

# REBUILDING THE CELTIC LANGUAGES

The Celtic League is pleased to give advance publicity to a very important new book, which draws together major studies on the six Celtic languages and presents them along with case study proposals and recommendations in the context of the work of noted U.S. linguist Joshua Fishman. The book is the inspiration of its Editor, Diarmuid O'Neill, who commissioned the studies from experts in each country and who collaborated on the Breton study. It is the result of work extending back almost two years and is due for publication early in 2003.

While it is not that usual to publish conclusions in such length prior to publication of the full studies, the Celtic League, mindful of its commitment to the Celtic languages in its constitution, hopes that publication of the draft recommendations in this special multiple issue of CARN will generate interest in and orders for the book. There is of course a particular significance for the League in the production in one publication of material and recommendations on all six Celtic languages.

The recommendations were discussed at the League AGM in 2002. It was felt that full discussion on the many aspects was primarily a matter for the language organisations in the Celtic countries. The book may also hopefully serve as a catalyst for more co-operation between the Celtic language bodies. The last Inter Celtic Language Conference was held in Rath Carn (Éire) over 25 years ago. Is it not time to hold another to promote more structured co-operation and with this book and its recommendations as a major item for discussion?

## CASE STUDY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CELTIC LANGUAGES

Many of the case study proposals and recommendations refer to the various stages of the RLS or Reversing Language Shift system as developed by Joshua Fishman. A summary of this system is therefore provided below to facilitate an understanding of it for non linguists.

The Eight Stages of RLS as reconstructed by Joshua Fishman

### STAGES OF REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT: SEVERITY OF INTERGENERATIONAL DISLOCATION

(Read / implement from the bottom up)

Below is a detailed list of the 8 stage GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) first published by Joshua Fishman in 1991 in his internationally recognised book "Reversing Language Shift". Some terms may not be clear to readers seeing this termi-

nology for the first time. "Xish" refers to the authentic local language in question such as Irish in Ireland, Cornish in Cornwall or Breton in Brittany. "Yish" refers to the intrusive outside language in question; English in Ireland, French in Brittany and so on. 4B schools are schools, which primarily use the outside language such as English or French and are under the control of Yish staff also. 4A schools are schools in which the local language is the main medium of instruction and is administered under Xish control. In Ireland the Gaelscoileanna schools would be classified as type 4A schools because their medium of instruction is Irish and Irish speakers administer them. Likewise in Brittany the Diwan, Div Yezh and Dihun schools would also be classified as type 4A schools because the medium of instruction is Breton and Breton speakers administer them. Those schools in Brittany that use French for both the medium of instruction and administration would be classified as type 4B schools.

### *Rebuilding The Celtic Languages: Reversing Language Shift In The Celtic Countries.*

*Edited by Diarmuid O'Neill, Foreword  
by Joshua Fishman*

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### *II. RLS to transcend diglossia, subsequent to its attainment.*

1. Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels.
2. Local/regional mass media and governmental services.
3. The local/regional (i.e. non neighbourhood) work sphere, both between Xmen and Ymen.
- 4B. Public schools for Xish children, offering some instruction via Xish, but substantially under Yish curricular and staffing control.
- 4A. Schools in lieu of compulsory education and substantially under Xish curricular and staffing control.

### *RLS to attain diglossia (assuming prior ideological clarification)*

5. Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.
6. The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood; the basis of mother tongue transmission.
7. Cultural interaction in Xish primarily involving the community based older generation.
8. Reconstructing Xish and adult acquisition of XSL.

# ALBA

## AN GHÀIDHLIG / GAELIC

By Lilly Adams

### Gaelicisation Incorporating the Principles of Reversing Language Shift

This policy of Gaelicisation should ultimately entail:

I: The Gaelicisation of those areas which were until recently Gaelic speaking.

II: The establishment of new Gaelic speaking communities and other Gaelic cultural activities to a much more limited extent in the traditionally English speaking lowlands with initial focus on urban centres. (as the Scottish Lowlands have identified primarily with English and Scots as their primary speeches since the retreat of Gaelic from the Lowlands in the period between 1300-1500)

### GAELIC SCOTLAND AND LOWLAND SCOTLAND

Scotland is by no means unique among European nations in possessing two linguistic traditions. In this case the traditionally Gaelic speaking Highlands as opposed to the Scots and English speaking Lowlands. However this fact has a bearing on this case study. As Lowlanders do not really identify with Gaelic (at least not any more for Gaelic was spoken throughout the Lowlands until about 1400-1500) this case study limits the proposal for the revernacularisation of Scottish-Gaelic to the traditional Gaedhealtachd or regions of the Highland which were until recently Gaelic speaking and rejects the concept of trying to impose Gaelic on those Scots who do not identify with it. This case study does however advocate that in certain cases new urban Gaedhealtachd and more Gaelic cultural activities not to mention RLS support initiatives be established in cities such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Dumfries and others. The reason being that it is absolutely critical for Gaelic to utilise the language enthusiasts, learners and even fluent Gaelic speakers to be found in these urban centres. The utilisation of urban Gaelic enthusiasts takes on ever increasing urgency as the western isles and west coast of Scotland – the traditional Gaedhealtachd continues to contract and lose speakers to English.

### Initial Proposals for RLS initiatives for Scottish Gaelic; Stages 8-5

Because Scottish Gaelic still possesses a significant body of native speakers (66,000

in the 1991 census) in all age groups it does not suffer from the severe dislocation that certain other minority languages find it so difficult to overcome. The vast majority of native Gaelic speakers are however to be



found in the extreme northwest of the country and are clearly too distant from the urban south and even much of the Highlands to provide backup support for RLS initiatives in these two areas. Clearly the burden of Gaelic RLS in Scotland is going to fall mainly though not entirely on new learners of the language.

### Proposed Stages of RLS in Scotland

Stage 8 of the GIDS scale involves the reconstruction of Xish and bringing it to adults through courses under Xish supervision. In the case of Scottish Gaelic this task might be carried out in the future by the proposed Gaelic Language Board to be structured along the lines of the Welsh Language Board. Pending its establishment groups such as Comunn na Gàidhlig, CLI (Comann an Luchd Ionnsachaidh) and others could conceivably extend classes for adults to a far greater extent than is presently the case – provided they receive the necessary funding for such a large scale task.

Stage 7 of the GIDS scale involves the cultural interaction of older native speakers with

younger learners. As stated because Scotland still has a significant body of native speakers this is a stage, which could be tackled with reasonable hope of success.

Stage 6. We now come to the most difficult stage for any RLS movement to surmount even for stronger languages such as Welsh and Basque – The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood use of Xish (Gaelic): the basis of mother tongue transmission. The success of RLS fully depends on a language attaining this stage. In the case of Scottish Gaelic such communities remain intact in the northwest but for Gaelic to regain a healthy status it must re-establish new Gaelic speaking communities much more widely in the

Highlands and also in the larger towns to avoid the old pitfall of being perceived merely as a language of uncouth northerners. Again the burden will probably fall primarily on learners but native speakers could well play an important role in launching new Gaedhealtachd.

Stage 5 involves the establishment of schools for literacy acquisition for both old and young but not in place of English medium schools. This means instruction either on the weekend or after hours in regular schools.

### Secondary stages of RLS in Scotland

Stage 4B involves the use of schools where Yish (English) is the medium of instruction but Xish (Gaelic) is introduced as a subject. In Scotland this would serve to disseminate much more widely at least a limited knowledge of the language. Again only a national body such as the proposed Gaelic Language Board could really introduce Gaelic into the schools on a national scale.

Stage 4A involves the establishment of Xish (Gaelic) medium schools and units



staffed and administered by Xish (Gaelic speakers). This process has already begun in Scotland. Gaelic medium schools are to be found in the western Gaedhealtachd as well as in Glasgow and Gaelic medium units are operating in other cities. The growth in Gaelic medium preschool and primary students has been particularly robust. Again it is a process that must be coordinated on a much wider scale nationally and at present there isn't really a body in Scotland, which could undertake such a task.

Stage 3 involves greater use of Gaelic in the work place both by Gaelic speakers and English speakers. Ultimately legislation of some form is usually required to enforce observance of the use of minority languages in the work place. Hence the establishment of Secure Status For Gaelic becomes that much more important.

Stage 2 entails the establishment of local/regional mass media and governmental services in Xish (Gaelic). Gaelic has already made progress here to a certain extent in that it is present both on the BBC television and radio services for Scotland. In public administration progress has been more limited but again future legislation could bolster the position of Gaelic by requiring services to be provided in the language and making Gaelic admissible in all Scottish courts for example.

Stage 1 involves education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels. With Gaelic it must be remembered that higher order functions in Gaelic were dispensed in the medieval Scottish kingdom before English began to displace Gaelic in the late 13th century. In today's world this stage implies the use of Gaelic as a medium of instruction in university not merely a subject, much more extensive use at the managerial level in the private sector and in government administration at both local and national levels. This would imply that Gaelic would have to be recognised as an official language (nationality) on a par with English.

*Below are listed some rather specific RLS tools or props not mentioned above.*

I.) The establishment of a new organisation to assist young families who wish to raise their children in Gaelic. The proposed Gaelic Language Board could prove to be the answer. Existing language agencies are already overtaxed and such a new body whose mandate is the establishment of new Gaelic speaking communities would signify an unequivocal commitment and link to stage 6 efforts.

