

An Naidheachd Againne

The Newsletter of An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach / The American Gaelic Society

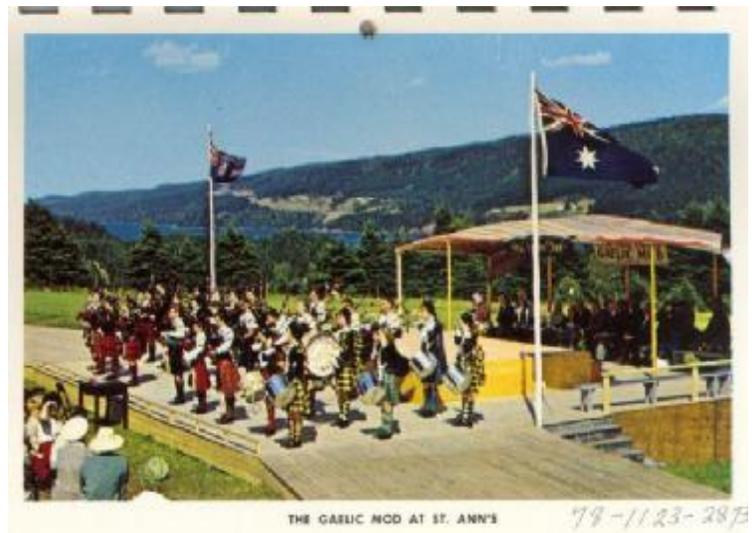
Samhradh-Foghar 2010, Leabhar XXVI, Aireamh 4
Summer-Fall 2010, Volume XXVI, No. 4

Anything But Maudlin: The Gaelic College Mod

by Heather Sparling

One of the more controversial Gaelic cultural events in Cape Breton's history has been the annual Mod held at the St. Ann's Gaelic College of Celtic Arts & Crafts. The first annual Mod was held in the same year as the College's founding: in 1939. The Gaelic word "mod" originally referred to a court held by a Highland chief for settling disputes over rent and other matters. Today, it refers to a Gaelic cultural competition that may include recitation, storytelling, drama, instrumental performance (especially bag-pipes), dance and Gaelic song. Competitive Gaelic mods were first developed in Scotland, where the Royal National Mod was established in 1892 based on the Welsh equivalent, the Eisteddfod, which was established in 1880.

Cape Breton's Mod was a major success in its early days, attracting 4,000-5,000 attendees within less than ten years, peaking at 7,000-8,000 attendees



in the mid-1950s. This was no minor feat since road access to the College was limited at the time and many people arrived from places such as North Sydney and its environs via boat. It was so popular that county mods began to be held throughout the province, including in Port Hood, Iona, Sydney, New Glasgow, Amherst and Dartmouth.

A *Post* article proclaims that the 1940 Gaelic College Mod "was a day replete with animated Gaelic competition. Kilts and plaids of numerous clans were in evidence, and it is doubtful if better Gaelic solos, choral singing and bag-pipe music were ever heard in the Highlands of Scotland than those which were heard during the day." Each year, the opening ceremonies prominently featured a Gaelic address as well as an English one, and a Gaelic church service was a perennial event. The Mod attracted major political

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Go to <http://www.acgamerica.org> for more information on upcoming ACGA events and other Gaelic-related activities.

figures, including Federal Ministers (such as Angus L. MacDonald, who was Canada's Minister of Naval Defence before becoming Nova Scotia's Premier; and Allan MacEachen, who served for a time as Canada's Minister of Manpower and Immigration), Provincial Premiers (including G. I. Smith and John Buchanan), various Lieutenant Governors, and even – once – Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and his wife.



But not everyone was impressed with the event. In 1958, Reverend Somerled MacMillan of Paisley, Scotland, the official bard and historian of Clan MacMillan at the time, while visiting Cape Breton, declared that “the Gaelic Mod held annually here since 1939 is a farce and a phoney.” Having been led to believe that Cape Breton was a Gaelic stronghold, he was shocked at how few people still spoke the language. He complained that Scottish culture was being represented at the Mod only by a few young

AN NAIDHEACHD AGAINNE

An Naidheachd Againne is the quarterly newsletter of *An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach*. The newsletter is published in the Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. It is produced by the Publications Committee of ACGA.

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An Naidheachd Againne welcomes submissions. Contact the editor for more information.



dancers in front of an audience consisting mostly of parents. A.W.R. MacKenzie, the College's founder and the Director of the mod, defended it by claiming that there were 100 competitors in the Gaelic language that year and by suggesting that “Perhaps he missed the point that the Gaelic College is not simply dedicated to promotion of the Gaelic language but also the entire Celtic Arts.” MacKenzie was obviously shaken by MacMillan's accusations and conscious of murmurs of discontent in the community, for in 1964 he wrote in the Mod Souvenir Booklet that “the Gaelic College and the Annual Gaelic Mod have been established to promote and to seek to preserve (not merely the ancient Gaelic language) but all the worthwhile Arts and Crafts of the Highland people and, therefore, the promoters do not pretend to carry on their promotion work after the pattern of the Scottish National Annual Gaelic Mod.”

The Mod lost a powerful ally when A.W.R. MacKenzie died in 1967, while a controversy over who should run the College cast a shadow over the Mod in the late 1970s. Still, it continued to be held until 1999, when it was changed into a noncompetitive festival, *Fèis a' Mhòid* (“Festival of the Mod”). Gaelic *fèisean* (festivals) had become popular in Scotland in the 1980s as an alternative to the Royal National Mod, which was viewed by some to be a foreign imposition rather than an indigenous initiative. Many people in both Scotland and Cape Breton believe that the Mod's formalities are inimical to the development and maintenance of traditional Gaelic expressive culture. However, the Gaelic College's Mod continues on 69 years after its inception, only in a different guise. ❖

Heather Sparling is an associate professor of ethnomusicology at CBU whose research centres on Gaelic song in Cape Breton.

My Colorado Immersion Weekend

by Erin Park

Going to the Immersion Weekend in Colorado Springs was not one of my plans this year and neither was winning an ACGA member scholarship. My grandmom's plans for travel this year did not include the Rocky Mountains either. Through some mysterious force (my mom) everything came together and suddenly I found myself at Colorado College with my grandmom as an escort! I was somewhat unsure of what to expect, and how the weekend would go. It turned out, not surprisingly, that the classes were amazing and the weekend was fun and full of Gaelic.

Mòrag Burke's class had a warm, friendly, and relaxed atmosphere. Because her mother and grandmother were both native speakers, Gaelic has been a part of her life ever since she was little. Although not strictly a native speaker herself, she has a native understanding of the language and this came through in the way that she taught the class. She also had a learner's and scholarly understanding of Gaelic becoming fluent through formal classes at St. FX. She related her personal and native perspectives by sharing stories from her own life, including stories about her mother, who still fills the woodbox at their house in Big Pond, Nova Scotia. Looking back, this class helped prepare me for my trip this summer to Cape Breton; it gave me a taste of the culture there. Her song workshop was different from any other that I had gone to because she taught us songs that her family wrote and ones that she herself had composed.

