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The Celtic Languages in North America: Notes from the Field

In this and following issues of JCLL, the published articles will include accounts of the current state of teaching and learning of each of the modern Celtic languages the U.S and Canada]. We have begun with Welsh and Scottish Gaelic. Volume 8 will include articles on Irish and Breton. These field reports have been funded by a mini-grant to NAACLT from the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages in Washington, D.C. We are grateful to NCOLCTL for their assistance as well as to the authors who have provided the reports.

SCOTS GAELIC IN NORTH AMERICA : REPORT FROM THE FIELD.

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The basis for this report comprises my own first-hand experience, both in Canada and the U.S., together with information gleaned from teachers of Scottish Gaelic in regions, provinces and states throughout North America who responded to letters and phone calls of enquiry. Not all responded; and so, perforce, the account is more general than specific in some areas. On the whole, however, a picture emerges of considerable activity in certain parts of both countries, and of at least some activity in many states and provinces. Some of the teaching takes place in academic institutions, a great deal of it not; some of the teachers are native speakers, many are learners at varying stages of fluency. Among the latter, there is a high order of dedication, and a good percentage of them have attended Gaelic immersion sessions at the Gaelic College, St. Ann's, Cape Breton; summer sessions at Sabhal Mór Ostaig, the Gaelic College in the Isle of Skye; the weeklong language and music sessions named Ceblas, in South Uist; and/or weekend immersions in the US, offered chiefly under the auspices of Comann Gaidhealach Aimearagaidh, and in Canada. This report reveals strong response amongst North American learners to the resurgence of Gaelic, with a networking process between them and institutions and initiatives in Scotland and Nova Scotia.

Canada : Nova Scotia

At the end of the 19th century, immigrants from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, for the majority of whom Gaelic was the first, and for a time the only, language, comprised about one third of Nova Scotia's population. Today, the province's native Gaelic speakers, now estimated at under 500, are to be found on Cape Breton Island: this is the last indigenous Gaelic population in North America. On mainland Nova Scotia, proximity to commercial centres, especially the capital city of Halifax, accelerated Gaelic's disuse. In Antigonish County, the county closest to Cape Breton Island—the town of Antigonish is approximately 50 kilometres to the Canso Causeway, which joins Cape Breton to mainland Nova Scotia—Gaelic was in certain areas the language between friends and neighbours until a couple of generations ago.

St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia

"St.F.X." occupies a unique position. Geographically, it is close to Cape Breton and shares with it a common Highland Scottish background. Historically, it was founded by Gaelic-speaking Roman Catholic priests who proclaimed faith and heritage in the words placed above the door to St. Ninian's Cathedral, "Taigh Dhé". Further, again historically, we receive students from Cape Breton and Newfoundland in the east to Victoria, British Columbia, in the west; and from Maine and other eastern United States. Currently, we are seeing an influx of students from other states, such as Florida, Oklahoma, Iowa, Arizona, Oregon, and California. These are coming specifically to learn Gaelic.

As early as 1891, Gaelic was taught at the university, and continued to be taught, until the Department of Celtic Studies was formalised in the late 1950s under Major C.I.N. MacLeod, a native of Scotland. He was succeeded as Chair of the department by Sister Margaret MacDonell, herself a native Gaelic speaker from Judique, Cape Breton, with a Ph.D. from Harvard.

Under Sister Margaret's direction, two major advances occurred. She established the Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Project,

enabling the collection on audiotape of folklore and song from Cape Breton Gaelic speakers by Dr. John Shaw from Ohio, a Ph.D. in Celtic Studies from Harvard. This material, probably the largest oral Gaelic collection in North America, is available for study by students and members of the public alike, and offers authentic vernacular models for use in instruction. In addition, during her tenure, the Sister St. Veronica Chair of Gaelic Studies was established and in September, 1984, Kenneth E. Nilsen, Ph.D. in Celtic Studies from Harvard, and a native of New York, was named to the Chair. In retrospect, this was an auspicious moment. In Scotland in the early 1980s, stirrings of Gaelic renewal were finding actual expression in the founding of Gaelic nursery schools, and it is perhaps from this point on that the Gaelic Renaissance was seen to take flesh, both in those who were active on its behalf and those, on both sides of the ocean, who woke to the realisation that they wished to be part of it by learning the language.

