

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



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

AUGUST 15TH-18TH, 2011

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

AUGUST 2011

Stòras a' Bhaile 2011 Event Design

Stòras a' Bhaile 2011 was held over four days of immersion folkway sessions: August 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th. Its continuing purpose is to foster language acquisition through experiences in living Gaelic culture.

Attendance for Stòras 2011 included seventeen registered participants (See Appendix A: Names of Participants), along with eleven contributing supporters, providing demonstrations of tangible and intangible cultures. For referencing selections of Nova Scotia's Gaelic story and song traditions, Stòras a' Bhaile drew technical support



from *Sruth nan Gàidheal*, the online portal containing a comprehensive representation of the province's Gaelic tradition and folklore. Susan Cameron gave a demonstration of searching the new platform of the

database now hosted at the Angus L. MacDonald library website.

Native speakers, representing dialects, and traditions, from Central Cape Breton, and Inverness County, led sessions on *seanchas* and farm related work over the four days. Gaelic speaker and fiddler Joe Peter MacLean of Boisdale contributed throughout conversationally and musically. Morning sessions in storytelling were directed by Dr. John Shaw during which he introduced participants to Gaelic stories known in Nova Scotia and accessible on-line from the *Sruth nan Gàidheal* portal. Following each day's activities, a ninety-minute gathering



of all provided opportunities to dance, sing, tell a story and play music.

Immersion topics included language arts, music, dance, domestic artifacts and food preparation such *maragan*, *im* and *bonnach*. Activities were convivial and intended to engage individuals within a nonthreatening language environment. Participants were provided with opportunities for sharing socially in settings familiar to Gaelic speakers who have acquired their language skills by way of generational transmission. Recognizing that a large proportion of participants were computer able, content from the *Sruth nan Gàidheal/Gaelstream* digital website was made available throughout Stòras in the Highland Village Tuning Room.

In past years we have used the historic buildings on site for hands-on demonstrations of food preparation. Because of the limited space in the buildings and the number of participants, there was some difficulty in hearing what was happening. This year, in an effort to address the space limitations presented by the site, and in order to make it easier for our Gaelic leaders, some of whom have mobility issues, we decided to hold the sessions in a conversational format only. We employed settlement maps made by A.F. Church circa 1880 to evoke memories of families in the areas where the informants were raised and to inquire into the *sloinnidhean* (patronymics) used to refer to them.

The use of this naming system was a special focus for us



this year and Jim Watson led a morning session on this topic.

Gaelic Language Through Social Transmission

Approach to Gaelic Language Transmission

Stòras a' Bhaile is founded on the principle that Gaelic language renewal in Nova Scotia entails restoring a group identity based in shared cultural expressions. For 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. *Stòras a' Bhaile* 2011's mission was to encourage Gaelic conversation in ways which have typified a Gaelic worldview to the



present and provide a model for adaptation to a range of uses. Project organizers feel that progress in Gaelic renewal is evident

among Nova Scotia's community-based Gaelic initiatives. This is particularly so in the area of adult education through the *Gàidhlig aig Baile* methodology. In order to re-integrate Gaelic language and culture to its familiar social domains, much work remains to create meaningful opportunities for conversational interaction. *Stòras a' Bhaile* intends to contribute at least one approach to normalizing Gaelic language as



a medium for expressing daily life. The usual place for learning Gaelic in Nova Scotia is most often 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 accepts all comers - regardless of Gaelic skills- wishing to have

an immersion experience by way of cultural transmission in a social environment. Discussions, planning and programming for *Stòras* began in 2007 and 2008. *Stòras a' Bhaile* 2009 emerged as a Gaelic only event for all sessions, including lunchtime. While



participants adhered to Gaelic only during regular programming, evening activity afforded further opportunities for participants to attend programs at *Féis an Eilein*, or going to the Jamesville beach following day's end at Highland Village. Perhaps as important as any other aspect of the program, Gaelic language and culture, for the *Stòras a' Bhaile* group at least, demonstrates the importance social interactions play in the learning outside organized learning situations. To this end, *Stòras* continues to evaluate itself for growth and development.