I am not a math person, so I was hesitant to go to Caroline Root's workshop on math, but I was very glad I did. The class was taught mostly in Gaelic and I was happy to find it was not as difficult as I would've

guessed. The topics and vocabulary (i. e. multiplication and words for shapes) that were introduced are not in your average grammar book. I am excited that I can now count to the thousands in Gaelic! Caroline also had a Games workshop, which, as its name suggests, was a lot of fun! Even my grandmom, who

had absolutely no Gaelic, came and enjoyed this workshop. We played common board and card games in Gaelic. It was a creatively different context for learning. Caroline was an inspiration for me, as someone who had gotten interested in Gaelic as a teenager and now has gone to St. FX, taught in Scotland and the US; she gave me an idea of what my own pursuit of Gaelic could look like.

I should mention that the location for the Immersion Weekend makes for some great sightseeing with the group and on your own. The Garden of the God's tour was awesome, and through

it I got to experience Gaelic very much outside the classroom from our bilingual tour guide, Rudy. It was a fun, educational, and unusual outing. Grandmom and I explored the the Olympic Training Center before the weekend and on Sunday afternoon took a train ride up Pike's Peak. Colorado is beautiful and the weather was gorgeous all weekend.

Great classes, teachers, workshops, outings and ceilidh – thank you to all the teachers, organizers, and everyone who attended the Immersion Weekend for a wonderful time! ❖

Though only in her teens, Erin Park is an accomplished Gaelic learner, Gaelic singer (winner of last year's U.S. National Gaelic Mòd) and step-dancer. She won a scholarship in this year's member-scholarship competition, and used it to attend the Immersion.

We've lost our editor!

We've been aware for a while that our editor, Brooke Montgomery, would need to step down when she became president of the Utah Scots, but that happened earlier than we expected. So:

- This newsletter is later than expected (though larger)
- We (actually, I) hope you'll forgive any failings of your temporary editor (me)
- We're looking for a long-term editor and hope you will consider taking on this task if your background and interests happen to fit. ACGA will provide appropriate software if you don't have it, and a reasonable amount of tutorial assistance, if you need that. The job consists of working (in an online forum) with our very well organized Publications Committee in planning issue content, and converting that content into newsletter format. The editor doesn't need to write content, be fluent in Gaelic, or distribute the newsletter. If you're interested in this job, contact Rudy Ramsey (rudy@ramsisle.com).

2010 Immersion Weekend, Colorado College

by Rudy Ramsey

To all appearances, a good time was had by all at the 2010 ACGA Immersion Weekend. This annual ACGA event was held for the second year in a row at Colorado College, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This beautiful campus has proven to be a particularly suitable location for the IW. Twenty students came from Colorado and surrounding states, but also from Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Ontario. We had three great instructors: Donnie MacDonald, of Lewis, Men of Worth, and California; Mòrag Burke, of Cape Breton; and Caroline Root, of Colorado.

Thursday evening, we went to Jack Quinn's (amazingly large and busy) Irish Pub for dinner and craic.

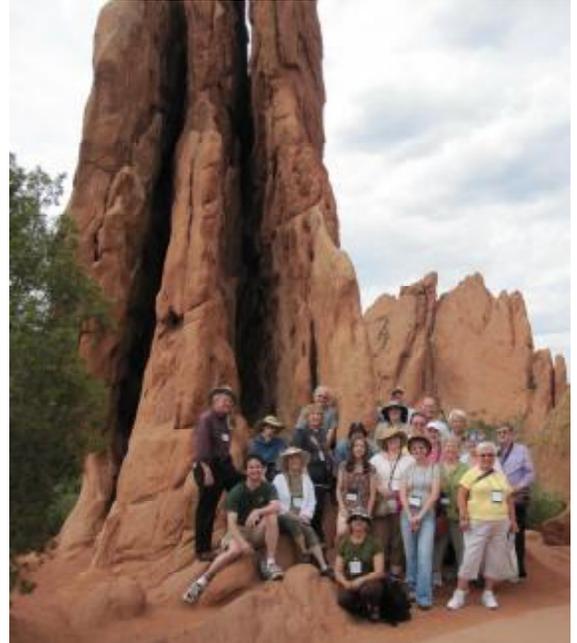
Three mornings, the instructors provided classes at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Three workshops were offered on Friday, and three on Saturday. Topics included:

- Poetry Interpretation (Selected from the Poems of Anna Frater)
- Conversation and How to Stimulate the Flow
- Songs of Big Pond
- Life of the Early Gaels in Cape Breton
- Games in Gaelic
- Mathematics in Gaelic

Friday afternoon, Rudy Ramsey served as guide for a bilingual tour of the beautiful Garden of the Gods Park (see separate article).

On Saturday evening, we had a very nice ceilidh, with most of the attendees sharing songs, instrumental music, stories, jokes, and even Highland dancing. The dancing was by Erin Park, who also sang a beautiful song for us. She attended on an ACGA Member Scholarship and has written a separate article in this issue about her experiences at the IW.

We're planning to hold next year's Immersion Weekend at this same site. After that, we may look for another area capable of holding the event. We like to move this event around the country, but our ability to do so depends on sufficient local support in the area in which the event is held. ❖



Thank you, ACGA

Beth Frieden, a recipient of ACGA's College Scholarship, has sent us the following letter.

I am writing to inform An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach of my successful completion of the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (Primary) for Gaelic speakers at the University of Strathclyde. I have received confirmation of my award, issued on June 17, 2010. It was certainly a challenging year, but I passed all modules with high marks and have secured a year-long, full-time post teaching a Gaelic-medium composite P3/4/5 class at Rockfield Primary in Oban, beginning in August. Your scholarship was crucial to my ability to complete the course and I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach for making it possible for me to achieve this goal.

Le gach deagh dhùrachd,

Beth Frieden

Lios nan Diathan

le Rudy Ramsey

An àite litir a' chinn-suidhe an turas seo, tha mi a' sgrìobhadh aiste mu dheidhinn Lios nan Diathan ann an Colorado Springs, Colorado. Thadhail sinn aig ar cruinneachadh aig an Deireadh-Sheachdain Bogaidh san Ògmhios. Bha mi fhìn nam stiùiriche airson turas dà-chànanach an siud.

'S e àite anabarrach brèagha a th' ann, agus àite clach-eolaich nach eil coltach ri gin eile san t-saoghal. Tha sin air sgath 's gun do thachair gluasadan-talmhainn gu math neo-abhaisteach an seo. Ach is dòcha gum bu chòir dhuinn tòiseachadh, uill..., aig an toiseach.



