

Litir do Luchd-Ionnsachaidh le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, written and compiled by Roddy Maclean, and specifically aimed at Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Roddy can be contacted by e-mail at roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk **

Chaidh na Gaidheil gu iomadh cheàrnaidh ann an Aimeireaga a Tuath agus chaidh mòran aca am measg nan Innseanach Ruadha. Phòs cuid aca bean Innseanach agus tha na h-uibhir de dh’Innseanaich an latha an-diugh aig a bheil sinnsear a thàinig às a’ Ghaidhealtachd.

Ach dè an cànan a bhruidhneadh an dà shluagh ri chèile? Tha fhios, uaireannan, gur e a’ Bheurla Shasannach a bh’ ann, neo seòrsa de Bheurla. Tha mi cinnteach, uaireannan, gun togadh na Gaidheil an cànan Innseanach. Agus, uaireannan, bhiodh na h-Innseanaich ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig.

Chithear sin bhon sgeulachd a leanas. Ann an sgìre iomallach anns na beanntan, a bh’ air a cuairteachadh le coille, bha treubh de dh’Innseanaich. B’ iad an aon fheadhainn gheala a bh’ air a dhol nam measg – sealgairean Gaidhealach agus, gu dearbh, cha robh fios aig na daoine ruadha gu robh cànan sam bith eile aig daoine geala ach a’ Ghàidhlig.

Latha a bha seo, nochd Sasannach nam measg. Bha e glè dhèidheil air dòighean tradiseanta nan Innseanach. Cha robh mòran aig an àm a bha a’ toirt for air gnothaichean mar sin, ach bha ùidh mhòr aigesan. Thòisich e air a dhol nam measg, leis an amas na faclan a bh’ aca airson diofar rudan a chlàradh. Ach cha robh Gàidhlig sam bith aige.

As dèidh greis, thachair e ri fear Innseanach anns a’ choille. Bha aodach tradiseanta air an Innseanach agus bha an Sasannach cianail fhèin toilichte coinneachadh ris. Thug e peann is pàipear a-mach às a mhàileid aige. Fhad ’s a bha e a’ dèanamh sin, mhothaich e do na brògan brèagha a bh’ air casan an Innseanaich. Bha iad air an dèanamh de leathar. Cha robh e air bròg dhen t-seòrsa sin fhaicinn ann an Sasainn a-riamh.

“What you call?” dh’fhaighnich e, agus e a’ comharrachadh nam bròg.

Choimhead an t-Innseanach air. Cha do thuig e facal de na thuir an duine geal.

“What you call?” dh’fhaighnich an Sasannach a-rithist. *“On feet, what name?”*

Ghabh an t-Innseanach iongnadh nach robh e a’ tuigsinn facal de chainnt an duine ghil. Nam b’ e Gàidhlig a bh’ ann, b’ e Gàidhlig de sheòrsa annasach nach robh e air a chluinntinn a-riamh roimhe.

Chomharraich an duine geal casan an duine eile a-rithist le chorraig. Bha e deiseil le peann is pàipear. Thuig am fear ruadh dè bha a dhìth air. *“Mo chasan,”* thuir e. Thòisich am fear eil’ air sgrìobhadh.

“Again, please. Again, please. What you call?” thuirt an Sasannach. Bha e a’ sgrìobhadh air a’ phàipear. Bha an t-Innseanach toilichte. Ged nach do thuig e fhèin am fear eile, feumaidh gun do thuig am fear eile esan. “Mo chasan,” fhreagair e.

“Thankyou. Thankyou.” Bha an Sasannach cho toilichte ’s a ghabhadh a bhith. Choimhead e air a’ phàipear. Sgrìobhte air, bha am facal m-o-c-c-a-s-i-n. Agus ’s ann mar sin, a dh’aindeoin na chanas na h-eòlaichean mu dheidhinn cànan nan Algonquianach, a chaidh ainm Gàidhlig a chur air na brògan leathair a tha na h-Innseanaich Ruadh’ a’ dèanamh chun an latha an-diugh. *Moccasin*.

Airson crìochnachadh an t-seachdain-sa, seo agaibh tòimhseachan.

Is àirde e na taigh an Rìgh
Is mìne e nan sìoda

Bheir mi am fuasgladh dhuibh an ath-sheachdain, agus chan innis mi breug sam bith an uairsin.

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Faclan na seachdaine: Aimeireaga a Tuath: *North America*; Innseanach Ruadh: *North American* (“red”) *Indian*; na h-uibhir: *a lot*; sinnsear: *ancestor*; treubh: *tribe*; thachair e (ri): *he met*; leathar: *leather*.

Abairtean na seachdaine: chaidh X gu iomadh cheàrnaidh: *X went to many regions*; dè an cànan a bhruidhneadh an dà shluagh ri chèile?: *what language would the two peoples speak to each other?*; chithear sin bhon sgeulachd a leanas: *that is seen from the story that follows*; b’ iad an aon fheadhainn gheala a bh’ air a dhol nam measg: *the only white people that had gone among them*; bha ùidh mhòr aigesan: *he had great interest*; a-mach às a’ mhàileid aige: *out of his bag, knapsack*; nach robh e a’ tuigsinn facal de chainnt an duine ghil: *that he was not understanding a word of the white man’s speech*; chomharraich X casan an duine eile le chorraig: *X pointed at the other man’s feet with his finger*; thuig X dè bha a dhìth air: *X understood what was needed (by the other)*; cho toilichte ’s a ghabhadh a bhith: *as pleased as was possible to be*; a dh’aindeoin na chanas na h-eòlaichean mu dheidhinn cànan nan Algonquianach: *despite what the experts say about the Algonquian (Indian) language*; is àirde e na taigh an Rìgh: *it is higher than the king’s house (palace)*; is mìne e nan sìoda: *it is finer (smoother) than silk*.

Puing ghràmair na seachdaine: Ann an sgìre iomallach...a bh’air a cuairteachadh le coille: *in a remote area...which was surrounded by forest. Can you explain why we say “air a cuairteachadh” and not “air a chuirteachadh”? For those of you who keep the Litrichean, you will benefit from referring to Litir 53 (26.05.00). Sgìre is a feminine noun and what we are saying literally in Gaelic is “she was after her surrounding...”. The “a” is a possessive pronoun and, of course, the feminine possessive pronoun does not lenite the following noun. In the case of, say, a house which is masculine in Gaelic, we would say “bha an taigh air a chuirteachadh”, with the noun lenited. It is worth pointing out that the preposition “air” here is not actually the same as the preposition “air” which means “on” (eg air a’ bhòrd). It is a derivation of a different adjective, “iar”, meaning “after” or “behind”, which remained in its original form until the 19th Century and which is still the Gaelic for “west”, the compass point behind an observer who orientated himself towards the east at the equinoctial sunrise. For a fuller explanation of this last point, see the text of Litir 31 (17.12.99)*

Gnàths-cainnt na seachdaine: cha robh mòran aig an àm a bha a' toirt for air gnothaichean mar sin: *there were not many at the time who paid heed to such matters.* A' toirt for air: *paying attention, heed to.* Cha tug mi for air: *I didn't think about it.*

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