

**Highland Heights Inn
Iona, NS**

May 29, 2009

**Report on Ceilidh House Meeting
Gaelic language and culture in Central Cape Breton**



**Report prepared by
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Participant Contributions

May 29, 2009

Iona, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia

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Objectives

- To explore how Gaelic Language and culture can have a very real presence in our school environment.
- To create an appreciation for the unique asset we have with our Gaelic Language and culture in Iona and surrounding communities.
- To create excitement about what we "could have" in terms of Gaelic activities and language development here in our area.
- To explore how Sgoil Mhic Fhraing A'Chaolais and the Iona peninsula could be recognized as leading forces in the preservation of our Cape Breton Gaelic Language and culture.

Identifying our Communities

Some of the key themes that came out of our first discussion “identifying which communities we belong to” are very much part of our daily lives. The most common types of communities that we identified include:

- Family
- Farmers
- Sports teams
- Former school mates
- Professional associations
- Church
- People with whom we have shared interests
- Gaelic culture

Common Themes from Storytelling about the Gaelic Community

The different stories that we narrated/ told about our communities focused on the cultural aspects of our community. The importance of our Gaelic culture, particularly the Gaelic language.

Common Story for Group A: Lesley Ann, Tracey, Hector and Evan

~We should have Gaelic immersion in school- making it real (only speak Gaelic for certain periods of time or have someone come in to speak it with students).

~Create Gaelic music songs which are age-appropriate or student-created as part of music composition.

~On-line Gaelic courses, independent study courses in high school.

Common Story for Group B: Anita MacDonald and others

We have a desire to learn- to regain our “sense of loss”

~We need the Gaelic language; we should have a motivator- sense of loss that we want to regenerate.

~We should build upon this sense of loss. ~Somehow, we have to instill desire and respect for the language.

~Important to who we are, understanding where we came from.

~This is important for preserving our culture- the Gaelic culture.

How do we instill this?

~Gaelic milling from class, etc..

~Something to capture attention.

~Start from the top; but also work down (older ones inspire the younger ones).

~Activities in homes, like a more natural setting.

~Allow them to feel more comfortable- it builds communities (allows them to learn language, songs, etc...) in intimate environments.

~Socialize- allows them to gather, enjoy one another while learning about our culture.

Common Story for Group C: Brendan and others

- ~Make reference to the children- learning from them.
- ~Make reference to the older generation- we can learn from them.
- ~When older people pass, what they take away from us?
- ~Their knowledge, their culture
- ~You can't just make that stuff up!!
- ~Not written in books.

Language is intertwined with values

- ~Your word was/ is everything; children were priceless.
- ~They saw the values in their community- gave their last cent to the church, university, school, etc...
- ~Gaelic being spoken in the church, prayers, Gaelic choir, etc...
- ~Gaelic can strengthen you as a person creating friendships, opportunities to learn.

Common Story from Group D: Fred and others

- ~Use multimedia for cultural storytelling.
- ~Gaelic culture- very inclusive, sharing common interests and extremely welcoming.

Way ahead:

- ~25% should be learning Gaelic Language
- ~We should be divided into smaller groups with common interests
- ~We take pride in the language
- ~Small groups for conversations are needed

Common Story from Group E: Paul MacNeil and others

- ~Intergenerational community
- ~It is the vine that ties us together
- ~Strong musical connection- singing in the language
- ~Having fun- social activities.
- ~It is necessary to be simple- unthreatening.

Project Group Reports

Small groups gathered ideas about potential projects. The different projects discussed are also about the Gaelic Language:

Project A: Based on what is currently offered at the school, raise awareness and the profile of Gaelic at Rankin.

Who: -school-based, teachers, administration, students, etc...