O chionn 300 millean bliadhna, bha sreath de bheanntanan mòra an iar air an seo air a bheil na “Ancestral Rockies” (no “Frontrangia” :-); cha b' urrainn dhomhsa uirsgeul cho math ri sin innse). Chaidh am briseadh sìos le aimsir, uisge, agus atharrachadh anns an teòthachd. Ghluais abhnaichean na clachan beaga is gainmheach an seo, far an do thog iad “alluvial fans” cho domhainn ri 4000 troigh.

Mu 200 millean bliadhna air ais, bha Colorado air a' mheadhan-chearcaill, mar pairt de Pangea, nuair nach robh ach an aon mhòr-thìr ann. Le gluasad phleiteachain na cruinne, thàinig is dh'fhalbh cuantan mòra

The Garden of the Gods

by Rudy Ramsey

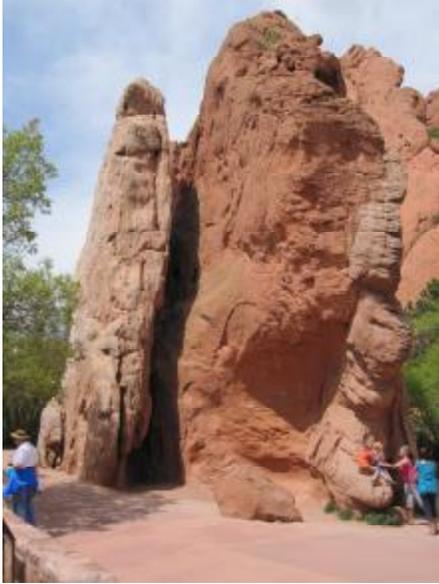
In place of a president's letter this issue, I'm writing an article about the Garden of the Gods, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We visited it during our gathering for the Immersion Weekend in June. I served as tour guide for a bilingual tour there.

This is an astonishingly beautiful place, and a geological site unlike any other in the world. That's because very unusual tectonic movement occurred here. But perhaps we should start, well..., at the beginning.

Some 300 million years ago, there was a mountain range to the west of here called the “Ancestral Rockies” (or “Frontrangia” :-); I couldn't make up stuff this good). They were broken up by weather, water, and temperature changes. Rivers moved the resulting gravel and sand here, where they formed “alluvial fans” up to 4000 feet deep.

About 200 million years back, Colorado was on the equator, as part of Pangea, when there was only the one continent. With movement of the tectonic plates, great oceans came and went here several times, and layers of sandstone

an seo mòran thursan, agus chaidh irean de clach-ghainmhich a chruthachadh fon uisge, air mullach nan alluvial fans. Mar sin, tha clach-ghainmhich dearg, mìn agus dìreach ri taobh an conglomerate geal, garbh bho na alluvial fans.



Eadar 66 millean agus 2 mhillean bliadhna air ais, tha na pleiteachan air a' bhith trang, leis an fhear "Seán Phacifig" a' gluasad fon fhear "Ameireagaidh a Tuath". Tha sin air na Rockies a thogail, agus tha e air na h-irean-cloiche a ghluasad an seo. Tha sinn a' bruidhinn air gluasadan mòra; tha

ire-cloiche aig mullach na beinne, Pike's Peak, is an aon ire dà mhìle **fo** Colorado Springs. Tha an dà àite mu 9 mìle air falbh bho cheile, le gluasad dìreach de 4 mìle!

Agus 's ann sa mheadhon aig a h-uile rud a tha Lios nan Diathan. Le loidhne sgàinidh mòr air gach taobh den phàirce (agus mòran eile nas bige anns gach àite), tha na clachan air tionndadh gus a bheil iad a' seasamh dìreach anns a' Gharradh Mheadhanach. Tha bleith talmhainn air an stuth bog a thoirt bhuaithe, agus tha na clachan rim faicinn a' seasamh dìreach, brèagha, pròiseil. Tha mòran chumaidhean-cloiche iongantach is àlainn ann. Is urrainn dhuibh eachdraidh an àite a leughadh anns na clachan fhèin, agus sin pairt den spòrs.

Air an turas againn, sheall sinn air mu fhichead cumaidhean-cloiche sònraichte, agus dh'ionnsaich sinn bhupa mu dhèidhinn clach-eòlas an àite. Dheasbairich sinn mu creutairean neònach a bha a' fuireach an seo cuideachd. Nam measg bha Plesiosaurs – dìneasairean snàimh a bha 42 troigh a dh'fhaid agus aig an robh coltas ri Nessie – tarbhan-nathrach dà throigh a dh'fhàide agus mìle-chasach a bha 6 troighean bho cheann gu crìoch.

Chuala sinn didgeridoo cuideachd, ach sin sgeulachd airson latha eile. :-) ❖

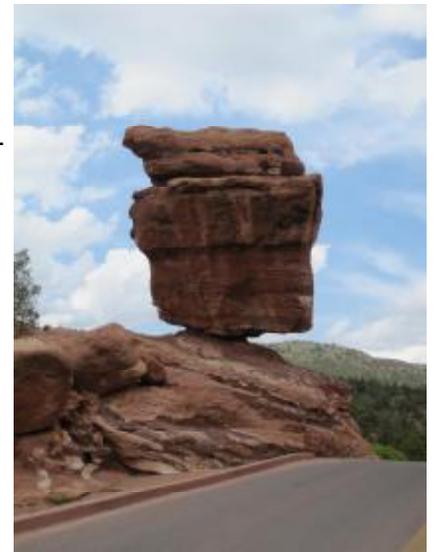
were formed on the ocean bottom, atop the alluvial fans. Thus, there's smooth, red sandstone right beside the rough, white conglomerate from the alluvial fans.

Between 66 million and 2 million years ago, the plates were busy, with the "Old Pacific" plate moving beneath the "North American" plate. That formed the Rockies, and it moved the geological layers here. We're talking about a lot of movement; there's a rock layer at the top of Pike's Peak that's the same as a layer that's 2 miles **under** Colorado Springs. The two locations are some 9 miles apart, with a vertical movement of 4 miles!

And in the middle of the whole thing is the Garden of the Gods. With major fault lines on both sides of the park (and many smaller ones everywhere), the rocks have turned until they stand straight upright in the Central Garden. Erosion has removed the softer surrounding material, leaving the stones standing upright, beautiful, and proud for all to see. There are many amazing and beautiful rock formations there. And you can read the history of the place in the stones themselves; that's part of the fun.

During our tour, we looked at some twenty special rock formations, and we learned from them about the geology of the site. We discussed the modern history of the park, its use by Indian tribes over the centuries, and some strange creatures that have lived here. These include Plesiosaurs – 42-foot long swimming dinosaurs that remind me of Nessie – two-foot dragonflies, and millipedes six feet long.

