

North American Gaels

Language, Literature, Lore



**School of Irish Studies,
Université Concordia**

Montréal

14-15 April 2023

Conference Handbook

Friday, April 14

11:00 Conference Launch

Panel 1

Chair: Natasha Sumner

11:30 [Michael Linkletter](#) (Saint Francis Xavier University):
*“Eilean Eòin, Eilean a’ Phrionnsa agus an t-Eilean Fada –
Gaelic Place Names and Prince Edward Island”*

12:00 [Lodaidh MacFhionguin](#) (Government of Nova Scotia):
*“Space, Place, Nurture: Fostering a Welcoming
Environment for Scottish Gaelic Learners in Nova Scotia
and Beyond”*

12:30 [Màiri Britton](#) (Saint Francis Xavier University):
*“Cainnt anns na Ceathramhan: Celebrating the Gaelic Songs
of Nova Scotia”*

1:00 Lunch Break

Panel 2: UNESCO Partnerships

Chair: Pádraig Ó Siadhail

2:00 [Sadie Ryan](#) (University of Glasgow):

“UNESCO Sites Unseen: Place-Based Learning in a Globalised World”

2:30 [Julie Pellissier-Lush](#) (Mi'kmaq Cultural Consultant):

“Mi'kmaq Culture Today”

3:00 [Brittnee Leysen](#) (University of Glasgow):

“Placemaking in Nova Scotia: A study of the UNESCO Geopark the Cliffs of Fundy”

Panel 3

Chair: Aidan Doyle

3:45 [Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh](#) (University of Edinburgh):

“ ‘Ciod a tha bhar luchd rialaidh ag baile ag deanamh?’:

Rev. James McLagan’s American War”

4:15 [Sophie Stephenson](#) (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig):

“From Malaig Bheag to Manhattan: The Story of

Transnational Gael, ‘Angus The Yank’ (1892–1978)”

4:45 [Tony Ó Floinn](#) (Mary Immaculate College, U Limerick):

“An tOileán Úr – Fresh Inspiration in the Poetry of Pádraig

Phiarais Cúndún (1777-1857)?”

Book Launch

5:30 Natasha Sumner and Aidan Doyle (eds.)

North American Gaels: Speech, Story and Song in the Diaspora

Saturday, April 15

9:00 Tea

Panel 4

Chair: Natasha Sumner

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“Nioclás Tóibín’s *Eachtraí Hucailbeirí Finn*: Americans on a Raft in Waterford”

10:15 [Shamus MacDonald](#) (Saint Francis Xavier University):

“Amplifying the voice of tradition: Putting fieldwork recordings to use in Gaelic Nova Scotia”

10:45 [Pádraig Ó Siadhail](#) (St. Mary’s University, Halifax):

“ ‘Ceanada’: Two 1960s’ Irish-language perspectives on Canada”

Panel 5

Chair: Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin

11:30 [Stuart Dunmore](#) (University of Edinburgh),

[Natasha Sumner](#) (Harvard University):

“Gaelic language acquisition motivation and identity orientation among Scottish diasporas in Nova Scotia and New England”

12:00 [Aidan Doyle](#) (University College Cork):

“The experiences of Irish speakers in North America in their own words”

12:30 [Raymond Jess](#) (Concordia University):

“Ireland, French Canada and the Gaelic League Debates”

1:00 Lunch Break

Panel 6

Chair: Aidan Doyle

- 2:00 [Matthew Knight](#) (University of South Florida):
“Awaking the West: The *Chicago Citizen* and the Irish
Language Movement in America”
- 2:30 [Brian Frykenberg](#) (Cumann na Gaeilge),
[Natasha Sumner](#) (Harvard University),
[Greg Darwin](#) (Uppsala University):
“*Anonn is anall*: Oral history and the Irish language in
Greater Boston and New England”
- 3:00 [Brian Ó Conchubhair](#) (Notre Dame University):
“Hidden Histories? The Irish, the Irish Language and
Chicago: 1850-2000”

Film Screening

4:00 [Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin](#) (Concordia University):

“The Lost Children of the Carricks”

5:00 **Conference Close**

Michael Linkletter (Saint Francis Xavier University)

“Eilean Eòin, Eilean a’ Phrionnsa agus an t-Eilean Fada - Gaelic Place Names and Prince Edward Island”

Abstract

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, Highland settlers came to Prince Edward Island in large numbers establishing a vibrant Gaelic-speaking community. Their descendants are still counted as the largest ethnic group in the province today. Because of the decline in the language over the past century, however, very few modern place names reveal an origin that, at first glance, reflects the historical strength of the Gaelic community. This paper will discuss the use of Gaelic place names in PEI historically and will rely on evidence from early Gaelic publications and oral tradition. The Gaelic name for PEI itself will also be a significant point of discussion.

