

# The Tartan Telegraph



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## The Warp & the Weft

By J. Beau Buffington

I am encouraged and excited by the recent trend towards local farmer's markets and community supported agriculture. In addition to the Greater Springfield Farmer's Market at Battlefield Mall and the C-Street Market on Commercial Street, there are new markets opening this year on Park Central Square and in the City of Battlefield as well as markets that are entering the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year of operation in Marshfield, Rogersville, Willard and Ozark.

Apart from an apparent movement away from the resource-intensive, large-scale agriculture that relies heavily on inputs from the petro-chemical

industry like oil, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides – as well as hidden costs to the taxpayer such as government subsidies – small-scale farming and organic gardening methods are what our grandparents and great-grandparents did to put food on the table. Perhaps this is exactly the reason that our ancestors celebrated the cycles of the seasons: each seasonal milestone helped them to prepare for the next (hopefully) bountiful harvest. Gardening connects us to the natural world and thru this connection, we realize our connection to one another. Or to paraphrase my mom's bumper sticker, "If you eat, then you are involved with agriculture."

What's this you say? No time for a garden? Consider this: many so called 'weeds' like dandelion, polk, purslane, dock and lambsquarter (as well as the "smorgasboard of the swamp" – cattails, one of the most important and edible of all wild foods) are routinely poisoned with chemicals that are harmful to us, our pets and our water supply in our quest for a uniformly green lawn or a cattail-free pond. Yet these plants are actually more nutritious than the produce that we buy at the supermarket!

According to the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University, the Weighted

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Mark Your Calendar Now!

**Saturday, June 20th:**

Midsummer Picnic, St. John's Episcopal Church, 515 E Division St, Springfield.

**September 11 & 12:**

Southwest Missouri Celtic Festival, Buffalo.

**October 24:**

Harvest Dance at the country home of Champ & Angie Herren. More details to follow.

**November 14:**

Kirkin' of the Tartans, St. John's Episcopal Church, 515 E. Division, Springfield, 7.00 pm.

Average Source Distance (WASD) for locally grown produce is 56 miles. Compare this to vegetables from the local supermarket, where produce travels nearly 1500 miles, and this is a difference of 27 times further. Non-local produce takes much more energy to transport than the local variety. Furthermore, local produce is fresher and better-tasting than its counterpart which is picked while green and allowed to ripen on the long road ahead.

I have been following Galen Chadwick's editorials in the Springfield News-Leader with great interest. Through his two organizations, The Well-Fed Neighbor Alliance and The 1,000 Gardens Project, I have become familiar with The Transition Movement, which is meant to help communities develop an "energy descent plan" for a "life beyond oil." The idea is that a

future with less oil consumption could actually be better than the present circumstances but that communities must "unlock their collective genius" and find solutions to the problems of peak oil and climate change.

The Transition Movement helps communities to develop resilience, defined generally as the ability of a community to absorb shocks to the system. The goal is a sustainable city that is designed with consideration of environmental impact, dedicated to minimization of required inputs of energy, water and food, and waste output of heat, air pollution, CO<sub>2</sub>, methane and water pollution. Currently, there are one hundred communities recognized as official Transition Towns in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Italy and Chile.

Globally the Transition Movement and locally the 1,000 Gardens Project and Well-Fed Neighbor Alliance are helping to raise local awareness of permaculture principles as well as the importance of re-localizing our economic base. (After all if the thrifty Scots can turn cottage industries such as textiles, bagpipes and whiskey into multi-million dollar export enterprises, then we could obviously learn a great deal from our Celtic counterparts!) With the grassroots leadership shown by the Transition Movement, we can start to measure the WASD in feet instead of miles. We can also visualize a future with less oil, a future where the best is yet to come.



[www.wellfedneighbor.com](http://www.wellfedneighbor.com)

[www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

## Tartan of the Season: O'Neill



The name is derived from Niall, a descendant of an Irish prince who married into the royal house of Dalriada. He was said to be descended from "Niall of the Nine Hostages" a king of Tara in Ireland who ruled around 400. They were originally confined to the islands of the Hebrides, mainly Barra, Gigha and Colonsay and a small enclave in Argyll at Taynish. The clan motto is "Buaidh no bas" which means "Conquer or die".