We also heard a didgeridoo, but that's a story for another day. :-) ❖



Mòd nan Lochan Mòra 2010

Ohio Scottish Games, Wellington, Ohio, 2010

The eighth annual Mòd nan Lochan Mòra took place at the Ohio Scottish Games in Wellington, Ohio, from Friday, June 25 to Sunday, June 27. Sine Anna MacKay and Angus Allan Macdonald were the judges this year, Sine for music and Angus for Gaelic. Sine is very active in fiddling and singing circles in Scotland, a gold medal winner at the National Mod in Scotland and has just come from running the 2010 Inverness Mòd at which there were 700 competitors. Angus is very active in Gaelic circles and has competed many times at the National Mòd in Scotland, competing in quartets and with the Largs Gaelic Choir for which he is the Gaelic tutor. The judges and competitors were based at the Rodeway Inn in Medina.



Poetry and Storytelling took place on Friday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. at the Inn. The poem is prescribed and storytelling is the performer's own choice.

The song competition took place on Saturday, starting at 9:30 a.m. Men and women in the advanced category sang three prescribed songs each and a self-select; beginners sang one prescribed song and one self-select. Adjudication and the reading of scores followed each event.

After the Mòd was completed the Mòd competitors and judges demonstrated waulking at the Performing Arts venue. Many thanks to Bonnie Gordon for arranging the time and venue.



The Mòd ended with a workshop on the Sunday morning held at the Inn. Sine and Angus taught five songs, three of them òrain mòra, one love song and a puirt.

The Mòd Chair, Frances Acar, would like to thank the Officers and Trustees of the Games for all their help in preparing for the Mòd, the judges for providing such excellent feedback and adjudications, and the competitors for all their hard work in preparation.

Results are on the next page. ❖

Results, Mòd nan Lochan Mòra 2010

Poetry: 1st Mike Mackay

Storytelling 1st Cathleen MacKay
2nd Mike MacKay

Song:

Each year beginners who have been learning Gaelic for just a few months are permitted to sing just the prescribed song.

Beginner's prescribed song: 1st Robbie Greenwalt

Advanced Women

Prescribed: 1st Susan Luse
2nd Erin Park
3rd Anne Alexander

Combined: 1st Anne Alexander
2nd Susan Luse
3rd Erin Park

Overall scores: 1st Susan Luse
2nd Anne Alexander
3rd Erin Park

Advanced Men

Prescribed 1st Stan Gerchak
Combined 1st Stan Gerchak
Overall score 1st Stan Gerchak

Best score for Gaelic (Catherine Mackin Memorial Quaich) Stan Gerchak
Best score for Music (Margaret Mary Crystal) Susan Luse

Ohio Championship medals awarded by Margaret Callander, Treasurer of the Games, for:

Best score overall for men: Stan Gerchak

Best score overall for women: Susan Luse

Survey Says! Member Responses to ACGA Events

By Heather Sparling

This is the fourth article in a series summarizing the results of our member survey conducted last year. In this article, I will look at the responses to ACGA-sponsored events, including the Immersion-Weekend, the Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Language and Song week, and the Mod. I was personally quite amazed to discover that more than 50% of you said that you had attended the Immersion-Weekend before, 43% have attended Grandfather Mountain, and 30% the National Mod.

With 31% of the vote, the Immersion Weekend was rated one of the best services or events offered by ACGA, second only to An Naidheachd Againne, our newsletter (note that respondents could pick more than one service or event). Grandfather Mountain was a close third with 29% of respondents naming it as one of the top ACGA events. Respondents explained why these events are so valuable. Many of you noted that they provide great opportunities to practice one's Gaelic. The quality of instruction was also high on several lists, as was the opportunity to interact with or meet others. Language is social; the whole point of a language is to facilitate communication and interaction. It is hard to learn a language in a small community and even moreso in isolation. These types of events give learners the opportunity to try out their speaking skills but also their comprehension skills. We all acclimate to the Gaelic of our fellow learners and teachers; it can be very helpful to shake things up by interacting with new people who have different dialects, pronunciations, and vocabularies.

Some of you named some other reasons for valuing these events. For many, these events are less expensive and more viable time-wise than comparable events in Scotland or Cape Breton. For a lucky few, these events are in close proximity to their homes. But others also commented on how much fun these events are, how enjoyable the workshops are, how inspirational and motivational they are, and how they offer the opportunity to learn about and purchase new Gaelic resources. They also provide a means to hear what is going on in the broader Gaelic community.

I remember hearing the well-known story of the minister who visits a parishioner who has stopped attending services. Sitting by the fireplace, the minister uses a pair of tongs to remove a hot, red coal. Alone on the hearth, it goes grey and cold. But when the minister replaces it in the fire, it quickly glows red again. The point is that faith needs community. So does language. Although we live in an age that allows us to commune easily via Skype, instant messaging, email, and various other means, they really cannot compare to face-to-face interaction and the intensity of a few days given over entirely to learning and enjoying Gaelic.

The Mod was named as a top event by 11% of survey respondents for many of the same reasons given for the Immersion Weekend and Grandfather Mountain week: it's affordable, it provides Gaelic practice, it offers opportunities to interact with others, and it offers quality instruction. One additional reason was that its competitive nature motivated participants to learn materials. This is one of the features that makes the Mod stand apart: although you will learn something while you are at the Mod (just as you would learn something at the Immersion Weekend and Grandfather Mountain), you will learn something even before the event as you prepare to compete. Your learning is thus augmented as you are motivated to learn the lyrics of a song or the plot of a story, as you practice your pronunciation, and as you investigate the history and context of whatever it is that you are preparing. As a university professor, I know that students learn more when they come to class prepared, having completed, for example, an assigned reading. Their background preparation means that I can focus on more difficult concepts in a lecture than on the basic facts. The same is true of the Mod: prepara-

(Continued on page 10)

tion for competition means that you will learn more from the adjudication you receive.

Of course, competition is not for everyone, which was clear from the comments explaining why 18% of you listed the Mod as one of the least valuable events or services offered by ACGA. Several people wrote that they don't enjoy competitions. Competitions can be controversial. Some argue that they create divisions rather than community by pitting one person against another. But as we celebrated at the recent Olympics, competition doesn't necessarily preclude friendship and community. In fact, my experience with the Mod was that most competitors were primarily interested in the adjudications they received rather than winning. We cheered each other on and took genuine pleasure in each other's successes.