Biography

Michael Linkletter is an associate professor and holder of the Sister Saint Veronica Chair in Gaelic Studies at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, receiving a PhD in Celtic Languages and Literatures from Harvard from Harvard in 2006. Though he has broad interests in Celtic Studies, his research mostly deals with the historical Gaelic community of the Canadian Maritimes.

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Lodaidh MacFhionguin (Government of Nova Scotia)

“Space, Place, Nurture: Fostering a Welcoming Environment for Scottish Gaelic Learners in Nova Scotia and Beyond”

Abstract

New Gaelic speakers have been emerging since at least the early 1990s into the 21st century in the Province of Nova Scotia and in other regions of North America. Many of these are engaging in learning Gaelic language to connect with their own Gaelic heritage and identity and to further access the vast store of Gaelic language based cultural expression such as song, story, customs and traditions.

The visceral connection many have to Gaelic language and cultural heritage and identity in the Scottish Gaelic diaspora in North America continues to demonstrate how these elements of the human condition are integral at the individual and community level.

While issues related to the legacies of colonialism and disenfranchisement in a post-modern world present obstacles to individuals and communities working to reclaim, renew and revitalize their Gaelic language and cultural heritage and identity, with the number of resource tools being created, particularly via online websites and social media platforms, the opportunities now available to new speakers seem greater than they have ever been.

This paper will look at the obstacles and opportunities before Gaelic speakers and how Gaelic language acquisition and use can be approached in a way that acknowledges and accommodates how learners come to the Gaelic language and different and conventional approaches to language learning, allowing for creative and innovative spaces for learning and an embracing of a multiplicity of identities.

Biography

Lodaidh MacFhiongain / Lewis MacKinnon is an advocate for diversity and inclusion. His work involves Gaelic language and cultural development, supporting initiatives at the community, institutional and government levels that pertain to Gaelic language and cultural reclamation and renewal and advancing socio-economic opportunities for Nova Scotia’s Gaelic community. He is a community activist, poet, writer, musician, speaker, Gaelic tutor and author having published and recorded number of books of poetry and music CDs.

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Màiri Britton (Saint Francis Xavier University)

“Cainnt anns na Ceathramhan: Celebrating the Gaelic Songs of Nova Scotia”

Abstract

Cainnt anns na Ceathramhan / Language in Lyrics was a four-year collaborative project focused on documenting, digitizing and improving access to records of Gaelic songs in Nova Scotia. The core team worked with organizations in both Scotland and Nova Scotia to create a searchable online index of over 6,000 songs and 1,000 lyrics. This paper will frame *Cainnt anns na Ceathramhan* as an applied research project, discussing how it emerged from and engaged with the NS Gaelic community. There is a philosophy of ‘social learning’ at the heart of many successful Gaelic projects in Nova Scotia today. *Cainnt anns na Ceathramhan* was involved in a deeply rewarding reciprocal relationship with the wider Gaelic community, from transcription frolics to crowd-sourcing data to an education project which created song-based lesson plans for teachers. In this paper, I will demonstrate how to find some of the local and lesser-known songs, collections, and characters in the Index and discuss what these records tell us about the role of songs and singers in Gaelic Nova Scotia, both historically and in the present-day context of language revitalization.

Biography

Màiri Britton is a Gaelic educator, musician, and project coordinator. Originally from Edinburgh, she is now based in Nova Scotia where she teaches Gaelic language and culture at St Francis Xavier University, Colaisde na Gàidhlig and in the community. She is coordinator for the Gaelic folklore project *Cainnt is Ceathramhan* and performs regularly as a Gaelic singer, harpist and step dancer.