Partnerships and Overall Objectives

From its inception, Stòras a' Bhaile has been a partner-based initiative. Co-ordination of resources and event planning was carried out this year by Highland Village staff members Jim Watson and Carmen MacArthur, 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 2011 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 folk life 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.*



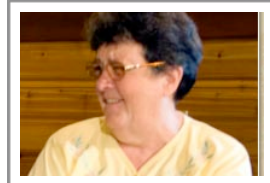
Contributing Nova Scotia Gaelic Speakers

It is important to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Nova Scotia's native speakers to all such initiatives such as *Stòras a' Bhaile*. Their contributions to Gaelic renewal in Nova Scotia remain significant from past to present. These are measurably felt in generous support of community-based language programming and through their recorded voices in digitized on-line collections such as *Sruth nan Gàidheal* and *Cainnt Mo Mhàthar*. *Stòras a' Bhaile* 2011 was very pleased to have included the following presenters during its program:

Catherine MacNeil (*Catriona ni'n Iomhair Mhicheil 'An Shaothair*) Christmas Island, CB County
Catherine (née 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 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*.



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 2012



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.



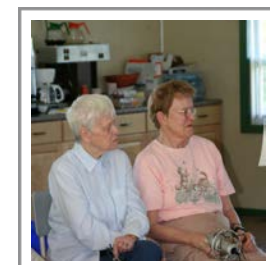
Katey Margaret MacLeod (*Ceataidh Magaidh n'in Aonghais Ailein*) A native of Broad Cove Marsh, Inverness County, Katey Margaret was raised in a traditional Gaelic-speaking household known for music, stories and song. Her contributions as a Gaelic mentor to learners has been exceptional as she welcomes all who come to céilidh in her South West Margaree home. A gifted storyteller in her own right, her specialty is humorous anecdotes told in her rich mainland dialect. Katey Margaret also has a special love for animals and is the devoted owner of a well cared for cat and dog. *Stòras* looks forward to seeing Katey Margaret again soon.



Mickey 'John H.' MacNeil, (*Micheal mac Eòin Chaluim Sheumas Mhòir*), Jamesville, Iona, Victoria County
Mickey John H. MacNeil belongs to Jamesville, Victoria is a talented tradition-bearer with a gentle manner always willing to share stories, proverbs and songs in Gaelic-speaking company. Among his contributions over the years, he is well known as a member of the Iona Gaelic Singers. Mickey is a retired local merchant and farmer. His company and distinct Barra Gaelic are always a welcome addition to any gathering. We look forward to his participation once again at *Stòras* 2012.



Martha Ramey, Theresa Burke (*Martha agus Treasag nigheanan Pheadair Mhóir Steabhain Mhicheil*), Sydney, Cape Breton County
Martha Ramey, and her sister Theresa Burke (née Mac Neil) were born and raised in Glen Garry, rear Big Pond. They are exceptional tradition bearers of the Cape Breton Barra vintage. They, along with Theresa's daughter Marion (a fine tradition bearer in her own right), brought a wide range of Gaelic perspectives to *Stòras* participants. They shared reminiscences about their childhood years in Glen Garry and the different types of *bonnach* that were made in their home. *Stòras* looks forward to Theresa and Martha returning with Marion for *Stòras a' Bhaile* 2012.



Stòras a' Bhaile

Coordination and Planning for 2011



Stòras a' Bhaile 2012 will seek to build further on suggestions arising from the Stòras a' Bhaile 2011 as brought forward by its participants. The current planning team will continue as partner in its role as cross-institutional representation. 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 2010 was the first initiative of its kind in Nova Scotia. The planning team envisages it as establishing a precedent and 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 2011 included 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 2011 - APPENDIX A



Organizers

Susan Cameron, St. Francis Xavier University
Mary Jane Lamond, Cape Breton Gaelic singer
Dr. John Shaw, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh
Jim Watson, Nova Scotia Highland Village
Rachel Redpath, Young Canada Works Research Student

Gaelic Leaders

Katie Maggie MacLeod, Margaree Valley, Nova Scotia
Martha Ramey, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Teresa Burke, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Marion Burke, Sydney, Nova Scotia
Anna MacKinnon, The Banks, Inverness, Nova Scotia
Joe Peter MacLean, Boisdale, Nova Scotia
Catherine MacNeil, Christmas Island, Nova Scotia
Mickey MacNeil, Iona Nova Scotia

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