From Ohio to North Carolina to Cape Breton and Scotland, it’s been an active spring, summer and fall for the members of An Comunn Gàidhealach, America. ACGA’s week-long immersion in Gaelic language and song in Banner Elk, N.C., this July and the annual U.S. National Mòd in Ligonier, Pa., in September drew Scottish Gaelic learners and teachers from across North America and overseas.

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Pictured clockwise, Sherry Kreamer and Fiona Mackenzie at the U.S. National Mòd, waulkers at the Grandfather Mountain Highland Games, and a different type of “waulkers” taking lessons outdoors at ACGA’s immersion week.
Friends,

It's difficult to believe that another summer has come and gone. I don't know if that's because I am getting old, or because I was so busy!

Nine years or so ago, I walked into my first class here in Toronto and me without a word of Gaelic in my head! I was sure that I would be the oldest student in the class, but I couldn't have been more wrong. Instead, I discovered a community of people of all ages, with a real interest in keeping this beautiful language alive. I have also had the opportunity to travel because of Gaelic — Cape Breton, Ohio and North Carolina, and I hope one day, to Scotland itself.

I am looking forward to events like our immersion weekend in Texas next year, and perhaps meeting some of you. We had an election a while ago and we have a new ACGA board. I know that you will give them a warm welcome. Heather Sparling, Christopher Wilborn and Rachell Blessing have come on board, and Harry Webb has re-turned. A complete list of directors follows this letter.

We are ready and willing to work on your behalf, but we need two things - your ideas and your help. ACGA is a non-profit organization, and we depend on volunteers. At the same time, if you have an idea about anything that you would like as a member, send an email to me or anyone else on board.

Leis gach deagh-ghuidhe (with every good wish),

Janice Chan
ruadh@idirect.com

ACGA Executive 2006

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Duilleag 2
The 2006 elections offered a very good choice of candidates, and “new blood” was injected into the Board of Directors.

Meal-a-naidheachd to Chris Wilborn, Rachell Blessing, Heather Sparling, and incumbent Harry Webb. Tapadh leibh to those who cared enough to run but weren’t elected.

The only criticism of the election would be that it was held later than it should have been, and the current committee would like to rectify that while hopefully producing a slate of candidates as good its predecessor did. To that end the committee itself is forming earlier than it usually does. With veterans Mike MacKay and Glenn Wrightson volunteering to head it up, we’re almost home in terms of its composition.

We would still like to get at least one more volunteer to work on the election with us, someone who maybe doesn’t feel quite ready to commit to being on the Board but would like to help out ACGA in a limited, defined role.

It would be terrific if such a person would be willing to return the following year or two and take on more responsibilities while we recruit other new members.

Ideally, this committee would consist of 3 or 4 individuals, with one person cycling off and a newbie coming on each year.

We are also calling at this time for those wishing to run for Board to contact the committee. ACGA is a society run entirely by volunteers, and what does or doesn’t get done depends on those voluntary efforts, including being on the Board.

You don’t have to have attained any particular level of Gaelic to sit on the Board, and running for election is open to any member in good standing, i.e. your dues are current.

Directors are elected to a 3-year term and then can be re-elected a second time before having to step off the Board for at least one year. In 2007 two directors, Anne Landin and John Fraser, will not be able to run again as they will have finished 2 consecutive terms. Thus, this next election will be an opportunity to get more new people onto the Board.

(The more we can get fresh faces involved in this society — while finding new limited roles for those who have already done a lot for ACGA — the smoother we will be able to transition and build for the future.)

The Board of Directors generally meets 4 times a year, via teleconferencing. In order to work efficiently, the Board is divided into committees (Education, Publications, Outreach, Membership, Gaidhealtacht Support, and Administration) and members are expected to serve on at least one of these.

E-mail communication is frequently used on both the committee and Board levels. Anyone interested in running for Board or working on the Election Committee should contact Mike MacKay or Glenn Wrightson at mackay@progeny.net or thegaelicguy@hotmail.com.

