

AG11: Agallamh le Sandra NicNèill: Togail Teaghlach le Gàidhlig

Interview with Sandra MacNeil: Raising a Family with Gaelic

Presenter: Seumas Dòmhnallach (James MacDonald)



SEUMAS:

Cuide rinn an-dràsta tha Sandra NicNèill, a thogadh ann an Steòrnabagh, ach a tha pòsta agus a' fuireach an-diugh san Eilean Sgitheanach agus a' togail a teaghlach ann an sin. Fàilte ort, Sandra. An toiseach, ma-thà, innis dhomh mun an teaghlach: a' chlann, dè an aois a tha iad agus dè an ìre aig a bheil iad.

SANDRA:

Uill, tha trìuir clann agam, agus tha iad sia, ceithir agus dìreach naoi mìosan. An tè as sinne, tha ise anns a' bhun-sgoil ann am Bun-Sgoil Shlèite.

SEUMAS:

Seadh. Tha sibh air cur romhaibh a' teagasg tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, nach eil? Tha sibh a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig riutha. Carson a tha sibh a' dèanamh sin?

SANDRA:

Tha Gàidhlig agam fhìn agus aig an duine agam cuideachd, 's bha sinn dìreach airson togail a' chlann le Gàidhlig, 's bidh Gàidhlig aca dìreach airson cumail Gàidhlig beò agus ...

SEUMAS:

Seadh. An e ceist a bh' ann air an do rinn sibh mòran deasbad? A bheil sibh toilichte gu leòr gu bheil sibh air seo a dhèanamh air neo an robh teagamhan agaibh air dhòigh sam bith mu dheidhinn?

SANDRA:

Feumaidh mi aideachadh chan e ... Cha do rinn sinn mòran còmhradh mu dheidhinn. Tha mi a' smaointinn gur e dìreach rud a thàinig gu math nàdarach thugainn. Bha sinn an dùil a' chlann a chur a-staigh. Cha do bhruidhinn sinn mu dheidhinn. 'S e dìreach, tha an sgoil faisg òirnn, 's e sgoil Ghàidhlig a th' ann, so, dìreach bha e a' dèanamh ciall a' cur a' chlann tro fòghlam Gàidhlig.

JAMES:

With us now is Sandra MacNeil, who was raised in Stornoway but who is married and now lives on the Isle of Skye where she is raising her family. Welcome, Sandra. First, then, tell us about the family: your children, what their ages are and the stages they are at.

SANDRA:

Well, I have three children, and they are six, four and just nine months old. My eldest daughter, she goes to primary school in Sleat Primary School.

JAMES:

Right. You have decided to educate her through the medium of Gaelic, haven't you? You speak Gaelic to them. Why do you do that?

SANDRA:

I speak Gaelic and so does my husband, and we just wanted to raise our children speaking Gaelic, and then they'd have Gaelic, just to keep Gaelic alive and ...

JAMES:

Right. Is it a question about which you had a big discussion? Are you content now that you are doing this or have you ever had any doubts about it?

SANDRA:

I must admit we didn't ... We didn't really talk about it. I think it's just something that came very naturally to us. We planned to enrol the children. We didn't talk about it. It's just, the school is close to us and it's a Gaelic school, so it made sense to put the children through Gaelic-medium education.

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SEUMAS:

Seadh. A bheil thu a' smaoinichadh gu bheil buannachdan ann a thaobh a bhith a' cur ur cuid cloinne gu fòghlam Gàidhlig?

SANDRA:

Tha min dòchas gu bheil. Tha mi a' smaointinn gu bheil. Tha e math dhaibhsan gum bi dà chànan aca. 'S e Gàidhlig an cànan as motha a th' aca, 's bidh iad a' bruidhinn Beurla ris na caraidean 's feadhainn eile, daoine eile anns an teaghlach aig nach eil Gàidhlig, agus na caraidean againn, bidh iad a' bruidhinn Beurla riuthasan.

SEUMAS:

Seadh. Tha sibh ann an coimhearsnachd far a bheil nàbaidhean Gallda agaibh feadhainn nach bi a' bruidhinn na Gàidhlig. A bheil thu a' smaoinichadh gun toir sin, 's dòcha, buaidh air a' chlann mar a dh'fhàsas iad nas sine?

SANDRA:

Cha 'reid mi gu bheil. Mar a thuirt mi, tha sinn dìreach a' feuchainn ri cumail a' dol le Gàidhlig a-staigh agus ma tha Beurla gu bhith aig a' chlann agus ma tha iad a' bruidhinn mun cuairt agus le na caraidean 's rudan aca ann am Beurla, tha sin ceart gu leòr, ach bidh sinn a' feuchainn ri cumail Gàidhlig anns an taigh agus tha fhios aca gur e Gàidhlig a th' aca san sgoil cuideachd.