II.) The mounting of publicity campaign aimed at young parents to raise their children in Gaelic and to use Gaelic at home. The Welsh Language Board is presently doing so and what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Again priority should initially be

given to western Scotland but followed shortly thereafter by the urban south. (Also stage 6)

III) Learning aids and counselling must be provided to young families who opt to raise their children in Gaelic. Booklets on parenting skills in Gaelic, poems, games for children in Gaelic, prayers, riddles, songs, reading readiness in Gaelic, etc. Such services and supplies so necessary in any serious attempt to rebuild family and community life in Gaelic could best be provided by the new organisation recommended above – to coordinate the rebuilding of Gaelic language use at stage 6.

IV.) Grand parenting surrogates and day care in Gaelic free of charge are other crucial services which must be made available all over Scotland while there is still time to utilise the still significant number of older Gaelic speakers. Such a service might be coordinated by Comunn na Gàidhlig or organisations such as CLI because of their links with adult learners or even a newly appointed government body to compliment the existing voluntary organisations but however linkages are established with older native Gaelic speakers they provide valuable backup for stage 6 efforts in general.

V) The establishment of Gaelic speaking youth groups ultimately in every community.

Youth groups in Gaelic are not merely back-up for stage 6 but are an actual part of the process of providing a Gaelic speaking environment for youth outside of school.

VI) The establishment of a Gaelic medium University. It cannot be overstressed how important it is to have such an institution whether in western Scotland or in the south – where most of the learners and Gaelic enthusiasts are to be found. Efforts to expand Gaelic at university level fall within the range of stage 1 and hence are greatly dependent on the success of earlier efforts at the stage 4 and stage 6 levels.

VII.) The establishment of a daily newspaper in the Gaelic language perhaps subsidised by the new Scottish ministry of Culture (stage 2)

VIII) A publicity campaign could be mounted to attract Gaelic speakers in England, the US and elsewhere back to the new Gaelic speaking communities in Scotland. Financial and political constraints are a consideration here it is true but efforts by Gaelic language bodies to attract Gaelic speakers back to western Scotland and the Gaelic speaking communities in the urban south might in fact have some success in increasing the Gaelic speaking population. (stage 6)

# ALBA NUADH / NOVA SCOTIA

## AN GHÀIDHLIG / GAELIC

By Lilly Adams

### Gaelicisation Incorporating The Principles of Reversing Language Shift

This policy of Gaelicisation should ultimately entail:

I: The Gaelicisation of those areas that were until fairly recently Gaelic speaking.

II: The establishment of new Gaelic speaking communities and other Gaelic cultural activities in urban areas such as Halifax and other towns which lie in traditionally English speaking areas of Nova Scotia but which contain many Gaelic language enthusiasts and learners as well as some fluent speakers.

### THE BACKGROUND: SCOTTISH-GAELIC IN NOVA SCOTIA PAST AND PRESENT

Despite it's present fragile status in Nova Scotia with fluent speakers numbering under a thousand Scottish-Gaelic was spoken by at least 80,000 people there in the 1880's.

Indeed because of the very large numbers of Irish and Scottish immigrants into nineteenth century Canada both Irish-Gaelic and Scottish-Gaelic were clearly spoken by several hundred thousand people in Canada at the time Canada was formed in 1867. The reason that Gaelic yielded ground in Nova Scotia only gradually to English was that entire Highland communities came over to Nova Scotia (and other parts of Canada) hence community use of the language arrived intact and stayed intact for many generations. However gradually the economic and social dominance of English in Canadian society began to bear down on Gaelic and the language began to retreat in Nova Scotia falling back on Cape Breton where it retained it's strength for several generations longer than elsewhere in the province. By 1901 the number of Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia had fallen to roughly 50,000 and by 1931 to 30,842. The 1951 figure was 6,789 and in 1991 it had fallen to 542.

# DARING TO BE OPTIMISTIC: PROSPECTS FOR RLS IN NOVA SCOTIA ADOPTION OF REALISTIC STRATEGY PROPOSALS FOR GAELIC IN NOVA SCOTIA

Despite the precariousness of Gaelic in Nova Scotia let us quote Joshua Fishman; "there is no language for which nothing can be done". There are many languages in the world today, which are not properly documented, and with only a handful of native speakers remaining (particularly with many North American Native languages) which are in danger of not only falling into disuse but of not even being recorded for posterity. Beothuk, the Native language of Newfoundland disappeared without record in the 1800's as the Native population was literally exterminated by Europeans.

Hence there are worse scenarios than Nova Scotia Gaelic. Those tackling the issue of RLS in Nova Scotia must give careful thought however to the best approach as to how to direct scarce financial and human resources.

## *The initial focus of RLS in Nova Scotia: the first decade. 2005 - 2015*

Clearly the severely weakened status of Gaelic in Nova Scotia dictates that initial RLS efforts must focus on the lower order functions of the eight-stage GIDS scale. (stages 8-5) for a period of years before the higher functions (stages 4-1) can be realistically tackled.

That means beginning to work with adults and helping more and more acquire speaking ability in Gaelic (stage 8). Community cultural interaction involving both older native speakers and younger learners. (stage 7). Most critical of all and the most difficult to achieve even for much stronger languages such as Welsh, Basque, Catalan etc. is the establishment of the intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood: the basis of mother tongue transmission. In short the establishment of new Gaelic speaking communities upon which all further progress in RLS depends. (stage 6)

Stage 5 entails the establishment of schools for literacy acquisition for both the old and young but not in place of the existing English medium schools – that comes later.

## *The secondary focus of RLS in Nova Scotia: the second decade 2015-2025*

The first 4 stages are necessary before Gaelic can make headway with the higher order functions of language use. (the dates quoted for the commencement of RLS are hypothetical but do indicate that any RLS program will involve many years before bearing fruit).

Stage 4B involves making use of Yish

(English) medium schools for the introduction of Xish (Gaelic) into the curriculum as a subject only. It's not a maximalist achievement but it does help to disseminate greater knowledge of Xish (Gaelic).

Stage 4A involves the establishment of Xish (Gaelic) medium schools staffed by Xish (Gaelic speaking) staff.

Stage 3 involves tackling use of Gaelic in the work sphere. For Gaelic in Nova Scotia this is clearly a goal many years off in the future but never the less an important one because most people will not learn a language which they perceive as having no economic value. Legislation (in the distant future) may be required to promote Gaelic in the work place.

Stage 2 involves the promotion of local/regional mass media and governmental services in Xish (Gaelic). Here Gaelic

already has a foothold already as there are minor publications in the province in Gaelic but clearly down the road issues such as both a Gaelic medium television and radio service would have to be tackled to assist and serve the Gaelic speaking population. For the same reason a daily newspaper in Gaelic would be required to serve Gaelic speakers.

Last but certainly not least is Stage 1, which deals with the use of Xish (Gaelic) in the highest spheres of education, the work sphere, mass media and government operations at higher and nationwide levels.

This would entail Gaelic as a medium of instruction in university (preferably an entirely Gaelic medium university), Gaelic used at upper managerial levels, Gaelic present in all forms of mass media and in government administration at both local and provincial levels. Clearly this would entail official status for Gaelic in Nova Scotia on an equal footing with English. Suffice to say all the stage 1 functions mentioned have never been dispensed by Gaelic in Nova Scotia so their introduction in these fields in the future would be quite revolutionary yet necessary for successful Gaelic RLS to take root in Nova Scotia.

# BREIZH

## BREZHONEG / BRETON

*By Diarmuid O'Neill and Marcel Texier of the ICDBL*



*Marcel Texier, eloquent Breton nationalist  
and my guide and translator in Brittany.*

## PROPOSALS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE NOMINOË STUDY (Feb 2000)

## PROPOSALS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY AND HOW THEY FIT INTO THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT

### Aims and Goals:

Primarily to restore Breton as the chief language of the community in western Brittany and to strengthen it's use in eastern Brittany also. Another aim is hopefully to illustrate how Gallo the other traditional vernacular of Brittany may be strengthened in eastern Brittany.

### The Main Thrust of the Proposals:

- i.) A Two Stage Policy or Approach to Bretonisation For Brittany
- ii) Aid for Gallo



A two-stage policy of Bretonisation. The first stage is a policy of Bretonisation in Breizh Izel or western Brittany beginning in 2003 or thereabouts so as not to overextend the limited financial resources of the Breton language bodies such as Ofis ar Brezhoneg, Diwan, Skol Uhel ar Vro, the Cultural Council of Brittany etc. and also in order to immediately address the issue of the declining Breton speaking population in Breizh Izel whose Breton speaking ability must be used as soon as possible. The second stage would be the extension of a policy of Bretonisation to eastern Brittany beginning about 2010. In eastern Brittany however the position of Gallo must also be taken into account and while Breton speakers and new Breton speaking communities in eastern Brittany must be aided so must Gallo speakers and cultural organisations. Just what form of aid to Gallo is most effective and appropriate is a matter for the Gallo cultural organisations and the Regional and Cultural Councils of Brittany. Likely this would entail greater media in Gallo and even schools where Gallo is the medium of instruction.

### **Bretonisation Incorporating The Principles of Reversing Language Shift**

This policy of Bretonisation should ultimately entail:

1.) The establishment of new Breton speaking communities in each canton, (initially the cantons of western Brittany but later to be followed by the cantons and towns of eastern Brittany). New Breton speaking communities are the most central tenet of stage 6.