Timeframe: -September, 2009 – ongoing

Resources: -technical resources (website, model)
-personnel- time to do it now
-\$ for set up (sign, etc...)
-elders/ tradition bearers
-work with school board to develop Gaelic certificate program

Milestones: -people talking in community
(indicators of success) -people looking to come into school
-feedback on websites; general comments
-hearing Gaelic more in school (outside of classroom setting) ... an infusion

Project B: Incorporating Gaelic Culture into School- Enhancing School Gaelic Image

Objectives: -raise awareness and profile of Gaelic and Rankin
-enhance school website to reflect such (model)
-promote Gaelic certificate program
-link to Paul's sign idea
-entrance/ signage in Gaelic
-announcements in Gaelic
-letterheads/ note cards in Gaelic

Who: -school staff, community leaders

How: -collaboration between present playgroup and school
-school tours at Highland Village
-more media coverage (Victoria Standard, CB Post, quarterly newsletters)

Resources: -elders/ tradition bearers infused
-volunteers, storytelling- in English, Social Studies and Family studies
-other curriculum areas, cultural industries, community teaching, etc...
-collaborative projects

Project C: March break Gaelic Networking Initiatives

Objective: -promoting collaboration among community groups

Who: - school, Feis, Highland Village, playgroup (young children)

Resources: -school CAP site, tradition bearers, grant money needed

Timeframe: -present (now)- this Summer

Critical needs: -someone or an organization to coordinate- awareness/ signage, broadcasting groups

Phase II: -now coordinating into the school system

Critical needs/ issues: -bus for students, timing of events, transporting children in general, communications problem (signage)

Success indicators: -increased numbers of participants
-young children using the Gaelic Language
-it happens!!!!

Project D: Gaelic Mentorship project

Goal: -Gaelic Language acquisition (cultural context)

Description: -develop and implement a mentorship program for youth who are committed to Gaelic language and culture

Possible mentors: -fluent Gaelic speakers

Who: -Mary Jane Lawnord, Anita MacDonald, Evan Bonaparte, Nikki MacNeil

Timeframe: -Meet on July 2nd evening

Resources: -get more information on mentorship programs. Meet Frances MacEachen for mentorship information

Project E: Active Learner's Group

Goal: -develop fluent speakers through intense immersion

Who: -maximum of 12 students

-1 to 2 instructors

-school, Highland Village, Feis

-Government!!! Office of Gaelic Affairs, Department of Education, Service
Canada, NS Economic and Rural Development

Timeframe: -Start by Fall/ Winter 2009

Leaders: -NS Highland Village (Rodney), Tracey, Feis (Beth) and Hughie

Resources: -Money and people

-Bun's Barr (Root and Branch)

-are there methods/ things that can be adopted to what we want to do?

Milestones: -securing funding

(challenges -funding our instructors

to -identifying students

overtime)

Indicators of success: 12 new fluent Gaelic speakers

Project F: Vocational Style Gaelic Courses focused on broadcasting, radio streaming live internet

Advantages – benefits for Gaelic

-ties in with community and school

-ties in with teaching Gaelic for students and listeners

-ties in with Gaelic beginning for school

-ties in with strengthening of our culture- awareness

-provides employment skills helping to create a Gaelic economy

Challenges

-infrastructure, certified instructors and students (Diploma)

-accreditation

-sustaining interests

Solutions

-Could be started on a modest basis with donated equipment, mentorship, etc...

-approach companies for experts and services, writing newscasts, Gaelic lessons,
performances

Resources/ partners to approach

- CBC
- Cape Breton Eagle (Scott Roberts)
- Cape Breton Post
- Office of Gaelic Affairs
- Department of Education/ innovative speakers/ musicians

Milestones

- equipment installed, instructors secured, accreditation worked out, students enrolled and first broadcast done

Indicators of success

- increased use of Gaelic in community
- level of interest/ ratings
- permanent presence

Project G: Language Planning for Central Cape Breton

Guiding principles and foundational work

- regional linguistic representation, regional cultural content, standard of representation, criteria for selection, resources that are necessary, action, evaluation tools, etc...

Who: -locals, local institutions, schools, NSHV, government, ECBC, CBU, *Board na Gaidhlig*

Resources: -meeting budget, professional help

Timeframe: -can begin immediately if will is there

Why: -how do projects complement each other?
- how are they sustained with out a plan?

Process: -research, asset mapping in areas in need of development

Grouping and weighting of themes according to what is possible/ doable:

At this point of the day, participants grouped and focused on the major themes that came out of group discussions around project ideas. The grouping is as follows:

Vocational style Gaelic courses at school: Gaelic broadcasting, early childhood education, Gaelic immersion, Gaelic camp, daily or weekly Gaelic Gaidhlig aig baile and Gaelic as other language option in school.