When I joined the department in September, 1993, as the second fulltime member from Scotland after Major MacLeod, Dr. Nilsen, who had been the department's only fulltime member since Sister Margaret's retirement, was coping with greater numbers of students—a happy position to be in! The department has always had a strong commitment to Scottish Gaelic, as a Heritage Language of the province, and my task was primarily to give students a strong foundation in Gaelic, one that would in Celtic100, An Introduction to Scottish Gaelic, and C200, Second Year Scottish Gaelic, give them a good start towards fluency. Dr. Nilsen teaches Celtic 300, Third Year Scottish Gaelic, advanced level Gaelic with emphasis on the attainment of fluency, concentrating on the Gaelic of Nova Scotia. Perhaps one aspect that marks out the Celtic Department at St.F.X. from other academic departments in which Gaelic is taught: for our department, Gaelic is a living language as well as an academic subject. All the business of the department is conducted in Gaelic; and students may be heard to speak Gaelic in the halls. To be sure, we have a full undergraduate Celtic Studies program: other courses offered are Celtic Literature, in translation; a history course, The Gael: Old World and New; First and Second Year Irish Gaelic, Scottish Bardic Poetry and Irish Bardic Poetry, and

The Folklore of Ireland and Scotland. New this year is an Honours-level course, Seminar on Scottish Gaelic Immigrants' Literature, in Gaelic. In addition, classes in Selected Topics and Directed Study in advanced topics are offered as needed.

The department has recently been the recipient of a second Chair, The Ben Alder Chair in Celtic Studies. This has enabled us to secure a third member for the department, Michael Linkletter, a graduate of our own program, currently writing his Ph.D. thesis in Celtic Studies for Harvard. As a result, we have added a new course on Celtic Civilization. Michael was the first recipient of the department's Gaelic Scholarship, founded in 1995 by the joint efforts of the Celtic Society, the Celtic Department, and the Antigonish Gaelic Choir under the direction of Catriona Parsons. This scholarship enables one or two students to attend a summer course at Sabhal Mór Ostaig on Skye and afterwards to spend time with a Gaelic family in the Outer Hebrides. So far nine (9) students have benefited from this program. Our links with Scotland are further seen in that several of our students have gone on to graduate study at Edinburgh University. One of these, Will Lamb from Maryland, is currently working on his Ph.D. in Linguistics at Edinburgh, and was involved in developing a National Certificate course in Gaelic Language and Music, centred in the Uist tradition, which began in September, 2000, at Colaisde Bheinn na Faoghla, at Lionacleit, Benbecula, in the Outer Hebrides. He has also published a Gaelic Grammar.

The St. F.X. Celtic Department works in close cooperation with the local Gaelic community. On our Gaelic Days, we offer classes in Gaelic at several levels, including a class for children, and workshops in Gaelic song; and for some years now we have ended the day with a Milling Frolic, singing the worksongs which traditionally accompanied the fulling of the newly woven cloth. This store of songs has been preserved, and added to, in the living Cape Breton tradition. These Gaelic Days attract people from all over Nova Scotia. In addition, our students get involved in a university initiative known as Service Learning and each winter term bring Gaelic to a local school.

The Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts

The Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts, a summer school located at St. Ann's on Cape Breton's historic Cabot Trail, was founded in 1938 by A.W.R. MacKenzie, a Presbyterian minister from the Isle of Skye. He saw it as a way to help preserve the heritage of the Gael, a heritage centred in the Gaelic language. His own primary interest was in bagpipe music and in the training of pipe bands. In addition, at the college's inception, Gaelic language, history, and literature were taught by local scholars, (including Jonathan MacKinnon, the founder and publisher in the last decade of the 19th century of the newspaper, MacTalla, which for a dozen years was the only all-Gaelic publication in the world), together with Highland Dancing. Since then, over time, other disciplines were added : Cape Breton Fiddling, Piano Accompaniment to the fiddle (a Cape Breton innovation; historically, the pianoforte was an alien instrument to the Gaels), Cape Breton Step Dancing, Celtic Harp (a nod this to older Celtic tradition, since the harp was not a traditional Cape Breton instrument)and Weaving. Today, one may also learn to play the bodhran and instruction in the small pipes has been added to that in the Great Highland Bagpipe.