2.) The continued establishment of new Breton medium schools in each canton by the Diwan, Div Yezh and Dihun organisations with priority being given to Breizh Izel during the next decade. This corresponds to the Stage 4 level but is necessary for stage 6 to take root.

3.) The establishment of a new organisation to assist young families who wish to raise their children in Breton. Existing language agencies are already overtaxed and such a new body whose mandate is the establishment of new Breton speaking communities would signify an unequivocal commitment and link to stage 6 efforts.

4.) The mounting of a publicity campaign aimed at young parents to raise their children in Breton and to use Breton at home. The Welsh Language Board is presently doing so and what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Again priority should initially be given to western Brittany. (Also stage 6)

5.) Learning aids and counselling must be provided to young families who opt to raise their children in Breton. Booklets on parent-



*Breton at School – A Right for our Children*

ing skills in Breton, poems, games for children in Breton, prayers, riddles, songs, reading readiness in Breton, etc. Such services and supplies so necessary in any serious attempt to rebuild family and community life in Breton could best be provided by the new organisation recommended above – to coordinate the rebuilding of Breton language use at stage 6.

6.) Grand parenting and babysitting in Breton free of charge is another crucial course which must be made available all over western Brittany while there is still time to utilise the large numbers of older Breton speakers. Such a service might be coordinated by Skol an Emsav because of its links with adult learners or even Ofis ar Brezhoneg but however linkages are established with older native Breton speakers they provide valuable backup for stage 6 efforts in general.

7.) The expansion of the Dudi Breton speaking youth groups to every community. Youth groups in Breton are not merely backup for stage 6 but are an actual part of the process of providing a Breton speaking environment for youth outside of school.

8.) The establishment of a Breton medium University. Diwan aspires to establish one at Carhaix/Karaez in 2005 but it cannot be overstressed how important it is to have such an institution whether at Carhaix or anywhere else. Efforts to expand Breton at University level fall within the range of stage 1 and hence are greatly dependent on the success of earlier efforts at the stage 4 and stage 6 levels.

9.) The expansion of the K.E.A.V. organisation to every community so that Breton language learners everywhere in Brittany have access to summer facilities where they

can practice their Breton. (this is at the stage 5 level but again is necessary backup).

10.) The establishment of a daily newspaper in the Breton language perhaps subsidised by the Cultural Council of Brittany. (stage 2)

11.) The continued expansion of Breton on radio and television. Télé Breizh which began broadcasts on September 1, 2000 mainly in Breton for 17 hours a day (although with a fair amount of French language broadcasts and also programmes from other Celtic countries) was a major victory in the battle to save the Breton language. An increase in Breton language broadcasts on other television and radio stations should continue and can help reinforce the position of the language in the media. (stage 2)

12.) A policy of Bretonisation must be extended to the workplace. Ofis ar Brezhoneg is already assisting organisations, municipalities and private companies which ask for guidance regarding terminology in the Breton language. The project by André Lavanant to launch new Breton speaking business enterprises is a good example of what must be undertaken. (stage 3)

13.) The campaign to secure official status for the Breton language in all five departments of Brittany must be increased and intensified. Only then can Breton language use be extended within the civil service at all levels of administration whether on a municipal or a departmental or a regional level. Indeed all of the efforts and recommendations mentioned above will be fortified when official status for Breton becomes a reality. Unfortunately language is a political issue and long-term efforts to strengthen Breton cannot in reality ignore the legal status of the language (or lack thereof)

14.) The planned establishment of more classes for adults in more Breton communities to help expand adult literacy in Breton. At present about 9,000 adults across Brittany are enrolled in Breton language classes. (In Wales there are about 23,000) The organisations which are presently offering lessons in Breton to adults are - Skol an Emsav, Ar Falz, An Oaled, Spered ar Yezh, Roudour, Stumdi and many others. A more coordinated and united effort by these organisations to bring Breton to a greater segment of the adult population in Brittany could be mounted. (Stages 8 & 5)

15.) A publicity campaign be mounted to attract Breton speakers in Paris, northern France and Belgium back to the new Breton speaking communities in Brittany. Financial and political constraints are a consideration here it is true but efforts by Breton language agencies to attract Breton speakers back to western Brittany and the new Breton speaking communities might well have some success in increasing the Breton speaking population. (stage 6)



*Monique and Marc Blaise in Brussels, founders of the ICDBL in 1975.  
They are a credit to Belgium.*

## CYMRU

### CYMRAEG / WELSH

*By Colin Williams of Cardiff University and the Welsh Language Board*

#### PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE OF WELSH

##### *Several priorities in terms of policy initiatives*

(N.B. policies should be accompanied by the specification of realisable targets within a reasonable time-scale)

- Economic development and job creation programmes a priority to tackle the fragmentation of Welsh-speaking communities.
- Holistic language planning which ties language goals to other socio-economic currents and regional development initiatives.
- Welsh for Adults national plan and learning programme geared towards integrational immersion.
- A national strategic plan for bilingual skills in education which will bring bilingual education into mainstream provision, and build on a linguistically integrated education and training system for Wales
- The promotion of bi and tri-lingualism to make Wales an 'intelligent region'.

- To build on the partial success of consumer's rights to bilingual services in several sectors of the economy it is necessary to ensure that workers enjoy similar rights.
- Revised Welsh Language Act to establish the statutory framework within which the pressing concerns of economic change, local property market fluctuations and migration issues may be addressed.
- Extending Welsh Language Board language schemes to appropriate elements within the private sector
- The National Assembly for Wales to formulate, adopt and revise a comprehensive language plan for its internal procedural and administrative operation.
- The National Assembly for Wales to develop a national language policy in order to realise its stated goal of creating a bilingual nation.
- Develop a national language plan for young people and youth culture
- Small and medium-sized enterprises to develop bilingual schemes and working practices
- Promote I.T. developments which offer bilingual choice as a norm rather than as an add-on extra.

## CYMRU

### CYMRAEG / WELSH IN ARGENTINA

*By Pawl Birt  
of Ottawa University*

#### *Survival and Revival Strategies*

The centenary of the Welsh Colony in 1965 was a turning point in the decline of Welsh cultural activity and identity. It brought a renewal of direct contacts between Wales and Patagonia and heralded the beginning of visits by groups from Wales and a greater realisation in Wales that the Welsh language had survived in Argentina and that many of the Welsh-Argentineans were again keen to promote their language and culture. One outcome of the celebrations was the renewal of the Eisteddfod albeit in a bilingual form and to celebrate their Welshness albeit in a separate Argentine version. In the following years Chubut increasingly became a tourist venue for Argentines from the capital, and the Welsh renewal of its cultural roots led to the now familiar outcrop of 'casas de te' where a traditional Welsh tea could be experienced in the beautifully decorated older houses in Gaiman and other Welsh centres to the sound of recorded Welsh choir music. Welsh culture in Patagonia was in some senses in danger of



becoming folklorised as a tiny bastion of non-Hispanic Argentina, where the architecture, names and cultural events like the Eisteddfod were reminiscent of other ethnic colonies in the country whose roots went back to the early years of the Argentine state. This was not the whole picture, however, since the Welsh language although long since banished as a living language on the streets of Rawson and Trelew, was still the natural means of communication in many of the chacras in the Valley and in the Andes. The Eisteddfod although now thoroughly bilingual aimed to involve both Welsh and Spanish speakers in choral and literary competitions that reflected their linguistic traditions<sup>1</sup>. The contribution of the Welsh to the early history of Chubut was also given greater prominence in street names, statues and commemorative plaques, one of the most outstanding being the statue celebrating the contribution of *la galesa* or the Welsh woman to the early evolution of the colony, and erected in Puerto Madryn in 1965.

It had become clear that by the early 1990s, the language was mainly restricted to those born before c1950, and indeed the attitude towards the language was of paramount importance in its actual use. A younger speaker of the language would now generally only use the language with older members of the family and community if at all, but hardly ever with his or her contemporaries. Experience at school was also a defining factor given that by now friendships and romantic bonds would be almost always undertaken through the medium of Spanish. Even the generation, whose education goes back to the 1960s and were in some measure able to speak Welsh, tended to reject that language when involved in peer-group activities. The language was tending to be associated with backwardness, the older-generation and chapels. Yet, another very dynamic cultural initiative has taken place since the 1990s within the context of changing attitudes.

Given that the Welsh language is still spoken in many homesteads in the Valley (especially the town of Gaiman, and the rural districts along the Valley) as well as Trevelin in the Andes, including the chacras of Cwm Hyfryd, a survey was conducted by Dr Robert Owen Jones in these areas to quantify the vitality of Welsh and the interest and feasibility of setting in place in those still traditionally Welsh districts opportunities to teach Welsh as a second language. The Survey published in 1996, led to the first teachers of Welsh being sent from Wales to Patagonia the following year. The present author was privileged to be able to attend the meeting to welcome the first teacher who had been appointed to teach Welsh in the Andean region of Esquel and Trevelin in 1997 and witnessed the clear enthusiasm of the local people most of whom present did not speak Welsh. Three or more teachers are now sent on an annual or bi-annual basis to the

three centres of Trelew, Gaiman and the Andes (Cwm Hyfryd).

