



Air Chéilidh: the Gaelic Narrative Project

April 23, 2021

Hosted by Mike Kennedy

Guests: Màiri Britton and Kenneth MacKenzie

Greetings as Màiri played the clàrsach (harp):

- this is so lovely.... what a wonderful start.
- the sun is just setting on her music in Montreal
- I agree this is beautiful music and musician too
- Hello again from Edmonton, AB
- Greetings from Halifax!
- Downtown Mabou
- Calgary, AB
- Vancouver Island, BC
- A Mhàiri! Cha chuala mi thu air a' chlàrsach a-riamh roimhe! Nach eil sin dìreach earachdail!
(Màiri I haven't heard you play the harp before. Isn't this lovely!)
- Hi watching from Judique
- Hello from New York State
- Littleton, New Hampshire, USA
- Usually linking in from Alaska, but Illinois today.
- Beverly MA
- Latha math dhuibh bro Shidni | Hello from Sydney!
- Hello from Colorado!
- Hello from Antigonish
- Halò à Halifax Alba Nuadh!
- Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

- Tha sin cumhachdach a Mhairi! Tha mi a seo ri taobh an Locha, The Points. (That is powerful Mary. I am here, beside the loch, The Points, (Lewis, Scotland)
- Millsville , Pictou County, NS
- Montreal, thanks for the beautiful music merci beaucoup.
- Greetings from midtown Manhattan in New York City.
- 'S ann á Abhainn a' Chaimbeulaich ann an Eilean Vancouver a tha mise (Campbell River, BC) • Sin thu fhèin a Mhàiri!
- Haidh à Rockland, Massachusetts. Bha an ceòl cho brèagha, a Mhàiri.(Beautiful Music, Mary) • Hello from West Van!
- Feasgar math dhuibh bho Eilean na Nollaig (Christmas Island, NS)
- halò à Ontario
- From Margaree Harbour but tuning in from Lawrencetown, Annapolis Valley. • Halò à Manitòba
- Ciamar a sibh uile bho Alba (From Scotland)

What stories about Gaelic do you want to let go of?

- That learner Gaelic is not good enough, and that Gaelic is somehow hard to learn. • Releasing "Gaelic is a hard language."
- The assumption that one should have Scottish heritage or background to be interested in learning the language can be off-putting.
- "What are you going to DO with Gaelic anyway? Why bother?" releasing that one. • Who are you going to talk to?
- letting go of singular identities, i.e. that we all possess multiple identities and that there can be space for diverse Gaelic identities along with many others
- We never hear, that a person speaks good English, but we often hear Gaelic being graded. We need to let this go, once and for all.
 - tha sin cho cudthromach!! moran taing
 - I agree
 - Great point.
 - That is so true
 - Hear hear

How do stories like these impacts you and your Gaelic journey?

- Collectively, we are warriors.
- When I taught law at Glasgow University, every year we had to meet with the Dean of the faculty, the head of the law school, and the director of research at the law school. I was working on Gaelic language rights, and was asked by my Dean, 'why, dear boy, are you wasting your time on the Teuchters [a highly derogatory term in Scotland for Gaels]'. As you might imagine, I did not take this lying down.
- Surprised that mainland Scotland sometimes looks down upon the people from the north who grew up speaking Gaelic
- Someone mentioned how it only takes one generation of not speaking a language for it to be lost

and how there is work to be done in repairing that link. But (there is) a hopeful feeling that it can be done

