**Gaelic Children's Camp in several NS communities**

~ by John Gillis

Several Nova Scotian communities were involved during the past three weeks in hosting Gaelic Children's Camps. About forty or so children attended each week and participated in activities such as games, singing songs, dancing and crafts all done through the medium of Gaelic. The program was held in communities such as Christmas Island, Iona, and St. Andrew's, near Antigonish and the camp in West Mabou ran from July 24 to July 28 at the West Mabou Hall.

Thirteen people from the west coast of Scotland, including mothers who are educators and a grandmother also attended. There were opportunities for adults and parents to improve Gaelic language skills as well. "Establishing communities here in Nova Scotia has been fabulous. An estimated 50,000 Gaels emigrated from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to Nova Scotia between 1770 and 1840, establishing communities that mirrored their Scottish homes of origin in terms of dialect of Gaelic spoken, song traditions, music and kinship. A sense of Gaelic identity is strong on both sides of the ocean."

There's been so much commitment and there's a real sense of community spirit here. We hope these activities and links between families continue to grow," said MacIntyre.

For Morag MacLellan, a senior citizen and grandmother from Moidart, Scotland, this is her first visit to Nova Scotia, and she's here with her daughter and four grandchildren. MacLellan's first language is Gaelic. "If it's been such a wonderful experience all around. We've been very much welcomed into the communities and here in Mabou, and I've had the opportunity to visit and speak Gaelic with a number of people. Their Gaelic is very close to my own," she added. MacLellan says is encouraged by what she has seen in Nova Scotia and by the fact that learning opportunities in the schools have much improved in Scotland in recent decades.

"We're encouraged by the fact there has been support at the government level, but we're still challenged by an understanding of what Gaelic is. We've run these camps and programs for some time now, and we believe the next step may be to develop an after school program," said Bernadette (Campbell) MacEachen.

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The project is supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage and Highland Council, Scotland, as an initiative under a memorandum of understanding signed between the two areas to strengthen Gaelic language and culture on both sides of the Atlantic.