Their purpose is not only to provide Welsh-language classes to adults and young people but also in some measure to stimulate interest and participation in other traditional aspects of Welsh culture that are associated with the language, including the choirs, modern Welsh youth culture, and occasionally chapel activities. Another paramount objective is the training of local tutors who can take over the work of teaching the language. A spin-off from this project has been the creation of Ysgolion Meithrin (Welsh-medium nursery schools) for those of pre-school age, and closely based on the model that has been very successfully developed in Wales. This allows very young children to learn Welsh in a natural educative setting although usually their parents are non-Welsh speaking. Funding for the scheme to send Welsh teachers came originally from The Welsh Office and was taken over subsequently by The National Assembly for Wales and was encouraged and supported by the then First Minister of the Welsh Assembly, Mr Rhodri Morgan. The scheme has attempted to provide classes to people of all ages. Recently, it has emerged that there is an increase in the numbers of classes for young children but that the adult classes have tended to stabilise. During 2001, 700 people attended classes in Welsh in Patagonia, with 149 hours of teaching per week.

It is probably too early still to come to any clear conclusions about the future of Welsh language teaching in Patagonia on the basis of the work achieved since the launching of this scheme. Other ethnic language schemes exist in Argentina, including Basque, Catalan, Yiddish and German. Apart from

such languages as German and Italian, they do not represent clearly defined communities in the country. Italian was a major language in Argentina in the early twentieth century, and German, and Swiss-German continues to be spoken and in some cases taught in areas of their settlement. What sets Welsh apart from these is that it has a presence in clearly specific areas along the eastern Chubut valley and the Andean area around Esquel and Trevelin where it enjoyed majority status in rural settings until c1950. Welsh has now become minoritised in all these areas and the survival of the language in Patagonia now depends on a wide range of conditions.

The introduction of the Welsh-teaching scheme reflects a clear desire on the part of Welsh-Argentines to see their linguistic heritage as part of their identity as Argentines and that the language should be taught as part of the education of those who live in settlements that were founded by the Welsh. This, of course, should eventually lead to a debate about the place of heritage languages in post-colonial contexts. It is unlikely that many of those who are promoting the teaching of Welsh in Patagonia expect or even desire a utopian return to a (largely mythic) Welsh-speaking Patagonia. Spanish is accepted as the national state language. At the present moment there are still appreciable numbers of adult Welsh speakers in Chubut; a considerable number of these for varying reasons have not transmitted the language to their children but have welcomed the scheme to teach Welsh as a second language for their grandchildren now that attitudes have changed again towards the Welsh language. In the meantime, several hundred children are being introduced to the Welsh language through classes. At this point it is unclear to



*Patagonian Eisteddfod in Chubut, 2002*

what extent some of these children will become fully proficient and thereby ensure a continuum of Welsh-speaking during the 21st century. Many of the students have reached a high level of proficiency, one of whom has won the 'Learner of the Year at the National Eisteddfod of Wales in 2001. Will a situation be created whereby each succeeding generation will (as a matter of parental choice) learn the language in a school setting rather than from the parents? This is probably the least attractive option as a language maintenance strategy, but maybe the most probable.

Over the past few years contacts between Wales and the Welsh communities in Chubut have grown rapidly. Greater travel possibilities have made Patagonia a tourist venue for some Welsh speakers. This has meant that some of the Welsh communities, especially Gaiman have become very visually Welsh and in this sense the tourist attraction is not only aimed at the smaller Welsh market but to the many tourists from Buenos Aires who come to Chubut. The Welsh language is sometimes used for hotel names; businesses and bilingual (and trilingual!) menus are available in some of the tea-shops and hotels of Gaiman, Trevelin, and Esquel. On a much less superficial level, the interaction between Wales and Chubut works on a variety of levels, apart from the British Council run project to bring Welsh language teachers to Patagonia. Such organisations as Cymdeithas Cymru-Ariannin (The Wales Argentina Association) has for many years been instrumental in promoting links between Welsh speakers in Wales and Patagonia. With the arrival of new technologies other channels have been successfully explored. One of the most exciting is 'Dolen Ysgolion' (School Link) which seeks to foster links between Welsh-medium schools in Wales and schools in Chubut where there is a sense of Welsh heritage. This allows children to communicate by electronic mail between the two countries, and it is hoped it will lead to the exchange of teachers in the future. The Eisteddfod in Chubut has now gone from strength to strength and although no longer predominantly Welsh in language, it has become adopted by people of all origins in the region and is recognised as the oldest cultural festival in Chubut Province and thus an essential part of Welsh culture has become an integral part of the culture of Chubut. In Welsh-speaking Wales, the existence of the Welsh in Patagonia has become more familiar in recent years due to various television and radio programmes that have been devoted to life in modern day Patagonia. In Chubut as well, local radio stations in both Trelew and Esquel have broadcast programmes of Welsh music and interviews. Live web-broadcasts of the Chubut Eisteddfod have been made. A wide range of web material exists devoted to the Welsh in Patagonia.

## Conclusions

In a period where centralised states may be beginning to be transformed in a way we cannot for the moment imagine clearly, and reorganising themselves into new communities, it might be the right time to reappraise how regions will function as part of such new realignments. The discussion of such matters has a long history in western Europe and may now be reaching a point where, at last, the integral elements of the linguistic mosaic that are a feature of many European countries will not be seen as retrograde and threatening to central powers. Such debates have yet to be formulated in many of the constituent countries of the Americas, including Argentina. Ultimately, despite the healthy rediscovery of links between Wales and Patagonia, it must be a question for those in Chubut how they wish to promote Welsh and secure its survival. The danger is that Welshness will become folklorised in a centralised state that sees linguistic diversity within its borders as either a threat or more frequently now as a harmless relic of an earlier stage in the state's history. A Welsh-Argentinean is no less Argentine when he or she speaks Welsh (and Spanish); thus let us

hope that this enclave of Celtic speech in the southern hemisphere will thrive as Argentina recreates itself. The major danger to the new found status of the Welsh language and culture in Chubut is the perhaps inevitable yet not imminent loss of the mother tongue Welsh-Argentine speakers. If the provincial authorities in Chubut ever decide on a policy of promoting the living Celtic language first introduced there in 1865, then perhaps part of the research work in the policy construction would be to examine the experiences of other post-colonial societies like Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Clearly much a policy could hardly ignore other heritage languages in the region especially those of the indigenous peoples. Much depends finally on the attitude of speakers of Welsh in Patagonia and those of Welsh origin who may not have been brought up in the language. The links with Wales are also of paramount importance but rather than depend upon a mindset that sees a reversal of language shift in a historical linguistic territory, it might be better to think in terms of a language acquisition development programme that respects the unity and diversity of the region and the country.

ÉIRE

## AN GHAEILGE /IRISH PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF IRISH IN THE IRISH REPUBLIC

By Donall Ó Riagáin, Former Director of the  
European Bureau of Lesser-Used Languages

*What needs to be done?*

*Clearly very much!*

*The following would seem to be  
the top priorities:*

1. The commitment of the State and of the Irish language movement to serious language planning has to be the top priority. As far back as 1968, Fishman proposed to the Irish Government that "a central research and evaluation unit be established to serve all programmes for teaching, utilising, or strengthening Irish, regardless of what government department might be in charge of them"<sup>1</sup>. Over thirty years later, this recommendation has lost none of its validity. Such a unit might best be located in the Department for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and should have responsibility for all aspects of language planning. Realistically, it stands a better chance of being set up and functioning well under the

ambit of Foras na Gaeilge. What is important is that it has teeth. Any efforts at language planning over the past thirty years have been dogged by the fact that they were the work of agencies [e.g. Bord na Gaeilge], which had no power to see that they were implemented. Efficiency and cost-effectiveness are now accepted as sine qua non in modern business and public administration. The stop/go policies of previous decades and the frittering away of scarce resources on poorly thought out projects could lead to the abandonment of the language restoration as public policy.

Ó Donnchadha, in his masterly work on the Irish language revival<sup>2</sup>, argues that no Irish government, since the establishment of the state, was fully committed to the language revival. Few observers would disagree with

1. Quoted in "The Irish and Irish" J. Fishman, *Reversing Language Shift*, Clevedon, 1991.

2. *Castar an Taoide* – Diarmuid Ó Donnchadha [Baile Átha Cliath, 1995]



him. But this leads to the crucial question, "How realistic is it in a post-modern society, with a market driven economy, to expect a government to give this kind of commitment?" "Sadly, the truthful answer is, "Not at all!" But it is realistic and reasonable to expect a government to create conditions where the language may develop, where citizens who chose to use it may do so without obstruction or undue inconvenience and where future generations can acquire it. And this is where language planning moves to centre stage. No administration can be "language neutral". If the administration uses one language almost exclusively, it is *inter alia* favouring that language and discriminating against others. This approach is underpinned by the growing awareness in international forums, especially in Europe, that language rights are an integral part of human rights.

Voluntary organisations must face the fact that the embracing of language planning could entail painful re-evaluation by them of their work and objectives. A previous Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, Michael D. Higgins, TD, set up a small commission to consider and assess the role, structure and efficiency of the various voluntary Irish language organisations that receive financial assistance from the state. Its report, published in 1997<sup>3</sup>, contained the recommendation that "the funding system for voluntary organisations should be project-based, with definite targets, which would be properly costed". Little has been done since to implement this recommendation.

