could answer questions. If it was set up so that people might want to learn a story they could have an opportunity to listen repeatedly in their own time. I might have also used that opportunity to get people looking at the wikis which are set up for both Gaelstream and Nova Scotia Gaelic learning materials.

Of course having it even longer than three days, maybe five days would be better, because people were starting to get used to each other and more comfortable and I think with two more days the results would be noticeable.

### Response 2

Sin sibh fhein airson gach obair a rinn sibh 's mile taing dhuibh airson sin. Chord an stòras ruim gu mòr! S toigh leam a bhith a seinn fad na h-uine 's fad mo bheatha. Bu toigh leam a bhith a' seinn le duine aig a bheil guthan gu math làidir, ach 's mise an dìreach fear am miosg na boireanaich anns a' chomhlan An Clitha Clis. ('s mar a chanadh iad... Gura mise tha fo mhulad)

Ach bith mi ag ionnsachadh orain ur fad na h-uine 's a cur snas air na fuinn agamas.



### Response 3

Everything. Informal atmosphere. Participation was welcomed. Great food. Great people. Na seann fheadhainn. Bha iad cho brèagha. The evening activities. Great price. Seeing soooo many speakers, and young ones, in one place. The songs, music, dance and fun. The great stories. The natural feeling, setting and language. Everything was amazing. Learning some traditional skills that I can really use at home and share with others in my community. We really had the time of our lives and hated to have to come back to real life. It was such a treat to "be in Gaelic" for so long. And I noticed how quickly my Gaelic was improving and how easy it was to pick things up. I get rusty sooo quickly at home!

It would be awesome if it could be for a week, or happen more frequently throughout the year or in different places. It was just awesome on every level, not a complaint about a single thing!!!

Moran taing uile!!!

### Response 4

What did you like about Stòras a' Bhaile?

- Cothrom thighinn comhla gus Gaidhlig a bhruidhinn fad uine mhor.
- Cothrom seachas a dheanamh air diofar rudan - gu h-araid rudan laitheil
- Cothrom ionnsachadh bho dhaoine eile.
- A'togail Gaidhlig ann an suidheachadh nadarra.

How can Stòras a' Bhaile be improved?

- Dh'fhaoidhte geamaichean a chluich gus a h-uile duine a tharraing a-staigh is gus am faigheadh a h-uile duine cothrom bruidhinn.

-A'dol gu aitaichan diofaraichte, dh'fhaoidhte a leithid a' chladach gus rudan ura a thogail mu dheoghainn rudan/aitaichean sonraichte...

Chord a h-uile sian rium glan, a' Sheumais, is bha mi cho toilichte gun d'fhuair mi cothrom a dhol ann. Cha diochuimhnich mi gu brath e!

### Response 5

Thanks again for letting the beginner join in, it was a wonderful opportunity to hear Gaelic spoken so much and in such a beautiful setting. Following are answers to your survey!

1. What did you like about Stòras a' Bhaile?

- great setting
- food was delicious and oatcakes oh my!
- full immersion atmosphere was very helpful in 'getting over' making mistakes.
- combination of language and skill learning was great (helps to put an action to the word)
- ceilidhs were excellent and a fun way to end the day.
- very much enjoyed having the input of the tradition bearers.
- having at museum was also a good way to 'advertise' the gaelic culture and learning in Nova Scotia to visitors and to show that it is very much an active community and to show what the culture is today.

2. How can Stòras a' Bhaile be improved?

- recipes!
- hard to say, I really enjoyed it!
- song workshop?

### Response 6

I liked everything about Stòras a' Bhaile, especially the demonstrations speakers did on traditional activities. All the activities were beneficial, but overall the best part of the program was that it provided social time for a group of people capable of communicating solely on Gaelic.

I think in the future Stòras a' Bhaile could be longer. Also, it could be appropriate to incorporate more discussion / orientation about Gaelic music into the céilidh sessions.

### **Response 7**

The organizers of Stòras a' Bhaile have succeeded in providing a valuable opportunity for young Gaelic-speakers in the province to connect in natural group-based settings with Cape Breton Island's Gaelic-speaking elders and their traditional stores of knowledge. I would argue that this programme has succeeded in allowing for a weakened link in the communal transmission of Scottish Gaelic language and culture, as passed down over the last two centuries, to be strengthened and renewed between these generations. The success of such interactions between these two generations was only one of the programme's major achievements. Attention should also be brought to the programme's triumph among speakers in my own generation, as Stòras a' Bhaile has encouraged young learners of the language through providing a much-needed organic environment where inter- as well as intra-generational cultural exchanges can occur. Personally, these three days have been among the most inspirational and constructive events for me during my several years of learning the language in the province. It has revealed the continued ability of the talented individuals at the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum and their various partners in combining their strengths to provide services to the local community that are not only of the highest quality but are also invaluable in their return in terms of the current efforts for Scottish Gaelic linguistic and cultural renewal in the province. The fact that the usage of Gaelic and its associated cultural forms continued outwith the official programme in various gatherings during the evening among the younger participants reveals its ability at providing continued enjoyment in using the language and also in endorsing a strong sense of pride towards Scottish Gaelic among those who participated.