Clearly, then, the Gaelic College is to be seen as a heritage-based institution. When I began to teach Gaelic there in 1978, at the invitation of the then teacher, Tena Morrison, who was in her seventies at the time, it was clear to me that she had been fighting a heroic action to keep the presence of Gaelic alive at the college. The resurgence of interest in Gaelic had actually begun but it took time to manifest itself. After Tena's retirement, I more or less held the fort. In 1988 the Gaelic College Foundation funded my preparation of a Gaelic course, Gàidhlig troimh Chòmhradh, the first module of which was published in 1989, the second in 1991, and the third in 1993. Each module is accompanied by three 90-minute tapes, with all the Gaelic from the books on these tapes. While not a traditional grammar, the course emphasises modern Gaelic structure and idiom, the spoken as well as the written word. Gàidhlig troimh Chòmhradh is

currently being used in Gaelic classes and by lone students in North America, and other parts of the world. Recently, a teacher from the U.S., who had honed his pronunciation by listening to my tapes, wrote to tell me that when his students went to Sabhal Mór Ostaig, the teachers there were surprised to hear how good their pronunciation was. While this affords one considerable satisfaction, it also serves as an example of how interconnected our efforts are.

Finally, in the late eighties, we were able to hire another Gaelic teacher in the person of Hector MacNeil, a Cape Bretoner and graduate of St.F.X.'s Celtic program. Numbers of students wishing to learn Gaelic were increasing, particularly in adult ranks, and many of these were from the United States. In 1993, we began a weeklong adult Gaelic immersion session at the end of August. This has been very successful. We have seen numbers of our students improve their fluency. Among these are David Livingston-Lowe from Ontario, who teaches Gaelic at St. Michael's College in Toronto and who has taught at Sabhal Mór Ostaig; Nicol Freer from Virginia, Past President of Comann Gaidhealach Aimearagaidh, himself a Gaelic teacher; and Rob Dunbar, a lawyer from Ontario with ties to Nova Scotia, currently teaching at the University of Glasgow. Rob has been heavily involved in the effort to obtain secure status for Gaelic in Scotland, writing and speaking on its behalf in Gaelic.

Many of us had been lobbying Gaelic College directors for a considerable time to institute a new Gaelic position at the College, namely a Director of Gaelic Programming. In 1993, our efforts prevailed and Hector MacNeil was named to the post. This was a brand new Gaelic position in Nova Scotia. The Gaelic College is now affiliated with the University College of Cape Breton in Sydney, and first and second year Gaelic courses are taught there for credit by Hector MacNeil. He has told me that this year ten (10) students are enrolled for the beginning course, and two for the second level -small numbers yet, but room to grow.

Comhairle na Gàidhlig, Alba Nuadh

The Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia, since its inception in the 1980s, has acted as an umbrella group for the various Gaelic organisations throughout Nova Scotia, and lobbies the provincial government in Halifax on behalf of Gaelic initiatives. Its current president is Lewis Mackinnon, from Lower South River near Antigonish, and a graduate of St.F.X. In 1996, the Council was successful in obtaining parliamentary backing to name May as Gaelic Awareness Month. Each year now during Gaelic Month, workshops, ceilidhs, Féisean (see below), university students bringing Gaelic to local schools, Gaelic Days, milling frolics, and the publication of MacTalla, full of Gaelic-related news, serve to raise awareness in the community at large of the Scottish Gaelic contribution to the province. More recently, the Council obtained funds from the provincial Government to do a Gaelic audit, in effect a study of the past and present situation pertaining to Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. Next, a strategy for Gaelic development will be implemented, with government and communities in partnership. This is the plan. But there have been similar plans in the past that achieved little; therefore, it's not surprising that considerable scepticism prevails. However, generally Gaels would like to see Gaelic obtain secure status—something not yet realised in Scotland—and more accessibility to Gaelic instruction in schools.