2. Secondly, both government and the voluntary movement must face the fact that the maintenance and development of a community, whose first languages is Irish, must become a clear priority. Language reproduction [i.e. intergenerational transmission] is normally one of the greatest challenges facing lesser-used language communities<sup>4</sup>. Any language, not used as L1 by some community, however small, can hardly be considered to be alive in any meaningful sense. Much of the revival effort to date has aimed at giving everyone at least some ability in Irish. The cúpla focal (couple of words) strategy may well have contributed to the popularity of Irish but did little to create a new generation of primary bilinguals. The use of Irish in the Gaeltacht continues to decline. Indeed census data would suggest that more children are being brought up with Irish as mother tongue outside the Gaeltacht than in it. A lot of Irish is used in network situations e.g. in networks which have grown up around Gaelscoileanna. But little has been done to create new Irish speaking communities in the

normal geographical sense. Efforts were made with varying degrees of success – Gaeltacht Park in Whitehall, Dublin, in the twenties, and Shaw Road in Belfast, Glanmire in Cork and Naas in Co. Kildare in the sixties. The most successful of these is undoubtedly the Belfast one. With soaring house prices in most of Ireland, such experiments as those mentioned, without official support can hardly make any real impact.



*Micheal D Higgins, Previous Minister for the Arts, Culture and Gaeltacht who commissioned a Report on the Irish Language Organisations.*

One of the great paradoxes of the Irish language movement is the fact that many of the people who devoted time, money and boundless effort to the organisation of Irish classes and cultural events, went home and spoke English to their spouses and children. They never could bring themselves to face the "real nexus of intergenerational mother tongue transmission", as Fishman so eloquently described it<sup>5</sup>. A shift in emphasis towards the development of new Irish speaking communities would not only add a new and very real impetus to the demand for Irish medium services but could also arrest and reverse language decline in traditional Gaeltacht areas. Nothing succeeds like success!

3. Thirdly, there needs to be a root and branch review of the teaching of Irish. The results being obtained are not commensurate with the time, effort and dedication invested. It must be conceded that in recent years, revisions of the syllabuses have brought about improvements by shifting from formalised teaching, with emphasis on grammar and literacy skills, to a more functional-notional approach. Nevertheless Irish in the education system is under pressure. When it ceased to be a compulsory subject in state examinations in 1973 it was retained as a required subject on the curriculum of schools in receipt of state funds. But the pattern of recent examination results in Irish – which show a growing percentage of pupils failing

or not taking the paper – together with a number of recent policy decisions suggest that this line is itself showing signs of erosion.<sup>6</sup> School curricula are under increasing pressure with the need to study subject such as computer science and continental languages. The booming economy has attracted, and probably will continue to attract, immigrants from abroad, whose children do not know a word of Irish when entering school in

Ireland and who may have a low motivation for learning the language. If the time allocated to the teaching of Irish is not used efficiently, external and hostile pressures could become irresistible and it could be reduced to being one of many optional subjects. Language activists have been loath to open up a debate on Irish in the education system lest the position of the language be undermined and teachers have tended to be sensitive about their professional skills coming under critical review. A redefinition of aims, attainment levels and methodology, based on positive terms of reference, could only be of benefit to all. Any revision of syllabuses would need to be followed through with the necessary backup for teachers in the form of adequate in-service training and the provision

of teaching aids and materials.

4. The provision of resources for corpus planning and its implementation. A new English-Irish Dictionary has been commissioned. However, there is no Irish equivalent of Roget's Thesaurus nor are there modern Irish-French or Irish-German dictionaries. Glossaries of new terminology need to be provided on a regular basis and made readily available on the Internet.

What future has Irish? Can the David of Irish survive against the Goliath of English? Or, as the distinguished Canadian sociolinguist, William Mackey, commented<sup>6</sup>, "Irish is one of those ancient European tongues which for centuries has succeeded in surviving in a nation without a state and has faced the prospect of dying in a state without a nation". There are many reasons to be pessimistic but then pessimists do not change society. The odds facing Irish are formidable which have made it an uneven struggle and

3. *Treo 2000* - Dublin, 1997

4. Evidence of this can be found in *Euro mosaic – the Production and Reproduction of the Minority Language Groups in the European Union*, a report prepared for and published by the European Commission [Luxembourg, 1996]

5. "Language Policy and Social Reproduction – Ireland 1893-1993" – Pádraig Ó Riagáin, Oxford, 1997

6. *Language Policy in Canada and Ireland: a comparative study* – W.F. Mackey [Baile Átha Cliath, 1982]

one, which has not been won – not yet. The revival of Irish was not the success for which the early Gaelic Leaguers hoped. But neither has it been a failure. Irish did not die. Today, it is not the language of demoralised peasants as it was at the end of the 19th century but rather that of self-confident, well-educated young people young people who within a decade have made the Irish economy the fastest growing in the EU. It is the language of a nation whose population is rapidly growing, especially in the Republic where it has now reached 3.8 million. It is the lan-

guage of a country where the figures for immigration now double those for emigration. It is used to a greater or lesser extent in practically all domains of life – home, school, public administration, church, TV, radio, social and cultural life. It has a thriving literature. It has recognition at European level. Even for many for know little or no Irish, it is the language of the heart. An Irish patriot of the early 20th century, Terence Mac Sweeney, observed, "We have not survived the centuries to be conquered now". Of that, many feel sure.

## PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS DEALING WITH IRELAND AS A WHOLE – BOTH THE IRISH REPUBLIC AND NORTHERN IRELAND

*By D. O'Neill*

First and foremost, the chief goal of Irish language efforts and of this study must be stated unequivocally so that there is no confusion or misinterpretation about this issue, which is so important to the Irish people. The goal of the vast majority of those working on behalf of the Irish language is to restore it to full health as one of the two main daily vernaculars of Ireland. It is acknowledged here that this goal has not been pursued vigorously enough in the past by the Irish Government and it's main language body Bord na Gaeilge now Foras na Gaeilge (with an all Ireland mandate). It must be stated clearly that the past and present policy of the Irish Government and of Foras na Gaeilge of Irish by Choice for those who wish it is failing to make headway against the endless tide of Anglicisation which is still ongoing in our new globalistic world. It is a policy which is not up to the task of making Irish as commonly spoken in Carlow, Cork, Meath, Dublin, Tyrone and Louth as it was in 1820. On the other hand it is recognised that much has been achieved by the combined efforts of the Irish Government and the language bodies. For example we now have Raidió na Gaeltachta, Raidió na Life, Telefís na Gaeilge increased Irish medium schooling, greater publishing in Irish and other things for which we may thank the Irish Government, Bord na Gaeilge and others. What we do not have is a solid commitment to a living Irish language by the Irish Government and I'm sorry to say – Foras na Gaeilge. The Irish Language Bill has already been effectively scuttled by the bureaucracy before it had a chance to get off the ground. Only about 5% of primary children in the south and 1% of primary children in the north are presently enrolled in the Irish medi-

um Gaelscoileanna – despite the fact that 30% of parents in the Irish Republic have indicated they would like to see their children enrolled in Gaelscoileanna. (clearly many more Catholic parents in the north and increasing numbers of Protestant parents are also in favour of Irish medium education for their children).

Are these actions the actions of a government and establishment which is behind Irish? Stalling on the Irish Language Bill and then producing proposals that depend on a minister for proper implementation? Halfhearted commitment to Irish medium education? It sounds like a harsh commentary but these are the hard questions which the Irish public must start asking.

We must be clear about the fact that the existing establishment in Dublin, government economic and religious while not opposed to Irish is not in reality behind the language. This study is reluctantly forced to reject the position of the Irish Government and it's language agencies Foras na Gaeilge and others of damage control and what amounts to a sometimes impatient death bed vigil beside Irish and embraces a policy of growth and expansion for the Irish language. That means new Irish speaking communities, expansion of Irish medium education to far higher levels (at least 60%), far more media in Irish, greater efforts to win hearts and minds back to the daily usage of Irish and perhaps an even greater sea change – a change of heart on the part of those working for the language whether in the government or voluntary sector not to mention a change of heart by society at large even perhaps of the Dublin bureaucracy. All this does not mean that there is no hope of change. Foras na Gaeilge a relatively new body may yet

prove to be a strong catalyst for Irish in the future provided it adopts some major policy changes. In addition circumstances for Irish are more favourable than in the past – more people literate in Irish than ever before, more fluent speakers (in the range of 350,000 – 500,000 in both the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland), more media and publishing in Irish. In short Irish is within striking distance of re-establishing itself as widely spoken community language, if the opportunity is taken up.

The change of heart mentioned entails an acceptance of the Irish language again back into Irish life. Back into Irish families, Irish communities, Irish businesses, Irish religious institutions and all other facets of Irish life on a daily basis. The Irish people want to see Irish as a living language again – spoken in banks, at sports matches, at work, in supermarkets, in the street and everywhere else.

It should be mentioned that these goals by and large apply also to the Catholic and Nationalist population of Northern Ireland (850,000 or so persons) and one could not even begin to apply them there without strong backing from Dublin (from both government and voluntary agencies). More and more Protestants in the north have taken an interest in the Irish language but it must be understood that their primary loyalty is to the English language and culture as well as to Ulster Scots and these loyalties must be safeguarded legally regardless of what the future political status of Northern Ireland may be.