- A common experience of our generation...that any language other than English was considered a step backwards.
 - Anger at the many people who still have no knowledge of the value of Gaelic culture •
- These insults make us angry!
- We also talked about how often people recognized that Gaelic was used when speakers didn't want children to understand what they were saying. It was a secretive language, not one for everyone.
 - Reclaiming a sense of deservability of connection to Gàidhlig.
 - I have been told that it is "just a hobby language"
 - It's just so unbelievably sad that I hear in 2021 the same things that would have been said to my grandmother in 1921, but seeing so many kids learning so passionately in programs like Na Gaisgich Òga makes me feel so proud
 - As two Gaelic-speaking parents in Edinburgh who are raising a son through Gaelic, we face the same struggle, a Choinnich. But even in the Western Isles, my sister-in-law and her husband, both Gaelic-speakers, face the same challenges. We need to work together and support each other.
 - You will still see and here in Scotland that schizophrenic anti-Gaelic sentiment which conveniently or out of ignorance ignores the active campaign of cultural genocide

What do you feel moved to do with Gaelic in your own life?

- I need to take Gaelic speaking Classes
 - Keep on keeping on.
 - Sing more
 - Join a Gaelic Community!
 - I want to learn more Gaelic songs.
 - Take the spirit of community and help share the power of it with those who don't have the benefits of it in their own circles of influence.
 - I am moved to learn the Gaelic stories and songs and pass them on, and of course to teach it. :) •
- I want to learn more songs and read more advanced books
- Enjoy it all to the fullest.
 - I want to learn how to write Gaelic
 - I'd like to raise my family in Gaelic. I'd like to teach music through the medium of Gaelic. •
- Teaching, sharing, celebrating, rooting in to community, welcoming. Singing!! • Looking forward to Beginner Gaelic lessons in the fall at the Gaelic College in Cape Breton • Bruidhinn Gàidhlig! (speak Gaelic)
- Learn more songs and stories
 - Get together with more people involved in Gaelic
 - Gaelic songs!
 - Keep writing Gaelic poetry.
 - Stop thinking I'm not good enough and dive in and really enjoy the things that fill me •

Enjoy everything it has to offer!

- Learn the Eigg dialect from speakers in Cape Breton. Make the circle of knowledge whole again. • I feel very excited about investigating how music can move Gaelic language and cultural revitalization forward. We need new ways to approach the challenge of revitalizing threatened languages and I can't think of anything better than doing so than with the beautiful, rich body of Gaelic songs.
- I enjoy helping others find ways to continue their journey with Gaelic.
- Integrate the language with music and dancing - see how they all connect + try and find the roots of the language in the landscape
- Keep learning and enjoying
- Support initiatives and stay positive
- To use it, to improve in comprehension and to pass it on to my nephew. And also to advocate for it.
- Learn a Gaelic word or phrase for every dance step I know.
- Speak, speak, speak.
- Sing more songs!
- Keep learning both of my Gaelic languages, sing and do more and more
- To continue to share a perspective that there is space for a diversity of Gaelic identities and that there is place and space for all who identify with Gaelic language and cultural arts and expression
- I want my grandchildren to be introduced to the Gaelic culture.
- Write more poetry and songs
- I feel moved to investigate a few Gaelic songs to learn/re-learn from my childhood growing up in Creignish/Craigmore, Cape Breton.
- Probably take a class and continue to support the community through the Mabou Library resources.
- I am moved to gather in community with other Gaelic learners to use the language and have fun! Also to teach my grandchildren.
- learn how to read and sing Gaelic songs
- Also to advocate for other minority languages and peoples
- Keep learning and growing in the culture and language for myself and bring it to my grandchildren so they can grow up with this knowledge as well
- Dèan a h-uile oidhirp airson a' Ghàidhlig adhartachadh agus a neartachadh. Make every effort to progress and strengthen Gaelic.
- Use my Gaelic as often as I can. Keep growing my Gaelic. Use new words and turns of phrases. • As a teacher with 4 years until retirement I'd really like to move home and help with as many Gàidhlig initiatives as possible.
- As I said to Mike and Heather, where Gaelic is today is what was in my wildest dreams 25 years ago.
- I hope to make it to Alba Nuadh one day
- The NS Gaelic community has given me the courage and confidence to start living my life in Gaelic. I call to the crows in Gaelic, I say a little Gaelic blessing by the graves of my ancestors, and now I can speak to my neighbours in Gaelic. Such great has been done here tapadh leibh