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Sadie Ryan (University of Glasgow)

“UNESCO Sites Unseen: Place-Based Learning in a Globalised World”

Abstract

This paper gives an overview of UNESCO Sites Unseen, an ambitious public education project which will help learners to reflect on their local identities and cultural heritages, and the global connections embedded within these. The UNESCO Chair team are working with people who live in and around Scotland’s 14 UNESCO sites to create digital learning packs (suitable for use in schools and community education settings) which engage with their sites and use them to explore place, cultural heritage, language, and identity. Each site will be paired with another UNESCO site somewhere else in the world: these pairings will allow exploration of Scotland’s global relationships. We plan to facilitate intercultural communication and join the ongoing project of decolonising education, as well as creating partnerships between the sites which will continue beyond the end of the project. The learning pack which the remainder of this panel is centred around aims to bring together learners from the Northwest Highlands of Scotland and the Mi’kmaw Nation in Nova Scotia, to think together, through artistic activities, about the contemporary legacies of colonialism in their communities. Facilitating intercultural conversations like this is a vital part of the decolonisation dimension of this work.

Biography

Dr Sadie Ryan is a Lecturer in Languages and Intercultural Studies in the School of Education, University of Glasgow. Her research interests include migration, multilingualism, linguistic discrimination, accent and dialect variation, the language of young people, language on social media, and the treatment of language in secondary school education. She also specialises in public engagement, and makes the award-winning linguistics podcast *Accentricity*, which is aimed at a public, non-specialist audience, and tries to narrow the gap between academic knowledge about language and people’s everyday linguistic experiences.

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Julie Pellissier-Lush (Mi'kmaq Cultural Consultant)

“Mi'kmaq Culture Today”

Abstract

In this interactive presentation of poetry, storytelling, and song, the significance of these mediums of knowledge-sharing and memory-keeping in Mi'kmaq and Gaelic traditions will be discussed. Julie will share the experiences she had engaging with Gaelic song and storytelling tradition while in Scotland, and how these mediums can be methods of healing in communities impacted by colonisation such as the Mi'kmaq and Gaels.

Biography

In 2019, Julie made history when she became Prince Edward Island's first Mi'kmaq Poet Laureate since the title was first appointed in 2002. In 2022, Julie was invited to Scotland as a guest of Scotland's International Storytelling Festival.

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Brittnee Leysen (University of Glasgow)

“Placemaking in Nova Scotia: A Study of the UNESCO Geopark: The Cliffs of Fundy”

Abstract

In Scotland, it has been noted that the use of the Indigenous language, Gaelic, is less visible than English, even in spaces such as the UNESCO City of Literature, Edinburgh, where Gaelic literature is rarely included in City of Literature initiatives (Kostanski and Puzey, 2014). Research on the impact of an UNESCO designation award has been done in the areas of economics (Kayahan and VanBlarcom 2012), heritage and tourism (Mariani and Guizzardi, 2020), and ecology (Ishwaran, Persic, and Tri 2008), but there is an absence of research on the effect of site designation on Indigenous communities and languages. When Scottish, and Gael, culture and language reached the shores of Nova Scotia, placemaking efforts including the naming of places and the continuation of traditional celebrations, food, and music, established this part of Canada as ‘New Scotland’. Over time, we have seen this Scottish presence continue to thrive, but how has this impacted the existing Indigenous Mi’kmaw peoples in the area? Using the Cliffs of Fundy as a case study, how does an UNESCO designation impact on culture, and aspects of intangible cultural heritage, such as language continuation and traditional lifeways of the Scottish settler and Indigenous Mi’kmaw peoples?

Biography

Brittnee Leysen is the Project Administrator for the UNESCO Sites Unseen programme. She is also an associate tutor and administrative officer in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow.

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Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh (University of Edinburgh)

“ ‘Ciod a tha bhar luchd rialaidh ag baile ag deanamh?’: Rev. James McLagan’s American War”

Abstract

As a military chaplain to the largely Gaelic-speaking Highland regiment the Black Watch, Rev. James McLagan (1728-1805) spent much of 1778 stationed in what is now Queens but was at that time a part of Long Island just outside New York City. Two of his letters from this period of the American War of Independence survive: one was written by McLagan and addressed to his fellow scholar Rev. Ewen MacDiarmid; the second, was written by the minister of Lismore, Rev. Donald MacNicol, and addressed to McLagan. Both letters are of interest for a variety of reasons, not least for their use of Gaelic and English. With a particular focus on these letters, but also using other evidence, this paper will examine McLagan’s American experience and most especially his experience of the American War of Independence.