Surnames regarded as septs (sub-branch) of the MacNeil clan include MacGugan, MacNeilage, MacNeiledge, MacNeilly, Neal, Neil, Neill, Neilson, Nelson.

In April of 2009, Jim O'Neal was elected mayor of Springfield, Missouri. Piper Beau Buffington and drummer Daniel Dossey performed for the victory party at the Doubletree Hotel in Springfield, Missouri and performed such traditional tunes as *Scotland the Brave*, *Atholl Highlanders* and, one of Buffington's personal favorites, *O'Neill's March*: [www.jabuffington.com/music/oneillsmarch.mp3](http://www.jabuffington.com/music/oneillsmarch.mp3)

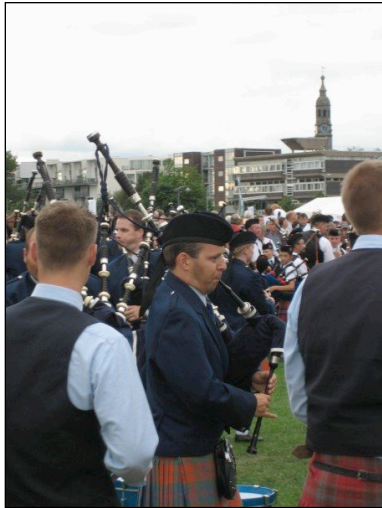
## A Conversation with Jori Chisholm

By J. Beau Buffington

*At the WinterStorm Gold Medal competition this year, I was thoroughly impressed with Jori Chisholm's focus, confidence and control on the platform: as I told him later, he seemed to perform with the attitude that "I came here to win." Later that weekend, I was able to meet him and to ask him about doing an interview for the newsletter, and I was thrilled that he was agreeable with the idea. I was finally able to catch up with him on as he drove from Seattle to Vancouver, B.C. to practice with the World Champion Simon Fraser University Pipe Band (SFUPB) in Vancouver, British Columbia.*

**Beau Buffington:** So, when you practice with SFUPB, what sort of preparation does the band do? Do you just work on practice chanter or pipes? All the above?

**Jori Chisholm:** Only pipes. We almost never play practice chanters. I don't know how it works in other bands, but from my experience, most other bands do much more more practice chanter work. I think SFU has evolved over the years to just play on pipes. When we learn new music we'll be playing it from music on overhead projectors, and we'll just be read-



**Warming Up in Scotland**

ing off the overheads and sight reading.

**BB:** Wow.

**JC:** That tends to be my philoso-

phy on individual practice as well: just play on the pipes. Maybe a little practice chanter work here and there. Everything that you can do on the chanter, you can also do on the pipes. There's no reason for you to have a tune memorized before you play it on the pipes. Get a music stand, stick it on the wall, stick it on the fridge with a magnet...whatever, but just get the music up and start playing on the pipes. It's multi-tasking: you're working on learning the tune, memorizing the tune, working on the rhythms of the tune, working on your technique all the stuff you can do on the chanter AND you're getting the physical workout of the pipes. You're working your reeds in, getting comfortable, you're working on your stamina—all that stuff. In a time where people have fewer and fewer free moments, you just try get it all in. So, what I recommend to my students is do as much practice as you can in on the pipes. When you get totally tired and want to keep going, then get your chanter out.

**BB:** Yeah. That sounds good!

**JC:** You know, when I cross the border here [...] I'll head up to the university, and we'll have practice in one of the big lecture halls. It'll be right straight on the pipes, pipes out. The pipers and drum-

mers are separate for maybe 45 minutes. We'll work on unison playing and technique and maybe do some tuning. Then the drummers will join us on drums and we'll do some of the full band stuff, ensemble work, then we'll do a little bit of arranging between the pipers and the drummers.

**BB:** So, what about the players that actually commute from out of the country? Do they make it every week? How does that work?

