



Air Chéilidh: the Gaelic Narrative Project

April 16, 2021

Hosted by Frances MacEachen and Hector MacNeil

Guests: Michael “Mickey” MacNeil and Colin Watson

What is gained when we keep stories alive?

- We gain/maintain a unique cultural view of the world.
- The value of humour in the old stories is something we can hold onto in these trying times.
- A greater connection to each other and to our ancestors/community • Intergenerational connections
- Tha na sgeulachdan a’ cumail Gàidhlig beò (Stories keep Gaelic language alive).
- A connection to place
- Just the sheer enjoyment of the experience
- We get to look through a window on the past for awhile
- Story lifts us to different times, past and present
- Ceangailichean brìghmhor is aoibhneas | meaningful connections and joy/delight
- Respect for our story tellers - our elders - and how they can help us show up in the world ourselves, while keeping connected to those who went before us

- Stories give us a sense of connection to one another, to the ancestors, and to a bigger net
- The stories we tell may help us to see what is valuable to us. • Ceangal ri saoghal a th'air falbh agus eòlas a chuidicheas sinn gus saoghal a latha a-màireach a neartachadh. (A link to a world that has gone and knowledge to help us strengthen tomorrow's world.)
- We keep our ancestors alive for their great-grandchildren
- Deep friendship with older Gaels creates modern day tradition bearers that can pass on their knowledge to the future generation
- We experience spontaneous interaction, face to face connection and a better knowing of where we came from.
- Telling a story is a way of animating people and loving them in a different light.
- You get to learn about how someone interacts with their community. • We keep the history of the community alive as well as the ancient stories from our ancestors, "the Old Gaels". It makes me feel warm and cozy to recall my grandfather telling stories. I love how the stories have been held, shared and valued. I would love to hear the young ones tell stories.
- Fairies...though I didn't hear stories about fairies growing up. Tea & lunch. Enunciation.

Insights gained from the evening

- Story telling has always been valued and practiced, in my experience growing up in Cape Breton and returning annually for vacations...even though it was in English, though my grandparents all spoke Gaelic.
- I think one of things we have lost in English-speaking society is the tradition of storytelling within the community. And it's something we really miss. We leave it to the professionals, the authors and moviemakers, instead of telling our own stories and carrying forward our traditions. We tell stories to children, but not to adults. And I have found that adults miss that and want it back!
- You can be 90 something and still talking about the older people! • LOVED hearing from Colin so much about Migi being a 'time keeper'. It's so true. Migi

paints a world for you to fit right into - the places, people, histories, *sloinnidhean* (patronymics) ... have experienced same with other elder Gaels too. What a precious gift!!

- The stories link us to our ancestors and give a depth to our current community relations. Stories also help tell us what is valued in our community, and how to deal with the problems we face.
- These stories are so full of wit and actions. So nice to see them and it reminds me of my grandparents and their friends and the stories they told. • I got most of my stories from my late grandfather, who didn't have Gaelic but came from a Gaelic-speaking family. He told me many stories about his father and his aunts and uncles and other characters up in Glencoe, MacLeod Settlement, etc. What we gain is the ability to travel back in time and get to know people who died long ago. There are many people I feel I know now; I often tell my kids about them, and they'll remember those stories too.
- Almost three generations so at ease with each other - so much affection and respect
- Tonight's session made me long for the stories of my ancestors. I wish I had a pipeline back to my ancestors, in particular my grandmother (McVarish) to hear her stories.
- Loved hearing Eachann's sharing about storytellers, how he was drawn in, how he was welcomed and cared for. A lot to learn from simple practices. • I learn so much about Gaelic humour, worldview, and communities through stories. They're a real bridge between previous generations and the present • A good storyteller will take you to a place and time from long ago, and in your mind's eye, you can see the people and places so clearly, and everything becomes real.
- Master storytellers all! Hearing a story first hand from a good storyteller is like winning a lottery, and reading that same story is much different. • I believe we were taught respect for our elders when we grew up listening to our grandparents, aunts & uncles tell stories...as children we were told: "children are to be seen but not heard", when story telling was happening! If we weren't listening, we were asked to go outside.
- I'm so sorry that I didn't listen and record more of the old stories like my father told me to do.
- I am sitting with the question of when to enjoy the moment by being

present, and when to make the effort to document a moment for posterity. • From what I gathered from my MA Research with Rod C. and Mickey MacNeil, there was a parish priest from Mabou whose influence was so profound in the Iona area that it may have accounted for some of the inclusion of Lochaber Gaelic dialect into the Barraich around Sanndraigh. • I was struck by the enthusiasm I heard from the storytellers when they were speaking and their engagement with the tales. It was lovely to hear and see.

