# Bun is Bàrr Master Apprentice Program
# Project Closure Report

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**Gaelic Affairs**

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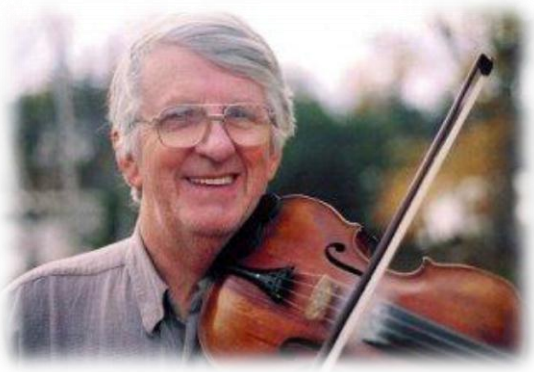

*Mar Chuimhneachan*
*Eòs Peadar mac Theàrlaich Eòis*

*In Memory of*
*Joe Peter MacLean*
*June 4, 1945 – Jan. 11, 2013*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bun is Bàrr Master Apprentice Program involved seven elder Gaelic speakers who passed on their language and culture to seven apprentices. The program was created by the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. In May 2011, Dr. Leanne Hinton came to Nova Scotia to train the Gaelic teams.

The Master-Apprentice program focuses on learning language through every day and cultural activities. Teams were to work together 360 hours over 12 months, one-on-one, using Gaelic only to communicate.

Dr. Hinton gave an overview of language revitalization, advised on activities to do together and how to stay in Gaelic. The weekend was also attended by other Gaelic learners and teachers and members of the Mi 'kmaq and Acadian communities. Assessment of the apprentice's language ability was done to provide a baseline for assessment at the end of the program.

After the training weekend, the real work began as apprentices began planning their visits with their mentors. They had to provide Gaelic Affairs with periodic reports on their activities with invoices for their mentor's hours. Apprentices were not paid, except those who applied for and received a bursary. Teams were supported by facilitators Goiridh Dòmhnullach and Shay MacMullin, who checked in on the teams and provided encouragement.

Teams in the program were: Amber Buchanan and Jean MacKay, Sydney; Melanie Altman Holder and A.J. MacDougall, Judique; Susan Cameron and Joe MacKinnon, Antigonish County; Colin Watson and Michael MacNeil, Malagawatch/Jamesville; Colin MacDonald and Anna MacKinnon, Inverness; Joyce MacDonald and Mary MacKinnon, Southwest Margaree; Renée Kaser and Joe Peter MacLean, North Sydney/ Boisdale. Apprentices reported using some of the material provided at the training weekend, but also spent their time together cooking, visiting other Gaelic speakers, having meals together, playing cards, going to concerts or milling frolics. Close to 50 different activities were cited in their reports. A follow up training session was held and three house céilidhs, where the teams interacted with other Gaelic speakers.

Many of the apprentices observed that time spent with their mentors taught them more than language, which is a desired outcome of the program. Dr. Hinton writes in her book on the program: "Learning your language of heritage also means learning about customs, values and appropriate behavior." Apprentices learned about local and family history, songs, stories, cultural norms and practices. The material was alive, being passed down from a tradition bearer, rather than from a book where nuances and certainly much of the fun would be lost. Apprentice's language skills also improved, for some more than others and this was dependent on the hours the teams spent together and other variables, such as how much Gaelic conversation the apprentices had outside of the time with their mentor.

What was most gratifying was the impact of the program on the mentors. Most were hesitant to be a "teacher"; in fact they didn't like the word master, so they were called mentors. All the mentors, however, said they would do it again and were surprised and encouraged by their apprentice's progress and diligence. They formed strong bonds with the apprentice and enjoyed the social contact with the apprentice and with other learners in the Gaelic community. One apprentice is even building a house next to his mentor and they still see each other daily. Seniors using their language again and sharing their natural skills and gifts is one of the program's most positive outcomes.

The beauty of a program like this is also its challenge. The unstructured and organic nature of the learning process means that measurable outcomes are difficult to define. However, learning is happening on many levels and it seems at a deeper level. Interviews at the end of the program reveal that apprentices developed a strong connection to their mentor and their community. They want to stay in Nova Scotia and be involved with Gaelic for the rest of their lives. The chance to just use the language naturally with their mentor means that they have greater ease in conversation, a huge step for language learners and important for Gaelic development. More people using the language will raise the profile and status of the language.

Nonetheless, apprentices felt that more structure and support would have helped them complete more hours. Building in stronger accountability and support will be important for future mentoring programs. It was also learned from this program that apprentices with the strongest language skills going into the program can get the most out of the program, and this may be more enjoyable for the mentor, too. There are limited numbers of native speakers left, so their time needs to be maximized by matching them with those who can develop superior language skills and become tradition bearers. These will be our future tradition bearers and can also be teachers for other learners.

In order to meet the needs of the growing number of beginner and intermediate learners, Gaelic Affairs will work with community organizations who are offering *Gàidhlig aig Baile* classes, and encourage groups to look at developing their own mentoring programs, as is being done with Bun is *Bàrr: Baile nan Gilleasach*, offered in Gillisdale, and *Bun is Bàrr: Na Gaisgich Òga*, which is being offered for youth ages 10-15 at *Colaisde na Gàidhlig* (St. Ann's Gaelic College). A testament to Gaelic Affairs' mentoring success is to see branch programs initiated in the community.

Bun is Bàrr Master-Apprentice Program was made possible by support from the Department of Seniors, which contributed to the costs for the senior mentors, and Acadian Affairs, which supported Acadian participation at Hinton's training weekend.

# BACKGROUND

Since 2004 Gaelic learners and teachers in Nova Scotia have participated in Communicative Language Teaching Approaches (CLT) with a primary goal to develop the speaking ability of learners. CLT teachers, who are more like language facilitators, use props and body language to convey meaning. Translation, reading and writing are not part of this approach. *Gàidlig aig Baile* (Gaelic at Home) sessions, which use a CLT approach, have been held in community halls and homes throughout the province, involving hundreds of learners. An evaluation of the classes in 2008 (*Am Blas Againn Fhìn*) revealed learners' and instructors' top priority to be more intensive immersion opportunities, which would create fluent speakers, who could themselves be community instructors.

In response to this report, the Office of Gaelic Affairs (OGA) piloted a mentorship program in 2009, *Bun is Bàrr* (Root and Branch). It matched two intermediate level learners with Jim Watson, a Gaelic researcher, writer and educator who specializes in Cape Breton *seanchas* (oral tradition) and Gaelic singer Mary Jane Lamond, who was a third apprentice and song instructor. Interaction was in Gaelic only. They worked on transcribing Gaelic stories, telling stories, singing songs, visiting elders and doing everyday activities together. Its success led to Bun is Bàrr 2010, involving three mentors, Jim Watson, Effie Rankin and Hector MacNeil, and six apprentices. A focus group at the end of the 2010 program showed that the apprentices felt they did not have enough time with their mentor; they were just getting to know them when the program ended. (It lasted 12 weeks. Mentors and apprentices spent about 36 hours together. Participants in the 2009 program benefited from an 8-day follow up residential program, after the initial 12 weeks, which they said made a big difference in their language learning outcomes.)

With a desire to continue trying new mentoring approaches, the Office of Gaelic Affairs went back to the inspirational roots of CLT in Nova Scotia and invited Dr. Leanne Hinton, professor emeritus at University of California at Berkeley, to Nova Scotia to train teams in the Master-Apprentice Program (MAP). Dr. Hinton, who specializes in Native American languages, sociolinguistics and language revitalization, is the author of *How to Keep Your Language Alive: A Commonsense Approach to One-on-One Language Learning*, about California's Master-Apprentice program. This program was developed by the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival in response to the stark decline in native languages spoken in California – at the time of publication of *How to Keep Your Language Alive* there were 50 Native American languages spoken in California but not one of them were being spoken to children at home.

Gaelic Affairs' 2009 and 2010 Bun is Bàrr programs were inspired by Dr. Hinton's MAP program, but her program is different in that it pairs mainly elderly speakers with learners. This would be a new approach in Nova Scotia. The elderly native speaker has been incorporated into learning programs, but generally has been absent from a leadership role in language transmission. It was important to try this approach, since many of our native Gaelic speakers from Nova Scotia can share language, insights, practices and culture that may not be accessible in another decade. This approach may also have other benefits with regard to elder engagement and intergenerational transmission.

# SELECTION PROCESS AND TRAINING

Prior to Leanne Hinton coming to Nova Scotia to do the training, Gaelic Affairs advertised a request for expressions of interest (REI) from teams to participate in the program. The REI explained that the Master-Apprentice Program focuses on learning language through visiting and everyday activities. Through shared activities, apprentices are immersed in language associated with, for example, cooking, sharing a meal and daily household tasks and cultural practices.

*The Goals of the Master-Apprentice Program, as stated in the REI, are:*

1. To strengthen links between Gaelic learners in Nova Scotia and our Gaelic elders.
2. To provide Gaelic elders with an opportunity to share their knowledge, cultural traditions and wisdom with another generation of Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia.
3. To provide Nova Scotia learners with an opportunity to be immersed in Gaelic language and culture and acquire, by spending time with an elder, the linguistic and cultural foundation of Gaelic Nova Scotia.
4. To help re-establish the *céilidh* (visiting) tradition in Nova Scotia.