Tiugainn a chàirdean, we need you to step up!

— ELECTION COMMITTEE 2007
2006 U.S. National Mòd Winners
Competitions Held in Ligonier, Pa., Sept. 9-11, 2006

Distance Learning Competition

Luchd-toiseachaidh (Beginners)

1. Leigh MacBride

Luchd-eadar-meadhanaich (Intermediate learners)

1. Brian Neveln
2. Cheryl Mitchell

Luchd-Adhartaich (Advanced learners)

1. Scott Morrison
2. Cam MacRae
3. Nancy Neveln

Fileantaich (Fluent speakers)

1. Glenn Wrightson

Aig a’ Mhòd (at the Mòd)

Ag Aithris Sgeulachd (Storytelling)

1. Michael Mackay
2. Liam Ó Caiside
3. Rudy Ramsey

Bàrdachd (Poetry Recitation)

1. Cathleen Mackay
2. Rudy Ramsey
3. Scott Morrison
4. Brenna Morrison

Co-ìharpaisean nan Òran (Song Competitions)

I. Òran Mall (Slow Song)

1. Frances Acar, Joan Weiss / Michael Mackay
2. Cheryl Mitchell / Rudy Ramsey
3. Ed Owen
4. Glenn Wrightson
5. Edward Brash

II. Oran-Obrach (Work Song)

1. Frances Acar / Glenn Wrightson
2. Joan Weiss / Edward Brash

III. Puirt-a-beul (Mouth Music)

1. Brenna Morrison / Michael Mackay
2. Rudy Ramsey
3. Ed Owen
4. Scott Morrison

IV. A’ Seinn Mar Aon (Unison Singing)

1. Liam Ó Caiside, Nick Freer
2. Joan Weiss, Shirley Weaver, David Weaver

V. Oran Luaidh (Waulking Song)

1. “The Virginians”
2. MacTalla

VI. The Song Finals

1. Frances Acar / Michael Mackay
2. Edward Brash, Rudy Ramsey
3. Ed Owen
4. Glenn Wrightson

Special Mòd Awards

♦ Marietta MacLeod Cuach
Presented by Donald F. MacDonald in memory of his wife to best over-all female singer: Frances Acar

♦ Herbert P. MacNeil Cuach
Presented by the Clan MacNeil to best over-all male singer: Michael Mackay

♦ Duais Sgoilearachd Sabhal Mor Ostaig
A scholarship presented by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Scotland’s Gaelic college on the Isle of Skye, for best combined score in prose and poetry in the Mail-in Mòd: Ann Dickson

♦ Duais Dhaibhidh Mhic Risnidh
The David MacRitchie Award for best recitation of a traditional tale in Gaelic: Michael Mackay

♦ Searrag-Ghlainne Mhic Dhomhnaill
Edinburgh Crystal decanter presented by Donald F. MacDonald of Edinburgh and North Carolina for best poetry recitation at the Mòd: Cathleen MacKay

♦ SCOTS Shield
Presented by the Scottish Club of the Twin States for best Waulking Song Demonstration: “The Virginians”

♦ Duais Leòdhais agus na Hearadh (Lewis & Harris Award)
Presented for the best performance of a song from the Lewis and Harris traditions: Michael Mackay

Duilleag 4
Agallamh: Coinneach Nilsen aig Naomh FX
An Interview with Ken Nilsen of Saint Francis Xavier University

Ken Nilsen has been head of the Celtic Studies Department at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia, for many years. Under his direction, the department has grown to include four full-time faculty members and now teaches Scottish Gaelic at four levels — it is the only accredited undergraduate school in North America to do so — as well as Irish-language classes and other courses on Celtic history and civilization.

In this interview he describes the Celtic Studies programs, courses and activities offered by “St. FX.”