Gaelic in the Schools

In the early 1970s, shortly after the foundation of the Highland Society in Sydney, Cape Breton, a movement began to bring qualified teachers of Gaelic from Scotland to Cape Breton. Aided and abetted by Jake MacDonald of the then Jordanhill Training College, Glasgow, and Alan J. MacEachen, a Gaelic-speaking Cape Bretoner with considerable clout in the National Government, Effie MacCorquodale from North Uist, Margaret (Margie) MacDonald from Eriskay, and Murdina Stewart from Skye were recruited. Until financial backing ran out, they taught Gaelic in Inverness County Schools, on the west side of Cape Breton. Eventually, Murdina Stewart went back to Skye, Effie married a Rankin and Margie a Beaton, both from Mabou. Despite

setbacks, and occasionally having to teach her Gaelic class after school hours, Margie Beaton has taught Gaelic continuously in Mabou except for one year when it was not offered. Today, she teaches in a brand new school, Dalbrae Academy, which has a Gaelic mandate written into its foundation principles. In a recent communication from her, she stated that she's teaching Gaelic at the 10th-12th grades while Bernie Cameron of Mabou teaches a Gaelic Studies program, comprising language and folklore, in the elementary school.

Besides Mabou, at Rankin Memorial School in Iona, Cape Breton, a Gaelic Studies program is in place for Primary through Grade 5, with 60 students; Community Gaelic Arts (primarily fiddling) for Grade 10; and Gaelic Cultural Studies, essentially a Social Studies class, for Grade 11. This latter class may now be implemented in any Nova Scotia high school. Gaelic classes, however, although also possible, have not yet found wider availability. As to be expected, Gaelic is being offered in an informal way, on a non-credit basis, throughout the province. To name a few: Kay MacDonald, from New Waterford, Cape Breton, offers classes, largely for adults but with one 12-year-old currently in attendance, at the Sydney Highland Society; Lewis MacKinnon has offered classes in the Halifax Continuing Education Program; and in the Annapolis Valley, Murdina McRae, originally from the Isle of Lewis, has been holding classes for adults for a number of years.

Other Initiatives.

The Féis movement, which began in Barra in the Outer Hebrides of Scotland, has taken root in Nova Scotia and, as will be seen, to some extent elsewhere. A Féis is a festival, a celebration of language and culture which, during the length of a day or a week, offers workshops, ceilidhs, and considerable fun. Unlike a Mòd, also originating in Scotland on the model of the Welsh Eisteddfod, it has no competitive events. In 1990, the first of these on Cape Breton Island—possibly the first in North America--Féis an Eilein, was held by the Christmas Island community.

Other feisean are Féis nan Oran (Festival of Songs), instituted by Rosemary McCormack, originally of South Uist, in Iona; Féis Mhàbu, led by Margie Beaton, Effie Rankin and others in the Mabou Community; and Féis a'Chladaich a Tuath, the North Shore Féis, with Angus MacLeod at the helm. Angus is now also one of the three regular Gaelic teachers in the Gaelic College Summer School.

Space only permits mention of two other initiatives, An Clachan Gaidhealach (The Highland Village), a model village of the early settlers, in the Iona district, which requires knowledge of Gaelic among its employees; and two publications, one out of Halifax entitled Celtic Heritage, and Am Bràighe, published in Cape Breton. Both seek to bring information and timely articles to the attention of the reader of Gaelic extraction, including Gaelic lessons and articles written in Gaelic. The editors of Am Bràighe have been particularly outspoken on behalf of Gaelic rights.

Canada : Other Provinces.

The greatest activity on behalf of Gaelic in the rest of Canada is to be found in Ontario and British Columbia. In Ontario, the University of Ottawa, with Dr. Paul Birt the current Chair, and the University of Toronto have Celtic Departments, but with concentration in Irish and, at Ottawa, also in Welsh.

Toronto, Ontario

The Toronto Gaelic Learners' Association/ Comann Luchd-Ionnsachaidh Thoronto was formed in the summer of 2000 to continue the Saturday morning non-credit Gaelic classes that had been sponsored by Mòd Ontario during the previous ten (10) years. The creation of the new organising body was necessitated by the disbandment of Mòd Ontario. The TGLA is a non-profit community organisation dedicated to teaching and promoting Scottish Gaelic, especially in the Greater Toronto Area, spokesperson Janice Chan informed me. Since October 2000, they have continued the Saturday classes at the University of Toronto St. Michael's College campus with the sponsorship of the Celtic Studies programme, and are allowed facilities at a nominal charge

in exchange for allowing students enrolled in the Scottish Gaelic credit course in Celtic Studies to use these classes as an extra tutorial. Classes run for fifteen (15) weeks on Saturday, 10 am to 12 pm, beginning in 2001 on September 22 and concluding February 16, 2002. Instruction is offered at four (4) levels, as follows :

Beginner : Fifteen (15) students ; Instructor : Kerrie Kennedy
 Intermediate I : Seven (7) students ; Instructor : Heather Sparling
 Intermediate II : Ten (10) students ; Instructor : Janice Chan
 Advanced : Seven (7) students ; Instructor : David Livingston-Lowe

(Back-up/Supply Teacher : Deborah Livingston-Lowe)

There is a waiting list of five (5) students for the next session, to begin in the late Spring. Future plans include sponsorship of a Gaelic Immersion weekend, to which students from other parts of Canada and the U.S. will be invited.

