

many of the same expressive and creative resources with the native speakers; a sort of linguistic dissonance is the result when neo- and paleo-speakers attempt to engage in conversation. I have suggested that more attention might have been paid, and might still be paid, in the construction of grammars and dictionaries to some traditional genres in vernacular forms of the language—e.g., conversational styles that incorporate more idioms, proverbs, and sayings to help provide a bridge between the native and neo Breton speakers. The conversational and age gap between younger and older speakers may already be so great as to render the crossing of this bridge impracticable or impossible. An unanswered question (and unanswerable at present) is whether or not the neo-speakers will become sufficiently numerous to propagate their own version of the language and to promote, through time, its further elaboration as a set of vernaculars as expressive and creative as the ones that are being currently being lost.

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Retrospective NAACL - the first decade

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This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of NAACL in 1995 and the 10th year of publication of *JCLL*. It seems appropriate as we enter into our second decade as an organization, to review the progress and growth of NAACL, both to provide a record of the early years, and to serve as a basis for future planning and development.

Compared with most professional organizations, the membership base of NAACL is unique in that it includes both academic professionals and teachers in community-based language learning settings. Some members are professionally engaged with Celtic languages on a full time basis in academic institutions, while others teach their languages part time in addition to primary academic duties in other fields; still others teach their languages as an avocation, often on a volunteer basis, while engaged in other careers. This range of backgrounds reflects the realities of the context in which the organization has developed. It is in the nature of Celtic language teaching in North America that much of the language learning activity, particularly the learning of the modern spoken languages, takes place outside of official educational domains. Many who undertake the study of Celtic languages do so, at least initially, on their own or in small study groups without formal instruction; this was even more so a decade ago than it is today. There are a number of credit-bearing university-level courses available in Irish (although the focus of some of these may be more on the literary than the spoken language), but considerably fewer in Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, and virtually none in Breton, Manx or Cornish.¹ Although the number of university courses on the modern spoken languages is growing, classes are more often taught on a non-

¹For a survey of the available resources for the study of Celtic languages, see the series of articles published in *JCLL*, volumes 7-9. Volume 7 includes articles on Welsh and Scottish Gaelic, volume 8 on Irish and Breton, and volume 9 on Manx and Cornish.

credit basis through community education programs or by volunteers in community groups. The instructors in these classes are not typically professional teachers, but simply speakers of the languages from a variety of occupational backgrounds who are willing to share their knowledge of their languages with others on an informal basis. NAACLT was intended from the outset to serve both groups of teachers; its founding committee included individuals from both groups, and it continues to include both academics and non-academics among its active membership at all levels. The dialogue between professional language teachers in academia and volunteer community language teachers is and should continue to be viewed as a strength to be valued and developed, as it encourages a focus on the commonalities among Celtic language teachers in every domain, and allows us to learn from the variety of situations in which people learn and teach these languages, and the creative ways they have found to engage learners not only in university settings but in non-traditional teaching situations as well.

How it began

In April 1994, Thomas Ihde sent out a message to a number of individuals and internet listservs dealing with Celtic languages, calling for expressions of interest in the establishment of "an association in North America for Celtic language teachers and applied linguistic researchers." The goal of the organization would be to enhance communication among those who were teaching Celtic languages, often in isolation and without knowledge of others engaged in similar work. He received a number of responses from across the continent, and during the remainder of that year a founding committee was formed², along with subcommittees to develop a constitution and by-laws for the organization and to plan an election of a first slate of officers. In August of that year the first newsletter was published, announcing the formation of the organization and calling for further interest, and the initial recruitment of members began (*NAACLT News* 1.1, August 1994). By early 1995, the organization can be said to have been officially launched, with the completion of the NAACLT constitution and by-laws in January and the first election of officers in February: President Kara Smith (University of Western Ontario), Vice-president Thomas Ihde (Bergin Community College), Secretary-Treasurer Ron Crow (Conradh na Gaeilge i lár Ohio and Antioch College), and Members at Large Paul Birt

²The founding committee and ad-hoc executive committee consisted of Jim Clarke, Ron Crow, Dennis Doyle, Wayne Harbert, Thomas Ihde, John T. McCranie, Michael Pearson, Kara Smith and Nancy Stenson.