Gaelic mentorship project: connect native Gaelic speakers with young learners. Example: young learner staying or visiting on a regular basis with a native Gaelic speaker. Positive points for both learner and native Gaelic speaker (allows for more help around the house, place/ environment for learner to be immersed and learn), nurturing the culture of the culture, playing group/ parents, P-12 (bottom up consistent), encouraging people to utilize what is happening (Feis/ H.V./ play group), find ways for each group to collaborate and support existing programs make more holistic community approach.

March break/ Gaelic network: local inns, Highland Village houses for lessons, school for assembly and evening events, invite students from other schools, creating a planning committee, Public relations work to encourage those in community who may be straddling the fence, creating a learning plan, community debate compatibility, criteria for community expectations, if set too high/ too low (backlash), simple projects not enough (will fall by the wayside), will create social space outside community, treasure chest program, training need to be put in place, and activities for parents and children done in Gaelic on a regular basis (songs, art, social).

Incorporating Gaelic culture into school: Gaelic singing groups, bringing the students to the community, visit local churches, seniors' homes, song workshops, with other Gaelic speakers, mailing frolics on a regular basis in school, and create a strong Gaelic identity in Rankin school of the Narrows

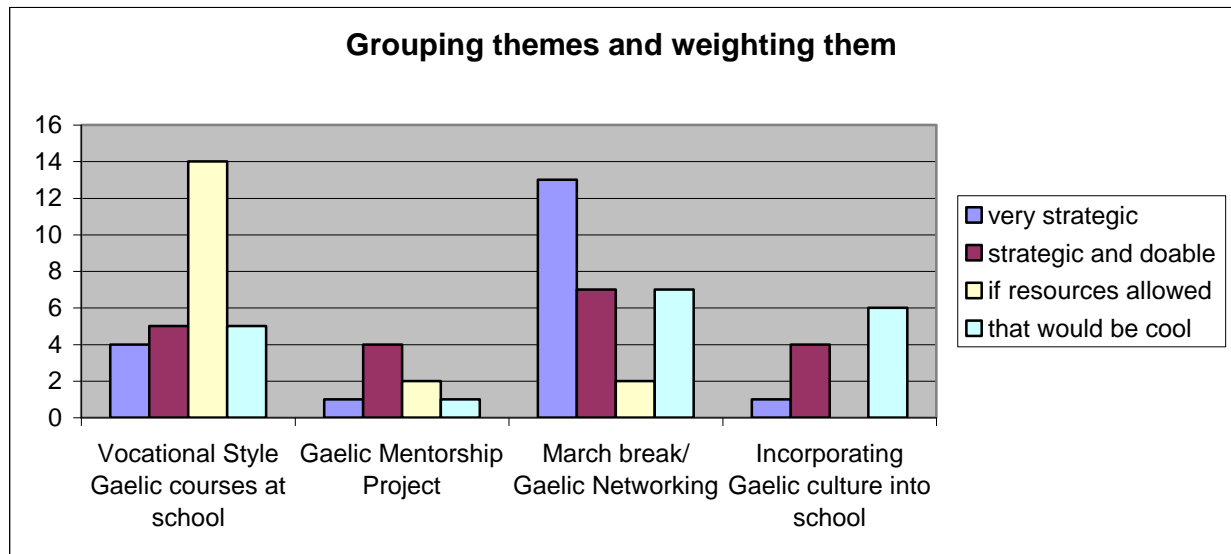
The weighting was done by placing 4 different colors on each of the thematic groups. The colors are explained below:

Light blue: very strategic

Morrow: strategic and doable

Yellow: if resources allowed

Light green: that would be cool



~According to the weighting with 4 colors, the “March break/ Gaelic Networking” project was ranked as the number one that is very strategic and doable. The result shows that doing this project is not too dependant on resources.

~In second place is the “Vocational Style Gaelic Courses at School” project. However, it was decided that this project is too dependent on the availability of resources.

~It was also decided that the “Gaelic Mentorship” project is strategic and doable, but doing is it is dependent on the availability of resources and planning.

~According to the scoring, the “Incorporating Gaelic Culture into school” project is strategic and doable. However, it requires the identification of local leadership that will get it started and kept alive.

Recommendation

The local planning committee of the workshop recommends that a core group of individuals from central Cape Breton should meet to discuss how to implement short term project ideas and explore how to continue to work together to sustain Gaelic development in Central Cape Breton.