Workshops in Gaelic Language and Song entitled "Cànan's Orain" are held from time to time, also at St. Michael's College. These are run by Lorrie MacKinnon, a longtime student at Gaelic College Immersion Sessions, with connections in Cape Breton. Lorrie has an extensive collection of milling songs which she herself has collected live on audiotape.

Glengarry County, Ontario

In what was once an area of Gaelic-speaking immigrants, Sine MacKenna, after a year at St. F.X.U. and time spent in Skye to learn Gaelic, returned to Canada where, in 1990, she taught Gaelic as part of a highland Heritage credit course at Glengarry District High School in Alexandria. She later went on to integrate it into her 3rd grade curriculum at Alexander School in Alexandria. Sine's parents had begun to teach the language on their relocation from Montreal, at St. Joseph's School in Alexandria, and from there they and other interested people founded the Glengarry Gaelic Choir, along with Féis Glengarry.

Montreal, Quebec

Twenty five years ago, Donald MacDonald, a native of Harris in the Outer Hebrides, began teaching Gaelic in his home to groups of three or four students. Nowadays, he conducts his classes by computer, using "Pure Voice", and by telephone entirely without charge. He currently has about ten (10) students, ranging from Alaska, to South Carolina and California. He tells me he gets plenty of questions from Scotland also! Donald is a frequent contributor to *Celtic Heritage* magazine, particularly introducing songs from his native Harris tradition.

Vancouver, British Columbia

Expatriates from the Outer Hebrides, with a strong contingent from Lewis, including Maureen MacIver Lyon, initiated the Vancouver Gaelic Mòd, very much on the lines of the Scottish National Mòd. This now takes place every second year alternating with Féis Shiatail (see below), and has been extraordinarily successful, attracting competitors not only from B.C. and Washington State, but from Scotland itself. When I adjudicated there in May, 2001, there were six (6) adult Gaelic Choirs represented, including three (3) from Scotland. The standard of Gaelic and of Gaelic singing was uniformly high. Maureen Lyon has also been in demand as a Gaelic teacher, particularly with the Seattle learners.

Victoria, B.C.

Joan Morrison Noble, also a native of Lewis, began a series of 20-week courses of Gaelic Language and Literature at the University of Victoria, for Continuing Education, non-credit evening classes, for four or five years in the 1980s. Forty people applied, but the class was limited to 25 students. Joan created a booklet and cassette-tape titled *Sounds of Gaelic* for her class, and tells me that the University still gets orders from the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as Canada; and the University of Glasgow orders copies each year. In a communication from Joan, she wrote: "There were many gifted people in that class, among them Dr. Stephen Scobie of the English Department at UVic. and a recipient of the Governor General's Award for Poetry. He published his translations of the poems I handed out."

Another offshoot of the class was the launching of a Gaelic Choir in Victoria. Currently, a new Gaelic course is being taught at a newly-established language school in Victoria by Anne Campbell Reilly, originally from South Uist, and a member of the choir.

The United States

Like Canada, the greatest activity on behalf of Scottish Gaelic can be found in states in the east and on the Pacific Coast. On the level of formal instruction, Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is the most notable example, having begun to offer Celtic in 1896, and in 1940 having established a Chair in Celtic Studies, with Kenneth Jackson as the first recipient. Scottish Gaelic was offered there at least since 1971, since the calendar lists it from that time. In 1989, it began to be offered every two years, with Michael Linkletter as the most recent instructor. In the following account, however, attention is given primarily to less formal instruction, but instruction that has played an important part in the lives of dedicated learners. And a prime mover to this end has been Comann Gaidhealach Aimearagaidh.

