



Alec

ALEC MACDONALD

Alec is originally from the northeast part of the Isle of Skye and grew up in a Gaelic speaking family. He is known as Alec Valtis in the local community in Skye. He moved to Aberdeen in 2009 and has been here since. He visits Skye regularly and still calls it 'home', Gaelic being part of his everyday life and speaking it as part of his work and with his family weekly.



[I was] born and raised on Skye to a family where crofting was the norm. Everybody in the village – the small village of nine or ten houses – everybody, every single person, I think there must have been about 40 people, they were all Gaelic speakers... And the same old story, doors were never locked. People did not knock when they came in, and it's just open doors all the time, and everybody knew each other.... [After finishing school] I left Skye and went to Edinburgh to college, and I had different jobs in the interim period. Then I did my degree in Gaelic... I moved to Aberdeen in 2009 because my partner was here.

Growing up as a teenager, I can't ever say that I felt proud of the fact that I was a Gaelic speaker... like getting up and shaving in the morning or washing your face, it's just part of your life. It's part of you, you're not proud of that. It just is. But today I am, because I see just how uncertain things are with the language just now. But there's always hope there. There has to be. The minute you give up, then everything is lost.



Gaelic was the language of my home. I remember the first time that I heard English was when my father's cousins came home from the Glasgow Fair. I must have been about 4 or 5. I didn't question, you know... at that age you wouldn't question. But I do remember hearing this language... But then the minute we went to school, although every member of staff, the head teacher, the two or three class teachers, the two cooks... everybody was fluent in Gaelic, we had very, very little Gaelic taught to us. We had our Lord's Prayer on a Monday morning... but that was it.

I've been living here [in Aberdeen] for almost 18 years. I don't feel that I've lost my Gaelic or that my Gaelic has weakened at all. I speak with family every day,... I'm in contact with friends regularly speaking in Gaelic, and all my work is in Gaelic... I think you could be living on the moon and have no contact with anybody, but you're not going to lose your mother tongue.



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