- I wish I could write this in Gaelic! I got a dog from Christy MacNeil when I was teenager. They taught me a love of everything Gaelic.
- Colin and Hector share an intimacy through Gaelic, with their community, and the storyteller Michael.
- Some of us have had the benefit of hearing story in Gaelic but also regularly hear the storytelling style in English.

Actions we will take

- Cha mhisde sgeul math innse dà uair. (A story is not made worse if told twice) I've witnessed this over and over and over. But I don't often retell stories. Gonna give that a hook.
- I'm inspired to record all my father's wonderful stories that he picked up in Glace Bay before they are forgotten forever - he is so full of precious knowledge of his community. I am also inspired to slow down and take the time to connect with the people in my life, to share openly.
- I interviewed my mother recently about her life, and am reminded to do so again, to ask her about family history.
- Encouragement to learn more Gaelic

We're zooming in from

- Colorado
- Judique
- Am Baile Mór Halafacs
- Deer Lake, Newfoundland.
- Edmonton
- Hawthorne Road CB
- Pictou County

- Rockland, Massachusetts
- New York:)
- Bagh an Iar, Ceap Breatuinn!
- Air An Cladach a' Tuath.
- Perth, Ontario
- San Jose, CA
- Alasdriona à Lunnainn (London) Ontario
- Eilean Vancouver!
- Pembroke, ON
- Eilean na Nollaig
- Berkeley, California
- Halafacs, Halifax
- Alba, Scotland
- Sesezkuk, Mi'kma'ki | Chezzetcook, Alba Nuadh |

Reaction to the guests and stories

- Such a great little story
- 'S e a' chiad naidheachd a chuala mi aig Eachann 'Sgriob Liath an Earraich'.
Bha tionndadh math, math aige air. (The first story I heard from Hector was 'Sgriob Liath an Earraich' His delivery was exceptional)
- Tapadh leibh Eachainn tha mi ag gaireachdainn fhathast (Thank you Hector. I am still laughing.)
- God love Mickey Bean Nillag!
- Glè Mhath Eachainn!
- 'S e a' chiad naidheachd a chuala mise aig Eachann - an té mu 'n phancake ... thug siod orm gaireachdainn!! (The first story I heard from Hector was the one about the pancake. Did I ever laugh!!)
- Naidheachd bheag ait air a deagh innseadh! Tapadh leibh, Eachainn! (A funny little story. thanks Hector.)
- I loved him (Migi Bean Nilleag). I was so happy to be on the ferry when he was there
- Katie Margaret (Rankin) Gillis from Mabou could tell a story. • Flora MacLellan of Broad Cove too.
- Thelma MacLellan, St. Patrick's Channel, was a wonderful story teller. • I have a great photo of Mickey Bean Nillag at the house of Christie MacNeils at the

top of rear lona.

- Migi bean Nilleig: <https://www.androchaid.ca/na-tùsanaich-na-gàidheil> •
- He had the story of the toaster that he returned
- I remember that
- Nardocchio Geddes! It was on CBC and CTV National News
- longantach
- Wow I remember that car, saw it all the time lol
- Rinn thu math Colin!
- Sin sibhse
- Dia libh!
- Air leth uile gu léir!
- Tapadh leibh, a Chailein is Eachainn!
- Bha sin air leth math, tapadh leibh gu mor
- Taing mhór dhuibh uile - bha sin eireachdail!
- Egg water can cure warts - just saying

Oidhche Mhath Leibh | Thanks and Good Night

- Mòran taing airson an oidhche seo (thanks for this evening) •
- So much joy in the listening and sharing!!
- Tapadh leibh uile! Obair mhór a rinn sibh | Tremendous work! • There is no hopeless. Its happening. Both myself and my husband have license plates!!!
- Thank you for this great session. looking forward to next...Hector Frances Colin, Mickey and Mike
- Mòran taing airson na sgeulachdan! So beautiful to hear about the personal connections that are forged and strengthened through storytelling. • Abair deugh òrain (Wow, great song!)
- Excellent session to organizers and participants! Thank you! • Tapadh leibh uile! Oidhche eireachdail eile!! (Thanks for another incredible evening.)
- Thank you to everyone for another great session! Thank you for the stories, songs, and conversations!
- Mòran taing dhuibh. Math a bhith nur cuideachd. (Thank you all. So nice to be in your company.)
- Tapadh leibh uile bidh mi fada ur comain

uile...sgeulachdan...orain....Gaidhlig.....oidhche air leth math a bh'ann.
(thank you. I am greatly indebted to you all. Stories . . .songs, Gaelic . . . a
perfect evening.)

- Maith tú a Chilean! Go raibh maith agat Frances agus Hector. A lovely ceilidh.
- Tapadh leibh uile!
- Oidhche mhath leibh!