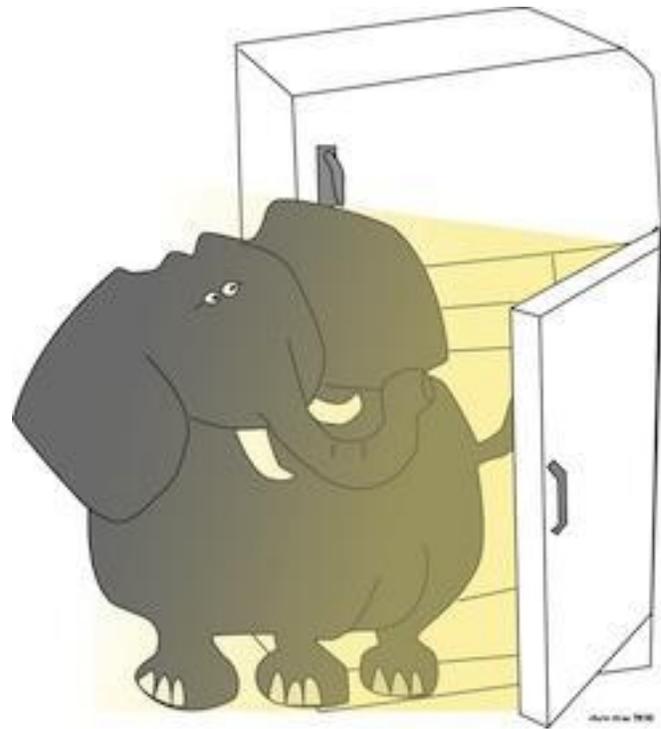
Indeed, competition can be useful for many reasons. As I've already mentioned, they are highly motivational. When else are you going to really commit to learning something in Gaelic to the point of feeling comfortable performing it in public? Competitions ensure that standards are established and maintained. Take pronunciation, for example. It is fundamental to any language, and yet it is also perhaps one of the

most difficult aspects of language learning, especially when we deal with sounds not familiar to us in our first language. It is too easy to be sloppy. But competition forces us to become conscious of it, to really listen to recordings of songs or stories in preparation for performing, and to learn from the comments of the adjudicator. Competitions can also help to maintain a breadth of repertoire. Once we have learned a song or two, it is easy for them to become our signature pieces. But set competition repertoire and different genre categories encourage us to learn new materials regularly.

There were other reasons that the Mod wasn't everyone's favourite event. Some claimed not to be singers (although I hasten to note that the Mod includes both storytelling and poetry recitation competitions). A couple of people noted that it was difficult for them to get to or that their schedules wouldn't allow them to attend. One person said he or she would be interested if there were workshops. Well, I'm happy to report that there are workshops! Sunday morning is reserved for workshops featuring something of interest to the guest adjudicator. When I attended, it was a Gaelic drama workshop. Song workshops are particularly popular.

Although the 2010 Immersion Weekend and Grandfather Mountain week are over, the Mod is fast approaching. [Editor's Note: For reasons discussed on page 3, this issue is late, and the 2010 Mòd has already occurred. We'll report on it in the next issue.] If you've been to any of these events before, I don't need to tell you how fun they are, and how much your Gaelic improves. Hopefully many of you were able to work at least one into your schedule this summer. If you haven't been to one of these events, then I urge you to consider them for next year. I promise that you won't regret it! ❖

Ciamar a tha fios agad a bheil aibhean air a bhith anns an fhrìds agad?



Lorgan-coise air an ìm!

[Editor's note: Jamie MacDonald, a veritable Gaelic institution at the Grandfather Mountain games, needed some help to get to the Gaelic tent this year. Three members and ACGA teamed up to help him out.]

Buidheachas do ACGA

le Seumas MhacDhonnhaill

A charaidean ACGA,

Bu toil leam buidheachas a thoirt dha na buill aig ACGA airson a' chothruim a dhol dha na geamaichean aig Beinn Seanar ann an Carolina am bliadhna, gu sònraichte dha Rudaidh, Neacail, agus Harry. Bha latha fìor mhath againn Disathairne. Thòisich gnòthaichean aig teanta na Gàidhlig mu dheich uairean sa mhadainn agus lean sinn oirnn gu 3:30, nuair a dheasaich sinn airson a' Mhòid. Cha mhòr nach robh sinn a' seinn òrain Ghàidhlig fad an latha! Bha Màiri Nic 'Ille Mhaoil agus Beathag Mhoireasdan còmhla ruinn cuideachd, a' teagasg nan òran agus a' stiùireadh nan seinneadairean. Thàinig mòran dhaoine dhan teanta agus tha mi cinnteach gun do chòrd e riutha glan. Cha robh mo bhean Marta ann an turas seo, mar sin rinn Micheal MacAoidh obair an trusaidh, còmhla ri Cam NicRath agus Libit, a' taladh nan daoine a-steach dhan teanta. Aig trì uairean, chum sinn am mòd againn agus abair seinneadairean a bh' againn! Bhuannaich Micheal MacAoidh a' chiad duais agus fhuair Linda Mhoireasdan an dara duais, ach bha a h-uile duine sgoinneil. Cha robh mi comasach air tighinn dhan a' phartaidh oidhche Shathairne, ach chuala mi gur e deagh phartaidh a bh' ann! Latha na Sàbaid thug mi lioft do Mhàiri Nic 'Ille Mhaoil dhan phòrt-adhair ann an Charlotte agus bha deagh chraic againn fad an rathaid. Tha mi toilichte gun robh teans agam tìde a chaith còmhla ri Màiri, seach nach do thachair mi rithe riamh roimhe – tha i fada nas òige na mise. Bha sinn a' seinn aig na h-aon mhòdan nuair a bha mi a' fuireach ann an Alba, ach bha ise na "junior" aig an àm sin. Nach mi tha aosda, ach "cha tig an aois leatha fhèin." ❖

Thanks to ACGA

by Jamie MacDonald

ACGA Friends,

I would like to thank the members of ACGA, especially Rudy, Nick, and Harry for the opportunity to go to the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games this year. We had a truly great day on Saturday! Things started happening at our Gaelic tent about ten o'clock in the morning and we went until 3:30pm, when we stopped to prepare for the Mòd. We must have been singing Gaelic songs nearly all day! Mary MacMillan and Beathag Mhoireasdan were with us at the tent as well, teaching the songs and leading the singing with yours truly. Many people visited our Gaelic tent and I am sure that they all thoroughly enjoyed the experience. My wife Martha could not be there this time, so Michael MacKay took over her duties, along with Cam and Libit, enticing passerbys into our tent. We held our mòd at 3:00pm and what great singers we had! Mike MacKay won first place and Linda Morrison got second place, but everyone there was great. I could not be there for the party on Saturday night, but I heard that it was a good one – as usual. On Sunday I gave Mary MacMillan a lift to the airport in Charlotte and we had a good blether on the way down. I am really glad that I got a chance to get to know Mary, since I had never met her before – she is much younger than me. When I lived in Scotland, we were singing at the same mòds, but she was in the "junior" competitions at the time. I know I am getting old, but so is everyone else! ❖

Gaelic Song & Language Week

Grandfather Mountain

In early July, twenty-eight students from eleven states and Canada gathered at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina, for Grandfather Mountain Gaelic Song and Language Week 2010.