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Cionn Ó Caiside

Liam: A Choimhnic, nach innis thu dhuinn beagan mu dheidhinn a’ prògram agus an roinnt gaibh fhéin agus ciamar a chaidh an stèidheadachd?

Cionn Ó Caiside

Liam: Agus aig ceithir iar aichean air an dràsda, nach eil?

Cionn Ó Caiside

Liam: A Choinnich, nach innis thu dhuinn beagan mu dheidhinn a phrògram agus an roinnt gaibh fhéin agus ciamar a chaidh an stèidheadachd?

Cionn Ó Caiside

Liam: Fealla-dhà, is dochaidh nó ri an seòrsa sin, naidheachdan, agus a h-uile seòrs’…

Cionn Ó Caiside

Liam: Creò rheumais gur e sinne a’ dèanamh a’ seo. A Choinnich, nach innis thu dhuinn beagan mu dheidhinn a phrògram agus an roinnt gaibh fhéin agus ciamar a chaidh an stèidheadachd?

Cionn Ó Caiside

Liam: A Choinnich, nach innis thu dhuinn beagan mu dheidhinn a phrògram agus an roinnt gaibh fhéin agus ciamar a chaidh an stèidheadachd?
Welcome Books for Children

Activity books introduce children to Scottish Gaelic language, culture

“Calum and Catriona’s Welcome to the Highlands,” by Michael Newton and Rhiannon Giddens, (Saorsa Media, Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006).

“Leughadh agus Sgrìobhadh” by Laurinda Nic Mhathain (Siol Cultural Enterprises, St. Andrew’s, Nova Scotia, 2006).

Texts and other materials for Scottish Gaelic learners used to be as hard to find as canned haggis in Kansas. When I began studying Gaelic 20 years ago, the only available textbook was Roderick Mackinnon’s “Teach Yourself Gaelic,” and that wasn’t easy to find. There were no Borders Superstores, no Amazon.com and no e-Bay (now a major source of used learning materials).

Since those dark days we’ve witnessed a revolution in Gaelic publishing, in particular when it comes to educational materials, thanks in large part to the development of the Internet and digital technology. Gaelic-language learning materials have proliferated in volume and in kind — from books to videos, audiotapes, CDs and DVDs to multimedia online courses for long-distance learners — as demand for information on the language and language courses has increased.

One group of learners, however, has been underrepresented, if not largely ignored, during this publishing boom: children. Although many children’s books have been published in Gaelic (a topic for another article), most language learning materials are aimed at adult learners.

That’s why two recently published activity books for children should be extremely welcome to those who want to introduce their children to the language and culture of the Scottish Gaels.

The first, “Calum and Catriona’s Welcome to the Highlands,” is aimed at children about 8-12 years old who have learned very little or no Gaelic but have an interest in the history and culture of the Scottish Highlands.

The second, “Leughadh agus Sgrìobhadh,” was written for children already studying Gaelic to help them learn to read and write in the language. Both use a mix of games, puzzles, pictures and stories designed to capture and keep the interest of children (and adults).

In “Calum and Catriona,” author Michael Newton and illustrator Rhiannon Giddens introduce the heritage of the Scottish Highlanders to contemporary children through the stories of Calum MacAlasdair and Catriona NicNèill, two children who emigrate from Scotland to North Carolina in the mid-18th Century. “We wanted to build a bridge of sorts between children in the United States today and their Scottish heritage,” said Newton, author of “A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World” and “We’re Indians Sure Enough.”

The book, which includes maps, pictures, word games, puzzles, name lists, “Scot-Libs” and folktales, introduces Gaelic vocabulary gradually, incorporating Gaelic words and phrases in games and activities as the reader progresses.

“Leughadh agus Sgrìobhadh” shares many features with “Calum and Catriona,” most notably word puzzles and games, but is aimed squarely at children already learning Gaelic — and at parents who have learned Gaelic and want to share it with their children. It is divided into 12 lessons, each beginning with a short story and followed by quizzes, puzzles and games and vocabulary lists. The book concludes with several crossword and word search puzzles.