(University of Ottawa), John T. McCranie (San Francisco State University) and Beth Ellyn O'Mullan (Rutgers University).

Conferences

One of the most significant events of that first year, however, was the first NAACLT conference, a one-day event held at Glendale Community College in Glendale, California, hosted by founding member Dennis Doyle. Short though it was, the program included presentations by speakers from both coasts and the midwest of the United States and Canada, dealing with topics on teaching techniques, technology, and assessment, from teachers of Irish, Welsh and Gaelic. Most of those in attendance had not previously met each other, but the atmosphere was friendly, eager, and welcoming, and many of those in attendance have remained active members of the organization and become close colleagues and friends. James Duran, one of those attending the first meeting, wrote a report for the next newsletter, from which the following is excerpted:

I admit to having been apprehensive about the way things would turn out, having never met most of the participants, and having misgivings about how many people...would come...I walked away from the conference, however, elated with the whole experience. The attendance was good...and the spirit of the participants—both academic and non-academic—was warm and enthusiastic...I relaxed considerably, since I felt myself at home with fellow language teachers who were obviously committed to their respective languages and willing to explore bold and innovative approaches to the teaching of Celtic languages. (*NAACLT News* 2.1, August 1995)

According to a report on the evaluations of the conference in the same issue, the primary complaint about the conference was that it was too short. In response to this, subsequent conferences have gradually increased in length to several days, and now include social events in addition to the formal conference papers, and sometimes a day of pre-conference workshops or post-conference language classes.

Conferences have been held each year, and the annual event remains a cornerstone of the organization, where members widely

separated geographically and in many cases working in isolation from other Celtic language teachers can meet and share their interests and experiences with each other, and meet new colleagues, as each conference brings in new participants as it moves around the continent. Conferences have been held in both the United States and Canada, on both the east and west coasts and in the midwest. Organizers strive for a balance in the conference locations, because it is recognized that those teaching informally may not have the resources to attend conferences as regularly as those with academic positions. By moving the venues to different regions, it is likely all members will be near enough to the conference in at least some years that they can attend if interested without having to travel long distances or take significant time off work. It has indeed been the case that each conference has drawn a number of local participants interested in the teaching and learning of Celtic languages in addition to the core of members who attend with some regularity, and some of these subsequently become members. Conferences are often held at university campuses, where suitable rooms can often be found by members employed there at relatively low cost, and where institutional resources can be called upon to help with the planning. But this is not a requirement, and a very successful conference was also held at an Irish Cultural Center in San Francisco in 2003. In the year 2000, the conference met at the University of Limerick, hosted by then-president Gearóid Ó Néill. Despite the distance, the conference was well attended by NAACLT members from the United States and Canada, and in addition, was advertised throughout Ireland and the United Kingdom, drawing many European participants who had not previously been aware of NAACLT and its activities. The opportunity to meet and interact with colleagues across the Atlantic was beneficial to all concerned, and a great pleasure as well; it also resulted in a number of new European members. As a result of the success of this meeting, the Executive Committee agreed that it would be worthwhile to plan occasional subsequent meetings in Europe, in order to continue encouragement of trans-Atlantic dialogue among Celtic language teachers. Accordingly, the 2005 conference was scheduled for Bangor, Wales. The full list of sites that have hosted NAACLT conferences during the past decade is given below:

- 1995: Glendale Community College; Glendale, California.
- 1996: University of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- 1997: St. Francis Xavier University; Antigonish, Nova Scotia.
- 1998: University of Minnesota; Minneapolis, Minnesota

- and University of St. Thomas; St. Paul, Minnesota
- 1999: University of Ottawa; Ottawa, Ontario
- 2000: University of Limerick; Limerick, Ireland
- 2001: St. Peter's College; Jersey City, New Jersey
- 2002: St. Francis Xavier University; Antigonish, Nova Scotia
- 2003: United Irish Cultural Center, San Francisco, California
- 2004: Concordia University; Montreal, Quebec
- 2005: University of Wales, Bangor, Wales

Plans are being made as we go to press for the 2006 conference to be held in Seattle, Washington, and discussions are underway of possible subsequent venues in Kingston, Ontario, and Madison, Wisconsin, among others.