uileadh

- Tha daoine air a bhith ag iarraidh orm clasaichean a dhèanamh agus tha mi air a bhith caran diùid mun chlàr-ama agam. Ach fhad 's a bhios mìos romham le planaichean stéidhichte 's urrainn dhomh sreath beag de chlasaichean a dhèanamh. (People have been asking me to teach classes, but I have been a bit reticent because of my schedule. But also long as I have a month planned, I can offer a small series of classes.)
- Support and encourage others
- Pass it on to my kids (if/when I get married and have kids). I also want to pass it to the pipers (and drummers) in the pipe band down here. Continue the connection between the language and the piping as well as the rest of the other aspects of the culture.
- Share my heritage and culture as much as I can!
- Somehow help in the survival of Gaelic
- As always, I feel moved to learn more songs and extra moved to work on no longer letting the imposter syndrome stop me from singing them!
- Learning more and more language, maybe even some steps! Build deeper connections with my friends in the community. Speaking and using my Gaelic more often.
- Yes! Thinking about connecting with other language communities. How can we support each other? A rising tide lifts all boats.
- There seemed to be several speaking in our groups who expressed a need for more opportunities to speak. I think that this series has proven a great format for those of us who can't get together.
- I'm inspired to keep learning and living as the best Gael I can be to inspire others. • I wouldn't mind becoming more involved in the community.
- Learn Gaelic songs and play Gaelic songs; teach grandchildren Gaelic words, try Duolingo and other resources to learn Gaelic. Attend Gaelic song workshops, visit Nova Scotia and Mabou • Gaelic every day for the rest of my life.
- Learn and Tell the old stories, the ancient ones.
- Continue to embed the language in my life through rituals, community celebrations, internalizing songs and stories, helping others connect to the language. Just keep loving and living it!
- Would like to connect with others of Gael ancestry who have become disconnected from the culture and/or language and keep growing the coimhearsneachd (community)
- As dèidh dhomh mo phrogram PhD ann an Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann a thoirt gu crìch, taic a chumail ri iomairtean brosnachaidh 'sna h-Eileanan Siar, gu h-àraid far a bheil mi 'n dràsda ann an Leòdhas. (After the completion of my PhD at Edinburgh University, I would like to keep supporting exciting initiatives in the Western Isles, particularly Lewis where I am just now.)
- To continue to work on strengthening connections with those of Gaelic heritage and identity in Nova Scotia, the Gaelic regions of Scotland, Ireland the Isle of Man, other regions of Canada, the United States, Australia and wherever those who connect with their Gaelic heritage and identity are found throughout the world
- Keeping Gàidhlig language and culture central on my journey to become a good ancestor. • I'd like to find a Gaelic community where I can hang out, either on-line or in person.

Other thoughts, musings

- Modhan teagaisg a leudachadh a bhios a' toirt seachad a' chultar agus a' chàin anns an aon chlas neo san aon phrògram. (Expand teaching approaches that deliver the language and culture in the same class and the same program.)
- Gaelic is a challenge to learn. I am trilingual, English, French and Spanish but Gaelic is another matter.
- From my perspective here in Lewis in the Western Isles; the Gaelic initiatives in Nova Scotia are providing some useful models to emulate
- 1. Changing the attitude of non-Gaelic speakers towards Gaelic; and (2) On the positive side, Gaelic teaching flourishing in Nova Scotia (Angus MacLeod, Lewis Mackinnon, Catriona Parson, et al.) and the recent works printed by Bradan Press; and contemporary Gaelic literature & poetry in Steall (published in Scotland).
- Is there such a thing as a pure Gaelic?
- Learner Gaelic, or people learning Gaelic is the only way to continue the language.
- We might need to honour the voices of the “nay-sayers” and invite them to the delicious Gaelic and Gaelic cultural table. Look at nourishment through Gaelic!
- When our children understand our own culture, they become empathetic to other cultures and gain new perspectives. That's how they can make this world a better place to live.