SEUMAS:

Dè cho soirbh 's a tha e do phàrant a tha ag amas air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh dhan a' chloinn aca ann an saoghal far a bheil, chan e a-mhàin nàbaidhean a' bruidhinn Beurla, ach far a bheil prògraman telebhisean 's a' mhòr-chuid dhen rudan anns a bheil ùidh aca tro mheadhan na Beurla?

JAMES:

Right. Do you think there are benefits connected with putting your children through Gaelic-medium education?

SANDRA:

I hope there are. I think there are. It will be good for them to have two languages. Gaelic is their main language, and they speak English to their friends and other people, other people within the family who don't speak Gaelic, and our friends, they speak English to them.

JAMES:

Right. You live in a community where you have neighbours who are non-Gaels, some of whom don't speak Gaelic. Do you think, perhaps, that might have an effect on the children as they get older?

SANDRA:

I don't think so. As I said, we're just trying to keep them speaking Gaelic within the home and if they do speak English and use it when they're out and about and speak to their friends and so on in English, that's fine, but we will try to maintain Gaelic as the language of the home and they know they'll be using Gaelic in school too.

JAMES:

How easy is it for a parent who aims to teach their children to speak Gaelic in a world where, not only do their neighbours speak English, but where television programmes and most of the things they are interested in are in the medium of English?

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SANDRA:

Tha sin ceart. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil e dìreach a' dependadh air dè cho làidir 's a tha sibh fhèin aig an taigh gu Gàidhlig a chumail a' dol. Tha Beurla gu bhith mun cuairt orra co-dhiù, 's tha fhios agam air a shin. 'S dòcha gu bheil e car doirbh gu ìre ma tha thu a-muigh còmhla ri caraidean, 's e dìreach Beurla a th' aig na caraidean 's tha thusa a' feuchainn ri cumail smachd air an fheadhainn agad fhèin, 's ma dh'fheumas tu a dhol air ais gu Beurla dìreach son na caraidean a' tuigsinn dè a tha thu ag ràdha riutha, tha sin doirbh gu ìre, tha. Chan eil mi uabhasach strict air a bhith a' dèanamh leabhraichean agus rudan mar sin leotha ann an Gàidhlig. Ma tha iad ag iarraidh coimhead telebhisean Beurla agus prògraman Beurla, bidh mi a' leigeil orra, ach tha iad measail air prògraman Gàidhlig cuideachd, feumaidh mi aideachadh. Na prògraman, na cartùns a tha iad eòlach air ann am Beurla, a-nise, tha iad air tòiseachadh a' tighinn a-mach ann an Gàidhlig, 's tha sin a' còrdadh riutha.

SEUMAS:

Ciamar a tha sibh a thaobh goireasan, leithid leabhraichean Gàidhlig, bhidiothan Gàidhlig 's rudan dhen t-seòrsa sin? A bheil iad sin soirbh am faighinn?

SANDRA:

Tha mi a' smaointinn gu bheil. Gheibh thu tòrr rudan air an eadar-lìon na làithean seo, so tha mi a' smaointinn gu bheil na goireasan a-muigh ann a shin ma tha thu deònach gu leòr coimhead air an son.

SEUMAS:

Seadh. Ged a tha thu fhèin fileanta sa Ghàidhlig a thaobh a bhith a' labhairt, tha thu ag aideachadh nach eil thu 's dòcha buileach cho sgileil a thaobh a bhith a' leughadh 's a' sgrìobhadh. Dè an seòrsa trioblaidean a tha sin a' dèanamh dhut?

SANDRA:

That's right. I think it just depends on how determined you are to keep using Gaelic within the home. They are going to be surrounded by English, and I'm aware of that. It may be difficult to some extent if you are out with friends and the friends only speak English if you're trying to keep control of your own children and you have to switch back to English just so your friends understand what you're saying to them, that can be difficult, yes. I'm not particularly strict when it comes to reading books and things like that with them in Gaelic. If they want to watch English television and English programmes, I let them, but they like the Gaelic programmes too, I must admit. The programmes, the cartoons they are familiar with in English, are now starting to come out in Gaelic, and they like that.

JAMES:

How are the resources, such as Gaelic books, Gaelic videos and things like that? Are they easy to acquire?

SANDRA:

I think they are. You can get a lot of things on the internet nowadays, so I think the facilities are out there if you're willing to search for them.

JAMES:

Right. Although you are fluent when it comes to speaking Gaelic, you admit that you perhaps aren't quite as skilled when it comes to reading and writing. What sorts of problems has that caused for you?