Members and Officers

The first NAACLT membership list published in November 1995 showed 53 members. Membership has remained fairly stable over the years. Given the relatively small numbers involved in the teaching and learning of Celtic languages, this is unsurprising. Each conference tends to draw in some new members, however, though not all remain in the organization on a long-term basis. A small but steady growth might be assured if ways could be found to retain members and keep more new members involved, even in years when conferences are not held in their area. As the teaching of Celtic languages continues to increase in North American Universities as well, a campaign to recruit those teaching in such institutions might also be undertaken on a regular basis.

The officers of the organization represent a broad cross-section of the membership. They have included North Americans from both the United States and Canada, as well as Europeans. Both academics and non-academics have held various positions over the years. Their language specialties also include the full range of languages represented by NAACLT, with Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh predominating (in that order) as they do among the membership at large in roughly similar proportions. But a recent member at large is a Manx teacher, and other officers and past officers have interests in Breton and other languages, even if these are not their primary focus of teaching and research. Thus, virtually all of the Celtic languages are represented in some capacity. The past presidents of NAACLT to date, with their primary language specialties and locations at time of office, are Kara Smith (Gaelic, Ontario),

Thomas Ihde (Irish, New Jersey), Ken Nilsen (Gaelic and Irish, Nova Scotia), Paul Birt (Welsh, Irish, and Breton, Ontario), Gearóid Ó Néill (Irish, Ireland), Catriona Nic Iomhair Parsons (Gaelic, Nova Scotia), Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew (Irish and Welsh, Pennsylvania), Bob Burke (Irish, Maryland), and Muiris Ó Laoire (Irish, Ireland), and Delyth Prys (Welsh, Wales). Current president as we go to press is Séumas Gagne (Gaelic, Washington), and Harold Kenny (Irish, Ontario) is president-elect.

Publications

From the beginning, NAACLT membership has included publication of the newsletter *NAACLT News*, and since 1998, the *Journal of Celtic Language Learning* has been included with individual memberships. *NAACLT News* keeps members up to date on activities of the organization, its members, the annual conference, and provides information about other conferences, publications, and events of likely interest to NAACLT members. Four past editors, Thomas Ihde, Ron Crow, Fintan Moore, and Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew have been responsible for *NAACLT News* in its first ten years, with occasional guest editors filling in. Brian Doyle began his term as fifth editor in the summer of 2004, and readers can look forward to the benefits of his past experience as a founding editor of *An Doras*, the late, lamented newsletter from Chicago for advanced-level learners of Irish. Regular features of *NAACLT News* include a message from the president, and information about upcoming conferences and other events related to Celtic languages, publications and other activities of the membership, progress reports from the editors of *Journal of Celtic Language Learning*, and introductions of newly elected officers each year. Other occasional features appear depending on the offerings of readers and the inspiration of particular editors. Early issues contained a column entitled "The Celtic Computer," which introduced readers to listservs and websites of interest, and provided instruction on access and technical issues for beginners in the days before the internet had become so thoroughly embedded in our lives. The feature "My Turn," appeared in several issues, profiling individual NAACLT members and their language teaching interests and activities. Occasional essays by members have appeared, such as one by Kara Smith on the justifications for inclusion of Scottish Gaelic in Canadian education (*NAACLT News* 1.2, Nov. 1994), and a list of ten myths about Celtic Language Learning composed by Tom Ihde (*NAACLT News* 5.1, March 1999). Past editor, Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew started a Proverb Corner, introducing proverbs from the various Celtic languages, with discussion of their origins and meanings, and English analogues. An-

nouncements of new books and resources, and letters to the editor appear from time to time. The more NAACLT members contribute to the newsletter the better it will be as a resource and vehicle of communication among members, and all editors have been happy to welcome contributions. The newsletter is also a source of information about the annual conference, supplementing NAACLT's website, and the issue following each conference always contains a report on the conference for those who were unable to attend.

The *Journal of Celtic Language Learning* is NAACLT's scholarly journal. Its mission, as presented in the first call for contributions, is "to provide another forum in which teachers and applied linguists can contribute to the literature presently available on bilingual and second language acquisition, as well as increase communication among Celtic language teachers and researchers." (*NAACLT News* 1.2, Nov. 1994). Members receive the year's issue of *JCLL* as part of their annual dues, and the number of institutional subscribers, mainly libraries, continues to grow, albeit slowly.