Gifts and Gratitude

- These evenings have been a gift!
- A gift: Seeing the number of people who share a love of the language and culture and people. When I started learning Gaelic, almost 30 years ago, there were very few doing so. The numbers who are committed to Gaelic--and Gaelic in North American--is truly inspiring. Congratulations to those who have been supporting Gaelic for so long, and thanks to all of you, who are embracing it.
- I'll miss these sessions.
- This series has been enlightening and great fun. Thanks to everyone, especially those who organized it.
- Agus mealaibh ur naidheachd, a charaidean a chuir an sreath seo air doigh. Bha na seiseanan uile air leth math. (Congratulations friends who put this series together. The sessions were all excellent.)
- Inspiring to meet other Gaels from over the globe who are learning the language. • Enjoyed these sessions every week.
- An dochas gun teid agaibh air na coinneamhan seo a chumail a' dol! Chord gach aon dhiubh rium gu mor, mor. (I hope you can keep these sessions going. I enjoyed every one of them very much.)
- Such a pleasure to meet so many people from all over the world sharing the same interest and passion.
- So grateful to have heard your stories. Thank you all.
- Tapadh leibh uile!

- Taing mhòr mhòr dhuibh airson na seiseanan seo a chuir air dòigh! Tha iad air a bhi nan togail •
My heart has been moved every week. What a wonderful offering. Tapadh leibh uile!! • In gratitude for the work of the team!
- Taing mhòr, a h-uile duine.
- Taing mhòr uile tha mi cho taingeil (Thank all. I am so grateful)
- Deagh phrògram (Good program).
- This has been a wonderful project. I hope more can be done in the future.
- Tha mi an dochas gum bi a leithid againn a rithist. Is math a rinn sibh uile, moran taing. Tha albainn uir agus a Ghaidhealteachd gu leir fada nur comain. (I hope that we will have more of the same again. Well done everyone. Thank you. Nova Scotia and the Highlands (Scotland) together appreciate your work.)
- Bha na seiseanan seo eireachdail uile gu lèir. Sessions were all beautiful Having a wee weep with gratitude for you all...!
- Great series and great conversations!
- Thank you all for inspiring me to love the Gaelic more <3.
- Taing mhòr dhuibh uile. Tha sinn 'nur comain airson na seiseanan seo a chur air dòigh dhuinn!! (Thanks for organizing these sessions for us.)
- Congratulations on inspiring change, contemplation, friendship and love for helping people thrive in these trying times.
- Yes, please keep this going if possible! :-)
- Thank you to everyone, the hosts, the guests, those who organized everything. I will miss the sessions but I will carry on with my Gaelic learning and embrace my Gaelic culture forever!! • Dìreach sgoinneil! (Just great!)
- Taing mhòr uile! (Thanks all)
- Thank you to everybody for these wonderful evenings!
- Tapadh leibh uile!
- Ceud taing. Bha seo fìor mhath.
- Thanks to all the organizers for such a wonderful experience.
- Thank you all!
- What a beautiful series! Thank you to all who organized, spoke, and played. And thank you for all the wonderful conversations!
- Suas e!
- Looked forward to this ceilidh every Friday night! Hope it can continue. •
So beautiful hearing these sharings, Kenneth and Màiri. Tapadh leibh!! •
Taing mhòr, a Mhàiri is a Choinnich airson na chòmpairtich sibh leinn!
- Na puirt as fhèarr leam. Tapadh leat a Choinnich! (My favorite tune. Thanks Kenneth) •
'S math a tha thu a' deanamh!
- Mòran mòran taing a h-uile duine! Bha seo glè mhath
- Thank you so much for these wonderful 6 sessions!! I loved them all!!
- Gle mhath!
- Wonderful!