

Panel Abstract

Climate Resilience: A conversation about Dùthchas

My soul is entwined with the land, and that is the way I see the world¹

The human-planetary challenges confronting us today – global warming, rampant capitalism and extractivism, displacement and cultural dislocation are – are causing many of us to search deeply for what climate and cultural-ecological resurgent work looks like in these times. How do we strengthen climate and cultural resilience and how do we ensure Indigenous Knowledge is part of this? In the Gàidhealtachd (the Gaelic speaking Highlands and Islands) and in the communities beyond it, the Gàidheil Indigenous concept of dùthchas - a deep interconnectedness with the land, one's community, collective cultural memories and the basis for traditional ecological knowledge – has been at the centre of many conversations.

In celebrating the launch of “Dùthchas agus dualchas an saoghal nan Gàidheil” a report by panellist Lewis Williams about Indigeneity and strengthening climate and cultural-ecological resilience on Skye and Lewis, we will come together as some of those involved with the report to bring our community-grounded perspectives to some of its themes. We will each offer our thoughts on a variety of issues in the context of contemporary challenges including: intergenerational trauma, the politics of Gàidhlig language renewal, Gàidheil Indigenous resurgence and climate and cultural-ecological resilience, newcomer belonging, dùthchas as a practice in these times, and the relevance of the report findings to Treaty Futures in colonial nation states such as Aotearoa/New Zealand and Turtle Island / Canada. A public question and answer session will follow.

About the panel.

Peigi Ann Shields is 28 years old and a Gàidheal from the crofting township of Bragar on the West side of Eilean Leòdhais. She is Gàidhlig speaking, and her family have been in Lewis for thousands of years. Coming from a traditional Gàidhlig speaking family, she considers that Gàidhlig language and culture have been integral to shaping her life. Speaking Gàidhlig, working with the animals on the croft, peat cutting, looking after her home, and having a strong sense of community lie at the heart of how she lives. Peigi Ann sees that she has a responsibility to teach her children the knowledge of how to live as Gàidheil in the world



¹ Panelist Peigi Ann Shields, Bragar, Leòdhais.

that has been passed down by family members. Peigi Ann is a crofter and “Head of Gaelic and Community Engagement” at a local community centre, for Gàidheal culture and arts and community gathering space.



Born in Doncaster, England, **Alastair McIntosh** moved to Leòdhas with his parents and sister at the age of four when his father got a job as a rural doctor in the Parish of North Lochs. His mother's people were Welsh and English while his father's people are Highland Gàidheil and Scottish borders. Alastair spent the remainder of his growing up years on Leòdhais, before moving away from the Island as a young man. While he

has lived in Glasgow for many years, Alastair has remained strongly involved with land reclamation in the Western Isles and Human Ecology activism, (including his writings). He grounds his work in the community of Govan, Glasgow through his longstanding association with the Galgael Trust. Alastair will turn seventy this year.

From Aotearoa (New Zealand) **Lewis Williams** is a registered member of Te iwi o Ngāi Te Rangi (the Ngāi Te Rangi tribe of the Tauranga Moana). She is also of Gàidheil (nan Argeantaich, Eilean Arainn), Welsh and German descent. Her great great grandfather Daniel Sillars was from a crofting family in the village Imacher, Arainn. Born in 1830 during the Arainn Clearances as a young man he set sail for Aotearoa where he married into the Ngai Te Rangi tribe. With a social work, community development and academic background today Lewis' work is focused on Indigenous cultural-ecological thriving for planetary abundance. She divides her time between the Deshkan Ziibing, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Onyota'a:ka, and Lunaapéewak peoples (Turtle Island / Canada) where she works in the Indigenous Studies Program and Department of Geography and Environment at Western University, and Tauranga Moana, Aotearoa. She is the Founding Director of the Alliance for Intergenerational Resilience.





Panel Chair:

Agnes Rennie, (formerly Agnes Gillies) is a Gàidheal from Gabhsann (the village of Galson) located in the North of Leòdhas where she grew up on a croft. Both of her parent's families were resettled on the land 100 years ago, following its clearance in the 1800s for large scale farming and subsequent resettlement resulting in part from the 1919

Land Settlement Act. Her people have had an Indigenous relationship with and lived from the land of Eilean Leòdhais for many, many generations. Growing up in a Gàidhlig speaking family, Gàidhlig is Agnes' first language. Today Agnes is Chair of the Board of Directors of Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn, (Galson Estate Trust), a community owned trust overseeing the revitalization of Gàidheil Indigenous lifeways on 55,000 acres of community owned land. Agnes is also Vice Chair of Community Land Scotland.