In practice, the research published in *JCLL* has focused almost exclusively on issues relating to the teaching and learning of Celtic languages, although general topics of relevance to language learning and teaching generally would also be welcomed. The core of the journal is the research articles, which undergo a blind review by at least two referees familiar with the language and the issues treated in the article. If referees' recommendations disagree, additional assessments are sought to assist the editors in making their final decisions regarding publication. Initially, the review of papers was conducted entirely by *JCLL*'s international editorial board, which includes distinguished scholars of Celtic from the US, Canada, Ireland, and Wales. More recently, as the number of submissions has increased, from NAACLT members and non-members alike, the editors have increasingly moved toward recruitment of referees not otherwise affiliated with the journal, but active in the fields of Celtic language teaching, Celtic Studies, Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. The acceptance rate for submissions is presently at about 50%. Research articles have covered a wide range of topics in all the Celtic languages, from language acquisition to language policy, as well as studies of pedagogical issues, such as dictionary making, teacher certification, and syllabus design. An index to the contents of Volumes 1-10 is included in this issue.

In addition to the research articles, *JCLL* also publishes shorter articles in its Teaching Forum section, where teachers can submit descriptions of teaching techniques or tools that have been particu-

larly successful, or of the development of programs for the study of Celtic languages. There is also a section for reviews of books, dictionaries, and software for the teaching and learning of Celtic languages. Occasionally we receive review copies of books and materials, which are sent out to reviewers, but reviews are also welcomed from readers who already own copies of a publication and are willing to share their assessments of it in the journal. The editors are currently planning the addition of a new section for longer papers which do not report formal research studies but which discuss topics of relevance to readers of *JCLL*, through essays on issues in language teaching, and surveys of materials, programs or resources for particular languages.

Like any healthy institution, *JCLL* has seen some changes over its ten years of publication. The first issue was published in 1995 under the editorship of Thomas Ihde and Nancy Stenson. The interior was photocopied and the journals were bound by stapling them together at the center. Since volume 3, the entire journal has been printed professionally. Volume 3 was also improved by the purchase of Adobe PageMaker software, giving a more professional look to the page format as well. Starting with volume 4, the stapled binding was changed to perfect binding. After the publication of volume 4, Tom Ihde handed over his editorship to Muiris Ó Laoire, who is responsible for the final production aspects of publishing: formatting and layout, ads, printing and distribution, while Nancy Stenson continues to handle the initial work of soliciting and receiving manuscripts, arranging for review by referees, notifying authors of editorial decisions, and monitoring the revisions of accepted articles. As of the next issue of the journal, she will step down from this position and Kevin Rottet has agreed to take on the co-editorship. He will broaden the expertise base of the editorship, as he is a Welsh teacher, and all previous editors have been specialists in Irish.

Two member-initiated ideas have helped shape the contents of several recent issues of *JCLL*. First, at the suggestion of Editorial Board member Jeffrey Kallen, Volume 6 was a special issue, with Kallen as guest editor, of invited papers from a conference on first language acquisition that had been held in Ireland. It included a series of very interesting articles on the acquisition of Welsh and Irish by children, by several major scholars in the field of child language and linguistic theory. Second, thanks to a grant from the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, *JCLL* also published a series of "Field Reports," examining the state of Celtic language study throughout North America. Six

reports spread over volumes 7-9 provide valuable information never previously collected on resources and activities centered on each of the Celtic languages; these will serve as a benchmark for further study or action. Welsh and Gaelic are covered in volume 7, Irish and Breton in volume 8, and Manx and Cornish in volume 9. Some reports also include needs assessments and recommendations, which offer a valuable starting point should NAACLT choose to undertake language-specific development action in the future. Collectively, these reports provide a valuable resource to all those interested in the acquisition and maintenance of Celtic languages and their status in the North American context.

In addition to the regular publication of the journal and newsletter, the organizers of the NAACLT 2000 conference in Limerick published a volume of proceedings from that conference. Since only those in attendance received the proceedings, the editors have discussed the possibility of republishing some of those papers in *JCLL*, so that the wider membership can have access to them as well.