**JC:** No, no, no. The way that the top pipebands in the world have gone [...] have sort of become all star bands. SFU is one of those, so we have players all over the world. We have a core ground of players in the Vancouver area who are sort of our in-town players. Then we have guys who are sort of semi-in town / out of town like me, I don't come every week, but I'm within driving distance. Then we have guys who have to fly. We have guys who are from all over the U.S. who don't come every week, but we will have these band weekends, 4-day weekends or we'll have a band week around Spring break. And as many players who can fly out for that. We have a few of those get together every year, then in the summer players will come out. So, players who live in Scotland will come out for maybe



the whole month of July. It's quite a sacrifice for them, but we try to have the whole band in town for the lead up to the world's. And then all the players in the band are top players anyway and they need to be totally prepared and they're learning the music and we're distributing the music online, so that when they arrive they know the material, their pipes are going and it's just the fine-tuning that happens.

**BB:** As far the equipment, you've played long enough to see the changeover {...} from natural to synthetic, how do you think that affects the tuning and variability of the instrument?

**JC:** All of this new technology has made it really easier to have pipes that sound good and stay in tune. As a result, over the last 10-15 years, the rules have really changed for how competitions are judged. Whereas 15 years ago, even ten years ago under the old, all-natural setup, if your pipes were very slightly out of tune, you might get away with it. But these days, it's almost like a zero-tolerance policy: your pipes have to be absolutely perfect at the end – at the beginning – but also at the end to even be considered for the top prizes. The bar has just been raised so high because of technology. You used to regularly hear pipes going out of when you listened to a competition, drone reeds shutting off, and so on. Now, you hardly hear any of that at the top level. You hear really good, in-tune instruments for the most part all the way through. Of course players still experience what used to be considered very minor problems, but

now everything is sort of magnified. I know there are still a few pipers playing the natural sheepskin bags and cane reeds. I tip my hat to them, because it's a very challenging thing to do.



**Competing in Oban, Scotland**

Especially in a solo competition like a piobaireachd where you're looking at tuning up process of 30-45 minutes plus another 20 minutes on the platform. Sheepskin and cane drone reeds can give a very rich tone, but the synthetic drone reeds and synthetic bags with modern moisture control have made it much easier to keep the pipes stable for long periods of time. For the casual player or lower grade competitor, these innovations have tamed the instrument and made it much easier to achieve great pipe tone. It also leaves you much more time to focus on your playing skill rather than pipe maintenance.

**BB:** I wanted to ask you about your students, in terms of the Bagpipe Lessons. Obviously, they're not local, are they all over the country, or all over the world?

**JC:** Yes, I have students all over the world. I teach traditional lessons and have for many years – once a week or once every two weeks people come to my house

and have an hour lesson. But then about seven or eight years ago just when broadband internet was first available and when webcams first came on the market, I started teaching online. Lessons by webcam are basically just like traditional one-on-one lessons, but we meet via the webcam either thru Skype or one of these other video chat programs. And it has been a really great thing for students around the world, because now you don't have to have a teacher that lives locally, or you don't have to spend a lot of time and effort and money traveling to your lessons. So, I have students all over the U.S., Canada, Europe. I'm teaching a piper who is retired and traveling around the world right now on a sailboat. So, when he pulls into the port somewhere that has Internet access, he sends me an email that asking, 'Can we do a lesson this week?' We set something up and there we go, bagpipe lessons on your sailboat in tropical Port Who Knows Where. It's really another example of how the internet is bringing people together and shrinking distances. I really enjoy the process of trying to find new and innovative uses for all of this exciting technology and find ways to reach and teach more pipers.

**BB:** So, what are your future goals for your teaching studio? Would you like to continue teaching that way? Do you have a 5-year plan?

**JC:** I'm going to continue to grow my website. I've got several different learning options on there, including these tune lesson downloads which I created a few

years ago which allows pipers to download a tune lesson that includes the sheet music, an MP3 of me playing the tune on the pipes and you get an MP3 lesson of me teaching you the tune. The library of tunes include 70 tunes and four Piobaireachds and I plan to keep adding new tunes. I just launched a new website called PipeBandTunes.com that is the internet's first place to download complete pipe band music. With each tune you get the sheet music and a recording of the pipe tune, and the sheet music and a recording of the drum score, and a recording of the combined pipe tune and drum score. For perfect ensemble! The drum music has been put together by my fellow SFU Pipe Band member and World Champion James Laughlin – a great instructor and superb musician. I feel very fortunate to have a teaching studio that has been growing steadily over the years, and my students have been incredibly loyal. It has encouraged me to keep adding to the site and to keep adding new content and to keep innovating. I get some really great feedback from people all around the globe saying that they really appreciate just the access to the material.