Comann Gaidhealach Aimearagaidh

This association, modelled on An Comann Gaidhealach (The Society of the Gael) in Scotland, was founded in the State of Maryland in 1981 by John (Iain) Cameron, with members of his family as necessary charter members. Born in Kingussie, Scotland, in 1922, he spoke Gaelic as a child with his father and grandfather, at a time when it was not permitted in the schools. A lifetime later, after his retirement from a distinguished medical career in the USA, he began re-learning Gaelic and formed a study group in his home, using *Gàidhlig Bheò* as the text. Dr. Cameron was president of CGA until his death in 1983; during his tenure, he worked tirelessly to raise funds to support Gaelic organisations, especially the fledgling Gaelic Medium Pre-Schools and Playgroups in Scotland. Since his time, CGA has continued to raise money for Gaelic endeavours in the US, Scotland, and Nova Scotia. It has also instituted scholarships to the Gaelic College Immersion Week and to Sabhal Mór Ostaig. Its quarterly magazine *Naidheachd* offers articles on Gaelic-related topics, including linguistics; news, and reviews of recent books; information on workshops, courses,

learning materials; and the occasional piece of bàrdachd from one of its members.

A major innovation in 1988 was the first CGA Mòd Virginia, co-founded by Donald F. MacDonald of North Carolina, and Catriona Parsons. It was attended by then President of Scotland's An Comann, Donnie MacLean, and fittingly, by Finlay MacLeod, the founder of the Gaelic Pre-School movement. In 1992, the Mòd became the US National Mòd, with its venue now in Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Each year, specially created tutor tapes prepare participants for competition in song and recitation. In more recent years, because the territorial size does not allow everyone to come to the Mòd who might wish to, the Mail-In Mòd, instituted also in 1992, allows recitation and translation efforts at a distance. Mail-In Mòd adjudicators, 1992-2001, have been Effie Rankin (twice), Margie Beaton, Donnie MacLean, Seumas Watson (Gaelic Editor for *Am Bràighe*, originally from Maine), Rosemary McCormack (twice), Màiri Sine Chaimbeul (of Plockton, Scotland, and a Scottish National Mòd Gold Medallist for Traditional Singing), Kenneth Nilsen and Catriona Parsons. Adjudicators at the actual Mòd venues have been Catriona Parsons (nine times), Rosemary McCormack (twice), Màiri Sine Chaimbeul (twice), and Rhoda MacRitchie (of Harris, Scotland, and Toronto). Once again we see the close cooperation between the US, Scotland and Nova Scotia. In 1997, Scotland's An Comann Gaidhealach began a new cultural exchange program, sending Mòd Gold Medallist singers from the National Mòd in Scotland to the US Mòd.

To celebrate the new millennium, and as a memorial tribute to Kitty MacLeod, the great traditional singer from Lewis who had been a mentor to the American Mòd from the beginning, the Mòd committee asked Catriona Parsons to prepare a booklet of songs, rhymes, and lore, with a special children's section, accompanied by a CD. The material is drawn from her Lewis upbringing and from Cape Breton sources. At Mòd nan Eilean, the 2001 National Mòd held throughout the Hebrides, CGA presented copies of booklet and CDs to island schools.

Under the auspices of CGA, Gaelic Immersion Weekends have been held as follows :

- 1997 St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland
Instructors : Rhoda MacRitchie, Jamie Macdonald (of North Carolina, Ph.D. in Celtic Studies, Edinburgh U.; see below), Liam Cassidy (current editor of Naidheachd and the US Mòd bulletin, highly proficient in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic, a Gaelic College Immersion participant, and a fine singer of Cape Breton Gaelic songs), and Kevin McLaughlin (teaches Irish, and now Scottish Gaelic also, at U. of Pittsburg).
- 1998 Again at St. John's College
Instructors : R. MacRitchie, J. MacDonald, David Livingston-Lowe, K. McLaughlin
- 1999 Ditto
Instructors : R. MacRitchie, J. MacDonald, D. L.-Lowe, Effie Rankin
- 2000 Roslyn Center, Richmond, Virginia
Instructors : E. Rankin, D. L.-Lowe, Seumas Watson, Deborah Lowe (of Toronto), Michael MacKay (an advanced learner from Virginia, and recipient of CGA's Sabhal Mór Ostaig's scholarship)
- 2001 CU Conference Center, Boulder, Colorado
Instructors : D. L.-Lowe, S. Watson, Muriel Fisher(from Skye and instructor in Gaelic in Arizona ; see below), J. MacDonald, Michael Newton (Ph.D.in Celtic Studies, Edinburgh U., and author of several books on Gaelic-related subjects)

Each immersion weekend drew 45-50 students, with 55 in Richmond and 57 in Boulder. The 2002 immersion will return to Richmond.