Applicants were expected to apply as a team. Apprentices could be beginners in the language or have had some Gaelic language instruction or exposure. They had to be Nova Scotia residents who are serious about Gaelic language and cultural acquisition (i.e. language learning is more than a hobby or past-time) and intend to use Gaelic every day and pass on the language on to others. Masters in the program must be a fluent Gaelic-speaking elder. Teams are required to live in close proximity to facilitate visiting.

Eighteen teams applied for nine positions. A planning and selection committee of community members and Gaelic Affairs staff was set up.

The teams had to agree to complete a three-day training session with Leanne Hinton, at St. Ann's Gaelic College, May 6-8. This training was also attended by 30 others in the Gaelic community – teachers, professors, learners -- and three people from the Acadian community and two from the Mi' kmaw community. Dr. Hinton reviewed the principles of the Master-Apprentice Program, demonstrated activities and had participants practice activities together. The apprentices' language ability was evaluated during the weekend, as a baseline before beginning the program. There was also time in the evening for storytelling, singing, dancing and fiddle playing in the evening. In her report on the weekend, Dr. Hinton

remarked on the vitality and importance of Gaelic cultural arts:

> *The advanced learners will probably be focusing primarily on developing storytelling skills, learning songs, and developing the ART of conversation, which is very highly developed among the Gaels – conversation is not idle, but is the process of passing on knowledge and tales; everyone says Gaelic conversation is Education.*
>
> *And music! The whole group sings, and know hundreds of songs, or thousands for the especially revered singers. Every night after supper, people would gather in front of the fireplace and talk, tell stories, play the fiddle, do some step-dancing, and sing til the early morning hours. (Then 7 a.m. breakfast, so the sleep debt was considerable.) Their intense relationship to music is a giant asset to language revitalization.*

After the weekend the real work began and apprentices were expected to take the lead on initiating meetings and planning activities. They were asked to keep a journal to record their activities and hours in the program and submit weekly, later bi-weekly reports.

Masters were be paid a stipend of $3,000 for 360 hours involvement in the program Apprentices weren't paid, unless they applied for and were successful in receiving a bursary of up to $3,000. Bursaries would be first allocated to Nova Scotia youth (under 35).

While in Nova Scotia, Dr. Hinton spent an afternoon with BBMAP facilitators Goiridh Dòmhnullach and Shay MacMullin. As facilitators they would provide support to the apprentices: talk with them, answer questions, visit their mentor with them or do anything that would make it easier for the apprentice and mentor to work together. She also did presentations in Antigonish and Halifax on heritage language revitalization and language revitalization in the home.

# BUN IS BÀRR TEAMS

## AMBER BUCHANAN AND JEAN MACKAY

**Jean MacKay** (*Jean ni'n Mhurchaidh Dhòmhnaill)* is Amber Buchanan's paternal great-grand aunt. Jean is the youngest of four children born to Mary J. (MacDonald) and Murdock MacDonald, both of Lewis ancestry, who lived in Rear Big River, North Shore. Jean grew up hearing both English and Gaelic, and learned most of her Gaelic from her grandmother and from listening to Gaelic conversations at their home post office. She had little opportunity to speak Gaelic when she worked in the United States and in the industrial area of Cape Breton. Many decades later, when approached by Amber to be part of BBMAP, Jean was hesitant. Amber convinced her to try it and noted towards the end of the program how many phrases and words came back to Jean as she mentored Amber. Jean is a wonderful cook and hosts Gaelic learners and other visitors to her Westmount home, which she shares with Ray, her husband of more than 60 years.

**Amber Buchanan**, 26, grew up in Sydney. Both her parents are from the North Shore. She lives today in her mother's old home on the North Shore with her three year old daughter Sadie. She began learning Gaelic at 19, inspired by a trip to France after high school that made her curious about her own heritage language and culture. She began taking Total Immersion Plus classes in Sydney, after attending a youth gathering in Christmas Island. Around this time she would regularly visit her great-grandmother Sadie, Jean's older sister by 11 years, with her friend, neighbor and fellow Gaelic learner, Shannon MacDonald. Listening to their Gaelic conversation inspired Amber. Amber spent a year in Peru where she learned Spanish. She teaches Spanish and yoga in addition to Gaelic. She teaches students at Mira Road Elementary and holds immersion classes and weekends in her home on the North Shore.

## MELANIE ALTMAN HOLDER AND A. J. MACDOUGALL

**A. J. MacDougall (***Alasdair Seumas mac Iain Dhòmhnuill Ghilleasbuig Aonghuis Dhòmhnuill Iain)*
"Raised by his grandparents on a small farm in Judique South, A. J. MacDougall's youth was spent surrounded by the traditional music, language and culture of Gaelic Cape Breton. Descended from emigrants from Strathglass and South Uist, MacDougall is the former Warden of Inverness County and a retired Executive Assistant with the Provincial Government. Speaking slowly, and with deliberation, he vividly recalls his grandmother singing Gaelic songs at the spinning wheel and neighbors telling long stories during evening visits. Despite having spent much of his working life in Halifax, MacDougall always found opportunities to speak Gaelic - he boarded with a fluent speaker there for fifteen years. Today, MacDougall teaches Gaelic in community classes in Judique, Creignish and Port Hawkesbury, one of the only native speakers from the area to do so in recent years, and has taken an active role in the maintenance and promotion of the language in his home community." (From cainntmomhathar.com – Shamus MacDonald).

**Melanie Altman Holder**, 25, was raised in Vermont and as a young fiddler became attracted to traditional Cape Breton fiddling that was popular in New England at the time. Her family visited Cape Breton when she was teenager, and she continued to return, transferring to St. Francis Xavier University's Celtic Department, Antigonish, for her second year of university. It was here she began learning Gaelic from Catriona Parsons, Micheal Linkletter and Ken Nilsen. She was enrolled in the university's education program while doing BBMAP and graduated in May 2012, specializing in Gaelic education. She is married to Donald Holder, and they live in Long Point. Melanie works at the Celtic Music Interpretive Centre in Judique where she does demonstrations and gives tours of the Centre. She is also working to incorporated more Gaelic language and culture into their programing.

## SUSAN CAMERON AND JOE MACKINNON

**Joe MacKinnon** (*Eòs mac Dhòmhnuill Lachainn Alasdair Lachainn*) was born into a Gaelic-speaking family of six in Inverness, Cape Breton. When he was seven, his father was killed working in Inverness Coal Mine. He doesn't recall never having Gaelic or English, since both languages were spoken in the community. In his home, it was mainly Gaelic, especially when his MacIsaac grandmother came to live with them after his father died. She had little English. After his mother, Màiri Sheonaidh Dhùghaill, died, Joe moved away to work in Ontario and he says he went 40 years without speaking Gaelic. He married Pauline Chiasson , a French-speaking Acadian from Margaree Forks and they had four children. He started speaking Gaelic again when his son Lewis took an interest in the language, especially after his mother's brother Dougald (*Dùghall mac Iain 'ic*

*Dhùghaill 'ic Dhonnchaidh 'ic Lachain)* moved into the MacKinnon farm in Lower South River, Antigonish County. Joe continues to farm and is supportive of his local Gaelic community: holding classes and conversations groups in his home and sharing his hospitality, language and cultural skills with the many learners who visit him.

**Susan (MacKinnon) Cameron,** 51, lives in Antigonish County and works as librarian at the Fr. Charles Brewer Celtic Collection, St.F.X. University. She participated in the Scottish events when growing up in Antigonish town and recalls having an interest in stories and folklore; but her interest in Gaelic language and culture came later in her life. She obtained a BA in History and English and B.Ed. from ST.F.X. and a Masters in Library and Information Science from the University of Western Ontario. While working at the the ST.F.X. Library she began auditing the Gaelic classes of Ken Nilsen in 1991, and other university Celtic courses. When she became librarian of the Celtic Collection in 2005 she began to focus more on her Gaelic skills as she was in daily contact with Gaelic literature, learners and speakers. In 2010-11 she went to Sabhal Mór Ostaig for the fall semester of a Gaelic immersion course.

## COLIN WATSON AND MICHAEL MACNEIL

**Michael MacNeil**, "(*Mìcheal Eòin Chaluim Sheumais Mhóir*) was born on a small farm near Iona, an area settled by immigrants from Barra. Mickey John H. MacNeil is a talented tradition bearer with a gentle manner. Though he and his siblings were brought up during the Great Depression, their father, a farmer and fisherman, always managed to put food on the table and the local community provided a rich cultural environment in which to be raised. In the evenings, visiting was common and Gaelic stories were often shared between friends and neighbours. After serving in the armed forces for several years, Mickey returned to Iona where he intended to replace the local storekeeper temporarily – he ended up buying the store and spent the next thirty years behind its counter. Now retired, MacNeil is quick to laugh and reminisce about the years he spent there with his wife by his side. An important part of the local community, Mickey's general store provided a steady stream of Gaelic speaking customers with whom MacNeil would converse. A long-time member of the church choir, Mickey is a valued member of the Iona Gaelic singers and regularly travels to milling frolics around the island. (From cainntmomhathar.com -- Shamus MacDonald)."

