

COMHAIRLE NA GÀIDHLIG BULLETIN, MARCH, 2010

This bulletin gives you an update of Comhairle na Gàidhlig – The Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia activities since our December 2009 Newsletter. We hope the New Year finds you well, and we welcome your feedback and participation in our planning and projects.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Our main areas of work continue to be in finding ways to increase our *Gàidhlig aig Baile* teaching capacity and on increasing awareness about Gaelic – both of which are aimed at increasing participation in Gaelic development throughout Nova Scotia. For the *Comhairle*, this work focuses on **building our committees** and connecting them through the community, so that we can develop effective plans that meet the community's needs. To this end, have been organizing open meetings, and exploring ways to improve our communications. We are also exploring the potential of an annual gathering for the Nova Scotian Gaelic Community, which will bring us together for work and play.

Through January and February, much of the office's time has been spent in making **presentations and writing applications** and proposals for funding for long-term and short-term projects. Until our office receives some manner of secured funding, a lot of time will be spent on finding funds to keep the office going - rather than on doing the work that is our mandate. The process is good, however, in that it requires that we make a lot of planning decisions, and this spurs us on to the next round of activity. We have had a very productive period and hope to receive finances for a few good projects which will provide employment opportunities in the community in this coming year.

The Administrative Officer has been doing **routine** maintenance of the website, updating its events calendar, membership list and attending to requests and communications through our E-mail account, which is always busy. The **next newsletter** will be coming out for May – Gaelic Awareness Month, and as ever, we welcome any submissions.

CORRESPONDENCES & OUTREACH

We are halfway through our program of making **presentations to Municipal Councils** throughout the Gaelic regions of the province. We have been very well received, and have been greeted in Gaelic more than once by the Municipal Councilors to whom we present. These have been informative for us, and developing personal connections within the governance environment that we're working has been encouraging. Through this project, we've been able to raise the Gaelic profile a little more as some local newspapers have covered our presentations.

Our presentation is an overview of our concerns, what we do, and an update on our plans over the next years. Already, as a result of one presentation, we have been invited to bring students and make a presentation at one school's Multicultural Day. To date, we've presented to the following County Councils: Victoria, Inverness, Richmond, Pictou, Guysborough district and Colchester, along with Port Hawkesbury, New Glasgow and the Town of Pictou. We have yet to present to Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Halifax Regional Municipality, Kings County, and Antigonish Town and County.

Like many other Gaelic enthusiasts, Directors from our Board, and members of *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* attended a reception hosted by the NS Office of Gaelic Affairs for the **Great Book of Gaelic** which will be on display throughout Nova Scotia in the coming months.

In January 2010, we **met with NS Economic and Rural Development**, NS Tourism, and NS Office of Gaelic Affairs regarding the on-going discussion of how *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* may receive secure

long-term funding. Jessica MacLennan, Comhairle President, Caroline Cameron, Administrative Officer, as well as Board members Susan Cameron and Barbara Sutherland-Foote represented the council. We were disappointed to learn that this avenue is not open for our consideration at this point, but we were encouraged in a direction that may bring all our objectives together in a very productive project.

We are now developing a proposal to host a **'Forum Series'**, which is a province-wide event that allows the Gaelic community to gather around the full variety of Gaelic music, dance, song and language arts. It a five-year program of planning with annual working conferences which would provide an arena to exchange and explore the ideas, and to celebrate the strengths of the Nova Scotia Gaelic community and private sector. The overall aim is to facilitate a discussion of the wide range of opportunities for Gaelic development and potential economic development. In doing so, we will strengthen the capacity of the cultural community to pursue these potentials. It will also provide some broader sense of policy and practice which can be put in place to support community initiative.

In this year, we will be hosting a pilot **'Mini-Forum'** in Gaelic Awareness Month on **May 29**. The event features a presentation, dinner and Céilidh. We'll keep you posted on this event, and we look forward to a great get-together.