Biography

Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh is Senior Lecturer in Celtic Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh. His research interests include Irish and Scottish Gaelic language and literature, especially during the long eighteenth century.

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Sophie Stephenson (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig)

“From Malaig Bheag to Manhattan: The Story of Transnational Gael, ‘Angus The Yank’ (1892–1978)”

Abstract

Thousands of Scottish Gaels emigrated to North America in the 1920s; some of those returned to Scotland and brought back with them newly adopted ways, customs and stories of their adventures across the Atlantic. This paper presents the biography of return-migrant, Angus MacLellan “The Yank” (1892–1978) - a Gael, storyteller and tradition bearer who lived in New York City from 1920-33.

In addition to written sources, the paper brings together contemporary oral accounts passed on through family and community transmission, and gathered from both sides of the Atlantic; as well as archived, first-hand testimonies, from Angus himself. The paper investigates the Gaelic speaking community in New York City in the 1920-30s and demonstrates the prevalence and importance of Gaelic clubs and societies in North American urban centres in sustaining Gaelic networks and culture.

Using the lens of Angus’ life and lore, the paper explores the role of storytelling in the construction of community in Scotland and in the diaspora. The paper situates Angus as a transnational Gael within multi-cultural and multi-linguistic contexts and concludes on the impact and legacy of return migration on cultural transfer and the formation of identity, both in Scotland and in North America.

Biography

Sophie Stephenson has an MA Scottish Literature & Ethnology (Edinburgh University), a CertHE Gàidhlig and an HNC Traditional Music (UHI). Currently a post-graduate student (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig), her research interests include: Gaelic diaspora, genealogy, emigrant traditions and dance. Sophie works in the Gaelic arts and media as a performer, teacher and presenter.

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Tony Ó Floinn (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick)
“An tOileán Úr – Fresh Inspiration in the Poetry of Pádraig Phiarais Cúndún (1777-1857)?”

Abstract

By the time Pádraig Phiarais Cúndún arrived in New York State in 1825-26 he had already spent half a century in the vicinity of Ballymacoda in east Cork, Ireland. While much evidence is now lost, surviving manuscripts indicate that Pádraig Phiarais was actively composing poetry for at least a decade prior to leaving his native home. His extant letters and poems written exclusively in the Irish language over thirty years from his farm in Deerfield, Utica, are a singular Gaelic voice from pre-famine Irish emigrants. They are particularly worthy of attention due to the paucity of other surviving materials in Irish from North America during this period. This paper investigates the extent to which Pádraig Phiarais’ new life influenced the themes of his poetry as well as the extent of continuity with his earlier compositions. Fifteen of Pádraig Phiarais’ thirty or so poems were written in Deerfield; he forwarded copies of at least eleven of these to old friends and neighbours in Ballymacoda while the remainder do not appear to have been transmitted outside of his family prior to his death in 1857.

Biography

Tony Ó Floinn is a lecturer in Roinn na Gaeilge, St Patrick’s Campus, Thurles, which is part of Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland. His current research focuses primarily on the lives and works of east Cork natives Pádraig Phiarais Cúndún (1777-1857) and Dáibhí de Barra (1757/8-1851).

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Máirtín Coilféir (Concordia University)

“Nioclás Tóibín’s *Eachtraí Hucailbeirí Finn*: Americans on a Raft in Waterford”

Abstract

In the National Archive in Dublin, Ireland lies the unpublished manuscript of Nioclás Tóibín’s *Eachtraí Hucailbeirí Finn* [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn]. The source text is known the world over, recognised as a foundational work of North American literature. The novel sheds light not only on the history of slavery, industry and moral discourse in the United States but on the very roots of the nation’s culture – ‘Huck’s central dilemma defines the spiritual uniqueness of our country,’ declares American scholar Harold Bloom.