**Colin Watson,** 29**,** grew up speaking both Gaelic and English in his home in Valley Mills, Inverness County. His father, Jim Watson, passed the language on to him, and he remembers as a young boy travelling with his father to milling frolics, concerts and to visit tradition bearers. He graduated with a BA in environmental Studies from Sir Wilfred Grenfell College at Memorial University, Newfoundland and has a hospitality and tourism management course from the New Brunswick Community College, St. Andrews Branch. After working in British Columbia he returned to Cape Breton, drawn home to the community and culture he grew up in. Colin works as a guide at Nova Scotia Highland Village; he plays the fiddle and is a talented Gaelic singer.

## COLIN MACDONALD AND ANNA MACKINNON

**Anna MacKinnon** (*Annag ni'n Iain Alaisdair 'ic Aonghais Ailein) "*seldom heard English before she went to school. At her childhood home in Sight Point, Gaelic was the language of daily life. Her father, John Alex MacDonald, was a fisherman who operated a small farm overlooking the expansive Northumberland Strait. Her mother came from a musical family which included legendary fiddlers Donald Angus Beaton and Màiri Alasdair Raghnaill as close relations. During her youth, Anna attended school in Sight Point and Port Bàn, ruggedly beautiful areas largely uninhabited today. As a young woman, she moved to Broad Cove Banks to be closer to the once bustling town of Inverness. There she married, cared for her family and spent decades behind the counter of Malcolm Dan MacLellan's store in the centre of town. For several years, MacKinnon remembers speaking little Gaelic in public - then she decided to start. Older customers were delighted to do business in Gaelic and encouraged her to continue. By the time she retired from a local gift shop in town, Anna had been sharing her language with customers for decades. Full of fun, and devoted to her friends and family, MacKinnon continues to be a strong supporter of Gaelic in her community today and has hosted language classes there for several years." (from cainntmomhathar.com, -- Shamus MacDonald*).*

**Colin MacDonald**, 24, comes from a long line of Gaelic tradition bearers, including his great-grandfather, Hughie Dan MacDonnell, a noted storyteller, and his great-grandmother, Katie Florence Kennedy. He was raised in Foot Cape, near Inverness, and was encouraged musically at a young age. He and his brothers formed a band when he was only 10, All Fired Up. They played locally and produced a CD. Colin began learning Gaelic in high school with Margie Beaton at Dalbrae Academy, continued at Cape Breton University and during his second year of university transferred to the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow where he studied music and Gaelic. He also attended Sabhal Mór Ostaig, Scotland. When he returned to Cape Breton he worked as a student researcher at Nova Scotia Highland Village under the mentorship of Jim Watson. In the fall of 2008 he began working on his Masters in Celtic Studies at ST. F.X. where the

late Ken Nilsen reinforced what he learned from Jim Watson with regard to Inverness County dialect and culture. He continued to work on his Gaelic attending Gàidhlig aig Baile classes with Carmen MacArtur and working at Colaisde na Gàidhlig with Angus MacLeod. Coming into the Bun is Bàrr program Colin could speak Gaelic but wanted to learn more about local culture and dialect. Colin plays piano and guitar and is learning Gaelic songs.

## JOYCE MACDONALD AND MARY MACKINNON

**Mary (MacDonald) MacKinnon (***Màiri ni'n Ailig Bhig Alasdair Òig***)** was raised in MacDonald's Glen, Southwest Margaree. Known as the Keppoch MacDonalds, her ancestors came from Morar, Scotland. She married a local Gaelic speaker, Vince MacKinnon, and they raised six children on his family home in Kiltarlity Road, Gillisdale. Vince's mother was a sister to Joyce's grandmother, so Joyce and Mary knew each other before working together in BBMAP. Mary is a wonderful cook and welcomes friends and relatives to her home every day where she shares her baked goods with tea and lively conversation. You rarely leave Mary's home without a gift, maybe a hand-made dish cloth or food item like marag (sausage). Her positive energy and generosity is uplifting.

**Joyce MacDonald, 32:** Raised in Centreville, Inverness County, Joyce attended Mabou Consolidated where she first began learning Gaelic with Margie Beaton, although she heard it spoken by her grandmother. She went on to study Journalism at the University of Kings College, Halifax, and also studied Russian. She spent a semester in St. Petersburg, Russia. She was drawn back to Cape Breton in 2009 when she began as a reporter for the Inverness Oran. She started learning Gaelic again in Carmen's MacArthur's Gàidhlig aig Baile classes in Scotsville. During BBMAP Joyce lived with Carmen in their Gaelic-speaking home close to Mary and Vince's on Kiltarlity Road. Joyce is also involved with local theatre and is a published author of science fiction.

## JOE PETER MACLEAN AND RENÉE KASER

Joe Peter MacLean, (*Èos Peadar mac Theàrlaich 'ic Èois)*: "Raised on a small farm in MacAdam's Lake, near Boisdale, Joe Peter MacLean can remember going to wedding celebrations there that lasted six and seven days. His MacLeans emigrated from South Uist. According to family tradition, they arrived in Cape Breton in 1821. Brought-up in a tight-knit family, Joe Peter's father Charlie was a fiddler and carpenter. His mother Kathleen spoke Gaelic by preference and knew the words to many Gaelic songs. A talented musician, Joe Peter plays the banjo, mandolin and guitar but is best known as a traditional Gaelic style fiddler whose talents are always in demand. After moving

several miles down the road to Boisdale, Joe Peter began playing the fiddle regularly with friends in the area. A number of years ago, they released an album entitled Back of Boisdale. A loyal supporter of Gaelic events, MacLean can be seen drinking tea and sharing his language and music throughout Cape Breton - or wherever else the road may take him." (From cainntmomhathar.com -- Shamus MacDonald).

**Renée Kaser**, 25, grew up in Baddeck to parents who moved to Cape Breton from the United States. A family friend was Hector MacNeil, one of a handful of fluent Gaelic learners and teachers who kept interest alive in Gaelic during the 1980s and 1990s. She was aware of Gaelic at a young age but didn't get involved until her first year of university at Cape Breton University, where she took a song course with Hector. She pursued her interest by attending Gaelic immersion weekends at Colaisde na Gàidhlig and late took first year Gaelic with Hector in her third year at University. Renée is now a nurse who works at the Northside General hospital where she has the chance to use her Gaelic with some of the elderly patients. She would like to pursue her Masters in Nursing with a focus on culturally sensitive nursing care.

# THE PROGRAM

Leanne Hinton began the training weekend providing general information on language revitalization: why a program like this is needed, where the program has been used around the world and the principles of the program.

Principles:

- Leave English behind
- Make yourself understood –through nonverbal communication and rephrasing
- Focus on oral learning
- Apprentice is a pro-active learner
- Learn through activities
- Learn language you can use; and use what you learn

Other points she emphasized that weekend include:

- Teach in full sentences and aim for reach communication
- Language is also culture. Do cultural activities together
- Use audio and video-taping.
- Be sensitive to each other's needs. Be proud of yourselves and each other.

Ms. Hinton emphasized the importance of the apprentice setting language goals for the week, planning their activities with the master and keeping a journal of what they have learned. In the Master-Apprentice Program apprentices are expected to provide a weekly report on their activities to the program co-ordinator and to invoice after 40 hours have been completed.

The rest of the day was spent practicing activities that the teams could do together. Teams were given materials to work with including language conversation cards, wordless books, drawing pad and markers, Leanne Hinton's book on the program and UNO cards. Other materials were on hand during the training week for the teams and other participants to use as they practiced activities together. The Saturday evening of the training weekend was a rich sharing of songs and stories in Gaelic and Acadian French, milling songs, fiddle music and dancing. Sunday saw many non-program participants depart early while the teams stayed back for more training.

After the weekend, teams were expected to begin working together. Some teams got off to a slow start. Colin MacDonald and Anna MacKinnon had health issues and some apprentices like Amber Buchanan, Colin Watson, and Melanie Holder, started new jobs. Renée Kaser, Susan Cameron, and Joyce MacDonald worked full-time throughout the program.

Participants found it challenging to submit weekly reports. Although the expectation in the Master-Apprentice Program is 10-15 hours together as a team per week, with a goal of 50 hours per month, the teams worked more sporadically and provided the weekly reports sporadically. In later June facilitators were assigned to the teams: Shay MacMullin and Goiridh Dòmhnullach, Gaelic field officer in Gaelic Affairs. It was hoped that the facilitators would provide support and encouragement, especially for teams who had not yet submitted a weekly report. Over the course of the next few months they contacted and supported the teams through email, phone and visits. Two teams were not able to work together and in December they discontinued the program. Their challenges in beginning the program were due to work, illness (of the master) as well as other demands. Another challenge for these two particular teams may have been that they were not well acquainted before the program. In other communities that have offered a Master Apprentice program, the masters and apprentices are often related. In our program, only one team is related, Amber and Jean, and Joyce is related by marriage to her mentor Mary MacKinnon.

Eventually the weekly reporting schedule was discontinued in favour of a bi-weekly schedule and at the end of the program, teams sent in reports sporadically with their invoices.

A follow up training day was held on December 3, 2011. In preparation for the follow-up training, all the teams were asked to work on a short presentation to be delivered that day. Facilitators Goiridh Dòmhnullach and Shay MacMullin were present to support their teams and answer any questions they may have. Principles of the Master-Apprentice Program were reviewed and Goiridh did a presentation called "Working with Native Speakers." Goiridh encouraged the apprentices to record as much as possible of the native speakers and listen to the recordings afterwards. He always has a recorder when he is with an elder speaker and demonstrated that day several times how useful it is to have, since phrases and words constantly came up that he may not have heard before. After recording it is important for learners to organize their materials so they can retrieve it easily later. Teams present that day included Mickey and Colin, Joe Peter and Renée, Mary and Joyce, Anna and Colin and Melanie and A.J. Susan MacKinnon attended, but her mentor Joe MacKinnon was not able to attend. Also absent were Amber and Jean, due to illness. Most of the day was conducted in Gaelic, with some discussion on the program itself in English.