The latest issue of Naidheachd lists "study groups" in the US as follows : in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California (6), Colorado (3), Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts (2), Maryland (2), Minnesota/Wisconsin, Missouri/Kansas, New Mexico, New York/New Jersey (3), North Carolina, Ohio (2), Oregon, Pennsylvania (2), Texas (2), Virginia (4), Washington, D.C., Washington State. There are probably more that we don't yet know; and those listed are of varying types and sizes. There follows a sampling.

Arizona

Here, for instance, there appears to be a situation unique in the US. Muriel Fisher from Skye has been Director of the Tucson Gaelic Institute since 1983. In 1996, the University of Arizona hired her as Gaelic Language Expert in their Critical Languages Department. She has also been a Language Instructor at Pima Co. Community College since 1993. In addition, she has taught at Sabhal Mór Ostaig and in CGA workshops. She has developed teaching materials, which currently are being used by Kevin MacLaughlin at the University of Pittsburg; and has taught over three hundred students at the Tucson Institute.

California

The Naidheachd list shows the largest number of study groups, six, in this state. Donnie MacDonald of Lewis has been, for many years tutor and mentor, and not only to California learners. Donnie meets monthly with a study group of about ten in Auburn, outside Sacramento, and is characteristically accessible to students via e-mail, telephone and tapes. Donnie has also facilitated the learning of a group begun in Reno, Nevada.

In correspondence with Tris King, who has been teaching classes in East Bay, about 30 miles east of San Francisco, for five years, currently holding three classes, each one day a week for two hours, and averaging 7-10 students each, he informed me that Deborah White, who is also a musician, offers Gaelic Classes at

Santa Rosa Junior College; and Rod MacKenzie, at American River College in Sacramento. He writes: "The San Jose/Silicon Valley area is starving for a teacher—I get inquiries constantly"--- He also laments "the disparate elements of the California Gaidhealtachd, which definitely exists, but is a victim of California's vast geography."

Colorado

Glenn Wrightson, past president of CGA, and until recently coordinator of the CGA Weekend Immersions, to whom I am indebted for the information on those, and who has attended Gaelic College Immersion Weeks since their inception, began teaching Gaelic in Denver in 1997. He had twenty-three (23) in his original beginners' class, with a few children, but chiefly adults of varying ages. Currently, he is conducting three (3) classes, with eighteen (18) regular students at a conservative count. While he sees progress in his students, he laments, not the attrition rate among beginners, but those fairly accomplished advanced students who go in other directions. North Carolina: Jamie MacDonald, a native of No. Carolina, who is presently working on a research project on the Isle of Lewis, in 1997 founded the North Carolina Gaelic Mòd in conjunction with the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games. In 1999, he instituted Gaelic song Week at Lees-MacRae College, Banner-Elk, (where, as he reminded me in an e-mail, I had had him in Gaelic class around 1985). Well-known Gaelic singers such as Christine Primrose of Lewis and Mary Jane Lamond, herself a graduate of St.F.X.'s Celtic Program, have instructed there. In 2000, he added a Gaelic Immersion immediately before Gaelic Song Week. Last year, there were 35-40 in attendance. Ohio: Andrew MacKay Jergens teaches a class of 6-10 in Cincinnati, with native speaker Catriona MacDonald Luke from Great Bernera, Lewis, serving as resource person while she herself refreshes her knowledge of Gaelic. Andrew has attended the Gaelic College, Sabhal Mór Ostaig, and spent a week in Montreal with Donald MacDonald on a private tutoring basis.

Virginia

Jamie MacDonald was involved in several other projects since his sojourn in Virginia, 1995-1999. In 1997 and 1998, he was teaching classes at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia,

beginning with four (4) immersion weekends in the summer, and continuing with one weekend per month, with about thirty (30) students. At the same time, he was teaching classes for SGEIR (Scottish Gaelic Enthusiasts in Richmond), once a month in Richmond, Virginia, with twenty-five (25) students. (Liam Cassidy is now teaching those classes). In 1999, he returned to No. Carolina, where he taught classes in Fayetteville, with eight (8) students. He has also taught Gaelic workshops throughout the country, including Tennessee State University, So. Carolina Museum in Columbia, Edinboro State University in Pennsylvania, and Stone Mountain Highland Games, Atlanta, Georgia.