The aim of this paper is to comb through some of the ways in which Nioclás Tóibín’s version of the novel inducts this ‘spiritual uniqueness’ into the world of the Irish language. Although never sent to print, *Eachtraí Huc Finn* is in many ways a masterful translation and it raises complex questions about the exchange of languages and cultures, about the perceived limits of the Irish language and how North American life may have been understood by the Irish in the 1930s. *Huck Finn* is also a famously difficult language test for the translator, and Tóibín’s approach to dialect, terminology and alien concepts will also be discussed.

Biography

Máirtín Coilféir is Assistant Professor of the Irish Language and its Cultures in the School of Irish Studies, Concordia University, Montréal. His first monograph, *Titley*, was short-listed for the Oireachtas Book of the Year Prize in 2018 and his poetry has been anthologised in the bilingual collection *Calling Cards*, published by Gallery Press with translations by Paul Muldoon. His current research project, ‘Indigenous and International: Tracing Irish-Language Literature Across the Globe’ is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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Shamus MacDonald (Saint Francis Xavier University)

“Amplifying the voice of tradition: Putting fieldwork recordings to use in Gaelic Nova Scotia”

Abstract

Fieldwork with tradition bearers has a long history in Gaelic Nova Scotia. This work has produced an invaluable record of the language and its associated oral tradition. Too often, however, the results are underutilized at the community level. How can we make recorded material more accessible to language learners? How can we present old stories in new formats? This paper describes two recent projects that used material recorded from local tradition bearers in innovative ways.

Biography

Shamus Y. MacDonald holds a PhD in Folklore from Memorial University. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in Nova Scotia, Scotland, Nunavut, and Newfoundland. He teaches at St. F.X. University and works at the Nova Scotia Highland Village Museum.

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Pádraig Ó Siadhail (St. Mary's University, Halifax)

“ ‘Ceanada’: Two 1960s’ Irish-language perspectives on Canada”

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss two non-fiction 1960s’ Irish-language books about Canada, Brian Ó Baoill’s *Idir Huron agus Hudson* (1965) and Fionntán Mac Aodha Bhuí’s *Anam do-chloíte Quebec* (1968). The timing of the books’ publication was significant. The 1960s was a seminal decade in Canada with the centenary of Canadian Confederation in 1967, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the emergence in the early 1960s of the FLQ, a small militant pro-Quebec sovereigntist group willing to use political violence, and the founding in 1968 of the Parti Québécois, the mainstream expression of the sovereigntist movement. Writing for a readership primarily in Ireland, the authors’ approaches were different. Ó Baoill provided a first-hand account of his time in Canada, first in Toronto working for a mining company and then on-site at a uranium mine at Blind River, Ontario. He recalled his personal experiences and observations as he encountered Canadians and the Canadian outdoors. Mac Aodha Bhuí never explicitly stated it, but he likely visited Quebec in the early 1960s. Nevertheless, he eschewed the personal narrative, instead drawing on historical texts and contemporary journal and newspaper articles as he charted the story of French Canada and of Quebec from earliest times to the 1960s.

As I will explore in my paper, the range of topics covered inevitably varied from book to book, bearing in mind that Ó Baoill’s base was in Ontario and Mac Aodha Bhuí’s focus on Quebec. But there were shared points of interest. For example, both commentators were fascinated by Louis Riel. There were shared common gaps in the books too. For example, though regularly noting Irish connections with Canada, neither author mentioned Grosse Île, the Great Famine quarantine island and mass burial site which since the late 1980s occupies a central spot in the story of the Irish in Canada. As such, I argue that these two books deserve revisiting not just for a discussion of their authors’ insights into Canada, but for what the books suggest about the changing historiography of the Irish in Canada.

Biography

Pádraig Ó Siadhail is Professor Emeritus at Saint Mary's University, Halifax. His recent research focuses on Irish in a transnational context. He has just submitted for publication a monograph on the Irish language and South Africa, specifically interest in Ireland pre-1960s in the fortunes of Afrikaans and Irish-language commentary on Apartheid. At present, he is researching the activities of Irish-language societies in Canada before the Great War and is continuing work on a survey of Irish-language literature about and from Canada.