The lessons originally were created by Laurinda Nic Mhathain of St. Andrew’s, Nova Scotia, for her two oldest children, who were doing similar exercises in English in school, to help teach them to read and write in Gaelic. (The local school in St. Andrew’s now has an active Gaelic youth group taught by Mòrag Burke).

The book has a simple and appealing design, with black and white illustrations by Kali Harris. It’s aimed at a “grade two” level, and a longer book with 24 exercises is planned, according to publisher Trueman Mac Mhathain.

But “Leughadh agus Sgrìobhadh” should interest adult learners, especially beginners, as well.

— Liam Ó Caiside

Duilleag 6
Air an 20mh dhen Lùnastal, dh’fhàg mi an taigh agam ann an Tennessee tràth sa mhadainn is shiubhal mi fad an latha air itealan is bus. Chaidh mi dhan àite far an robh Gàidhlig aig a’ chuid bu mhotha dhen daoine anns an naidheachd linn deug is cluinnear i fhathast san latha an-diugh.

An urrainn dhuibh ainm a’ bhàt’aiseig anns an dealbh seo a leughadh? (Uiill, ’s e “Caolas Silis” a th’ann.) Anns an àite seo chuala mi iomadh còmhradh is òran Gàidhlig. Anns an àite seo tha mòran daoine aig a bheil ainmean mar MacNèill, MacIllEathain, is MacChoinnich is tha na daoine ro phròiseil às an dualchas Albannach aca.

Càit’ an robh mi?

The above is what I posted at the end of August on my Gaelic blog “Còmhradh,” and if you guessed that I had been in Cape Breton, you were right. Earlier this year I was lucky enough to win an ACGA scholarship for the annual immersion week at the Gaelic College in St. Ann’s, Cape Breton, and what a week it was!

Along with about fifteen other students, I spent three hours each morning in grammar and conversation classes and another three hours each afternoon in literature and song classes. As an intermediate-level student, I had the joy of spending all day with Gaelic teacher, singer, and scholar Catriona Parsons, soaking up information on the structure and vocabulary of Gaelic along with a wealth of songs and stories. At mealtimes in the cafeteria we met up with another dozen or so students finishing up a six-week TIP course at the college, and we tried our best to honor their commitment to speak only Gaelic during meals.

Not wanting to travel all that distance for a one-week visit, I had arranged to stay on in Cape Breton for an additional week with my friend Anne Landin, the energy behind “Guthan Prìseil: The Cape Breton Gaelic Recordings Digitization Project” and recent publication, “Guthan Prìseil.” Anne showed me all over Cape Breton; we drove the Cabot Trail, visited the Highland Village, and attended a community cèilidh in Glendale. The highlight of my visit with Anne, however, was meeting a number of the Gaelic singers whose songs and stories she has been collecting. And what a fitting follow-up to my immersion week experience, to spend time with Maxie MacNeil, Peter Jack MacLean, and Rod C. and Helen MacNeil, tradition bearers in the truest sense of the word.

Tapadh leibh Gaelic College agus ACGA agus tapadh leat Annag!

Cam MacRae writes the blog “Còmhradh” with two friends who are also Gaelic learners, one in Virginia, the other on Mull. You can find them online at www.tirnamblog.com, where several dozen Gaelic-language blogs are collected.
Matthew and his friend were walking into the house when they saw something very strange.

“What is that?” asked Matthew’s friend. “Well” said Matthew to him, “that is my mother, she thinks she has a bit of Gaelic”.

Matthew’s friend said “oh well, I am not so sure about that but she has a sharp knife indeed!”

