



Slighe nan Gaidheal Fact Sheet

Chì Mi na Mòrbheanna

General

The Scottish Gaelic phrase above translates as “I shall see the great mountains” and is the refrain of a song by the same name written by Iain Cameron in 1856. Played at the funeral of John F. Kennedy, it expresses a love of Gaeldom that sums up the purpose of *Slighe nan Gaidheal*, the Gaelic language and cultural society based in Seattle, Washington, USA. *Slighe nan Gaidheal* was formed and is peopled by individuals who have fallen in love with the language, the music, the courage, and the history of the Gaelic-speaking Scots.

The organization was founded in 1997 and is dedicated to seeing that the world is not deprived of the precious legacy of Gaelic literature, poetry, history and song that has come through the ages.

Slighe nan Gaidheal teaches and disseminates to the general public the Scottish Gaelic language in its contemporary and historical cultural context through classes, workshops, performances, and the encouragement of its routine use.

The organization differs from similar organizations in the United States in that it is intent on including as many different traditional art forms and other areas of study in its activities as possible. They believe that these practices inform each other in both obvious and subtle ways, and that they cannot truly be studied or practiced in isolation.

Programs

- Gaelic language classes - small group classes conducted by local Gaelic instructors
- *Gaelic Camp* - An annual 3-day language intensive that incorporates song and culture. Classes are taught by internationally prominent university-level teachers
- *Féis Shiàtail* - a weeklong Gaelic college, featuring language, singing, instrumental, dancing, craft and other cultural classes by international tradition bearers.
- *Seirm* (SHARE-um) - a Gaelic choir whose members both individually and collectively have brought significant recognition to *Slighe nan Gaidheal*. The unofficial ambassadors for the society, *Seirm* was formed in November, 1996 in order to prepare to participate in *Mòd Bhancùbhair*, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in 1997. After only a few months, the fledgling choir brought home the Sons of Scotland shield for mixed choir.

Seirm has competed in *Mòd Bhancùbhair* in the biennial event's three competitions

held subsequently. At *Mòd 2003*, the choir once again brought home the Sons of Scotland shield as well as highest marks in Gaelic for mixed choirs in competition 38, highest marks in Gaelic for competition 38 and 41 combined, and highest marks in music for competition 41. From its beginnings as a four-part Gaelic choir the group has expanded to perform staged music dramas, include instrumentalists as a part of its group, as well as continuing to strive for the highest standards of choral excellence.

- Awards – *Slighe nan Gaidheal* offers two awards to recognize and encourage excellence. Well known piper, scholar and professional “nudger” Colin MacRae endowed *The Alexander MacRae Award For Outstanding Contribution to Gaelic Culture* in honor of his father. Its purpose is to recognize commitment to the promotion and preservation of Scottish culture and heritage. In 2002, Penny McLeod De Graff was the first recipient, and in 2003, Richard Hill was the second.

The National Mòd Travel Award provides support for members of *Slighe nan Gaidheal* who have shown both initiative and excellence in their area of cultural interest. In addition to outstanding talent, recipients must exhibit the enthusiasm for Scottish culture that makes them a good ambassador of *Slighe nan Gaidheal* to the scattered children of Alba who gather each year at the Royal Scottish National Mòd.