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Stuart Dunmore (University of Edinburgh)

Natasha Sumner (Harvard University)

“Gaelic language acquisition motivation and identity orientation among Scottish diasporas in Nova Scotia and New England”

Abstract

This paper will examine Scottish Gaelic revitalisation initiatives and linguistic ideologies among disparate diaspora communities in Nova Scotia and New England. Notwithstanding the advanced state of intergenerational disruption in contemporary Gaelic communities in Scotland and Canada, policymakers have prioritised second language teaching in recent years to create new cohorts of speakers. Based on five years of ethnographic research in Scotland and Canada, this paper examines such ‘new’ speakers’ narratives concerning their language learning motivations, identities, and prospects for language revitalisation in each country. I will also draw on data from a recent Fulbright visiting scholarship in Massachusetts, a major destination for secondary emigration from Nova Scotia since the 1870s. This research assessed the various ways in which Gaelic learners in New England construct and convey their linguistic ideologies and identities, and how these may relate to the better-known Boston Irish diaspora. I show that challenging sociodemographic circumstances in the (few) remaining Gaelic-dominant communities in Scotland and Nova Scotia contrast with current policy discourses concerning the language’s future prospects. In particular, I consider the relative strength of Nova Scotian new speakers’ sense of heritage identity in relation to Gaelic, compared to American and Scottish speakers’ language ideologies concerning the ethnolinguistic Gaelic community.

Biographies

Stuart Dunmore teaches in Gaelic language and culture at Edinburgh University. His postdoctoral research investigated new speaker practices and ideologies in Scotland and Nova Scotia. Stuart has previously completed fellowships at the universities of Glasgow, Sussex and Sorbonne Nouvelle, and in 2022 he held a Fulbright scholarship at Harvard University.

Natasha Sumner is Associate Professor of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, where she lectures on the Gaelic Fionn Cycle and a wide range of other topics pertaining to Irish and Scottish Gaelic literature and folklore. She recently edited a volume on *North American Gaels* with Aidan Doyle and created and launched the Fionn Folklore Database (fionnfolklore.org).

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Aidan Doyle (University College Cork)

“The experiences of Irish speakers in North America in their own words”

Abstract

Since the publication of *Emigrants and exiles* (Miller 1985), there has been widespread acceptance of the claim that emigrant Irish speakers were more alienated in North America than their Anglophone counterparts. The following passage is illustrative of the tone of this book: "However, for a large minority of post-Famine emigrants, especially for western Irish-speakers...feelings of unhappy exile were so ingrained that they helped shape the emigrants' 'reality' by affecting their responses to American conditions" (Miller 1985: 512). This presentation attempts to test this hypothesis by examining written accounts of Irish speakers of how they felt in their new environment. The picture that emerges is much more nuanced than the version of events put forward by Miller. Some emigrants were successful and satisfied with their lot; others felt alienated and homesick. Crucially, there is little evidence that the responses of emigrants was determined by linguistic factors. In conclusion, I argue that our view of the experiences of emigrants has to be revised.

Biography

Aidan Doyle is a lecturer in the Dept of Modern Irish, University College, Cork, Ireland. His research focuses on the linguistic structure of Irish. He is also interested in sociolinguistics, translation, and the Irish language outside of Ireland. With Natasha Sumner, he has co-edited *North American Gaels*.

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Raymond Jess (Concordia University)

“Ireland, French Canada and the Gaelic League Debates”

Abstract

As a predominantly Catholic population within the purview of the British Empire, early twentieth century Irish nationalists saw in French-Canada a society and linguistic culture that mirrored many of the same political and cultural concerns as Ireland. For Gaelic Leaguers, French-Canada seemed to encapsulate their vision of how to maintain cultural independence in an Anglo-American world. However, although many Irish-Canadians were supportive of the language revival in Ireland and even established Irish language classes in Montreal and Ottawa, their position as a minority culture within Canadian Catholicism meant that they were also ready to defend their English language rights against Francophone encroachment. In the pages of *An Claidheamh Soluis* Gaelic Leaguers became increasingly critical of the Irish North American Catholic Church for its insistence on anglicizing new Catholic emigrants to the U.S. and Canada. In this paper I follow Irish and Irish-Canadian arguments about language and national identity during a period of rising cultural nationalism on both sides of the Atlantic. Debates over the linguistic ambitions of the Irish in Ireland as opposed to the religious ambitions of the Irish Catholic diaspora, became debates over the meaning of Irish identity in the early twentieth century.

