

## Fiosrachadh Pearsanta / Contact Information

Freagarraiche I / Respondent I

## Ceistean | Questions

Dear Good People of the National Gaelic Language Plan draft:

As a New Zealander who has been learning Scottish Gaelic for one year, I am far removed from the action, so to speak, but, as a current tutor of English and former teacher of Latin to high school students, I believe that I have some insights into young people and language learning. I have learned a number of languages now in a huge variety of ways. I learn Scottish Gaelic mainly through the [learngaelic.scotweb.org](http://learngaelic.scotweb.org), which I find excellent - one of the best I have encountered for language learning. I hope you consider my comments as both someone with a bit of insight into young students, and as someone who is learning your language from afar with no teacher. What I want to say cuts across all questions you ask in the Public Consultation document. However, it particularly relates to "increasing the use of Gaelic, " "positive image" and Question 5, what the key commitment should be.

In a nutshell I envisage a situation whereby you create many new speakers of Gaelic, but few who prefer to speak it. This happens when a language is an important heritage language but disconnected from popular media.

If a young learner of Scottish Gaelic watches Star Wars in English, he will prefer English. If another reads Harry Potter in English, she will prefer English. If another watches the Hunger Games in English, she will prefer English.

How can a child be expected to love a language when all his or her heroes speak English?

I have met quite a few Irish ex-pats in New Zealand, and every one of them has enormous respect for Irish Gaelic and yet none of them prefer to speak it with friends. I believe that the language has conquered their minds, but not their hearts. They understand the importance on an intellectual level, but haven't "warmed" enough to it. This is precisely what happens when too much focus is given to the heritage, to the importance, to the classroom learning of an endangered language, but not enough on artworks.

In my own experience, I wonder whether I would have taken so well to Scottish Gaelic had I not heard all the Celtic folk-pop music while growing up.

Ideally, original artworks are best, but there is not a great artist on every street corner. One must leverage the power of Hollywood, the BBC, and so forth and simply dub films into Scottish Gaelic, and translate the best children's authors too.

Money must be spent on training a new generation of actors to do dubbing work. There must also be translators of course, and a team of experts to determine what films and books get translated. One must be proactive in these things because it is too late to begin dubbing a film one year after it has become popular. The children will have already seen it in English. It does not take a genius to work out that the next Star Wars film will be popular. You must be dubbing it for mainstream release or soon after.

You mention yourself that "Gaelic use in the arts (is)...strengthening loyalty to the language." My answer to Question 5 is to put this at the head of the queue for Gaelic language revitalization, with the exception of money for preschool and primary school "Gaelic Medium Education."

This is also the strongest thing which you can do for the positive image. I should mention that when children see their film and tv idols speaking Gaelic it does not diminish that it is a special language. They will get that from things like Mods.

In terms of my own learning, I would love to buy new and old films and books in Scottish Gaelic. If dubbing is not an option, then at least subtitles.

As I said, I am far from the action, but seeing various news items on Gaelic in Scotland, e.g. over demand for Gaelic speaking primary schools, I believe that you have succeeded in creating the interest for young learners of Gaelic, but unless you put a lot of money into translating popular films and books into Gaelic, you will not ultimately increase the use of Gaelic in 10 years when those children grow up.

Han Solo spoke English, so they will too.

Tapadh leibh airson ur leugadh  
best regards

Respondent I