Throughout the program teams were encouraged to socialize with other teams or other Gaelic speakers in their communities, and their reports show that most teams did initiate visits with others in the program. Three Gaelic only social events were put on for the teams: at mentor Michael MacNeil's (Mickey John H.) in Jamesville in November of 2011, at Goiridh's house in Kingsville in January 2012 and one at Frances MacEachen's home in Little Judique in April 2012. The January event was attended by Joe and Susan, Colin and Anna, A. J. and Melanie and Joyce MacDonald. Jim Watson, who lives nearby in Queensville, also attended. The evening was steeped in seanchas (conversation on Gaelic subject matter), with apprentices exposed to a valuable opportunity to hear natural speech in a comfortable and fun setting. November and April gatherings were open to other members of the Gaelic community. At Mickey's gathering folks from the Iona Christmas Island area as well as other learners and speakers attended. The April event attracted more than 40 speakers, including native speakers Florence Graham and Margie Beaton. Learners of all levels were there, including a learner from California and Ontario. Past apprentices Shay MacMullin, Mary Jane Lamond, Carmen MacArthur attended the Iona and Little Judique events. Everyone kept in Gaelic throughout the afternoon and evening, sharing songs, stories, food and music.

In May a decision was made to extend the program until the end of the summer to enable participants to complete additional hours. Most teams were far short of the projected 360 hours. In the fall of 2012, two closing gatherings were held to get some feedback on the program, to celebrate our successes and to enable Goiridh to do an end assessment of the apprentice's language skills.

# Summary from Apprentice Reports

At the training weekend the apprentices were given some materials to work with. These included conversation cards that were developed for California's Master/Apprentice Program, a wordless book called *Where's the Cake Now*, opposite cards, sheets of wordless comic strips enlarged and photocopied with permission from *How to Keep Your Language Alive*, markers, a note pad and the UNO card game. They also each received a copy of Leanne Hinton's book, *How to Keep Your Language Alive*.

Apprentices reported using some of the materials. The cards and wordless book were used by all the teams. Some teams found the wordless books fun and useful, one apprentice said that it would be good if there was a wordless book geared to adults and another apprentice said they found it childish. Although the conversation cards were used, most didn't find them that useful. Two apprentices mentioned using the comic strips and the markers and tablet.

Apprentices seemed to find every day or culturally relevant items more useful to spark conversation i.e. photo albums, song books, like Brìgh nan Òran, websites like Sruth nan Gàidheal and Cainnt Mo Mhàthar, and playing cards. No one mentioned using the UNO cards. Most of the apprentices read or skimmed through Hinton's book. Two apprentices didn't read it.

The reports from the apprentices suggest that they were immersed in both every day and cultural activities that brought them out into the community, both supporting other learners and being supported by more fluent speakers. Apprentices seemed to naturally take the lead of their mentor and do what they liked to do best and talk about. Reports reveal cultural and historical insights that could likely only be learned from a program like this:

> Amber: "It is amazing how Jean is remembering little rhymes, or things they used to say on the North Shore and then she'll tell me when she sees me. Just hearing her speak and conversing with her, I'm learning much more about my dialect, that I didn't even notice before. It's really exciting. "

Colin W: “Mickey and I went to Valley Mills and got a load of topsoil and collected eelgrass for the garden. On the way we sang songs and made some small talk in Gaelic. Mickey told me about all the work involved in insulating the houses with eelgrass and told me about the 50 acres of field that went right to the water in MacKinnon’s Harbour that would fill several box cars with hay. We distributed the loam and eel grass on the garden, tilled it in, and made drills. Afterwards Mickey, myself, Catherine Ann, and Josie all sat down for supper.”

Joyce: “We talked about animals, relatives, neighbours, seasonal activities like haymaking, traditional songs, childhood games and toys, hot news topics like the clergy abuse scandal and mill closure, pets, recipes, plans for the coming week, a nearby spring reputed to have healing powers, traditional cures and illnesses, the weather, school days.”

Colin MD: “I went over to Anna’s and we had a cup of tea and chatted for a while. Then we jumped in the car and headed for Broad Cove Banks toward the brook with pure water. I filled her water jugs, and we spoke about the beautiful nature and colour of the leaves. We continued to drive towards Sight Point and along the way Anna talked about where all the farms used to be, and who used to own them. We stopped the car at an abandoned property and walked towards the cliff side. When we finally made it back to Anna’s, I helped her prepare supper – I peeled the potatoes and carrots and she cooked the ham.”

Apprentices listed the following activities in their journal, which they participated in with their mentor:

- Buying groceries together
- Playing cards,
- Doing chores around the house,
- Visiting mentor’s friends,
- Baking and cooking
- Telling/learning stories
- Going for a walk – on the boardwalk, around the farm, on the trails.
- Going to the horse races
- Going to concerts, ceilidhs, milling frolics
- Going for a drive
- Went on a trip to Newfoundland together
- Listening to fiddle music
- Looking through old photo albums

- Attending Stòras a' Bhaile, Caidreamh na Tì at NSHV
- Attending a birthday party
- Going to Gàidhlig aig Baile classes
- Going to song workshops
- Weekends at the Gaelic College,
- Listening to Sruth nan Gàidheal, Radio nan Gàidheal, Cainnt mo Mhàthar
- Listening to a CD of stories from Pàdraig Moireasdan of North Uist,
- Dined at restaurants,
- Trips to go shopping in Port Hawkesbury, Sydney,
- Visited the place where mentor grew up,
- Working on songs together,
- Attended after school children's Gaelic program together
- exchanged Christmas gifts,
- Tilled and planted garden,
- Went to An Drochaid Eadarrain Launch,
- Attended Là Mór,
- Went to a funeral
- Attended a milling frolic for students at a school
- Visited graveyards
- Went on the ALS walk in Washabuck,
- Attended Beaver Cove take out conversation group
- Attended Clan MacNeil Day
- Learned and said the rosary together
- Went to church
- Visited relatives
- Talked about our relatives
- Made fish chowder, corn chowder, rhubarb, oat cakes, vegetable soup, fish, potatoes, cookies, biscuit
- Planted flowers
- Helped with church meals
- Visited mentor in hospital

The most common activities seemed to be cooking and sharing food together, listening to fiddle music, Gaelic stories and songs and then talking about the music, stories and songs and in some cases learning stories and songs. They often attended social activities in the community, went shopping, for drives and visiting. One team even went on trip to Newfoundland.

The social activity of the Bun is Bàrr Program brought teams in touch with a number of Gaelic speakers across the province. Here is a list of some of the people mentioned in their reports, that they visited or shared time with, giving a sense of the wide reach and influence of a program like this: John Phillip Rankin, Catherine Cameron, Jim Watson, Katie Maggie MacLeod, Mary Ann Gillis, Emily MacKinnon, Paul MacNeil, Johnnie Gillis, Maxie MacNeil, Evan Boneparte, Rod C. MacNeil, Daniel MacDonald, Peter Jack MacLean, Chris Read, Rachel Redshaw, Stacey MacLean, Caroline Cameron, Ann MacDermid, Kay Potribney, Florence Plumridge, Kay and Jessie (née MacDonald,

Keppoch), Vince MacKinnon, Goiridh Dòmhnullach, Shay MacMullin, Frances MacEachen, Hector MacNeil, Betty Lord, Stephanie Kirste, Rosemary Poirier, Màiri Parr, Brian MacDonald, Floraidh MacIssac, Mae Rowe, Lewis MacKinnon.

The Bun is Bàrr Master Apprentice program had a very strong social and cultural focus, so they were learning language through participating in the culture. Joyce MacDonald notes this in one of her reports: "I feel as if I am not just learning a language, I am learning about how to live, about hospitality and humour and all the things that are part of the Gaelic worldview."

# LEARNING LANGUAGE THROUGH CULTURE

Joyce's observation is an outcome that Leanne Hinton would have hoped for when creating the Master-Apprentice Program. "Learning your language of heritage also means learning about customs, values and appropriate behavior," [1] writes Hinton. For languages like Gaelic that were transmitted orally and in a society where there was a clear power differential with English, reclaiming cultural knowledge within an appropriate social context is vital to empowerment of the Gaelic speech community.

Mark Warfard, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Spanish and Foreign Language Education at Buffalo State College, writes:

> "Language is a living thing: it is the very core of our cultural identity. Sensing its power, colonizers have systematically sought to control or even eradicate it among those they colonize, often with great success." [2]

Gaelic eradication goes back as least as far as the Statues of Iona in 1609. So in order to reclaim this small miracle that is Gaelic in Nova Scotia, how, why and where the language is taught is vitally important. Warford argues that psycholinguistics or commonly-used classroom methods that focus on grammar to the exclusion of its social context only "exacerbates the devastating work of linguistic conquest and colonization." [3]

"The learner is hauled out of the particularities of his or her cultural heritage and viewed as a passive, generic, computer-like input-output processor." [4]

In Nova Scotia, at least, Gaelic teachers in schools and universities strive to bring culture into the classroom, and Warford acknowledges that psycholinguistics has much to offer second language

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[1]

[2] Mark K. Warford (2011) Narrative Language Pedagogy and the Stablization of Indigenous Languages, The Reading Matrix, Volumne 11, Number 1. pg 76.