It must also be understood that when we say expansion and growth for the Irish language in Ireland we do not mean Québec style assaults on the English language (and consequent self inflicted economic damage related to the flight of US and other foreign investment). The English language is critical for the well being of the Irish economy and maintenance of cultural links with the English-speaking world. However this study does reject the present consensus that Irish is largely a thing of the past and that nothing can be done to make it a daily vernacular again.

One of the most pressing issues facing the Irish language movement is gaining a clear and unequivocal picture of the challenges facing it in its efforts to rebuild an Irish speaking Ireland. Perhaps the most pressing issue before the Irish language movement is the challenge of actually taking those steps then deemed necessary and following through on them until the goal is reached – until Ireland is Irish speaking once again. When we say Irish speaking we mean Irish speaking in a bilingual manner with English for no one would suggest that the world's most important language – English be discarded. In speaking to individuals from the various language organisations such as Gaelscoileanna, Foras na Gaeilge, Conradh na Gaeilge, the Ultach Trust as well as Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge one does not



get the impression that the Irish Government is seen as an adversary by them in the manner that the French Government clearly is an adversary to the Breton language movement or that the British Government has traditionally been an adversary to the Celtic languages and to lesser extent still is (though with a slightly better track record than the French or Spanish governments). However the Irish Government is generally seen as being on the sidelines – not directly involved in the battle to save Irish – but yet, strangely not opposed to efforts on behalf of Irish. To a certain extent this ideological positioning of the Irish Government mirrors Irish public opinion and that Irish public being referred to has used English not Irish, as its first language for 160 years now. Not since about 1830-1840 when some 4 million or so souls spoke and/or understood Irish has that language really been a dominant force in the daily life of the nation as a whole. In short part of the problem may be that the Irish people have simply become too accustomed to using English. Hence part of the challenge for language activists may be in breaking down psychological barriers to the acceptance of Irish as a daily vehicle of speech. People do on the surface accept Irish as something desirable that their children learn in Gaelscoileanna or elsewhere. People do accept Irish as part of their heritage and consider it appropriate that Irish as such be the first official language as well as visible everywhere in public signage but it's not easy to accept a different language for daily usage when it was last spoken by ones' great grandparents or others even further back in the family constellation.

Any serious effort to mount a more widespread and thoroughgoing strategy on behalf of Irish in both parts of Ireland must take into account various factors. These are funding, legislative, public relations and political in nature. Firstly greater funding and staffing for the organisations and their branches that promote Irish. Although only about 7% of primary school children in the Irish Republic are presently educated in Irish medium schools (the 7% figure includes Gaeltacht children) opinion surveys carried out by the Gaelscoileanna organisation itself indicate that something like about 30% or more of parents would enrol their children in an Irish medium school if they had the opportunity. So clearly here is an opportunity that is not being addressed. Problems facing the Gaelscoileanna organisation are severe understaffing, under funding, extreme difficulty in providing satisfactory accommodation and a problem with the transition from the primary to the secondary level of education (also experienced by Diwan the Breton medium education system) due to the fact that primary institutions are more widely distributed geographically than the less numerous secondary ones. This is a problem, which clearly might recede with an expansion in the

number of both primary and secondary Irish medium schools, which is in fact continuing to occur. Gaelscoileanna like others in the language movement do not perceive the government as an adversary although clearly some ministers have been more supportive of the organisation than others.

Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge which is the coordinating body for voluntary organisations sees in the growth of a large new cohort of Irish speaking children and adolescents a window of opportunity which must not be missed. In this they are entirely correct. Opinions diverge on how to carry Irish usage from the school to the community at large but Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge has for many years been trying to stimulate usage of Irish in the community at large and at present is sponsoring a program of the use of Irish by various communities. These include Galway, Cork, Carlow, Waterford, Mullingar and soon Dublin. The program for Galway for example is entitled "*Gallimh le Gaeilge*" or "Galway with Irish". It aims to promote Irish in the community both in the private sector and the public sector (more signage in Irish, more announcements in Irish, more Irish speaking staff, etc.) and is on a voluntary basis. Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge however regards its' budget of only half a million pounds and staff of only 10 as inadequate for mounting more effective and efficient projects in the future as well as the more efficient administration of existing projects. So clearly more funding and more staff are an issue on the agenda for the Irish language movement.

Also on the agenda of Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge are improvements to the legislative status of the Irish language.

They are lobbying to have Irish recognised as an official working language of the European Union, albeit as a second tier language such as Dutch or Portuguese, (English and French having been long recognised as the two main working languages of the European Union). Within Ireland itself Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge lobbies for greater provision of services for Irish speakers sometimes unsuccessfully (as when it recently failed to persuade the government to guarantee the availability of Irish speaking psychiatric workers for the mentally ill in Irish speaking areas). One recent success by Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge has been its' efforts to get the existing Irish Language Bill into legislation. While this has not yet happened the government is clearly drawing closer to enactment of the bill which would guarantee by law certain things which are not guaranteed at present such as access to service in Irish at all levels of interaction with the government.

With Foras na Gaeilge the new all Ireland body to promote Irish throughout the island there are some potential jurisdictional problems as how to enact new programs in both the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland simultaneously while the former remains under a totally different national jurisdiction. There exists also the issue of quite simply standing up for the Irish language in Northern Ireland where traditionally the Irish language has been suppressed by both the British Government and the local Unionist administration. The Irish Government does not have a good track record of sticking up for the rights of the Catholic/Nationalist community in Northern Ireland so is it realistic to expect different behaviour from the



*The Editor, Diarmuid O'Neill with Brigitte Lécuyer in Brittany*

same entity on behalf of the Irish language in the Ulster of the future? Perhaps not, but let us be optimistic and hope that a more affirmative approach to Irish language reform in the north is taken perhaps through greater cooperation between the Dublin Government and Nationalist political parties and language bodies in the north. The well-known enthusiasm of the Nationalist community in Ulster for the Irish language is a resource which cannot afford to go untapped in the battle to save Irish. It should be stated that the same right of access to Irish and services in Irish must eventually become the norm in Ulster as well as in the south. It is often forgotten that Irish remained widely spoken in Ulster well into the late 1800's and as late as 1820 was probably a majority language among

Ulster Catholics and was also spoken by a fair few Ulster Protestants.

Another subject that must be looked at or rather revisited is the question of proposals put forth on behalf of Irish in the recent past. Joshua Fishman who acted as a consultant to the Irish Government in the late 1960's and early 1970's was party to proposals from the Irish Language Institute that the Irish Government of the day rejected. Another serious proposal, which was rejected, was the Community Projects concept of the early 1980's - the "Scéimanna Pobail". Put forward by Bord na Gaeilge this included the establishment of new Irish speaking communities in the Dublin area and elsewhere (initially two in the Dublin area). Although the official approach of the Irish Government and its'

representatives in the language movement remains Irish through choice and building Irish within the community the consensus among most sociolinguists today is closer to the position taken by Joshua Fishman. That is that the demographic concentration of speakers of the said language must take place at the home-family-neighbourhood-community level (stage 6 in the Fishman GIDS scale) before the language can advance to higher order functions such as greater use in the media, workplace and civil service etc.

Below are listed some very specific proposals which are geared not towards artificial and half hearted revival efforts but real growth and expanded usage of the Irish language in everyday life.

## SPECIFIC PROPOSALS AND SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDIES AND HOW THEY FIT INTO THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT FOR IRISH

### Aims and Goals:

Primarily to restore Irish as the chief language of the community in a bilingual capacity with English (this study by no means advocates that English be dropped by any individual) among Ireland's 5.7 million people while at the same while at the same respecting the position of the waning Ulster Scots dialect as the one of the main speeches of Ulster's 850,000 strong Unionist community.

### The Main Thrust of the Proposals:

A two-stage policy of Gaelicisation. The first stage is a policy of Gaelicisation in the Gaeltacht and the larger cities and towns beginning in 2004 or thereabouts so as not to overextend the limited financial resources of the Irish language bodies such as Foras na Gaeilge, Gaelscoileanna, Udaras na Gaeltachta, Conradh na Gaeilge, the Ultach Trust, Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge and also in order to immediately address the issue of the declining Irish speaking population in the western Gaeltachtaí whose Irish speaking ability must be utilized. The second stage would be the extension of a policy of Gaelicisation to the smaller towns and rural areas of Ireland at large beginning about 2010. In Northern Ireland however the position of both English and Ulster Scots must also be taken into account

### Gaelicisation Incorporating The Principles of Reversing Language Shift

The critically needed policy of Gaelicisation should ultimately entail the proposals below (drawing on analyses by Donall Ó Riagáin, Aodán Mac Póilin and Diarmuid O'Neill)

1.) The establishment of a central research and evaluation unit be established to serve all programs for teaching, utilising or strengthening Irish regardless of what government department might be in charge of them.

2.) Both government and voluntary language organisations must accept once and for all that the creation of communities with Irish as the first language has to become a clear priority and their new guiding ideology. The old delusion of Irish by choice must finally be cast out. Irish by choice amounts to the same thing as Latin by choice - or in other words - nothing in the end.

3.) There must be a review of the teaching of Irish with closer attention and scrutiny paid to what works and what does not work when it comes to creating new and fluent young Irish speakers.

4.) The provision of resources for corpus planning and its implementation. Irish-French and Irish-German dictionaries are required as are glossaries of new terminology.