Reflection and Commitment

How will you further advance Gaelic in your work?	What next steps will you take for this to become a reality?	What kind of support, resources or skills will you need?	How will you know that you have achieved your objective?	If applicable, with whom will you keep in touch about your progress, and how will you do that?
Continue to learn and speak Gaelic to work with communities on Gaelic development	Continue in work + support of local Gaelic initiatives	Support from government toward OGA willingness-collaboration from community folks	Communities remain active, engaged, enthusiastic. Gaelic speakers emerge.	
Gaelic is currently one of the working languages in my workplace. I'll continue to use Gaelic daily and increase the frequency with which I use Gaelic with other learners	Great opportunities in my work- take advantage of those opportunities	Recording of native speakers; access to fluent speakers	Know more songs, speak more comfortably, listen to recordings and understand them	Immediate superior at work by phone/ email
By trying to become fluent in the language, learning Gaelic songs	Continue to work with and support Gaelic initiatives in my community	Mentoring	By results	
In my workplace by using the language	Continuing	Spoken and literacy skills	When my children are Gaelic speakers	Lili and Angus
Learning efforts used in my home through language	Set up and organize intense immersion	\$ and key people	Fluency	Rodney, Hugie, Beth and Tracey
Will reach out to other people to increase cooperative efforts	I would work with other interested parents/ teachers/ students	Space, equipment, instructors/ parents	Local broadcasts in Gaelic. Local stories, songs music, etc..	School
Research and learn the language to a higher level	Meetings and planning the project	Community members and Gaelic speakers	When people can speak fluently	The members of my group

How will you further advance Gaelic in your work?	What next steps will you take for this to become a reality?	What kind of support, resources or skills will you need?	How will you know that you have achieved your objective?	If applicable, with whom will you keep in touch about your progress, and how will you do that?
Continue to teach the Gaidlig Language at Rankin school. Help students better understand the Gaelic culture	Work hard on some of the ideas which we talked about today	Administration and student help, technological help \$	Visually-students will be able to see more Gaelic signs, etc...	Dawn, Elizabeth, Carmie
Continue to learn. It's a lifelong learning process. Raise a placard for things I am doing as a Gaelic teacher... make it more aware to community	Not sitting back becoming more of an advocate for what I do	More language development for myself as teacher. More support from community for good things already happening		Community parents Gaelic teachers and students
Brought like minds together. Allowed people to be aware of good things already happening	That people outside the school don't necessarily know or appreciate what's already happening in the school	Perhaps more community stakeholders involved playground people, more general community people?		
I hope to take part in more mentorship programs and other Gaelic classes				
Use more language in school via announcements and meeting with kids, etc...	Continue to work with and support the Gaelic teacher in enhancing the offering currently at school	Website skills	Hear Gaelic at school, hear about Gaelic in community and school	H. V., parents, school staff

How will you further advance Gaelic in your work?	What next steps will you take for this to become a reality?	What kind of support, resources or skills will you need?	How will you know that you have achieved your objective?	If applicable, with whom will you keep in touch about your progress, and how will you do that?
More collaboration between schools having Rankin make more prominent as a leader in this area- I can promote this	Identify key people (students) willing to go to other schools to share knowledge and make this information available to all	I have access to easily distribute the information I need to identify the interested people	From feedback from schools and requests from schools	Brendan, Staff of Rankin through phone and email conversations
Implement culture into specific course curriculum	Continuation of what I am already doing	Curriculum materials, tradition bearers, H.V./ Feis	Children are used in their culture	School administration, Gaelic educators
By getting involved with various stated initiatives	Start with small steps and work on specifics	Participation from key stakeholders	Are earmarked ideas gathered into working initiatives?	I will be speaking to other stakeholders.
Keep at it				

Closing Circle

- It went quickly. Nice to know there is commonality. Same vision for Gaelic Language.
- I appreciated meeting new people. Connections are so important
- It was nice to meet new people. I am always amazed by the passion people have. Thanks for the lunch.
- It is an interesting proposition. We have an unbroken presence of Gaelic speakers of Barra descent (on the Iona peninsula) since the 1880s. Tradition inherent in that can be traced back to the Calum Cille (St. Columba circa. 500 CE). Challenges are around the kind of decision you make on how you want to be represented – everything from tokenism to restoration of Gaelic. There you start your conversations.
- Good to hear what is happening. In one of the session I was with people not from the area, it was good to pull in ideas from other areas.
- It was a great medium. Not knowing what is going on at Highland Village or the School. There was a Féis at the school – How many parents heard of it? A lot of people don't know (what is going on).
- It was a good day, a good start. We need to share more what we are doing.
- Great day. Glad to see and hear other ideas. I hope we have a room full of doers. One thing to come up with ideas, another thing to do them.
- I am jealous of your community (laughter) Everyone seems to be talking about the same things.