**BB:** So, do your students do a lot of competing?

**JC:** Some do. I have a whole range of students from seven year old kids to retirees in their seventies. I teach complete beginners from day one all the way up to professional pipers – the whole range – from pipers who are really into competition and want to win at the highest levels to pipers who

have never competed and have no interest in competition and are into the music from a hobbyist point of view. There are many reasons to be into the music. For me, I love competing but it's not the only thing. If I could never compete again, I would absolutely play for fun and still continue learning new tunes, do my recordings and performances.

**BB:** So, what are your goals for the piping? Obviously, the Gold medal in Kansas City, you got that, what, that's the third time this year?

**JC:** The third time, which is just a great honor. There were so many good pipers in that competition. And a great judging panel. MHA of Kansas City has done such an excellent job creating an event and in less than ten years turning it into THE piping and drumming event on the continent. I'm looking forward to a great year, which includes playing with the SFU Pipe Band, competing in solo competitions and, of course, Scotland. I go to Scotland every August and plan to continue for a long time. I will compete at the World Championships with the band, that's the pinnacle of the year for the pipe band world. I stay over for the rest of the month and go to as many of the Highland games as I can. I plan to compete at the Gold Medal in Scotland, at both Oban and Inverness. I would like to keep competing there as long as they keep letting me in. The pinnacle for solo piping is to win those gold medals in Scotland. That gets your name in the history books. I feel like every year I'm

improving and sharpening my skills and every year putting out good performances. The rest is in the hands of the judges really.

**BB:** Does winning the Gold medal in Kansas City somehow put you a step towards qualifying to play in the medal events in Scotland?



**Chisholm Drinks Single Malt from the World Championship Quaich**

**JC:** Not in any sort of official sense. The way the Gold medal works in Scotland is that every year you have to apply, and part of that application is your competitive track record from the previous year. So, winning the US Gold Medal will definitely go on my application, including who was in the prize list and who was judging. This means something, not in any official sense, but it just adds to my overall track record. I've been competing for the Gold medal in Scotland for a few years, I've place in the top placed in the top four twice, which is very encouraging. So, my goal is to keep playing well and just have that good, consistent track record so they keep

inviting me back. It's getting harder and harder every year for players to get into that event, because it's restricted to 25 or 30 worldwide. If you look at every year someone wins the Gold medal so they get moved out, but every year someone wins the Silver medal, which is a qualifier. So, that spot is filled. The number of pipers worldwide at a high level is just getting bigger and bigger. Top piping is definitely getting more international. Whenever I first went over to Scotland just as a spectator almost 15 years ago, there were very few non-Scottish players in the Gold medal competition. Then, just a few years ago, more than half were non-Scottish players. So it's players from Canada, the US, New Zealand, and now countries in Europe: England, Ireland, Germany. It's just getting tougher and tougher to get in. So you've got to get the competitive track record, and that comes from

playing well, which in turn comes from being prepared and competing as often as you can. And I really enjoy competing. It's not everything to me, but I do enjoy the process of preparation.

The global standard of piping has been going up, but the American standard has been going up even faster. Without question, the standard of the U.S. has risen because of events like Kansas City, because you have absolutely top-notch teachers and judges, that's key. I know from my own experience that my piping would not be where it is without exposure to the top-level teaching that came at the Master of Scottish Arts school, at the Balmoral School[...]and it just builds. And also don't underestimate the power of something like the internet, where now it doesn't matter where you are, with a couple of clicks, you can listen to great

pipers of the past who are no longer living, and you don't have to be living in Glasgow to hear these guys. People are unearthing a lot of this old material, there's people re-releasing this stuff that was on old, dusty cassette tapes which is just incredible. The access to good teaching and good, relevant material has never been better. So that in your iPod, you can have Brown, Nicol, MacFadyen, and Donald MacLeod. It's amazing! And you can get online and have a webcam lesson. It's a very exciting time to be a piper!