[3] Warford, pg 76

[4] Warford, pg 78

learning theory. He cautions, however, that it is the product of Western education rooted in rationalist thought.

While it could be argued that the ancient Gaels contributed much to the building of the western education system[5], by the time of emigration to Nova Scotia, ours was a remarkably rich oral tradition passed on *o ghlùin gu glùin* (from knee to knee), or in the *céilidh* house, where all generations gathered.

Reclaiming the true meaning of a *céilidh* and putting Gaelic cultural content and the tradition bearer back in respected position may be as important for the survival of Gaels as a people as reclaiming their words.

This is a sociolinguistics approach to language acquisition, which sees language learning as an organic process that can't be separated from the conversations and the context in which the language is taught. Language learners are seen as active participants in the creation of new cultural and linguistic identities as they negotiate meaning with their teachers and peers. [6] Social learning is driven by conversations where "the self finds its moral identity in and through its membership in communities." [7]

One of the strongest mentoring relationships developed in BBMAP was between Colin Watson and Mickey MacNeil. Colin is now building a home on the site of the first home Mickey shared with his parents and siblings, before the family moved about 500 feet down the road to where Mickey lives alone today. Colin and Mickey still see each other almost daily. Colin appreciates Mickey's certainty about who he is and the place he has lived all his life. He describes Mickey as "the most spiritual person I know," and feels the Gaels in Mickey's time relied much more on each other, their faith and cultural traditions to add meaning and quality of life to what could otherwise have been a tough existence.

> Colin Watson: "Well, it (Gaelic culture) is just very strong without money -- for any of the cultural experiences I've ever had anyway. It's a sustainable culture in a large way, despite economic circumstances; the culture is very well grounded in the minds and

[5] Kenneth MacKinnon (1991) Gaelic a Past & Future Prospect, Saltaire Society.
[6] Warford, page 78
[7] A. MacIntyre, (1984) After virtue: A study in moral theory (2nd ed). Notre Dame, In: University of Notre Dame Press. As quoted by Warford, pg. 80

hearts of the people. It's a bit of an organic culture because it is raised with people from a young age and as they go through their different stages of development they gain more tools within the culture. These are proverbs, family orientation, poetry; it's all these things that help a person along to cope with difficulties they come across in their lives. I think that's an invaluable aspect to Gaelic culture that is empowering to people and allows people to live better lives.

"More and more all the time, I know in my field of study, environmental studies, there is concern with non-sedentary life . . . people are not connected to the world around them anymore largely because of technology . . . So people have moved away from this sustainable organic way of life."

Reflecting on these two worlds is part of the socio-cultural learning process as apprentices negotiate meaning and identity within an "intercultural space," where the world view and life experience of the elder native speaker meets their own.[8]

Issues of identity, belonging, livelihood, authenticity and traditions are front and centre in the mentor's kitchen, broadening and deepening the language learning experience.

Joyce MacDonald talks about a visit she and apprentice Colin MacDonald had with their mentors Anna MacKinnon and Mary MacKinnon. Ann and Mary talked for hours about the people they knew in common, often offering humorous anecdotes.

"They had three generations of information . . . It made me feel that I am missing a whole level of knowledge that is going to be possibly more difficult to obtain than Gaelic language – that whole mental map of who people are and how they are connected."

[8] Clare Kramsch (1994) Context and culture in language teaching (2nd ed). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. As quoted in Warford pg. 80

Many learners of Gaelic remark that the more you learn, the more you learn how much there is to learn. But instead of being a discouragement, it is an enticement to a rich and independent cultural alternative. Most learners in BBMAP have one foot in this world, and probably always have.

Amber Buchanan remembers being amazed hearing about the lifestyle of her great-grandmother, Sadie, Jean's oldest sister, on Cape Breton's North Shore. Her visits to her when she first started learning Gaelic opened up this world to her:

> "They were hugely self-sufficient. It was a huge community and everybody helped their neighbours plant their potatoes, pick their potatoes. They got three cents a pound for lobsters. That amazed me. The fact that they made their own clothes amazed me . . . the milling frolics, the traditional foods . . . just the intensity, really, of their everyday life."

Because it was her great-grandmother's life, Amber felt connected to it: "It made me feel it was inside me. That there was a part of that in me."

The language of Sadie and Jean was her way into that world. The cadence of their North Shore dialect and the songs that they sang at their famous milling frolics resonated with her.

Natalie MacMaster's fiddle was what first resonated with Melanie Altaman-Holder, also a fiddler, who grew up in Vermont.

"I liked her playing as it had that dance beat and it was really clear. I loved the strathspeys." Melanie doesn't have any Gaelic ancestry that she knows of, but fiddle music brought her family to visit Cape Breton where she found not only more great fiddlers and dance halls, but a strong sense of Gaelic identity. 'There is a sense that there is something really valuable about the music and there's a strong sense of Gaelic identity, even though not everyone speaks it."

Renée Kaser, shares a similar background with Melanie, although her American parents immigrated to Cape Breton, where Renée was born. She said learning the language and becoming part of the Gaelic community here in Cape Breton has been an amazing experience. She said she never felt truly rooted in Cape Breton until she became involved in Gaelic. "Gaelic fills something that's missing for me and it's a connection that I never want to lose."

It's a sentiment she shares with Joyce MacDonald who said of Gaelic language and culture: "It fills a hole in my heart."

It's worth noting that of the seven apprentices who went through the program, six are in the 20-34 age demographic, which is only 14.8 per cent of the population in Cape Breton, where all the

apprentices in this age range live. Gaelic is often associated with an aging population and sometimes viewed as a dying language, a relic of the past with little relevance to the younger generation. But the apprentices paint a different picture: "I speak Gaelic. I'm 24. And I love it. That might spark someone's interest," said Colin MacDonald.

They all say that Gaelic either attracted them back home or to live in Cape Breton, or is what is keeping them here, despite the insecure economy and limited job prospects.

They in turn are inspiring their senior mentors.

> "It's just wonderful the way the young people are so interested in the Gaelic," exclaims Mickey. "Yes, it's wonderful for myself, being old. It's wonderful to see the young people speaking the language. And there's so many that are very interested in the Gaelic. It's a lift for us old people."

Anna MacKinnon agrees:

> "I like the fact that the Gaelic is being rekindled. People out there are learning it all over again. 'Cause it was a dying language. It really was. It was a shame. And all the time people didn't speak well about Gaelic. That really bothered me." Or as she said in Gaelic: Nuair a chluinneas mi cuideagan 'ga càineadh, bidh sradagan a' falbh asam (When I hear someone putting Gaelic down, it infuriates me).

It is often a young learner that gets the native Gaelic speaker to begin using their language again. Mentor Joe MacKinnon said he didn't speak Gaelic for 40 years, until his son Lewis started to learn. Many Gaels who spoke Gaelic in their youth, but who quit speaking it as adults, are hesitant to begin speaking it again. Memories of people putting them down for speaking Gaelic can't be far from their minds. Joe and his fellow mentors deserve praise for continuing to speak Gaelic or for beginning again. In A.J. MacDougall's case he enrolled at St.F.X. where he was taught by, and likely taught a lot to, his professor and friend the late Ken Nilsen. Gaelic Affairs was fortunate to have them as mentors, and their apprentices remark on their kindness and patience.

Susan Cameron: “The thing about Joe is that he is so kind. He is not going to say bad things about other people at all. His outlook is so open and giving. It’s just nice to be around someone like that. I find it reaffirming. . . I am sort of absorbing the way he looks at life.”

Amber Buchanan: What I find the most useful thing in my life – aside from the Gaelic – what I am learning from her is acceptance, just kind of accepting everything for the way it is -- not worrying about it. She is always saying “Oh dé an diofar (Of what difference). I’ll say, ‘do I put the cookies on like this? And she’s say ‘Ach dé an diofar ithidh iad co dhìu. (Oh what difference. They’ll eat them anyway).

The mentors praise the apprentices for their hard work and are even surprised by the results:

"Tha mise 'deanadh dheth gu bheil iad a' dèanadh eagalach uile math, gu h-àraide aig an aois 's a' bheil iad a' tòiseachadh air ionnsachadh,” thuirt Màiri NicFhionghain. Dar a thòisicheas tu òg, thig e na's fhasa thugad. Ach tha creideas ri thoirt dhaibh, dha'n a h-uile duine a tha 'g ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig cho dìcheallach 's a tha iad air a h-ionnsachadh. Agus cuiridh e ìongnadh ort am faireachdainn 'ga bruidhinn."

(Mary MacKinnon: I think they are doing extremely well, especially considering the age that they began learning Gaelic. When you start young, (as children) it will come more quickly to you. They deserve a lot of credit -- anyone who is learning Gaelic so diligently. It surprises you to hear them speaking it.”