Biography

Raymond Jess is a teacher at Concordia University with a focus on the history of the Irish in Canada. His doctoral thesis explored the mirroring of Irish political nationalism with English-Canada, and the mirroring of Irish cultural nationalism with French-Canada, during the period of the Home Rule movement.

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Matthew Knight (University of South Florida)

“Awaking the West: The Chicago *Citizen* and the Irish Language Movement in America”

Abstract

Writing from Chicago in April 1880, Thomas O’Neill Russell bemoaned that, although there were a great many people learning the Irish language in New York and Boston, “I am sorry to say that there are not many learning the language in the West yet. There was a fine class in this city six or seven months ago, taught by Father O’Gallagher, but for reasons I don’t understand, it came to an end.” O’Gallagher’s class had started on 16 June 1879 in the stockyards, and had roughly sixty members at the time. In order to push the movement for the propagation and cultivation of the Irish language forward, O’Neill Russell convinced editor John Finerty to allow him to begin publishing Irish language material in the *Citizen* newspaper in 1883, and arranged for a Gaelic Society to be formed in Chicago in 1885 since it was “the only large city on the American continent in which there is not a Gaelic school.” Having been deeply involved with the Philo-Celtic Societies in Boston and New York, O’Neill Russell was clearly trying to establish a similar situation in Chicago: form Irish classes which were supported by published material in the language in the weekly press. As the Irish column in the *Citizen* has received little attention, save for the informative chapter in Fionnuala Uí Fhlannagáin’s *Fíníní Mheiriceá agus an Ghaeilge*, this paper will address the editorial decisions made for the column (they used the roman typeface), the occasional contentious correspondence and poetic wars of words (often directed at O’Neill Russell), the selections of printed material, the relationships and reciprocation with other publications, and the role of men like Maurice Crean, John Finerty, John Naughton, and Michael McDermott, who are not often mentioned in the historiography surrounding the cause to promote Irish in 19th-century America.

Biography

Matthew Knight is an Associate Librarian at the University of South Florida in Tampa. His research focuses on efforts to preserve and cultivate the Irish language in the 19th-century American popular press, including the *San Francisco Monitor*, the *Boston Irish Echo*, the *Chicago Citizen*, and the *New York Irish-American*. He is currently looking to publish his monograph *Éire Mhór: The Irish Language in the American Popular Press, 1857-1915*. He also works with the Dion Boucicault Theatre Collection at USF, and his book *Dion Boucicault, 'The Vampire' and 'The Phantom'* will be published in 2023.

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Brian Frykenberg (Cumann na Gaeilge)

Natasha Sumner (Harvard University)

Greg Darwin (Uppsala University)

“Anonn is anall: Oral history and the Irish language in Greater Boston and New England”

Abstract

‘Boston and the Irish Language: Fifty Years of Cultural Connection in Oral History’ commenced in 2017, sponsored by Cumann na Gaeilge in Boston and a grant from Mass Humanities (NEH). The project, now renamed “New England and the Irish Language,” documents the life stories of immigrants from Ireland to New England whose first language is Irish. Hosted and disseminated by the Open Archives at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and currently sponsored by the Emigrant Support Programme, Ireland, these interviews explore the shared experiences of emigration, assimilation, employment, and the challenges that Irish-speaking Americans undergo in maintaining cultural memory and contact with communities in the homeland and in the United States. Each interview in the collection is presented with a brief biographical summary, an Irish-language transcription, and an English translation.

We will present an overview of the history of this project and of challenges faced in conducting the interviews and preparing them for the collection through a selection of excerpts that indicate the range of material contained within this archive. We will conclude by discussing the future of the project and the value of this growing electronic resource for teachers and specialists in the Celtic languages.

Biographies

Brian Frykenberg is Coordinator of Cumann na Gaeilge's oral history project. He studied Celtic languages and literatures at Edinburgh and Harvard, and has published work concerning Suibhne Geilt and associated legends. He has served as librarian and curator at Boston University School of Theology and at the James Ford Bell Library.

Natasha Sumner is Associate Professor of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, where she lectures on the Gaelic Fionn Cycle and a wide range of other topics pertaining to Irish and Scottish Gaelic literature and folklore. She recently edited a volume on *North American Gaels* with Aidan Doyle and created and launched the Fionn Folklore Database.