Find Chisholm's teaching website here:  
<http://www.bagpipelessons.com>

## CD Review: Jori Chisholm's *Bagpipe Revolution*

By J. Beau Buffington



Jori Chisholm's debut CD *Bagpipe Revolution* is a dynamic, new offering on the Sage Arts label. Defying easy categorization in real or virtual musical pigeon holes, this recording is representative of a variety of different styles in its use of vibrant arrangements and instrumentation not traditionally paired with the Scottish highland pipes and smallpipes. These pairings include pedal steel guitar, dobro, ukelele and an assortment of percussion instruments. One particular track combines two bagpipes in succession with a slide guitar and a deft key change that left this listener wondering what sort of sonic-slight-of-hand had just transpired! The result is a first class fusion of sounds and synthesis of rhythms. *Bagpipe Revolution* contains many pleasant musical surprises including an original composition appropriately titled "Evolution", a Billy Joel song (believe it or not!) and a harmony-version of the pibaireachd

Too Long in This Condition. As a result, *Bagpipe Revolution* truly lives up to its name as a completely original and thoroughly enjoyable recording. ☒

*Bagpipe Revolution* is available at <http://www.bagpiperevolution.com>



## Tune of the Season: *The Pretty Dirk*

From Alec J. Haddow's *The History & Structure of Ceol Mor*

This tune was composed by Patrick Og MacCrimmon who became hereditary piper to the Macleods in about 1670. Patrick Og had admired a dirk belonging to the chief of the Macleods; and the chief told him that if he composed an appropriate tune in its praise by the following day, the dirk would be presented to him.

Next morning Patrick Og struck up the newly composed piobaireachd which seemed to express the performers entreaties for the gift and exultation at receiving it. The Macleod chief was so pleased that he called Patrick Og into Dunvegan Castle and handed him the dirk, say that he well deserved it for so forcible an appeal prepared in so short a time.

Patrick Og MacCrimmon died in 1730 and was succeeded by his son Donald Ban who was killed at the Rout of Moy in 1746. In this skirmish a defending force of five men under a blacksmith called Fraser, frightened off a much larger attacking force, by rushing about shouting and firing at random to give the impression of a much larger body of men. The attackers fled with the loss of one man – Donald Ban MacCrimmon – who dropped his dirk. It is recorded that this was picked up by Fraser the blacksmith, and may well have been the Pretty Dirk given to Donald Ban's father by the chief of the Macleods.

## New Farmers Market Comes to Battlefield

### Wilson's Creek Farmers Market: "Where the People You Meet Grow the Food You Eat"



The Wilson's Creek Farmers Market, located in the city of Battlefield, is southwest Missouri's newest producers-only market. The market has been made possible through the collaborative efforts of the City of Battlefield, the Battlefield Chamber of Commerce, and local citizens. The market will be a community hub where local consumers and market vendors can meet in a clean, colorful, family-friendly environment with an educational atmosphere.

The Wilson's Creek Farmers Market will be held at the Battlefield City Park every Friday evening starting at 5:30 PM. The market will be open until 8PM during the month of May, but hours will be extended during the summer season. The 2009 market season is May 1st – October 30th. In conjunction with the evening market, weekly and monthly educational programs will be held at the Battlefield Community Room.

The Wilson's Creek Farmers Market is a member of AgriMissouri's Missouri Farmers Market Association. The market blog is <http://wilsonscreekfarmersmarket.blogspot.com/>

This newsletter has been great fun for me to work on! I'm really proud of the writing that I've done over the last 7 issues. Especially, I've enjoyed the interviews with Roy Gullane, Alastair and Melissa Haddow and Jori Chisholm. This will be the last issue from me as I am called to other obligations. I would like to thank Todd Wilkinson and the Springfield St. Andrew's Society for giving me the opportunity to do this.

J. Beau Buffington

<http://celtoria.blogspot.com>