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SANDRA:

Chan eil mi uabhasach math gu leughadh no sgrìobhadh Gàidhlig. Tha mi a' smaointinn, an-dràsta, tha mi a' tòiseachadh ag ionnsachadh leis an tè as sine agamsa anns an sgoil. 'S docha nan robh barrachd ùidh agam fhìn ann gum b' urrainn dhomh a dhol a-mach agus cùrsa air choreigin a dhèanamh airson a bhith ag ionnsachadh agus a bhith nas fheàrr gu sgrìobhadh.

SEUMAS:

A bheil e na thrioblaid, 's dòcha, nuair a thig e gu obair-dachaigh, ma tha thu a' toirt cuideachadh dhith le obair dachaigh no dad?

SANDRA:

Uill, ma thàinig sìon doirbh suas, bidh mi daonnan ag èigheachd air an duine agam! Chaidh esan tro fòghlam Gàidhlig, so tha esan tòrr nas fheàrr na tha mise. Ach tha goireasan a-muigh, mar a thuirt mi, air an eadar-lìon 's rudan mar sin ma tha feum agad air, 's tha thu a' faighinn tòrr taic bhon an sgoil cuideachd. Tha fhios 'am air pàrantan aig nach eil mòran Gàidhlig. Tha iadsan a' faighinn tòrr taic bhon an sgoil.

SEUMAS:

A' coimhead air adhart beagan, ma-thà, a bheil sibh airson gu lean iad le fòghlam Gàidhlig nuair a thèid iad dhan an àrd-sgoil?

SANDRA:

Bhiodh e glè math nan tigeadh. Chan eil mi airson cus uallach a chur orra. Ma tha iad airson sin a dhèanamh, bhiodh sin sgoinneil. Tha mi a' smaointinn dìreach gu bheil sinn ag iarraidh orra a bhith eòlach air Gàidhlig 's measail air Gàidhlig 's dòcha dìreach a' cumail a' dol a' bruidhinn, ma dh'fhaodte ma tha teaghlach aca fhèin nuair a dh'fhàsas iad suas gun cùm iad a' dol leis.

SANDRA:

I'm not very good at reading or writing Gaelic. I think, now, I'm starting to learn with my elder daughter in school. Perhaps if I was more interested in doing so, I could go out and take a course of some description so that I would learn more and improve my writing.

JAMES:

Is it perhaps a problem when it comes to homework, if you are helping her with her homework or something?

SANDRA:

Well, whenever anything difficult comes up, I always call on my husband! He went through Gaelic-medium education, so he's much better than I am. But there are materials out there, as I said, on the internet and so on if you need them, and you also get a lot of support from the school. I know of parents who don't have much Gaelic. They get a lot of support from the school.

JAMES:

Looking a little further ahead, then, do you want them to continue in Gaelic-medium education when they go to high school?

SANDRA:

It would be good if they did. I don't want to put too much pressure on them. If they want to do so, that would be great. I think we just want them to know Gaelic and to love Gaelic and hopefully to carry on speaking it and if they have families of their own when they grow up that they'll pass it on.

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SEUMAS:

A bheil sibh a' smaoinichadh 's dòcha gu bheil barrachd cothrom aca air cosnadh fhaighinn ma tha iad eòlach air a' Ghàidhlig, Gàidhlig aca 's iad air a dhol tro fòghlam Gàidhlig? A bheil thu a' smaoinichadh gu bheil cosnadh ann dhaibh air a cheann thall?

SANDRA:

Tha mi a' smaointinn gu bheil, 's dòcha. Chì thu tòrr diofar prògraman air an telebhisean na làithean seo 's tha tòrr diofar rudan a' tighinn a-mach ann an Gàidhlig 's thig e tro media no na arts no rud sam bith a gheibh thu, ma tha iad ag iarraidh teagasg no sìon mar sin. Tha mi a' smaointinn gu bheil barrachd ann an-diugh na bha.

SEUMAS:

Tha eòlaichean foghlaim bho chionn fhada air a bhith a' cumail a-mach gu bheil clann a tha dà-chananach nas comasaiche. A bheil sibh a' mothachadh dhan a sin?

SANDRA:

Chan eil mi buileach cinnteach. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil a' chlann agam fhìn dìreach aig an aon ìre aig a bheil clann sam bith eile. Bhiodh e math, smaointinn gu bheil iad, 's dòcha, nuair a dh'fhàsas iad nas sine, gum bi barrachd cothroman aca. Chan eil mi cinnteach, ach 's dòcha. 'S dòcha.

SEUMAS:

Fiù 's aig an ìre òg a tha seo, am bi iad a' bruidhinn ri chèile anns a' Ghàidhlig?

JAMES:

Do you think they might perhaps have better prospects of getting a job if they're familiar with Gaelic, if they speak Gaelic and have been educated through Gaelic? Do you think there will be jobs for them at the end of the day?