Monday through Thursday, students attended their choice of morning and afternoon language and song classes taught by Mike MacKay, Mary MacMillan, and Beathag Mhoireasdan. All three teachers also taught late afternoon special interest sessions including preparing for a mòd, the songs of Donald Alan MacDonald, and Gaelic map reading. Evening activities included ACGA's Annual General Meeting, a cèilidh, and video night. Everyone gathered Friday morning one last time for songs and skits before lunch in the college dining hall and goodbyes.

Many students return year after year to Grandfather Gaelic Week, providing a sense of continuity to the week's activities. Just as important, however, is the diversity brought by new students. One of this year's new students was Jessica MacKay, joining her mother and fellow student Cathleen MacKay and her father Mike MacKay, who taught language and song classes for beginning students. ❖

My First Grandfather Mountain

by Jessica MacKay

When I look back on my first experience attending the Grandfather Mountain Gaelic retreat this summer, I think of music. The songs we learned and studied in workshops taught by remarkable instructors, harp music echoing through the narrow hallways of the dorm, and cheerful performances under the high mountains of Banner Elk all come drifting to my mind when I remember the week I spent there.

Along with being immersed in music, I found that all areas of Gaelic language and culture were prevalent throughout the week-long retreat. Even outside the classes and workshops, someone would always be conversing in Gaelic or sharing experiences in learning. It seems strange even now to not be constantly surrounded by Gaelic and the people who love it. The urge to start up a rousing waulking song in the middle of a crowded restaurant has followed me still. So has the inspiration to further my own knowledge and learning.

Though I have been attending similar events for some time, I found this to be a truly unique experience of immersion in Gaelic language, culture, and song. My first attendance at this retreat was both memorable and encouraging.



Dè Do Naidheachd?

by Cam MacRae and Jeanne Pendergast

With an occasional break when one of us or our mentor/teacher Mike MacKay is out town, Jeanne and I continue to write our naidheachdan each week; the words for number 30 are waiting on my desktop this morning. For the stories below, we were thinking about working on pronunciation in phrases like **an comain**, where the “c” comes close to a “g” sound, and learning some interesting idioms. The eight words or phrases we chose for this exercise appear in **bold face**.

Jeanne:

Latha a bha seo, bha nàbaidh agam a' dol dhan bhaile agus dh'iarr i orm **ealla a ghabhail ri** a dithis mhac. "Bhithinn fada **nad chomain** nan cumadh tu sùil orra gus nach dèan iad **miastadh**," ars' ise. Cha robh mi cinnteach. Bha fhios 'am nach e **mì-rùn** a bh' aca ach **chan eil rian nach** biodh dithis bhalach beaga caran mì-mhodhail an-dràsta 's a-rithist.

Co-dhiù dh'aontaich mi, agus chluich iad taobh a-muigh an taighe fad greis. Nuair a bha am pathadh orra, thàinig iad a-steach ach le pòcaidean **cnapach**. Bha iad **a' mùchadh** gàire agus bha amharas agam gur e losgannan no luchan a bh' aca. Ach chan e beathaichean mar sin a bh' annta. Dh'fhalamhaich iad am pòcaidean air a' bhòrd agus leum mi air ais. Bha iad air nead nathraichean beaga stiallach fhaighinn. Is beag nach deach mo chur à cochall mo chridhe. **Ma thogair** nach robh iad puinnseanach—ghabh mi an t-eagal mòr co-dhiù.

Thug am màthair cèic mhòr bhrèagha dhomh an ath latha.

Glossary:

nan cumadh tu sùil orra gus nach dèan iad **miastadh** – if you would (conditional) keep an eye on them so that they won't get into ("make/do") mischief

mì-rùn - ill-will

pòcaidean **cnapach** – lumpy pockets

a' mùchadh gàire – stifling a laugh

Is beag nach deach mo chur à cochall mo chridhe. - I almost jumped out of my skin.

"Is beag nach" means *almost*, while "deach mo chur" is one way to say *I was put*. The Gaelic version of *scared out of my wits* uses "put out of the husk (outer covering) of my heart."

an t-eagal mòr – used with the article when it really means *fear*; "eagal" is also used for "air eagal ('s) gu..." in the sense of *in case, lest*.

Cam:

Gu h-obann, chaidh an doras fhosgladh, bhrùchd duine a-steach agus ruith e dhan t-seòmair-suidhe, is mise is mo chuid chloinne fhathast sa chidsin ag ithe ar bracaist.

Cha robh rian nach robh eagal oirnn. Cha robh an duine a' dèanamh **miastadh** ach bha e ag èigheach, "teine." Ceart, bha teine anns an t-similear againn. Agus cò an duine? 'S e Fred Welch ar nàbaidh a bh' ann, agus an àite **mì-rùn**, 's e cobhair a bha an dùil aig Fred.

Dh'fhosgail e an doras anns an stòbha agus **mhùch** e an teine leis an smàladair sònraichte a bh' aige. An dèidh mionaid no dhà chaidh an teine a chur às, agus cha robh air fhàgail anns an stòbha

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ach **cnapan** de fhiodh fliuch.

Aig an àm sin, bha Fred na cheannard dhen luchd-smàlaidh an Tunbridge, Vermont, agus bha e an còmhnaidh a' **gabhail ealla ris** na similearan sa choimhearsnachd. Gu mì-fhortanach, bha (agus tha fhathast) teintean similearach gu math cumanta sa cheàrnaidh sin dhen t-saoghal.

Ma thogair gun do bhris e a-steach dhan taigh agam, bidh mi **an comain** Fred Welch gu bràth.

Glossary:

chaidh an doras fhosgladh - passive voice using a form of rach and a lenited verbal noun - the door was opened

mo chuid chloinne - my children (my share/portion of children - note that chloinne is the genitive plural form of clann)

cha eil/robh rian nach eil/robh - there is/was no way that

chaidh an teine a chur às - another example of the passive voice using chaidh - the fire was put out

a' gabhail ealla ri - keeping an eye on

ma thogair gun - who cares that, it doesn't matter that

an comain + genitive - indebted to ❖

Special offer on new Dileab Phriseil CD benefits ACGA

Just in time for **Christmas** gift buying!

Dileab Phriseil has just released their inaugural CD, chock-full of traditional tunes from Scotland and Ireland!

The perfect stocking-stuffer for that special someone who appreciates our "precious heritage!"

Scott Morrison, ACGA member, and Dileab Phriseil band members deliver 16 tunes, including four in Scottish Gaelic and one in Irish Gaelic, that are sure to get your toes tapping! Jig, reels, pub tunes and pipes! What better way to start off the holiday season!



Price: \$12 + \$5-US (or \$6-Canada) for S&H. Note: **\$6 for each sale goes to ACGA!**

To order your copy:

If paying by PayPal, please e-mail the name and address to which you want the CD sent to rudy@ramsisle.com, and make the payment in U.S. dollars to

payments@acgamerica.org .

