

“Let’s Learn Some Gaelic” (Part 3)

Scots Gaelic is the language that the first settlers of Pictou County spoke. The majority of the passengers on the Ship Hector, having come from the Highlands, spoke only Scots Gaelic and only few of them knew the King’s English.

When Rev. Thomas McCulloch came to Pictou in 1803, Gaelic was still spoken in Pictou by the Hector Settlers. McCulloch himself did not speak Gaelic. He, hailing from a small village called Fereneze near Glasgow Scotland, (The Lowlands) had not learned Gaelic, as English was the main language spoken in the Lowlands since the mid-1600s. There is a possibility, however, that McCulloch’s relatives, such as his parents and more possibly his grandparents, had known Scots Gaelic, but had discontinued using it due to the pressure of the British influence that encouraged the speaking of English in the Lowlands. McCulloch could have known some Gaelic, but was surely not fluent, as he was able to teach English to the Scots of Pictou when he erected the Pictou Academy.

In the last article, we learned:

Dè an t-ainm a th’ ort? [jay un ten-um a horsht]      What is your name?  
S’mise ... [your name]      [smee-sha...]      My name is...

Here are some more fun and basic phrases in Scots Gaelic.

Madainn mhath! [mat-een vah]      Good morning!  
Feasgar math! [Fehs-ker mah]      Good evening!

The Scots Gaelic language is a very guttural language, meaning that there are a lot of dark throat sounds. Similar to languages like German, Gaelic has sounds like kkh as if you had something caught in your throat. Give it a try with some of these funny sounding Gaelic phrases!

Chan eil mi ’tuigsinn [kkha-nyail mee uh tuhk-shin]      I don’t understand  
Oidhche mhath! [eye-kkhuh vah]      Good night!

To learn more about Scots Gaelic and the Gaelic Society and Culture in Nova Scotia, visit: <https://www.novascotia.com/explore/culture/celtic-gaelic-culture> or keep up with the next publication article of “Let’s Learn Some Gaelic.” It is up to YOU to keep the interest of the Scots Gaelic language alive! Nach bruidhinn sinn Gàidhlig! (Let’s speak Gaelic!)