Because of the tremendous success Stòras a' Bhaile has had in encouraging and inspiring young people to interact with Gaelic-speaking elders in the community as well as among their peers in their own generation, it would be recommended that the programme be expanded and perhaps even be adopted as a model in the ongoing efforts for language renewal in the province; perhaps exploring the possibility of incorporating it into the advanced levels of Gàidhlig aig Baile in various communities throughout Nova Scotia. If the programme is to be offered again next summer I would personally enjoy it seeing it be expanded and am happy to offer any assistance or support needed by the organizers in order to do so.

### **Response 8**

I thought the three-day immersion was excellent. I enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and in particular the opportunity to meet, converse with, and learn from native Gaelic speakers from Cape Breton. The opportunities for such a group of learners of all ages and stages of language acquisition to meet in a lengthy immersion setting along with native Cape Breton Gaels is rare and invaluable. The setting of the Highland Village was ideal for such a gathering.

I cannot think of any suggestions for improvement. Perhaps have the opportunity for a longer immersion period, say 5-7 days, although I think this would likely be logistically difficult both to organize, fund, and for participants to attend. The 3-day event is probably ideal.

### **Response 9**

From participating in the three days of the Gaelic folklife school this year, it is clear that Stòras a' Bhaile has a lot to offer to participants and the surrounding communities.

Most striking in this regard is the way in which Stòras a' Bhaile has actively complemented the high level of language skills achieved by Gaelic learners in the TIP courses throughout the province. The immersion aspect, I feel, was effortless, and I don't recall a single instance in which the 'Gaelic only rule' had to be invoked. Participants showed great interest in the contents of the various aspects of regional Gaelic life, and were eager to retain the vocabulary of words and expressions that surfaced naturally during the sessions. This has been an event where learning has occurred at all levels, not least of all among the community sources of tradition. For Gaelic speakers there is a strong sense of affirmation attached to seeing younger people show these levels of founded interest, competence and commitment.

Highland Village has been the ideal venue, not only on account of the period buildings used as venues, but also from its very effective organisation of the event and its close attention to detail. There are few if any other events where so much solid progress was achieved for Gaelic in Cape Breton over so little time.

Everyone involved is to be congratulated.

## Response 10

Storas a' Bhaile was an amazing opportunity for me, a unique opportunity to speak Gaelic and to hear Gaelic spoken by a variety of speakers at everyday activities. The three days seemed very short.

I thought the storytelling was excellent - revisiting the stories several times a good idea. And putting an emphasis on Cape Breton based anecdotes too - very good. Encouraging the participants to tell the story as they remembered it within the group seemed a perfect way to go from listening to telling the stories. Perhaps it would have been even more effective at this stage if the larger group had been broken up into two - each of no more than 10. It might have been a little less...intimidating...to join in and retell a story - that had already been so well told - within a smaller group. Also there would be greater opportunity for participation within a smaller group. (I very much appreciated the informal setting with tea and coffee available during the storytelling.)

The hands on sessions were very interesting - loaded with new phrases and words - in natural settings that helped fix them in the memory. I thought you and Mary Jane were right to be very flexible in how each session was conducted. You tried different approaches to get the most out of each activity. I especially enjoyed watching Anna talk Mairi-Sine through making oatcakes. The simple fact that Anna had to explain to Mairi-Sine in detail how to make the oatcakes and was free to do so while Mairi-Sine did the running around the kitchen worked perfectly. Lots and lots of Gaelic came naturally out of the situation. A ceilidh was a great way to end the day as well.

It might be interesting to hold Storas a'Bhaile at different times of the year, say every four months, so that you could highlight different activities appropriate to each season - planting in the spring, cutting hay in the fall, fuarag and ghost stories at Halloween, etc.

The chance to hear native speakers with different accents speaking "kitchen Gaelic" was wonderful of course. I felt very, very fortunate to have been part of Storas this summer.

Tapadh leibh uile.