Other activities and initiatives

NAACLT hosts a website (www.naaclt.org), which contains information about the organization and its goals, the members and officers, publications, and coming events, including the annual NAACLT conferences. There are also links to sites devoted to specific Celtic languages, and a page of information about classes in the languages. Seumas Gagne is slated to take over as webmaster in the near future from Rhoslyn Prys, who in turn succeeded Will Kenny and Thomas Ihde.

In 1998 NAACLT was accepted to membership in the National Council of Organizations of Less Commonly Taught Languages, known as NCOLCTL or The Council. There are eighteen member organizations of NCOLCTL, representing virtually the entire world, including organizations for teachers of African languages, South Asian languages, Nordic languages, Slavic languages, and more specific language groups such as teachers of Turkish, Korean, and others. The Council holds annual meetings as part of the conference on Less Commonly Taught Languages that they have been hosting for a number of years, and NAACLT has had a presence at those meetings since joining. In various years, Nancy Stenson, Thomas Ihde, Bob Burke, Dineen Grow, and Delyth Prys have represented NAACLT at NCOLCTL meetings, and other volunteers wishing to attend future meetings are welcome to notify the officers.

The more members we have involved the better. The experience of hearing from scholars involved in improving the teaching and learning of other LCTLs can be truly inspiring. In the words of Tom Ihde, who attended the first NCOLCTL meeting for NAACLT, "It was amazing to see how similar the needs were among the less commonly taught languages. Whether the language is Russian, Catalan, Swahili, or Gaelic, many of the areas needing development were the same....In reflecting back on the experience of attending NCOLCTL, I must say that the most valuable lesson...was not any on technique of language teaching but rather this general sense that we are in this effort together, to learn and teach languages that few seem to value in North America, but that on the international level are very real parts of people's every day existence."³

One noteworthy initiative undertaken in recent years under the guidance of then-president Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew is the Clann Lir book prize. This award is presented annually since 2002 to a children's book first published in a Celtic language, and aims to encourage creativity in writing in the Celtic languages for children nine years old and under. Textbooks are excluded, but any other works are eligible provided they were originally written in one of the Celtic languages. Subsequent translation into English or another language does not affect eligibility, as long as the translation appeared after the original publication. The winning book is selected by an awards committee at the NAACLT annual conference. The first year of the award, five entries were submitted, despite a rather late announcement of the competition. Helen Emanuel Davies' *Creaduriaid Rhyfeddol* (Fabulous Creatures) was selected as the first winner. The book was reviewed by Roslyn Blyn-LaDrew in *NAACLT News* volume 7, number 4, pp. 4-6, along with an announcement of the prize itself and discussion of other entries. The winner in 2003 was *Céard Atá sa Bhosca?* (What's in the Box?) by Áine Ní Ghlinn, which was reviewed by Ken Nilsen in *JCLL* volume 9.

In 2003, with the help of treasurer John Morrissey, NAACLT has been incorporated in California, and is now recognized as a tax-exempt public benefit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code. This status officially frees NAACLT from having to pay taxes on income derived from its activities, provided such income is used to further the purposes for which the organization was founded. Additionally, any donations and be-

quests to NAACLT (other than membership dues) will now be tax deductible, which could be a help in future fund raising.

Conclusion

The shape of NAACLT, and its membership have continued to evolve over the years. Much has been accomplished, including the establishment of communications among those teaching, often in isolation from colleagues with like interests. The organization has forged ties with colleagues abroad, especially in Ireland and Wales, and with teachers of other languages through membership in NCOLCTL. The journal and the conferences have given NAACLT international visibility, which can and should be encouraged further through additional initiatives. Membership remains stable, though fluid. Not all the founding members are still involved in the organization, but many new members have joined. It is in the nature of the Celtic languages, still taught minimally in academic institutions of North America, and primarily on a part time basis, that individual involvement with the language will vary from year to year as demands of the day job, families and other pressures of making a living alter their situations and availability for teaching. A potential future role for NAACLT might be to serve in the role of active advocate for the Celtic languages in academic settings, so as to enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of the general public, and increase the opportunities for involvement in teaching the languages to which NAACLT members are committed.

³From the 2000 NCOLCTL report, *NAACLT News*, 6.1, autumn 2000.