It also surprised the mentors how much they enjoyed the program. Almost all of them were a bit hesitant when asked to be a mentor. There were questions on whether their Gaelic was good enough, on whether they could “teach,” on whether they could make the time commitment and attend the training program. Many commented that they didn’t like the use of the term “Master,” so for this program the term was switched to mentor.  And even that term seemed a bit foreign, as Mickey MacNeil explains:

"Bha mi toilichte gun d' thàinig Cailean. . . Thàinig e dha 'n taigh. Dh' fhoighneachd e dhomh am bithinn `ga chuideadadh neo "mentor," gu dé bh' ac' air. Uill, cha robh fhios agamsa dé bha … B' fheudar dhomh coimhead a's a leabhar mhór ach gu dé bha sin," thuirt Mickey le gaire mhór. " Agus thuirt e ruim 'Oh, feumaidh tu t' aimn a chuir air paipear a' seo. . . Oh 's e rud ùr a bh' ann, 'se. "

> ("I was happy Colin came to the house. . . He asked me to help him or to be his mentor, whatever that was. Well I didn't know. I had to go the dictionary to see what it was," he jokes. "And then he said I had sign this paper . . . Oh, it was a new thing, it was.")

At the same time Mickey said he felt "it was a privilege to help Colin along with his Gaelic." Having had a mentoring experience all the mentors said they would do it again and Mary even said she could handle two or three apprentices.

The mentors deserve praise for stepping into the unknown and, with spirit, belief and enthusiasm, begin passing their language on to another generation. Many Nova Scotia Gaels could be, and some likely are, discouraged by how their language and culture was treated in the past.

> Mickey MacNeil: "You'd have to be careful where you'd speak Gaelic because they'd be making fun, you know, making fun of you because you had the Gaelic. And it was a language that was just fading away, you know, with the young people at the time. But I am so proud to see it coming back again. It's coming back! And the young especially are so interested in the Gaelic. It's wonderful."

And it's building community, observes Joyce, who participates in *Gàidhlig aig Baile* classes that Carmen MacArthur teaches in her home, where Joyce lives:

> "I can see how much joy it brings to people who are involved, and there starts to be that community. Just speaking Gaelic isn't enough, there has to be a community of people. The native speakers who have beautiful Gaelic, but no one was speaking with them. They are much better off with learners who have broken Gaelic and who are learning. The community starts to come together, and when that happens, you can see everyone is just lifted by it."

# THEIR LANGUAGE LEARNING

**FROM THEIR WEEKLY REPORTS, INTERVIEWS AND SELF-ASSESSMENTS**

Apprentice self-assessment and reports show they feel their language skills improved, particularly their comprehension skills and the fluidity with which they now speak. Most noticed an increased ease when speaking Gaelic, due to one-on-one time with a fluent speaker.

Susan Cameron: I am sure that before I did this I would never have spent an hour or two hours at a time speaking, just one-on-one. I never had that experience before, just the sheer ability to be able to do that. Joe was totally accommodating. I don't feel any kind of hesitation with him. I'd say that the fact that I can do that is the most noticeable change in my ability.

> Melanie Holder: Before I started (the program) if I was going to speak I was more nervous and had to think about what I am going to say before I say it. . . It's not as hard as it used to be."

Susan observed that when you let go of trying too hard, you may actually learn more.

> Susan Cameron: "You can relax into it. Anything like this takes time. I go to yoga and she always says 'let your muscles relax into it.' And I was thinking it is the same, let the muscle that is your brain relaxes enough so you can absorb it."

Colin Watson makes a similar observation:

> "I've learned that much of the tricky phrasing sinks into your head after a while despite the difficulty you may experience picking it up."

Many of the idioms and more complicated grammatical rules can seem daunting to some trying to master them directly, but if the learner gets enough exposure, they begin to sink in.

> Colin MacDonald: "As far as grammar goes, I still don't have it figured out and it was explained over and over. It was torturous. I don't understand English grammar that well but I seem to speak okay. Learning it through writing it on the board and different examples did not teach it to me, but through speaking it over and over again.

Having as much immersion experience as possible allows this passive learning to happen. This is best supplemented by recording the sessions and listening to them over and over. Joyce MacDonald, who made a big leap in language ability, had the added benefit of living in a home for most of the program where only Gaelic was spoken, including for a period with apprentice Colin MacDonald. So the more apprentices could bring Gaelic into their lives outside of their work with the mentor, the faster their learning progress.

The apprentices said the gatherings organized by Gaelic Affairs and Mickey MacNeil were very helpful and thought more of these would have been good. Some teams came together during the programs, and teams such as Renée and Joe Peter often worked with other learners in the community.

There is still a consciousness around dialects in Gaelic Nova Scotia, and a desire for learners to learn the dialect of their parents or grandparents who spoke Gaelic. This was a strong motivation for Amber Buchanan, who wanted to learn the North Shore (Lewis/Harris) dialect, which is one of the more endangered dialects in the province. For Colin Watson, who grew up speaking Gaelic, mainly that which is predominant in Inverness County, it was a challenge to work with Mickey who has a distinct Central Cape Breton or Barra accent. He remarks at the end of the program that although he struggled with Mickey's dialect at first, he is glad that he persisted.

> "I'm glad to have a better understanding of the Barra dialect now. In a way, speaking with Mickey in his dialect and keeping to my own mixed Inverness County dialect, helped reinforce my own dialect. I certainly have many words used in the Barra dialect now that I didn't have before. Some of the phrasing from Mickey's dialect comes out in my Gaelic now. It is no burden to carry."

Ultimately it is the relationship between the two people that makes the biggest different, observes Susan Cameron. If you are comfortable together, you won't experience stress and you can learn more. If you share similar interests, then the whole experience becomes more enjoyable and productive.

Getting the hours in proved to be a challenge for some apprentices, particularly those who were going to university or working full-time while in the program. Leanne Hinton said apprentices should spend at least 10 hours per week with their mentor, ideally 20. Apprentices weren't able to spend 20 hours per week with their mentor on a regular basis. The mentors were busy as well -- with families, community and volunteer work. Joe had a farm to run. The two apprentices who spent the most time with their mentors had periods of unemployment during the program and also were receiving a bursary which was an incentive to get their hours in.

## FROM EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

The Bun is Bàrr Master Apprentice Program adopted the assessment template used in other Master Apprentice Programs. At the beginning and end of the program, the teams sat down with Goiridh Dòmhnullach and Jim Watson and spoke about a poster showing the inside of a house. They were assessed in their comprehension, their ability to stay in Gaelic and their spoken ability,

Some of the apprentices were functional Gaelic speakers before the program. In the initial assessment they rated a 5, or the highest mark, for their ability to understand everything the mentor was saying during the conversation, or for using no English at all during the conversation. Colin Watson is actually a native speaker of the language. So this assessment tool may not have been the best to judge how his language ability improved. However, as Colin himself will admit, he struggles sometimes with correct phrasing and grammar, so more direct coaching would have greatly supplemented an amazing social and cultural mentorship with Mickey. Nonetheless his father, Jim Watson, noted that Colin's Gaelic has come along significantly from spending time with Mickey and that he himself is learning words and expressions from Colin.

Amber Buchanan, who was also functional in Gaelic at the beginning of the program, is, like Colin Watson, an ear learner who didn't study Gaelic at school and learned mainly through the Gàidhlig aig Baile approach. She was noticed to have an improved North Shore accent and as exceptional as a learner of vernacular speech. Again her challenges with grammatical points would also be aided with the help of a language coach. It is interesting to note that her mentor Jean spoke less Gaelic than Amber during their initial assessment. Jean said after the program that her Gaelic came back significantly by working with Amber and with Gaelic learners in the Sydney area who come to visit her.

Joyce MacDonald went from understanding some of what Mary was saying in the initial interview to understanding everything during the final assessment. During the initial assessment, Mary talked a lot, but it was noted during the final assessment that Joyce "held her own in the conversation." Writes Goiridh: ". . . her Gaelic was full of good local expressions! She had a lot of vocabulary and a decent accent. Some things surprised me." Joyce jumped from a novice to advanced level in the program.

Colin MacDonald also went from understanding most things to understanding everything in the conversation with his mentor Anna. Like Joyce he spoke more during the follow up assessment "he responded quickly and correctly and this keeps the conversation going well," writes Goiridh. He also self-corrects if he notices he makes a mistake in his Gaelic. Like most adult learners, having an English accent on their Gaelic or employing English phrasing can be difficult to overcome. However with more work and attention to this Goiridh thought that Colin could become a great Gaelic speaker. Anna is an excellent teacher. "Her speech is so rich," writes Goiridh, "that you pick up something every few sentences."

Renée Kaser was a Gaelic beginner when she began working with Joe Peter MacLean. Unfortunately due to illness, Joe Peter could not be at the follow-up assessment so Carmen MacArthur filled in. Renée went up one level in her comprehension and spoken ability. She did well at translating phrases. As Goiridh notes in his summary Renée deserves a lot of credit for putting in the number of hours she did, despite full-time shift-work as a nurse. She also lived about 30 to 40 minutes from Joe Peter. Joe Peter, who recently died, was a significant tradition bearer and his loss is greatly felt by the Gaelic community. Goiridh notes in his initial assessment how encouraging Joe Peter was and that he would not slow or simplify his Gaelic. Joe Peter had lovely Gaelic and vast cultural knowledge but could also be easily distracted so it would be a challenge for a beginner to take control of the learning situation.

Melanie Holder (no final assessment done yet). In the initial assessment it was noted that although hesitant to speak she did have the good grammatical base of a university Gaelic student. A.J. speaks clearly and slowly.

Given that Susan Cameron was able to get only 67 hours in with Joe MacKinnon, the goal she achieved of finding ease and comfort in having a Gaelic conversation with a native speaker is significant. She was able to understand everything that Joe said, an improvement from her initial assessment. She was noted to have "considerable improvement in comprehension and enjoyment of

the language and . . . great progress, particularly in social nuances." This concurs with Susan's own assessment that she can more comfortably participate in and enjoy Gaelic-only events.

# PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

**Opportunity to spend time one-on-one with a native speaker**

Every apprentice mentioned this as the most valuable part of the program. They all seem to have tremendous respect and love for their mentor. Most said they would not have spent this much time with an older Gaelic speaker if they weren't in a program like this. "I wouldn't be visiting her (Jean) nearly as much if I wasn't in this program" said Amber. "So it's really, really valuable. It is ensuring we are connecting with our elders, learning directly from them, which is extremely important for authenticity, quality, connection (and), for understanding."

**The Training Weekend at the Gaelic College**

The weekend at the Gaelic Collage was cited as a wonderful experience and opportunity to kick-off the program. People both in and outside the program participated, as did representatives from the Acadian community and for a brief time a mother and daughter from the Mi' kmaq First Nation. Lots of songs and music and dancing were shared, and people left with an uplifted feeling.

**Connecting with Language Revitalization experts** Bringing Leanne Hinton to Nova Scotia was an opportunity to learn more about language revitalization around the world. Her research and

expertise validates what the Nova Scotia Gaelic community is doing and makes people feel like they are part of a bigger worldwide language revitalization movement: that Gaels are not alone. It also familiarizes Gaelic Nova Scotia to a writer and language activist who can bring our story to the broader language revitalization community.

**Home gatherings organized throughout the program:** Creating Gaelic-only social spaces where people can practice their Gaelic and enjoy each other's company is consistently stated as important to people learning Gaelic. The three home gatherings held were highlights for all the apprentices involved. It was also good to bring in other Gaelic speakers from the community. Susan Cameron mentioned how delightful it is to see how much the native speakers enjoy each other's company. Side conversations among native speakers of Gaelic in Nova Scotia is a rich and rare opportunity, and helps considerable in picking up conversational speech and mannerisms.

**Small group gatherings**: It was also good for teams to get together, which happened in some cases, or for Gaelic learners or speakers outside the program to be brought along on a visit. Teams that socialized a lot in the community brought the language out into the community, raising the status of the language and creating awareness of the program. Apprentices reported mentors proudly introducing their apprentices to people they met at the garden centre, mall or céilidh. Generally the reaction to folks in the community was very positive: "Five years ago, when I started learning Gaelic almost everyone would say, 'Gaelic, you're not learning Gaelic.! Isn't that a dead language,' said Amber. "In the last year almost everyone says isn't that great you're keeping the culture alive and you're keeping the language alive. It's a huge, huge difference."

**Elder Gaelic speakers as mentors:** Most of the mentors expressed delight in being able to spend time with a young learner of Gaelic and the satisfaction they got in passing their language on to a new generation. Some apprentices were also able to do work for the mentor: anything from making and sharing meals, putting in a garden, shovelling the snow off their step or driving them on errands or taking them to dances and céilidhs. This was especially uplifting for seniors who live

alone. “I find that now that I’m in with Colin and the Gaelic crowd, it is very good for me,” said Anna. “It keeps the Gaelic in my memory. I remember words that I had forgotten.”

**Doing practical activities together:** Doing activities that mentors and apprentices would do anyway makes it easy to fit a program like this into your life. Melanie sometimes went on A.J.‘s daily walk with him or to Port Hawkesbury to run errands, Amber and Jean cooked together a lot, Colin and Anna shared many meals: “I liked the fact that the activities are all so productive,” said Colin. “You are making supper together, that’s good for Anna and me. We both want to eat. We are working on Gaelic as we do it. Anna doesn’t have to cook supper by herself for herself. That goes a lot for different chores, too.”

**Interviews with Mentors and Apprentices:** Almost every mentor and apprentice was interviewed or visited towards the end of the program. This was to get their feedback on what worked and what didn’t work during the program and also to get the apprentices reflections on how their language, cultural and social skills improved. Very interesting insights were gleaned from this qualitative research that supports the social value of learning Gaelic and its place in Nova Scotia today. It is important to ask questions and listen to participants and then take time to reflect on what worked well and what needs improvement for the development of Gaelic programming in the province.

# CHALLENGES

**Support for the teams:** Interviews and discussions with participants in the program indicate that this was a very successful Gaelic social learning experience. Outside support for the teams was perhaps not effective or sufficient enough to ensure that their language learning was optimized. Some learners said more structure and support would have been helpful, beyond giving their reports and invoices for hours completed in the program. The program did have facilitators, Goiridh Dòmhnullach and Shay MacMullin, who were assigned teams. They met with Leanne Hinton while she was in Nova Scotia, and notes from that meeting suggest a supportive but not too involved role for the facilitator: a call once a month to the mentor and apprentice and at least one visit with the teams per year. They took a proactive, occasional check-in approach as opposed to a more structured approach with some accountability built in and which would involve regular language coaching.

**Structure:** The beauty of the program is that is an organic learning process, the challenge is that is it an organic learning process. The need for more structure was mentioned by some of the apprentices who felt they were not getting the required hours in. The mentors didn’t comment about the unstructured nature of the program per se, but there were worries that they weren’t seeing the apprentices enough and fulfilling their obligation as a mentor in the program. More structure could mean more encouragement, accountability and check in from Gaelic Affairs, perhaps on a weekly basis. It could also mean help with setting goals, scheduling more events and milestones for the teams and providing a schedule at the beginning of the program. It is important

to find a balance since this is a self-directed social learning program. Too much structure may take away from the naturalness of just sitting down with someone for a visit and letting conversation happen, which is where a lot of rich learning takes place for those with advanced conversational skills. Structure and support, however, is probably essential for those with beginner or intermediate skills.

**Matching Apprentices and Mentors:** The loss of two teams during the program was unfortunate. However because they were not able to meet six months into the program, we felt that it would be very difficult for them to recover the ground lost. One of the challenges these teams may have had, in addition to busy work schedules, family demands and ill-health, was that the apprentices were not well acquainted with the mentors before asking them to be part of the program. It makes sense to ask mentors and apprentices to apply as teams because some ground work has been done to establish a relationship between the two. However this is now always easy, since the Gaelic community is scattered across the province, and rural areas are becoming increasingly isolated. People are not as connected as they used to be and apprentices may need support and help to find a mentor.

**Assessment:** It is a challenge to quantify the success of a social language learning program, which does not have a curriculum or written tests. Language assessments before and after help, but they are a snap shot of short conversation. They also don't measure the cultural knowledge gained, or the improved well-being of the mentor who has regular contact with a person learning their language. The important intangibles can only be gained through interview and observations. When asked how to evaluate a program like this, most apprentices said that the assessments are good to do, but that some other kind evaluation is needed. Colin Watson's said that success can be measured by the length of the relationship between the mentor and apprentice, which of course can continue long after the program is over. Colin then observed that his mentor's relationship with the Gaels in his life continues long after they have died. They are alive in his stories. When asked if he has a similar relationship with Mickey, he replied: "Mickey's voice will reverberate in my head long after he is gone."

**Distance:** Despite the fact that apprentices and mentors for the most part lived closer together than teams in the other mentoring programs, distance remained a challenge for some. In some cases the mentor was 30 minutes away, and for apprentices with not a lot of money, this could be a challenge financially, too. Having team members live as close together is important for continuity and community building.

**Funding:** As Colin Watson points out "Gaelic language is almost seen as a luxury to people now," since it takes so much time to learn the language, which is time they are not using to work and earn money. He said that the bursary allowed him to take the time to spend with Mickey, or even just put gas in his truck to go see him. The stipend provided was less than minimum wage and if we want to keep a younger generation learning Gaelic and staying in rural areas, where most of the Gaelic mentors live, it will require a greater investment. With an increase in funding for bursaries, this is still exceptional value for money. Community-based learning is a fraction of the cost of institutional language learning.

**Beginners and Intermediate range:** Developing effective programming for learners in the beginner to intermediate range is still a need. The Master-Apprentice Program can work with beginners, but it is more of a challenge for the native speaker and the apprentice. This program was developed because there were no other speakers of native languages in California other than the older native speaker. However with Gaelic in Nova Scotia there are competent fluent speakers who can either act as intermediaries or can teach in Gàidhlig aig Baile classes, or ideally longer immersions for those not yet functional in the language. It was also noted that advanced learners can get more out of the speech of the native speaker, whether it be vocabulary or idioms or cultural information that can be included in local learning materials. Advanced learners are becoming tradition bearers, essential to the transmission of Gaelic language and culture and Nova Scotia.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*From Goiridh Dòmhnullach*

**The name of the program**: The Master-Apprentice program should continue. It is a great resource for learners; it helps native speakers remember and reclaim their language and their language rights; it broadens awareness in communities and normalizes Gaelic language acquisition and influences outsider perspectives of our language and the speakers of it and of the legitimacy of keeping Gaelic alive and strengthening it; it rewards our native speakers for their fidelity to the language; it creates and strengthens vital inter-generational bonds; it keeps local dialects alive and increases the respect for them.

Running this program efficiently over the next five to 10 years is of vital importance to Gaelic language revitalization efforts in this province, because we still have fine speakers who can fully participate in a program like this. This is a window of opportunity that closes all too soon, as the death of Eòs Peadar clearly illustrates.