— Raonaid Blessing
New Gaelic Learners’ Group Meets in North Carolina

There is a new Scottish Gaelic class in Greensboro, North Carolina! The Guilford Gaelic Learners began last winter with 13 students and the first session has just been completed. Classes were based on a somewhat modified version of the TIP method being used in Scotland and Nova Scotia. TIP stands for Total Immersion Plus and is an approach being used by Fionnlagh M. Macleòid in Scotland to enable adult learners to reach a conversational fluency in Gaelic after 200 hours of classes. Classes are taught in the home and utilize hands on activities while speaking and learning.

ACGA member An Phillips organized the class which was taught by Anne Landin. The class met about every other Saturday except for a few postponements due to other events in the area.

After the first two sessions in a local library branch, the class rotated to various student’s homes. Many of the students already knew each other through Scottish country dancing group as well as their involvement in other Scottish activities in the Guilford County area, so there was plenty of fun and social interaction throughout the entire session.

A real bonus for the class was having as a frequent guest Catherine (Catriona nan Cloinne) MacLeod Tysinger, a native Gaelic speaker from Bru, Isle of Lewis.

Everyone was very enthusiastic and did extremely well. In addition to taking part in Gaelic conversation and activities involving doing things about the house and garden, the class learned songs and listened to stories.

Not being satisfied with conversation classes only, some bought Gaelic books and dictionaries, utilized Gaelic broadcasts and lessons through the computer and met informally each week to practice their conversational skills.

The group is holding another series of classes this fall. For more information, contact An Phillips, angelwyn@aol.com.

A portion of the Guilford group. Pictured are from left to right, John Gray, Leslie Dent, Catherine Tysinger, Johnathan Hinshaw, An Phillips, Dan Kinkade, Skeets Cahoon, Jerry and Sarah Cecil.

Éistibh ri Gaelcast

Prògram làn naidheachdan, agallamhan, ciùil agus spòrs a tha ’tha chraoladh air an Eadar-Lìon air feedh an t-saoghal –

Far a’ bheil sibhse!

Programs filled with news, interviews and music broadcast over the Internet — in Scottish Gaelic.

www.gaelcast.com
Directory of Gaelic Classes & Study Groups

A listing of groups and teachers known to ACGA. If you have information on study groups, classes or teachers you would like to submit, please contact the editor at liam@gaidheal.com

Alaska
Linda C. Hopkins
PO Box 1418
Palmer, Alaska 99645
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916-723-6320
Eva Gordon
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egclarsach@aol.com
David G. Williams
480 30th Street
San Francisco, Calif. 94131
Claudia Ward
22651 Equipoise Road
Monterey, Calif. 93940
408-373-5069
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Association of the Bay Area
(925) 283-8029
tris@speakgaelic.com

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Denver, Colo. 80027
303-698-9023
Kyri Comyn
5060 S. Washington
Englewood, Colo. 80110
303-781-0553
Rudy Ramsey
(Stella’s Coffeehouse Study Group)
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303-332-7643
Sue Hendrix
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813-980-0017

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info@mermaid-productions.com

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410-437-7090
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69 Burr Hill
Berlin, Md. 21811

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Menomonie, Wis. 54751

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3605 Blue Ridge Blvd.
Independence, Mo. 64052
816-737-5979

New Mexico
Kathy Lare
8715 Silvercrest Ct. NW
Albuquerque, N.M. 87114
505-890-6572

New Jersey/New York
New York Caledonian Club
Don Ross, instructor
Ripley-Grier Studios, 520 8th Avenue,
New York, N.Y.
For information, call (212) 662-1083
and leave a message for Priscilla
Campbell or Kitty Macmillan.
studies@nycaledonian.org

Brenda Steele
44 S. Main Street, Apt. 5K
Lodi, N.J. 07644
973-614-0848

Donald Mackinnon
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BOE 2T0, Canada
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Halifax, Nova Scotia B3L 4T8
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- David Gressett (2006-07)
- Harry Webb (2006-09)
- Anne Landin (2006-07)
- John Fraser (2006-07)
- Heath Sparling (2006-09)
- Rachell Blessing (2006-09)
- Christopher Wilborn (2006-09)
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