## Response 11

What I liked about Storas a Bhaile was that it was a social learning experience. It was an opportunity to socialize in the language but there was enough guidance and structure and opportunities to ask questions that it was also an excellent way to gain new expressions and vocabulary. I thought that for having done this for the first time that everyone got into the swing of things very quickly and the more that these events are held the more self-organizing they will become. By that I mean that at this stage there was definitely the need for defined leaders in order for the event to work but as the participants become more confident in their language and cultural skills the role of the leader will be much more in line with that of a traditional ceilidh wherein the leadership is more fluid with people taking turns leading the session. I thought that the sessions in Storytelling were excellent and the idea of asking questions and discussing the stories and vocabulary the next day was terrific and a method that could be further developed and used throughout the day.

What I thought could be improved? I think some discussion is warranted on the role of the native speakers in this program. I think it is invaluable to have them there but I wasn't sure if the activities that we involved them in were the best draw out their skills. I think that the topics were good but we should have some discussion about the methodology and how to deliver these sessions. I think for example, when we have a session like Making bonnach or building a fire we should have a session beforehand in order to determine who will do what and where they should stand, in order to maximize sight lines. I also wonder if we need to have some sort of simple equipment in order to amplify our visitors voices even slightly as not everyone could hear what was being said. It may be useful to review the video tapes of these sessions and look for ways to improve them.

## Response 12

Though I did not take in Stòras a' Bhaile in its entirety, I thoroughly enjoyed that which I was able to attend. The feeling that everyone was working together with a common interest and level of commitment was apparent throughout the three days. Keeping immersed the entire time challenged participants and instructors continuously, in positive ways. Telling the stories using images was an effective way to transmit meaning to learners. It may have been helpful if images were drawn or presented as new vocabulary was introduced on a phrase by phrase or concept by concept basis to perhaps allow for more specific clarity. The way in which Dr. Shaw encouraged participants to retell the story was a great way to reinforce the content. The inclusion of tradition bearers was a must and added immeasurably to the experience! Looking forward to many more!

## Response 13

I liked the marag, i think that was the best part) I think it should have been a week long, or longer!!

It's a great idea but it needs some work and flexibility for me. For me at my stage and the way I learn, some written text. It would have been very useful to write 10 words out that were important to each story. It would have greatly assisted my understanding of said stories the first time. It seems to me that we are more concerned about being pure than teaching and learning, which I see as holding the whole thing back. That being said, I was surprised, and pleased, to see the ability and (young) age of those involved. It may have been that the stories were shorter and easier to understand at the end of the week than the longer ones at the start. It could have been that I was more in tune by Friday as well. Not sure on that as the apples could never be the same.

All that being said, I enjoyed it very much!!!! I have not been around John Shaw very much, but found his delivery extremely helpful and comfortable. This probably flies in the face of all immersion manuals, but English is a part of our lives (like it or not) and it's in our Gaelic language. To not use it as a tool to teach is like having a tractor and not using the PTO!! I believe it needs to be part of the solution. I think it should be used just a bit to help teach. The ceilidh sessions were too long for me. An hour would have been plenty. I think that if people are at this level of learning, the ceilidh part of the day may have been better spent more on the learning side of things instead of the social aspect. I believe that this level of learner is probably aware of the culture that goes along with the language - to some degree anyway. More time spent breaking into smaller groups once again. Perhaps focusing on ceilidhs, or the lingo that goes along with the social side of things, may have been more productive, again, for me. A big ceilidh at the end of the week may have been more in order.

Those are my thoughts, hope some of it is helpful.

Móran Taing arithist

## Response 14

Stòras a' Bhaile provided a much-needed and appreciated opportunity for fairly advanced/advanced Gaelic learners to engage in the language with each other but also with native speakers.

Natural settings, such as the one provided at Stòras a' Bhaile, are very important to help with the transmission of language as these settings allow the learner to be more engaged in his learning. These settings also provide challenges sometimes not encountered in more formal settings - challenges such as background noise, inability to hear the speaker because of setting, etc.

One possible solution would be that all 'presenters' be recorded by someone standing close by. These recordings maybe could be distributed for a small fee.

## Response 15

- a) The overall concept is excellent, because of the informal approach, and exposure to culturally grounded material.
- b) The use of native speakers was naturally an important feature
- c) Review, and the series of questions asked about the stories told were excellent to bring forward comment and discussion from participants.
- d) One thing that is apparent to me is how easily this program could be also modified for use at intermediate and beginner language levels.

