



# THE ISLAND CONNECTION



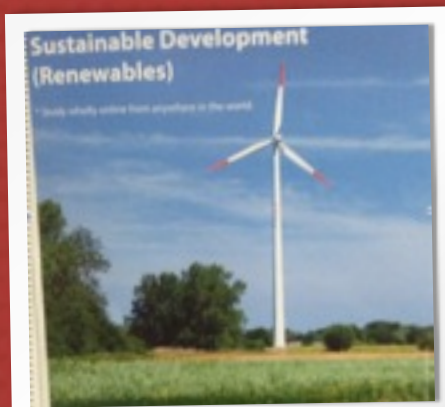
RIGHT - YVONNE AT KINGS COLLEGE  
LEFT - HEAD TEACHER EMMA CLEMENTS TENDS THE SCHOOL GARDEN ON SHAPINSAY

## Studying Island Education in Scotland

I live on the island of Vinalhaven, Maine and am the long-time guidance counselor at our Pre-K-12 school. On my GRTF fellowship, I traveled to the Scottish Isles to learn about how schools use real-life experiences in education. I found that from the majesty

of Kings College on the University of Aberdeen campus to tiny Shapinsay Community School on one of the smaller Orkney Islands, educators were approachable and eager to share their knowledge and to learn about my island school. I was also impressed with the

noticeably high quality of education they were providing the students of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. It was clear that the environment and culture of each island informed instruction, within the larger framework of the national Curriculum for Excellence.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IS A MAJOR AT UNIVERSITY OF THE HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS



LEWS CASTLE COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT IN ENGLISH AND GAELIC



WIND AND WAVE ENERGY ARE PREVALENT ON THE SCOTTISH ISLES

THE ISLANDS TO THE HIGHLANDS -  
ABERDEEN TO SHETLAND TO ORKNEY TO LEWIS TO INVERNESS TO EDINBURGH



TOP LEFT - VISITING THE 5000 YEAR OLD NEOLITHIC VILLAGE OF SKARA BRAE, ORKNEY

MIDDLE LEFT - ON THE BUS TRAVELING TO INVERNESS

BOTTOM LEFT - IN FRONT OF THE B&B IN ABERDEEN

MIDDLE RIGHT - IN A HANDMADE GREEN HOUSE IN DEERNESS, ORKNEY

TOP RIGHT - VISITING THE RUIN OF URQUART CASTLE ON LOCH NESS

# Seeking Out Island Students and Teachers

After the shock and excitement of being awarded a Rural Trust Global Teacher Fellowship, I got busy contacting Scottish educators in all areas of the Scottish education system.

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THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PAYS FOR COLLEGE TUITION AND FAMILIES PAY FOR ROOM AND BOARD.

ISLAND TEACHERS GET PAID A COST OF LIVING STIPEND AND ARE PROVIDED WITH HOUSING.

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## Summer months = Holiday!

Finding schools that were open and educators that were available turned out to be quite a challenge as most were on summer vacation. I did make a few appointments ahead of time and had a hunch that once I got to the islands, I would be able to make connections and find contacts. Happily, I was right.

## From airports to home kitchens...

Two of the best meetings I had were with island educators on Shetland and Orkney. Kate met me in the airport in Shetland before my flight to Orkney. Thankfully, my flight was delayed (too foggy to fly for a while) allowing us a longer time to meet and learn about each other's island schools. Kate put me in touch with her friend Jean, a teacher on Orkney Island. Jean invited me to her home and I learned a great deal about high school and college in Scotland. Her daughter, Katrina was an excellent source of information too. In addition to providing me with a wealth of first hand knowledge, Jean also gave me a tour of the local area and even invited me to stay for dinner. I intend to stay in contact with Jean and Kate.



## KATRINA WARD

KATRINA HAD JUST COMPLETED HER FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, OR 'UNI' AS SHE CALLED IT. KATRINA HAD SEVERAL CLASSMATES IN HIGH SCHOOL WHO CHOSE TO LEAVE SCHOOL AT AGE 16 TO JOIN THE WORKFORCE, WITHOUT THE STIGMA OF BEING CONSIDERED A 'DROP OUT'.



## JEAN WARD

JEAN WORKS WITH A GROUP OF CHALLENGING HIGH SCHOOLERS KNOWN AS 'JEAN'S BOYS'. THEY HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM WITH HEAVY EMPHASIS ON WORK EXPERIENCE. THESE STUDENTS SPEND 2 FULL DAYS A WEEK AT WORKPLACES WITH IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY MENTORS.



## KATE COUTS

KATE IS THE HEAD TEACHER OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL IN SHETLAND. SHE IS VERY INVOLVED IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, AND IS FOCUSED ON CONTEXTUALIZED LEARNING FROM THE LOCAL CULTURE, HERITAGE AND ENVIRONMENT WITH THE GOAL OF PREPARING STUDENTS TO BE GLOBAL CITIZENS.

‘In the past, the Scottish system of education was geared towards and very successful at getting college bound students into excellent schools, but this left many students behind. Now we have a system that insures equal pathways for all students, not just degree students.’ Alastair Eadie

The Scottish Education system is divided into sections: Primary School (P1-P7) from age 4/5 - 11/12 and which is roughly the same as our Grades K-7. The government also provides free high-quality pre-school to 3 and 4 year olds. Secondary School is from age 11/12 - 15/16. Students are required to attend for 4 years (Standard Grades 1-4) and then they sit for Standard Grade (or Intermediate) Exams which cover 8 subject areas. Upon successful completion of the exam at the end of S4, students can then choose to continue their education (which most do) or to join the workforce. Students who continue can follow a variety of

THE UHI CURRICULUM SUPPORTS LOCAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES RELATED TO LAND AND FISHING, AND INCREASINGLY TO RENEWABLE ENERGY AND TOURISM.

pathways, including school and work, Nationals 3-4-5, Highers and Advanced Higher. Students can also attend college instead of high school at the age of 16.

During the 16 days I was in Scotland, I had 12 education-related meetings, with primary/secondary teachers, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and government administrators, students, parents, community members and other education professionals.

All the meetings I had and visits I made were valuable, but the most useful and directly applicable information came from the secondary school and college-level educators. The multiple pathways towards career preparation and/or college readiness are of particular interest to me. I am currently reviewing what I learned and will explore it in depth during my sabbatical in the Spring of 2014. Many, many thanks to GRTF for making this trip possible.

## SOME OF MY SCOTTISH CONTACTS



HEATHER MONCRIEFF - SHETLAND



ALICE CLIFFORD - INVERNESS COLLEGE



CATHERINE DONALD - LEWS COLLEGE



ALASTAIR EADIE - EDUCATION SCOTLAND