SANDRA:

I think that maybe there will be. You see a lot of different programmes on television nowadays and a lot of different things are coming out in Gaelic be that in the media or the arts or what have you, or if they want to teach or anything like that. I think there are more opportunities now than there used to be.

JAMES:

For a long time, educational experts have maintained that bilingual children are more capable. Have you been aware of that?

SANDRA:

I'm not quite sure. I think that my own children are at exactly the same level as any other children. It would be nice to think that perhaps, when they grow older, they would have more opportunities. I'm not sure, but maybe. Maybe.

JAMES:

Even at such a young age, do they speak to each other in Gaelic?

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SANDRA:

Tha an dithis as sine, an dithis chlann-nighean agam. Bidh iadsan a' bruidhinn ri chèile ann an Gàidhlig, ach ma tha iad a' cluiche geamannan, 's ann anns a' Bheurla a bhios na dèideagan aca a' bruidhinn, 's an uairsin bidh iad ag innse dhaibh dè a tha a' tachairt ann an Gàidhlig 's a' cumail a dol mar sin, so, chì thu ... Tha. Tha iad a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig ri chèile.

SEUMAS:

A bheil thu a' faicinn gu bheil trioblaidean ann, no dùbhlain, rudan doirbh a' tighinn na do rathad a thaobh a bhith a' feuchainn rin cur air a' chùrsa a tha sin tro Ghàidhlig?

SANDRA:

Tha gu ìre. Tha cuimhne agam nuair a bha an tè as sine againn, dh'fhàs i gu math bochd, 's bha againn ri dhol dhan an ospadal leatha. Agus nuair a bha na dotairean a' bruidhinn rithe ann am Beurla, cha robh i buileach a' tuigsinn, 's bha mise a' feuchainn an uairsin ri dhèanamh eadar-theangachadh, so, ann an suidheachadh a tha sin, far a bheil saoghal Beurla mun cuairt òirnn, tha sin car doirbh, ach tha mi a' smaointinn gum bi mi dìreach a' cumail a dol.

SEUMAS:

Taobh a-muigh na sgoile, an sgìre anns a bheil sibh, tha cothroman gu leòr ann a bhith a' cleachdadh na Gàidhlig, a bheil?

SANDRA:

Tha. Tha ionad clann aca airson a bhith a' coimhead às dèidh clann, 's tha iadsan a' dèanamh rud às dèidh an sgoil, mar "after-school club", agus bidh a' chlann agamsa a' dol ann uaireannan, 's tha e math dìreach a bhith a' dèanamh diofar rudan tro fhoghlaim Gàidhlig agus a bhith ag ionnsachadh mar sin, mar karate agus ealain agus rudan mar sin, so tha sin mun cuairt òirnn.

SANDRA:

The two eldest children, my two daughters do. They speak to each other in Gaelic but when they're playing, their toys speak to them in English, and then they tell them what's happening in Gaelic and carry on like that, so, you see ... Yes. Yes, they do speak Gaelic to each other.

JAMES:

Do you foresee any problems or challenges, difficulties coming your way in terms of trying to steer them on that course through Gaelic?

SANDRA:

To a degree. I remember when our eldest, she became very ill, and we had to take her to hospital. And when the doctors spoke to her in English, she didn't quite understand, and I was trying to translate so, in a situation like that, where we're surrounded by an English world, it is difficult, but I think I'll just carry on.

JAMES:

Outside school, in the district in which you live, there are plenty of opportunities to use Gaelic, are there?

SANDRA:

Yes. There's a children's unit where they look after children and they do activities after school, like an after-school club, and my children sometimes go there, and it's great to learn different things through Gaelic and to learn like that, for example, karate, art and so on, so we have that around us.

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SEUMAS:

Agus cothrom dhutsa cuideachd a bhith a' coinneachadh ri pàrantan 's daoine eile aig a bheil Gàidhlig.

SANDRA:

Tha. Tha cothrom againne. Tha tòrr charaidean againn le Gàidhlig, so bidh sinn dìreach a' dol gu dachaighean a chèile. Tha e dìreach a' tighinn thugainn gu math nàdarrach a bhith a' bruidhinn ri chèile ann an Gàidhlig co-dhiù.

SEUMAS:

Sandra, taing an dràsta.

SANDRA:

Tha sin ceart gu leòr.

JAMES:

And it's an opportunity for you to meet parents and other people who speak Gaelic.

SANDRA:

Yes. Yes, we get a chance. We have lots of Gaelic-speaking friends, so we just visit each other's homes. It just comes naturally to us to speak to each other in Gaelic anyway.

JAMES:

Sandra, thank you for now.

SANDRA:

That's OK.