Other classes currently being taught in Virginia are conducted by Nick Freer, immediate past president of CGA; by Michael MacKay; and by Wayne Clark, this last for a continuing education program.

Washington State

In the spring of 2001, I was invited to do Gaelic workshops at Féis Shiatail, the second of the Féisean that have been held in Seattle, Washington. The dedication and hard work and inspiration I found in this small western Gaidhealtachd brought me back again in July to do an intensive language and song series. In their statement on why Gaelic Matters, "Slighe nan Gaidheal", Seattle's Gaelic language and cultural society, states: "We are deeply committed to the survival of Gaelic language and culture. We hope that by bringing tradition bearers together with learners we may share the enduring relevance of Scottish Gaelic traditions with our contemporaries and with our descendants." At the 2001 Féis, there were exponents of those Gaelic traditions from Scotland and Nova Scotia as instructors and facilitators. The society's award-winning Gaelic choir and performance ensemble, "Seirm", produced *Am ri Teachd*, an original Gaelic musical drama with supertitles, which married a futuristic look at Seattle's Gaidhealtachd in 2060 with traditional Gaelic songs. Members of "Seirm" recently won first place in the Waulking (Milling) song competition at the National Mòd in Scotland.

A big reason for "Slighe nan Gaidheal"'s success must be the Gaelic teaching of Richard Hill. Before he moved to Seattle in

1982, he had begun learning Gaelic with a "course from Cape Breton which included a 331/3 LP record with a Gaelic version of 'Mary had a little lamb' in the mountains of Wyoming, where many Gaels had come for the sheep and cattle business." Meeting Alison Kinnaird, renowned harpist from Scotland, steeped in the Highland clàrsach tradition, at an Oberlin College, Ohio, workshop, inspired him to try his hand at teaching Gaelic on his return to Seattle. From his first group of two students in his living room in December, 1989, to twenty people crowding into his apartment in 1995; to enlisting the Gaels of Vancouver to come south and do all-day intensive sessions; to starting a waulking song group; to composing a mission statement for their newnon-profit organization; to organizing the choir; to planning the first Féis for Spring, 1998, and beyond, the Seattle Gaels have gone from strength to strength and are busily preparing for Féis Shiatail, 2002. In Richard Hill's own words—and I think they are fitting words with which to conclude :

Perhaps most importantly we have begun to see all this as an independent North American movement, deeply rooted in and respectful of the traditional idiomatic language and culture of the Highlands, but not bound to it.-----We have used the analogy of a sapling from the Mother Tree transplanted far away. If our energy, enthusiasm and love for all things Gàidhlig can help to generate a New Forest, we will all be overjoyed.

A PRELIMINARY LOOK AT THE STATE OF WELSH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN NORTH AMERICA

Wayne Harbert
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Purpose

Most of the thirty-odd languages offered here at Cornell fall into the category of 'Less Commonly Taught Languages.' Among them, however, Welsh is easily the smallest, having far fewer native speakers worldwide than any of the others. Welsh ranks a mere 370th in the *Ethnologue* list of the world's languages by population (Grimes 1995). However, the fact that it is an LCTL, and a small one at that, is only one determinant of its pedagogical situation in North America. For one thing, it is far more likely to be familiar to North Americans than the vast majority of languages which outrank it on the *Ethnologue* list (including some—Telegu, for example--which exceed it in population by a factor of ten). For another, the number of North Americans with at least some interest in learning it is in fact quite out of proportion to its size. Both of these disparities hold of other Celtic languages too, of course, and are attributable in the main to extensive immigration from the Celtic countries during the 19th century.¹ The Celtic languages enjoy the status of 'heritage languages'—languages to which an immigrant population retains an emotional and cultural allegiance. In the case of the Celtic languages, this sentimental attachment has endured long after the immigrant population ceased to use the language, giving rise to a significant pool of potential adult learners. While individuals do occasionally arrive at an interest in the study of the Welsh through other routes—an interest in the structure of the language, for example (as in the case of the present author), or an interest in the music of the associated culture--the majority of students in Welsh classes, in my experience, are there because they identify themselves as Welsh-Americans, and perceive the language as a part of a heritage which they wish to reclaim.