If paying by mail in U.S. dollars, make check payable to "ACGA, and mail with the desired name and address to:

ACGA
PO Box 103069
Denver CO 80250

If paying by mail in Canadian dollars, make check to "Toronto Gaelic Learners Association", and mail with the desired name and address to:

ACGA c/o Janice Chan
43 Norbrook Cresc.
Toronto, ON M9V 4P7
Canada

Miosachan 2011

Our 2011 Gaelic photo calendars are now available to order. These 8 1/2 x 11 inch 12 month calendars are coil-bound on heavy card stock. Each month has a full colour photo submitted by an ACGA member on a Gaelic or Celtic theme. This year's calendar also has a photo in black and white on the cover.

The calendar notes major North American holidays, as well as a few other dates important to Gaels, with enough space to write memos or appointments. As far as we are aware, this is the only printed calendar that is entirely in Scottish Gaelic.

Prices are the same as last year - \$22 in American or Canadian funds, plus \$3 for postage.

These are limited edition calendars with only 100 printed. Last year we sold out, so get yours early!

If you are mailing to a US address, please make your check in American funds payable to "ACGA" (\$22 + \$3.00 postage) and mail to:

ACGA
PO Box 103069
Denver, CO 80250
USA

If you are mailing to a Canadian address, please make your cheque in Canadian funds payable to "Toronto Gaelic Learner's Association" (\$22 + \$3.00 postage) and mail to:

ACGA Calendar
c/o Janice Chan
43 Norbrook Crescent
Toronto ON M9V 4P7
Canada

If you would prefer to submit payment by PayPal, please e-mail the name and address to which you want the calendar sent to rudy@ramsisle.com, and make the payment in your local currency (U.S. or Canadian dollars) to payments@acgamerica.org. ❖



If you haven't discovered PayPal, you owe it to yourself to take a look. This is a very quick and convenient means of paying for things on-line **without** exposing your credit-card or bank-account numbers to the merchant. You will spend a few minutes creating your account, and you will have to provide those numbers to PayPal itself, but we think you'll find it worth the effort. More and more vendors are accepting this convenient payment method. ACGA accepts PayPal, too.

From the Bookshelf to Here

by Kyle Carey

My father's bookshelf is a staple childhood memory. I can remember when my head reached only the third shelf, where the solid spines of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* stared back at me. Even more clearly I remember my first bedtime stories. There were no forks and spoons, or cats jumping over the moon, but instead, Jane Eyre's immovable will, Miss Havisham's twilight romance.

By the time my head reached the sixth shelf, I was a college student, and suddenly, Peig Sayers' autobiography, and Tomas O' Crohan's *The Islandman* greeted me. Their back covers claimed they were originally written in Irish Gaelic. Our ancestors were from Ireland, but like most of the Gaels that fled during the lean years, they shed their old-world identities like a worn coat. Today, my family has no memory of the Irish tongue, or of what drove our ancestors to finally, and irrevocably, leave their pasts behind.

I can trace all that has happened in my life, the years leading up to my first year at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and my fluency in Gaelic, back to discovering those books, I consider them the stone-drop source of the ripples that have come to an end on the Western shores of Scotland.

I spent a semester abroad in the *Gaeltachd* of Ireland, I learned a bit of the language, wrote my senior thesis on Tomas O' Crohan's memoir, and afterwards, received a grant to go to Cape Breton for a year to learn Gaelic. I played Cape Breton tunes on my fiddle, heard the islanders singing the Gaelic words to the melodies, and wanted to learn. I applied to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and at the end of August, found myself on a train from Glasgow to Mallaig, squinting to make some sort of meaning out of the Gaelic station signs, my ancestors' own language as foreign to me as Braille.

The first few months at *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig* were extremely difficult. Unlike most of my peers, I hadn't grown up hearing the Gaelic language, or gone through Gaelic medium education. The sounds and structures of the language were completely new to me. To catch up, I knew what I would have to do: give up the comforts of speaking English, sacrifice my eloquence in my native tongue, and hope that it would eventually come in this new one.

A student from the city might have difficulty adjusting to the rural setting of *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig*. For me, it was completely conducive to what I wanted to do. There are few distractions, sea and the mountains for inspiration, and enough happening on campus to make you feel that somehow, you're still at the centre of it all. While many of the students left for the big city on the weekends, I stayed on campus, to be closer to the language, and by Christmas, I'd stopped speaking English completely. What had once been gibberish to me began to take form and sense, what had once seemed insurmountable had shrunk considerably in size.

The real test came when I went to live in Uist for three weeks in February, to work at a Gaelic medium primary school. I had to ask myself, would my learner's Gaelic make the cut outside the learning environment of *Sabhal Mòr Ostaig*? When I arrived on the shores of Lochmaddy, I went into the ferry station to ask about buses, mustering my courage to address the woman behind the desk in Gaelic, '*Hallo? Ciamar a tha thu an-diugh?*' 'I'm fine, thanks', she replied. Was she offended by my American blas? Did my brightly patterned Wellies scream tourist? On the taxi ride to my B&B, I was too shy to address the driver in Gaelic; luckily, all this would change the second I reached Flòraidh's house.

Small and stout, with a knot of white hair and a surprisingly youthful face, Flòraidh gave me a brisk hug as soon as I entered the door. She addressed me confidently in Gaelic, and I replied back to her the same, apologizing for being late, explaining that I'd had a bit of difficulty finding a lift. 'Oh,

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tha thu fileanta! She replied in wonder, 'you're fluent.' Straight from the mouth of a native speaker, my confidence was restored. My driver, who had begun to edge conspicuously towards the door the second the conversation turned away from English, threw a quick 's e do bheatha' our way before bolting out the door.

The next three weeks passed like a dream. I was thrilled to be in a community where Gaelic was natural and alive. I was praised for my language skills, offered support by those who, admittedly at times, had trouble understanding what could inspire an American to come all the way to the Western shores of Scotland to learn the language in the first place.

I must admit, I have trouble answering this common question myself. What I can tell people is that learning Gaelic has changed me permanently. It has been said that, 'to have two languages is to have two souls'. Indeed I feel like the richness of my own life has easily been doubled. I have wonderful new friends I wouldn't speak a word of English to, deep connections that have been forged through the medium of Gaelic, and enough fluency in the language to go to Uist and converse comfortably with the islanders in their native tongue. The language doesn't live within the walls of the classroom for me. It's as alive as a fiddle tune and a cup of coffee, and will continue to be so, I hope, regardless of wherever I travel next. ❖

Kyle Anne Carey is the winner of this year's ACGA University Scholarship. After graduating in 2008 from Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, Kyle spent a year in Cape Breton on a Fulbright Scholarship learning Gaelic. This fall she will begin her second year of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig's intensive language course, An Cùrsa Comais.