- I thought I would leave early, but I found it enjoyable. It was local. I liked seeing what the school is doing and the support there is for Gaelic.
- Thought it was excellent. Good to see different viewpoints and perspectives. It will take little steps to move forward. This is one of these little steps. We sat down and talked. The community is lucky to have you guys. It has to come from within.
- Didn't feel it was a long day. I got a lot out of it. I found out what is happening in the community and what everyone is doing.
- Enjoyed it.
- What a wonderful venue for a workshop like this. I've been at workshops that have dragged out, but this one didn't.
- Had a good day. Lots of ideas. I learned a lot. I hope there is follow through.
- It was really great seeing what everyone is doing . . . we can work together.
- This reminds me that there is a lot of support for a beginning teacher like me.
- I thought it was a good day, too. It rolled right along. We covered a lot of ideas. One thing to remember is not to be afraid of change. Things are going to be the same; they are never going to be the same as they were.
- It was a good idea. Co-operation was wonderful. It was definitely interesting. It was a diverse group. We are all touching each other – it reminds me of the game we play with kids with a ball of yarn – we make a spider web – (everything's connected). -- Interesting dynamic for us all to be in the room at the same time.

Workshop Evaluation

What did you appreciate about this workshop?	What did you learn?	What suggestions do you have for changes to this workshop? What else is important for us to know?
Learning about the interests in keeping the Gaelic culture alive		
External input	Lots of interest which is sincere, “doers” in the room	excellent
Great facilitation- good flow, good length and enthusiasm	More about what is happening in Gaelic in central Cape Breton. What people here are interested and passionate about	More clear instruction on action items. I like open space rules and explanation. I think the worksheets are better than flip chart in working groups
Open and friendly atmosphere, representation from many areas of the Gaelic community- interested folks.	Lot of work to be done, small projects, doable, may fizzle out if there are not other projects that they lead into	Don't know what the follow up is n this case? Were do we go from here?
Meeting friends, group discussions	That there is hope for the future with so many people being so passionate	
Getting together with like minded people. This reinforced my sense that there is a lot of interest within the general population	Common goals exist among a variety of people	Actual funding that is available
Well run, fresh ideas	Lots of interest, change in the air	Should happen on a regular basis, one a year, twice a year, etc...
Excellent location facility, excellent meal, a well organized day	There are many good ideas out there	I thought the format for the day was very good. Excellent facilitator
Nice group	Many challenges, tokenism or...	Specific recommendation to respond to
Common interest local priority	Current level of Gaelic at school, level of commitment among youth	I thought it was very well done, not too long
Sharing of great ideas	There is a very broad range of interesting ideas	Very well done

What did you appreciate about this workshop?	What did you learn?	What suggestions do you have for changes to this workshop? What else is important for us to know?
I really enjoyed this workshop. It was very valuable- I enjoyed coming together to discuss how we can improve Gaelic in our school and community. We have many strengths- always room for improvement. I liked how we could mingle with everybody and learn new ideas	I learned new ways to approach teaching Gaelic	Thoroughly enjoyed workshop. Very informative- great time
The opportunity to meet more people involved in the Gaelic community	I learned of many wonderful offerings already in place and the desire and commitment for more	It was nicely paced, good to work in different groups.
Collaboration	What's happening at school already	More stakeholders involved
Well facilitated, well attended (would have liked to see more parents), nice to get together with people who are interested in Gaelic	People in this area have some great practical ideas. We've already reached the awareness level, now what?	I think that the morning is important but since we already know that Gaelic is important to us, I think it will be more helpful to start the afternoon's activity earlier on in the day. This would give us more time to create and collaborate.
Everything	A lot	

Annex

Workshop Attendance

No.	Name	Address	Email
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