5.) The immediate establishment of an organisation either with or without government support to coordinate the establishment of new Irish speaking communities in both urban and rural areas. It should be remembered that new Irish speaking communities have already been established in Belfast and Cork while several attempts have been made to establish a Dublin Gaeltacht. These ventures must be expanded upon and more critically serve as the model for other urban and rural Irish speaking communities that would eventually serve as the foundation for a new Irish speaking Ireland.

6.) The establishment of new Irish speaking communities in each urban and rural community in Ireland both north and south, (initially the larger towns but later to be followed by the rural communities and smaller towns of Ireland). New Irish speaking communities are the most central tenet of stage 6.

7.) The development of strategies to halt the continuing decline of the language in the Irish speaking areas (Gaeltachtaí) and to extend and bring back the family and daily use of the language within all the Gaeltacht regions.



8.) The continued establishment of new Irish schools in every community by the Gaelscoileanna and Gaeloiliúnt organisations to the point where at least 50% to 60% (and eventually a much higher figure) of primary children are using Irish as their primary school language. This corresponds to the Stage 4 level but is necessary for stage 6 to take root.

9.) The establishment of a new organisation to assist young families who wish to raise their children in Irish. Existing language agencies are already overtaxed and such a new body whose mandate is the establishment of new Irish speaking communities would signify an unequivocal commitment and link to stage 6 efforts.

10.) The mounting of a publicity campaign aimed at young parents to raise their children in Irish and to use Irish at home. The Welsh Language Board is presently doing so and what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Again priority should initially be given to the larger urban centres such as Dublin, Belfast, Derry, Cork, Limerick and Galway etc. (also stage 6)

11.) Learning aids and counselling must be provided to young families who opt to raise their children in Irish. Booklets on parenting skills in Irish, poems, games for children in Irish, prayers, riddles, songs, reading readiness in Irish, etc. Such services and supplies so necessary in any serious attempt to rebuild family and community life in Irish could best be provided by the new organisation recommended above – to coordinate the rebuilding of Irish language use at stage 6.

12.) Grand parenting surrogates and babysitting in Irish free of charge are other crucial services which must be made available all over Ireland so the large numbers of middle aged Irish speakers can be utilised. Such a service might be coordinated by organisations such as Foras na Gaeilge, the Ultach Trust or Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge but however linkages are established with older native and second language Irish speakers they provide valuable backup for stage 6 efforts in general.

13.) The expansion of Irish speaking youth groups to every community. Youth groups in Irish are not merely backup for stage 6 but are an actual part of the process of providing a Irish-speaking environment for youth outside of school.

14.) The establishment of an Irish medium University. Fairly extensive courses are already taught through Irish at Galway University and at others but the failure to establish an actual Irish language university during the first 80 years of independence is symbolic of a hesitancy to make a real commitment to the language. Other nationalities

such as the Estonians, Latvians, Basques, Catalans, the Jews in Palestine in the 1920's and others seized their first opportunity to establish universities in the national vernacular when political circumstance finally allowed. Efforts to expand Irish at University level fall within the range of stage 1 and hence are greatly dependent on the success of earlier efforts at the stage 4 and stage 6 levels.

15.) The establishment of a daily national newspaper in the Irish language perhaps subsidised by Foras na Gaeilge. Either a new Irish language daily could be established in Dublin or the existing weeklies *An Lá* in Belfast and *Foinse* in Galway could be upgraded to dailies but it is probably best that they continue to serve local interests. Any such Irish language daily should be offered free of charge to all organisations and families that request it (stage 2)

16.) The continued expansion of Irish on radio and television. This should include BBC radio and television in the North. *Telefís na Gaeilge* which began broadcasts four years ago was a major victory in the battle to save the Irish language but the amount

18.) The campaign to secure official status for the Irish language in the European Union and in Northern Ireland must be increased and intensified. Only then can Irish language use be extended within the civil service at all levels of administration whether on a parish, municipal, county, regional or national level in both north and south. Indeed all of the efforts and recommendations mentioned above will be fortified when official status for Irish becomes a reality in these sectors. Unfortunately language is a political issue and long-term efforts to strengthen Irish cannot in reality ignore the legal status of the language (or lack thereof – recall the fate of the recent language bill for Irish)

19.) The planned establishment of more classes for adults in more Irish communities to help expand adult literacy in Irish. The figure in Ireland is not insignificant but needs to grow in order to have greater impact. At present about 8,500 adults across Brittany are enrolled in Breton language classes. (In Wales there are about 23,000) The organisations which are presently offering lessons in Irish to adults are affiliated with Foras na Gaeilge, *Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge*, *Conradh na Gaeilge* and the *Ultach Trust*. A



*Lá or Foinse to become a daily?*

of Irish language time on it needs to be greatly increased. An increase in Irish language broadcasts on other television and radio stations should continue and can help reinforce the position of the language in the media. (stage 2)

17.) A policy of Gaelicisation must be extended to the workplace where State bodies dealing with the language must have a mandate to operate through Irish. Sporadic initiatives have been launched in the workplace by government agencies but have lacked the permanent resolve that is a prerequisite for success. (stage 3)

more coordinated and united effort by these organisations to bring Irish to a greater segment of the adult population in Ireland could be mounted. (Stages 8 & 5)

20.) A publicity campaign be mounted to attract native Irish speakers in Britain, the United States and elsewhere back to the new Irish speaking communities in Ireland. Financial and political constraints are a consideration here it is true but efforts by the Irish Government to attract Gaelic speakers back to western Ireland might in fact have some success in increasing the Irish speaking population. (stage 6)

Diarmuid O'Neill

# KERNOW

## KERNEWEK / CORNISH

### CORNISH PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BY WELLA BROWN OF THE CORNISH LANGUAGE BOARD

*(Based on the Report by Ken McKinnon and reprinted courtesy of Wella Brown of Kesva An Tavas Kernewek/The Cornish Language Board. The British Government holds the copyright.)*

1. *The ultimate but ideal aim of the Cornish language movement is to establish the language as having the same standing as English in all areas of Cornish life.*

By this it is meant that the Cornish aspire to see Cornish eventually recover its position as a widely spoken community language, a language used in media (only about 10 minutes per week of radio time is presently allotted to Cornish) a language used in both the public and private sectors and with full official status.

2. *The inclusion of Cornish in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the government of the UK.*

This goal is now partly achieved. As explained below it will be necessary to recognise Cornish on a wider basis under the European Charter in order to guarantee government funding and services in the language in the future. (see below)

3. *The establishment of an officer for Cornish by Local Government authorities.*

This is seen as a particularly important goal by the Cornish because such an official (similar in principle to the Manx Language Officer) would greatly help facilitate efforts to introduce Cornish into the education system, assisting municipalities and county officials with the posting of Cornish language signage, referring enquiries to the Cornish language bodies and doubtless other activities requiring the guidance of the language bodies.

4. *The provision of instruction in and by Cornish in educational establishments at all levels.*

The fact that the Cornish are pursuing Cornish medium instruction at all levels from pre school through to university is further evidence that they are serious about efforts at the revernacularisation of Cornish. This goal will take time and the first step will

be to get Cornish into the schools as a recognised subject available to all students. Only then can one speak of entirely Cornish medium primary and secondary schools being established. At that point one could begin to speak of a Cornish language university to accommodate the increasing number of Cornish speaking students leaving secondary schools.

5. *Training courses for teachers.*

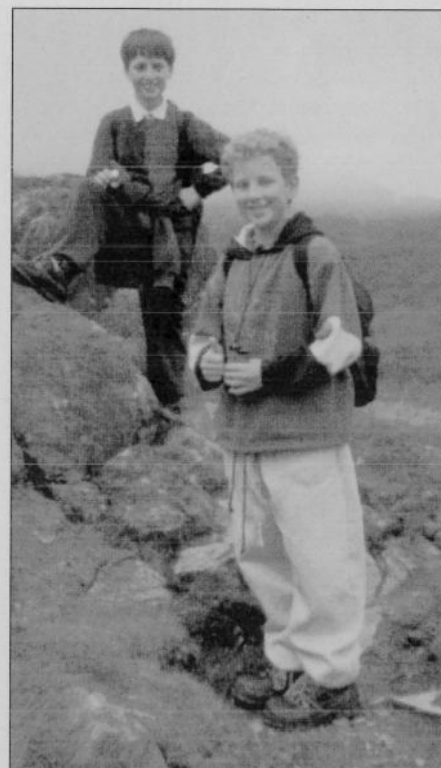
This issue goes hand in hand with the previous goal of establishing Cornish medium schools. That requires trained Cornish speaking teaching staff. The Cornish may want to take a look at how the Irish, Welsh and Bretons have dealt with this challenge. The new Diwan centre at Kelenn for the training of Breton speaking teachers is a pertinent example here.

6. *Broadcasting opportunities in radio and television.*

Here is one area where there is clearly room for improvement. Although difficult to set up and costly a Cornish language television service as well as radio service are two things which would greatly compliment and facilitate efforts to strengthen Cornish among the younger generation as well as learners from other age groups.

7. *Funding for research and publishing*

Cornish just like any other language requires status and corpus planning to both developed modern terminology and map out strategies for the language movement as a whole. In Brittany Ofis ar Brezhoneg was established for these very purposes. In Cornwall an Office of the Cornish language could be established or the Cornish Language Board could carry out these tasks with an expanded staff. As regards publishing the demand for Cornish language school texts and other titles is clearly going to expand in the next decade. That will require greater funding. Hence actually securing that funding will be crucial to the success of the introduction of Cornish into the education system.