SUMMER STUDENTS

We have submitted applications to the province and Service Canada for funding for summer student employment. Applicants should be students of Celtic Studies or have experience related to Gaelic language or culture. Submissions must include a cover letter, resumé and contact information of three references, and be post-marked or E-mailed by 6 p.m., March 29, 2010.

If successful in receiving funding, we will be hosting these positions in Inverness County, the site of the Administrative Office, but in this new world of 'connectivity' we will be able to consider applicants from across the province who have access to a computer, transport and high-speed internet.

Applicants must be returning full-time university students, and their work will include:

- assisting with administration, research, report-writing, and communications
- set-up and assistance at community Gaelic language and cultural events through the summer
- membership development through representation at events, and database updating

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

As a way to gain broader perspective and more participation in our Language Development and Education work, we have hosted two **open meetings** in Antigonish and Ainslie Glen, with a dozen and ten participants attending respectively. We've had very good discussions at each, with outcomes of a general task list and direction to move forward on communications with the Department of Education. Notes on both these meetings are **available on the website**. As well, all are welcome to join in this discussion, and we plan to develop a discussion board on our website, as a way to continue our work without the travel that is required for face-to-face meetings.

In our strategic planning session of November 2008, we discussed the challenge of finding the time and resources to enroll in intensive language training. Although the prospect is a long-term one, we think it may be the right time to set up an independent **Charitable Organization** which can receive tax-deductible donations as a way to raise substantial funds to support community language learning.

We had such great success with the **Tutor Training Workshops** in Ainslie Glen that we are seeking support to offer two more of these in the coming year with greater focus on developing language skills. We'll make these plans public as they develop.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION COMMITTEE

This committee has met a few times recently via telephone and in person. With Gaelic Awareness Month coming up shortly, there is a lot to think about. Following on our open meeting in May 2009 (notes available under 'Current Projects' at www.gaelic.ca), we are hosting a **media workshop** tentatively scheduled for **April 17**, and will integrate this with a workshop hosted by Communications Nova Scotia. There has been a lot of discussion over the last year about the need to work on this issue, and the *Comhairle* would like to move forward in discussion with all those interested.

This initiative fits into an overall plan of developing a **Communications Strategy** for the Gaelic community which can support the work and communications of all groups and individuals. If we receive financial support for this project, the strategy will be presented in a Promotions Package which will include a 'quick fact' sheets, a brochure, and lists of community groups and educational resources. There will also be a general vision of how to take best advantage of print and broadcast media, and social networking. We will also present key messages that we can all present in a strong and unified voice across the province to increase support and participation in Gaelic language and culture.

- *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* has gotten into the 'social networking' scene by producing a **Facebook** page which directs people to our website, and acts as a portal to a range of Gaelic resources.
- The *Comhairle na Gàidhlig* website, www.gaelic.ca, continues to be developed, and we encourage you to forward your Gaelic language and culture activities for posting on our calendar of events.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

We continue to work with the Office of Gaelic Affairs to try to **define where we can focus our energies** and resources in coordination with the work they undertake. Our aim in this dialogue is to reduce redundancy of effort, and establish a unique and independent role as we seek financial support from potential funders. We hope to establish a Memorandum of Understanding with the OGA as a basis for collaborative work.

Applications for funding have been submitted for the development of an **Events Handbook** to assist community groups in hosting events. There has also been on-going interest in developing a comprehensive inventory of resources across the Gaelic regions and basing our planning around these assets. We hope to receive support to carry out an **Asset Mapping Project** to support this work.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The *Comhairle* Executive forms this committee, which ensures that the Council operates in an effective and forthright manner. It oversaw the November review of our strategic plan, and its personnel subcommittee undertook an evaluation of staff. Current work is in preparation for hiring summer students, membership development, and of course, our **2010 Annual General Meeting on May 29**.

Comhairle na Gàidhlig - The Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia, is a non-profit organization promoting and developing Gaelic language and culture in Nova Scotia. Our Board of Directors meets quarterly, alternating between Cape Breton and mainland Nova Scotia. The Executive holds ten meetings per year, sometimes corresponding with the quarterly meetings. Anyone interested in addressing a topic with our committees or our Board is asked to please contact:

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