I also believe that the original Bun is Bàrr program (as opposed to the Master-Apprentice program) should be re-instated for diligent learners, especially those who don't have easy access to native speakers in their families and communities. In a program like this, a prospective apprentice should have to prove a very strong commitment to Gaelic language acquisition and, once an apprentice, should be required to be very diligent.

The original program should retain the title "Bun is Bàrr", as that term was coined for that exact program.

For the Master/Apprentice program, I propose a very Gaelic and a simple term**,** *Daltachas***,** which is the Gaelic for 'fosterage'. Our Masters, who don't want to be referred to as Masters, are providing 'fosterage in language'. Fosterage used to be very common in Gaelic society and greatly strengthened bonds within clans, across the 'class' lines. It greatly contributed to a sense of common identity and purpose. In our parents' time, many children were raised by grandparents,

aunts and uncles and with cousins and even by community members who were not closely related to them if their parent(s) were not at that point able to raise those children. This would be fosterage as well, even though it wasn't often called that, so there are definitely precedents in our culture for fosterage.

If we were to adopt the name *Daltachas* (Language Fostering) for the program, the Masters, and it may be nicer to call them 'language parents', would then be referred to as *Oidean (Oide* being the singular), if men, and *Muimeachan* (*Muime* being the singular), if women. Apprentices would be *Daltachan*, the singular being *Dalta* for a male, and *Ban-Dalta* for a female. I think that this re-introduces an old Gaelic cultural priority – that all share in the raising of the next generation.

**Who would be accepted into the program?:** Nova Scotians are extremely fortunate to have a tremendous resource still with us in language renewal – our native speakers. We want to make certain that we make the best use of this opportunity, so I recommend that we very strongly give preference to apprentices who are already functionally fluent, very close to it, or who have demonstrated to their instructor(s) that they have a strong aptitude in Gaelic language acquisition and that they are diligent enough to continue within the program and to take the best advantage of having the opportunity to learn from a fine speaker.

We shouldn't restrict participation only to those who have reached a certain level, for instance functional fluency. However, if you have a choice between two learners with roughly the same aptitude and work ethic and one is farther along to functional fluency, we should take this into account. I feel that it would also be important to have the option to make exceptions in cases where

the program can assist in inter-generational transmission of Gaelic within families and/or communities. If you have a neighbor learning from a neighbor, you're simply building on an already established relationship.

**How to 'construct' teams/match up learners and language parents:** We should do our best to match masters and apprentices based on how personalities will interact. For example, one team seemed to 'study' the language rather than just learning through 'living' it. The master lead in this approach and the apprentice kind-of coalesced and this allowed this type of relationship and style to emerge (part of the pairing was due to distance, and this is more than understandable). If more strict guidelines had been 'enforced', as to how language is transmitted, maybe this wouldn't have happened to the degree that it did. An apprentice with a different (possibly more 'forceful') style may have steered their interactions more to activity and to more natural acquisition experiences. With another team, the master had tremendous language skills but the apprentice was only in the first stages of language acquisition. A more fluent apprentice would have been able to 'harvest' a tremendous amount from this informant and recordings of that would now be available to other Gaelic language learners.

**Running Assessment and Encouragement:** From what was related to me anecdotally by apprentices, I feel that they were somewhat more diligent (and would be more diligent) when they got a 'push' from the office. Maybe it would be that a gathering was coming up and they would have to 'produce' something, like a story, a conversation, or a description in Gaelic of what they were doing. I feel that any apprentices accepted into this program are being given a tremendous opportunity and that they should be monitored more than having their hours recorded. They should be worked with so that they set targets for the upcoming, months, three months or whatever and, at the end of these periods, there should be a check-in or check-up to see how this went. If progress is not being made, the reason(s) for this should be explored. One apprentice working with one language parent would often very well prevent someone else having that opportunity and therefore, it should be efficient use of that opportunity and time.

Think of these hypothetical situations:

1) A team is formed and begin working together. They get along well enough but, for whatever reason, they just don't seem to 'click' when it comes to language transmission. Maybe it's because the master has known the apprentice all of his/her life through the English language, the apprentice doesn't want to be impolite, and the master speaks far too often in English, with the apprentice somewhat powerless to change this. Do you allow them to continue inefficiently (kind of at half-speed or quarter-speed) until the end of the program, or do you intervene and partner them with others, provided that they are okay with this?

2) A team begins to work together and are doing great, but then something happens that adversely affects their chances of spending enough time together. Maybe one is unemployed when they begin and later gets employment which greatly affects their freedom of getting enough time together. Or maybe family demands change and they can't get together. Do you leave the master or the apprentice in this type of 'limbo' or do you help the individual who does have enough time to reform a team with someone else?

**Getting Together:** We should attempt to get teams to make a céilidh on each other more often, even as simple as one team visiting one other team. I think that there are great benefits to strengthening their perspective that they are all on one larger team that is doing one of the most important things in the world and that others here and throughout the world appreciate what they're doing. It's also great PR, just through word-of-mouth, within our communities. Maybe the teams should visit local schools to explain to the younger generation what they are doing and why. Funds should be budgeted to pay for gas if they travel some.

**Recordings:** Because of the great opportunity of 'harvesting language' that this program offers, I very strongly advise that teams carry out recording sessions, knowing that their recordings will be edited and that they could be made available to other learners, present and future. It simply would mean that they would be aware that they'd have to somewhat be conscious not to say anything that they might not want others to hear later, like telling a story about their neighbor that they wouldn't want anyone finding out about or something. As well, they could be videoed and this could be used in Gaelic learning materials!

***From Frances MacEachen***

Gaelic Affairs should continue developing Bun is Bàrr mentoring in Nova Scotia. Further to Goiridh's suggestion on the name, Bun is Bàrr can be a prefix to other mentoring programing taking place in the province, which shares the foundational principles and intent of the original program. For example, instead of Bun is Bàrr Master Apprentice Program, *Bun is Bàrr: Daltachas* could be used. It is encouraging to see two former Bun is Bàrr apprentices developing their own programming: *Bun is Bàrr: Baile nan Gilleasach* , a local program being organized and offered by Carmen MacArthur (2009) in Gillisdale, and *Bun is Bàrr: Na Gaisgeich Òga*, a youth mentoring program, which is being organized by Emily MacDonald (2010) at Colaisde na Gàidhlig. The Bun is Bàrr curriculum developed for the first program has been offered as a guide to these programs and Gaelic Affairs staff is offering support, materials and guidance to these programs.

For the **2013-14 fiscal year**.

1. Gaelic Affairs considered Goiridh's suggestions to establish Bun is Bàrr: Daltachas. This builds on the success of the Bun is Bàrr Master-Apprentice Program, while offering more structure, support and accountability. I would recommend that this program be offered in phases, with phase one lasting no more than six months. We would review their progress at the end of six months to see if they have put in the time and work to continue with the program for another six months. This program would be open to those of advanced language skills and who have already participated in the office's mentoring program and would be designed to create high level tradition bearers, future mentors and teachers.

2. Work with Nova Scotia Highland Village to establish a mentoring program using the An Drochaid Eadarrain site. Similar to the original Bun is Bàrr, participants would transcribe materials on the site, for uploading to the site, and would also collect more material to be

included on *the An Drochaid Beò* site or on the main site. This program would be ideal for apprentices who need help in Gaelic literacy.

3. Continue to support Bun is Bàrr, Baile nan Gilleasach and Bun is Bàrr na Gaisgeich Òga.

**On-going**

1. Gaelic Affairs should develop a strategy for Bun is Bàrr programming, which includes effective communications messaging on:
    - Social language learning
    - How reclaiming Gaelic language and identity builds confidence and community
    - How Gaelic keeps and attracts youth to our community
    - How social language learning connects the generations and is very healthy for our senior population. How we can create a unique language learning approach that could attract outside interest and investment. Nova Scotia is the go to place for social language learning.

2. As part of strategy development, explore how Gàidhlig aig Baile can be better linked with Bun is Bàrr, particularly in support of new language learners.

# Financial Data

| Expenses | Projected | Actual |
|---|---|---|
| Leanne Hinton Professional Fee and Travel | $4,000 | $3961.53 |
| Training Costs | $10,560 | 9,320.50 |
| Mentors' Fees | 27000 | $11,353 |
| Apprentices' Fees | 12,000 | $7,958.32 |
| Follow up Training | 0 | 834.42 |
| Materials | 0 | 527.52 |
| Facilitation and programming fees | 3000 | 672.78 |
| TOTAL Expenses | 56,560 | 32,355 |
| **Revenue** | | |
| Office of Gaelic Affairs | 43,260 | 16,751 |
| Department of Seniors | 8,000 | $8,000 |
| Acadian Affairs | 5,300 | $5,300 |
| Participants Payment at Gaelic College | | 825 |
| Credit at Gaelic College | | 1479 |
| Total Revenues | 56,560 | 32,355 |

# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Projected payment for mentors was based on nine mentors working 360 hours each. Mentors were paid for only the hours they worked with their apprentices. Two teams dropped out. The remaining seven mentors worked for 1,363 hours rather than 2520 hours projected, had they worked 360 each.

- Projected payment for apprentices was based on four apprentices, who had received bursaries, doing 360 hours each - 1440. The four apprentices who received the bursaries did a total of 956 hours.

- Projected facilitation fees were based on three facilitators working with nine apprentices. Goiridh Dòmhnullach, field officer with Gaelic Affairs was able to do this in-kind, and Shay MacMullin did not work the number of hours projected. A third facilitator was not hired.