*Wella Chubb (foreground) and his brother Trystan, who both speak Cornish fluently as natural / native speakers.*

## CORNISH LANGUAGE UPDATE

November, 2002

The United Kingdom government has agreed in principle to recognise Cornish under the European Charter of Minority Languages and Nick Raynsford (the minister for local regions) has made a commitment to recognise Cornish officially as a minority language. The government will sign Part 2 of the Charter as opposed to Part 3 which was signed for Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic in Northern Ireland. The difference is that in signing only Part 2 of the charter the government is not legally bound to provide public funding to Cornish or to ensure government services be provided in Cornish. The Cornish Language Board estimates that 37 articles of the European Charter of Minority Languages are applicable to Cornish and could be signed by the UK Government in regards to Cornish. Despite the limitation to Part Two of the Charter the Cornish Language Board sees the development as a positive one which gives a green light to further development and sends out a signal of official encouragement to the various Cornish language bodies if not pocket



money and also something which can be built on in the future. In addition the Board feels that it will be a period of years before Cornish is ready for the kind of expansion which the third part of the European Charter would entail. Also with it's new status Cornish may have more success in securing funds from the County Council of Cornwall and the Regional Government of South-western England not to mention the UK government itself. Among other things Cornish now will be included in the census every ten years as Welsh, Gaelic and others presently are so in the next UK census to be held in 2011 we will have a more clear idea of the number of Cornish speakers.

Cornish despite severe restraints in past decades such as lack of funding, a weak presence in the education system (it is offered only after regular school hours), no presence in public administration and higher order functions such as university has nevertheless made significant progress. The number of fluent speakers has risen to roughly 300 with at least 500 or so learners at present. People must remember that Cornish had effectively

ceased to be used as a community language in the early 1700's although it would appear that native speakers survived into the early 1800's. Hence the Cornish effort at reconstruction is the most difficult of the Celtic languages in that it had no body of native speakers to rely on when serious revival efforts got underway early in the twentieth century and relying as it does today almost entirely on voluntary efforts.

*Kernewek Kemmyn* or Common Cornish seems to be gaining increasing acceptance as the Cornish standard dialect although the other two Cornish dialects, *Unified Cornish* and *Modern Cornish* are still widely employed. Public signage in Cornish is increasing. Cornish language films are being produced. More people are learning Cornish. It is only a matter of time before Cornish is introduced into the regular school curriculum and taught as a subject on a far wider basis to future generations. It is also fairly certain that we will see Cornish medium schools in the future. Hence there is no question that Cornish is on the road to a far stronger role in the everyday life of Cornwall.

year to fluency<sup>1</sup> immersion course for teachers, nursery nurses and all adult learners and through the development of retraining programmes for unqualified Manx speakers.

5. Provide a secure status for the language, ensuring that this status is adequately maintained by establishing an advisory body for language planning and policy for Manx Gaelic, which would also adopt the role of main funding organisation, should be identified. To be effective such an agency must employ at least one full-time equivalent language development post.

6. Ensure that opportunities exist to raise children's awareness, knowledge and general understanding of Manx as widely as possible throughout the school system. DoE to ensure that increased levels of staffing are provided for the Manx language programme, ensure that all schools timetable optional Manx for years 3 - 7 and ensure that the TCG (GCSE equivalent) is offered by all secondary schools.

7. Offer the new ATG (A-level equivalent) to adults and as a language option to year 12 in secondary schools.

8. Increase the success rate of adult learners by raising the standard and quality of provision at this level by ensuring that teacher training courses are available and establishing a centrally based national resource centre for material for all learners.

9. Develop and expand the use of Manx in the public, private and voluntary sectors through the production and distribution of marketing materials aimed at increasing the profile of Manx in business and Government.

# MANNIN

## YN GHAILCKAGH / MANX

*By Philip Gawne, Yn Greinneyder, Facilitator for Manx.*

### PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF MANX

1. Provide information, advice, guidance and support to new parents on the advantages of early bilingualism, ensuring that materials supporting the use of Manx in the home and at preschool groups are produced and distributed to parents through the IOM hospital maternity wing, to all Manx speakers and learners and to all relevant health visitors and midwives.

2. Support the development and expansion of Manx preschool groups, ensuring the highest standards of language transmission are obtained and establish a secure funding source for all Manx preschool groups.

3. Ensure that parental demand for Manx medium primary education is met by supporting the Manx medium primary class and providing educational and financial support to parents.

4. Ensure that adequate numbers of teachers and language workers are available in the future through the development of a One



*Phil Gawne with Mooinjei Veggey, Manx Language Playgroup.*

10. All Government departments to ensure that all new and replacement signs erected follow Government policy which recommends that all street name signs, village and town boundary signs are bilingual except where the traditional Manx name is the accepted form, and encourage local authorities to follow this recommendation.

11. Extend community based language activity through the development and implementation of a comprehensive programme of events for speakers and learners.

12. Implement practical measures to raise the status of the Manx language, including: the IOM Post Office Authority to adopt as official policy that all Manx Gaelic addressed mail to be delivered as quickly and efficiently as English addressed mail; IOM

Post Office Authority and IOM Treasury to have drawn up and implemented a strategy for the inclusion of some Manx Gaelic on all stamps, coins and bank notes; and MHF and other appropriate organisations to have developed a support structure for Manx language internet providers.

13. Ensure language planning is effective and up to date by scrutinising and adopting international minority language initiatives and treaties. IOM Government to have formally requested that the UK Government extends the provisions of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages to the Isle of Man.

14. Develop and standardise terminology and translation with Coonceil ny Gaelgey

(official translation service) undertaking widespread promotion of its services and producing a specialised terminology dictionaries to be widely available and free on the World Wide Web.

15. Provide a more Gaelic influence on the accent of spoken Manx and to ensure that good standards of Gaelic usage are maintained by releasing on tape or CD recordings of native Manx speech and through expansion of Manx Heritage Foundations Manx language writing fund.

16. Produce a development strategy for Manx language broadcasting and publication in all currently available media.

## the celtic side of life

*From the Editor of 'Rebuilding the Celtic Languages'*

There is no question but that my grandfather Seán O'Neill was the most formative influence on our family of whom we are all deeply proud. Born in Glasgow in 1881 to Irish immigrants, he was orphaned by nine and sent to live with relatives in Belfast. He had a remarkable military career. He deserted the British Army to join the McBride Column in the Boer War, trained the early Irish Volunteers in Belfast, was Brigade OC in 1920 and ended as aide to Micheal Brennan in command of the National Army.

After the civil war my grandfather settled in Dublin to raise his family of seven children. Éamon De Valera and other figures were regular visitors at his house. He retired from the Irish army in 1938 and passed away in 1948. A fluent speaker of Irish he used to drive his children mad as he would only write to them in Irish and would pack them off to Galway in the summer in hopes that they would pick up Irish. He was by no means a bigot and on one occasion administered the strap to my father for anti Protestant remarks, "this is going to hurt me more than you".

My father and mother arrived in Canada in the 1950's and were married in 1960. Their five sons, including myself, began arriving in 1961. After graduating from College in Toronto in 1989 in Business Administration I spent the better part of the next decade working for Air Canada. Presently I am launching a business in Boston with a partner.

My work with the ICDBL began in 1997 when Yann Plunier the previous Canadian Representative passed away. I received a letter from Brussels requesting that I take up the post. I agreed and although it often became time consuming I have never had any doubts that the promotion and safeguarding of the Breton language as well as the other Celtic languages is a legitimate and worthwhile task. I am very excited about this book dealing with the six Celtic languages and my trip to Brittany in February 2000 to do the field research for the Breton chapter was one of the most interesting in my life. After a stopover in Brussels where I met Monique and Marc Blaise – founders of the ICDBL in 1975 I took the train to Paris where Marcel Texier of the ICDBL picked me up. We then set out for Brittany and interviewed Lena Louarn the President of **Ofis ar Brezhoneg** and editor of *Bremañ*, Andrew Lincoln of Diwan, Per Denez the well-known Breton scholar, Pierre Lemoine the ardent Breton activist, Yoran Delacour, publisher at *Coopérative Breizh* and many others. I hope the study of Breton will prove helpful to Bretons. In addition I should mention the assistance of Joshua Fishman and his generous response to my endless questions. Also Lois Kuter of the US ICDBL was of great assistance with her Germanic sense of efficiency. She has always put the Breton language first. In addition I want to thank the other members of the Canadian ICDBL for their assistance



*My grandfather sometime in the 1920s in the new uniform of the Irish Free State Army.*

*(Reprinted courtesy of Beyond the Pale Press)*

over the years as well as the Breton community in Canada (represented chiefly by **Union des Bretons/Unvaniezh ar Vretoned**) for its support and encouragement.

Finally let me say that the priority of this new book "Rebuilding The Celtic Languages: Reversing Language Shift In The Celtic Countries" is to assist all six Celtic languages not merely Irish or Breton and hopefully provide real guidance for the language movements in the 6 countries based on the theories of Joshua Fishman and his internationally recognised work in sociolinguistics. I wish them every success in their endeavours.

*Is mise le meas,  
Diarmuid O'Neill*