I have a number of comments here that would only require minor adjustments to address. I hope you find them useful.

a) Logistical / spatial planning can be developed more, some development will come with experience. Not having a seating plan prepared, and then trying to figure out seating on the fly was unnecessarily disruptive. In general, the facilities were good, but on one occasion, participants were asked to sit in full sun at 2 pm on a hot day, and this was uncomfortable. As we wandered through the barn, it was informal to the point that the tradition bearer was having a conversation with the few people within earshot, and many of participants couldn't hear nor participate.

b) As to 'hands-on' activities, the presentations were actually lecture-style with real artifacts on hand. In terms of learning, this approach is certainly superior to seeing the artifacts in books, however, I don't think that it is accurate to call it hands-on. I believe minor changes in how the participants interact with the activities and each other could make major improvements in the program in this regard. Developing a program which encourages interjection and dialogue among participants would further improve the transmission of vocabulary and concept. In terms of delivery, some native speakers really could be coached to speak more, speak more to the group rather than to the leaders, speak louder, and repeat a bit, or ask questions in order to make it more interactive. Or alternatively, an assistant could provide a bit more speaking and questioning, such as was done in lighting the fire, alongside the native speaker. I understand that the native speakers are shy, like many students, but if this is possible it would be excellent – perhaps simply explaining that sound doesn't carry well because of the large crowd would encourage a bit more voice projection.

c) As to the social nature of the event, social interaction was encouraged to the same level as most other events which I attend – that is, we can speak in Gaelic among ourselves during tea and lunch breaks, but the program's style of presentation didn't blend well with socializing and discussion. This is something that I think can easily be developed with time and experience.

d) My own capacity as an intermediate learner coloured my experience of the event greatly. While it was good to be welcomed and encouraged to participate, I feel that my time spent there could have been better applied to something pitched at my own capacity. For this reason, I think that it would be practical to communicate in your promotional material which type of participants you have in mind when the program is developed, while still leaving it open to participants of all levels. Simply saying that it is all conducted in Gaelic may not fully convey this information, as TIP classes are also conducted fully in Gaelic, but pitched to junior learners. I am fully aware of the program's sincere intent to create a welcoming and comfortable environment, and for this reason, I believe that you would want to hear this feedback. Being restricted to using only Gaelic myself is not a problem – in fact I feel that most appreciate it. However, some examples of my difficulties due to poor comprehension are as follows:

- As an intermediate learner, the program started off solidly on the wrong foot for me. Because all initial instruction was delivered in Gaelic only, I could not be certain of what was being said, or of the parameters expected for our conduct. I would not want to appear disrespectful if I did or said something that was contrary to direction given, so I was kind of nervous to do anything.

- This was followed by a go-around whereby each participant, in front of a large group, was asked a series of questions. For junior speakers this is really intimidating, particularly in front of a gathering of professionals such as was present at Storas a' Bhaile. While we all should be beyond the worry of being judged, it is still a reality of the experience.

I think that there may have been about 5 of the 15 participants who were at my level of language capacity, and they may have felt very differently from myself about their experience, although I spoke with some who did share some of my thoughts. In this respect I hope this feedback assists you in future programming.

## **Response 16**

I liked the inclusiveness of the program. There were no grade levels, or expectations placed on individuals during the three days. It was probably tough for people with lower skill levels, but the Gaelic only rule with so many good speakers present helped create an immersion atmosphere close to a community experience with no questions asked about ability, just talking. It was especially encouraging to be with so many young people who kept on using the language after the day's program ended at the Village.

I think that the size of some of sessions could be smaller, particularly for learning stories, or songs. The Village is a great place for providing a natural surrounding, but limited space for a large number should be a consideration in planning for certain kinds of sessions.

## **Response 17**

It was great to see everyone again, it was also good to hear the language, thank goodness for the graphics. I have holes & pockets in my Gaelic and although I followed the main idea of the stories some of it was puzzling. Luckily some of the more advanced people would take pity on me (and others) and at the end of the day and give us the finer points of the stories if we asked. The food was good and there was lots of it. The gathering at the school at the end of the day

was a great chance to see & hear the talent all around us. Going to the different houses and having the 'old' people telling & showing us how things used to be done. It brought back some great memories of when things were simpler and life went at a slower pace.

I would have liked to have seen more hand cleaning, aprons etc. when handling/ showing the food preparation in the houses. I guess I should have figured that we would be spending time in the garden, but I've learned from before that if you don't wear gloves you'll get mud & grass stains on your hands, now that may be fine for you manly types, but for us office types dealing with the public it's not so good. I dare say that most of us have our own gardening gloves at home. I would have liked to spent more time in & around the barn and the animals, to hear the different names of the parts etc. of the equipment. I would have liked more questions to have been asked of the 'old' people. Some of us are a little long in the tooth and may have 'stories' about how things were done on our farms / homesteads. It may be of interest to some and it may provide an opportunity for us to learn / say more words in Gaelic.

(Please remind whoever that the pots for tea & coffee shouldn't be interchanged. The coffee drinkers probably didn't notice, but the tea drinkers did. I know, picky, picky, picky.)

Overall I believe the Stòras a' Bhaile was a good idea and I'd go again if able.