Each year ACGA awards a scholarship to a full-time university student studying Gaelic. For more information on ACGA's University Scholarship program, go to www.acgamerica.org/financial-aid.

Flùraichean a' Choille

It saddens us to report the loss of two members of our American Gaelic community.

John Landin, husband of Anne Landin, died November 15 after a long battle with brain cancer.

Anne Leslie, wife of Francis Leslie, died October 19 of complications following hip surgery.

Membership Renewals

Membership renewal notices will be sent to all members in the next week or two. We will send these notices by email first. You can save us significant volunteer labor and postage costs if you can either renew quickly or let us know (by email) that you don't intend to renew.

For the few members who don't use email, we will, of course, send notices by ordinary mail.



Gaelcast

Podcasts anns a' Ghàidhlig
Podcasting in Scottish Gaelic

Programs filled with news, interviews and music in Scottish Gaelic broadcast over the Internet at www.gaelcast.com

Dè tha Dol?

Gaelic Events

Saturday December 4, 2010 — Cànan agus Òran, Toronto ON

All day Gaelic language and song workshop, with Catherine-Ann MacPhee, Oighrig Keough, and David Livingstone-Lowe. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Alumni Hall, 121 St. Joseph Street (Saint Michael's College, University of Toronto). \$40, free to U of T students, \$20 to non-U of T students and free to native speakers. For more information, call Lorrie at 905-844-4908 or email ruadh@idirect.com.

January 13 – January 30, 2011 — Celtic Connections, Glasgow Scotland

Celebrating the influence of Celtic music on cultures around the world.

<http://www.celticconnections.com/celtic2011>

Saturday March 5, 2011 — Cànan agus Òran, Toronto ON

All day Gaelic language and song workshop. Instructors TBA 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Alumni Hall, 121 St. Joseph Street (Saint Michael's College, University of Toronto). \$40, free to U of T students, \$20 to non-U of T students and free to native speakers. Discounts for early registration. For more information, call Lorrie at 905-844-4908 or email ruadh@idirect.com.

June 2 - June 5, 2011 — Annual ACGA Immersion Weekend, Colorado Springs CO

The immersion weekend is a unique opportunity for learners of Scottish Gaelic to come together with more advanced and native speakers in both a classroom setting and informal gatherings. Instructors and cost TBA.

<http://www.acgamerica.org>, <http://www.coloradocollege.edu/index.asp>

June 29 - July 2, 2011 — Celts in the Americas conference, St. FX University, Antigonish NS

Hosted by the Celtic Studies Department of St FX and the Centre for Cape Breton Studies at Cape Breton University this conference will focus on the history, culture, and literature of Celtic-speaking peoples in North and South America.

<http://www.mystfx.ca/academic/celtic-studies/conf2011.html>

July 3 - July 8, 2011 — Grandfather Mountain Song & Language Week, Banner Elk, NC

Annual ACGA Gaelic song and language week at Lees-McRae College, leading up to the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games and Mòd North Carolina. Instructors and cost TBA.

<http://www.acgamerica.org>, <http://www.lmc.edu/>

September 9 - September 11, 2010 — U.S. National Mòd, Ligonier PA.

The U.S. National Mòd is an annual celebration of Scottish Gaelic song, poetry and storytelling sponsored by ACGA. The Mòd takes place at the Ligonier Highland Games in Ligonier, PA, not far from Pittsburgh. The three-day event includes competitions, workshops, cèilidhs and a banquet. There is a write-in Mòd for those who are unable to attend in person.

<http://usmod.wordpress.com/> ❖

Directory of Gaelic Classes & Study Groups

Arizona

Flagstaff

Study Group
Richard Ferguson
fergusdubh@yahoo.com

Phoenix

Classes
Richard Smith
coindubh@yahoo.com

Tucson

Classes
Muriel Fisher
<http://www.murielofskye.com>

California

Sacramento Area

Classes
Donnie MacDonald
minchmusic@comcast.net

North Hollywood

Study Group
Eva Gordon
celt@celticartscenter.com

Colorado

Boulder

Study Group
Sue Hendrix
susan.hendrix@colorado.edu

Denver

Lessons
Glenn Wrightson
thegaelicguy@hotmail.com

Denver

Study Group
Rudy Ramsey
rudy@ramsisle.com

Florida

Jensen Beach

Treasure Coast Scots-Gaelic Study Group
gerhardherm@yahoo.com

Illinois

Springfield

Study Group
Bill McClain
fidheall@yahoo.com

Maryland

Chevy Chase

Song Group
Joan Weiss
sweiss@american.edu

Massachusetts

Sandwich

Classes - Thomas Leigh
www.mermaid-productions.com

Song Classes - Maggie Carchrie

www.mermaid-productions.com

New York

New York

Classes
New York Caledonian Club
<http://www.nycaledonian.org/studies.php>

North Carolina

Asheville

Study Group
Leigh McBride
lmcbride@unca.edu

Guilford

Classes (adv. beginner)
An Phillips
fiongeal@gmail.com

Triangle / Raleigh area

Classes (beginner)
An Phillips
fiongeal@yahoo.com

Ohio

Cincinnati

Study Group
Andrew MacAoidh Jergens
macaoidh@eos.net

Kent

Classes
Frances Acar
Classes by Skype
frances.acar@gmail.com

Oklahoma

Midwest City

Study Group
Barry Acker
bearachanse@yahoo.com

Tulsa

Study Group
Adrian Martin
almarti6527@gmail.com

Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh Area

Study Group

Harry Webb

hwebb@zoominternet.net

Texas

Hurst

Classes

David Gressett

jdgressett@hotmail.com

Fort Worth

Study Group

Jonquele Jones

jonquele@flash.net

Utah

Salt Lake City

Classes by Skype

Rachell Blessing

rachell-blessing@comcast.net

Virginia

Alexandria

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neacalban1@aol.com

Washington

Seattle

Classes & Study Groups

Slighe nan Gàidheal

<http://www.slighe.com>

Canada

New Brunswick

Fredericton

Classes

Atlanta Gaelic Academy

<http://www.gaelicacademy.ca>

Nova Scotia

Halifax

New Glasgow

Port Hawkesbury

Classes

Atlanta Gaelic Academy

<http://www.gaelicacademy.ca>

Sydney

Classes

Cape Breton Gaelic Society

<http://www.gaelicacademy.ca>

Ontario

Ottawa

Classes

Randaidh Waugh

comunnqaidhligottawa@rogers.com

Toronto

Classes

CLUINN

<http://www.torontogaelic.ca>

Québec

Montréal

Study Group

Linda Morrison

linda@lindamorrison.com

FOR MORE information about these resources and for information on long-distance courses, short courses and private instruction, see our web page at www.acgamerica.org/learn-gaelic/classes-and-distance-learning

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