Gregory R Darwin is a senior lecturer in Irish, and head of the Celtic section, at Uppsala university, where he teaches courses on modern Irish language, literature, and folklore. His research interests include early modern and modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic folklore, Classical reception in Irish-language literature, maritime folklore, magic, and cultural contacts between the Gaelic and Scandinavian worlds.

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Brian Ó Conchubhair (Notre Dame University)

“Hidden Histories? The Irish, the Irish Language and Chicago: 1850-2000”

Abstract

The standard narrative regarding the Irish in Chicago holds that from a few hundred residents in the 1830s, Chicago emerged as the fourth-largest Irish city in America by 1860. Unlike their counterparts in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, however, Chicago's Irish grew up with their city and exerted an influence out of proportion to their numbers. As Chicago became even more ethnically and racially diverse, the Irish continued to be well represented at the highest levels of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese and city government, especially the police force, fire department, and public-school system. It is commonly accepted that, as they spoke English, the Irish had little need to create institutionally complete ethnic communities like Chicago's Polonia or German Nord-Seite: Catholic parishes remained the focal point of their lives and their neighborhoods. Staffed by priests and nuns of Irish birth and descent, these parishes played a vital role in mediating tensions between ethnic, Catholic, and American identities. This paper interrogates that narrative and draws on memoirs, archival material newspaper accounts, and travel writing to challenge the perception that the Irish-language played little or no role in Irish ethnic identity in Chicago.

If the Irish in Chicago were monoglot English speakers how do historians account for the persistence of the Irish language in the margins of Chicago-Irish culture over time? Drawing on archival material, held by the Gaelic League, newspaper accounts, travelogues, and memoirs, this paper explores the role and use of Irish as a vernacular language in Chicago from the post-famine period until the present day. It sketches the various efforts, both successful and unsuccessful, to employ language as a marker of ethnic Irish identity in a mid-Western city. It further considers the impact various cultural controversies played in Irish-language discourse within Chicago's Irish community, and how such controversies manifested themselves in the city and among its language population.

Biography

Brian Ó Conchubhair is an Associate Professor of Irish Language and Literature at the University of Notre Dame and a fellow of the Keough- Naughton Institute for Irish Studies and the Kellogg Institute for International Studies.

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Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin (Concordia University)

“The Lost Children of the Carricks”

Abstract

A trilingual film on Irish famine memory in rural Québec, *Lost Children of the Carricks* is an homage to Québécois-Irish historian, Georges Kavanagh, whose Irish-speaking ancestors survived the wreck of the Carricks off the Gaspé peninsula in May 1847. While Kavanagh’s record never registered on the radars of official famine history; his understanding of the tragedy unveils a francophone Irish *gemeinschaft* that preserved its own exclusive memory of Ireland’s Great Hunger. Filmed in the Gaspé in northeastern Québec and in Sligo, Ireland, the film allows Kavanagh an opportunity to tell his own, as it follows him to the landmarks and seamarks of the tragedy and on his journey home to find his ancestral village in the northwest of Ireland. Written and directed by Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin and narrated by poet, Vincent Woods, *Lost Children of the Carricks* explores the Great Famine diaspora from the perspective of multiple linguistic and cultural traditions.

Biography

Professor Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin is an award-winning musician, ethnomusicologist, filmmaker and cultural historian. Principal of the School of Irish Studies at Concordia University Montreal, he held the Jefferson Smurfit Chair of Irish Studies and was Professor of Music at the University of Missouri-St. Louis from 2000-2009. He was the inaugural holder of the bilingual Johnson Chair in Québec and Canadian Irish Studies at Concordia University from 2009-2021. His recordings include *Traditional Music from Clare and Beyond* (1996), *Tracin’* (1999) and *The Independence Suite* (2004). His *Short History of Irish Traditional Music* published by O’Brien Press has been a best seller for over twenty years. His monograph *Flowing Tides: History and Memory in an Irish Soundscape*, a study of traditional soundscapes in the West of Ireland was published by Oxford University Press in 2016. His recent work includes a collaboration with Canadian composer Seán Ferguson for his suite *Fataí Bána, Carraig Dubh*, written for uilleann pipes and live electronics, and a trilingual film *Lost Children of the Carricks*, written and directed by Ó hAllmhuráin, which was selected to represent Ireland at the Ethnografilm Festival in Paris.

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