

the celtic connection

ISSUE 29 VOLUME 1

Proudly Serving Celts in North America Since 1991

DECEMBER 2019/JANUARY 2020



U.K. General election 2019: Parties in final campaign push as poll nears on December 12 with leaders saying the stakes are higher than in any recent election. Meanwhile, Scottish National Party leader Nicola Sturgeon is warning “the very future of Scotland” is at stake in the election. Pictured above (L-R) Jo Swinson (Liberal Democrats), Boris Johnson (Conservatives), Jeremy Corbyn (Labour), and Nicola Sturgeon (SNP). [Inside pages 11 & 13]

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

AILBHE SMYTH has been at the forefront of some of the seismic social changes in Ireland these past few years and she will be in Vancouver this February for the upcoming St. Brigid’s Day Festival. Read in-depth interview with Ailbhe inside on pages 30, 31 & 32.



MEGAN FEARON is the Sinn Féin MLA for Newry and Armagh in Northern Ireland. At 28-years-old she is the youngest public representative in Ireland and she spoke to *The Celtic Connection* on her recent visit to Vancouver. Read our interview on page 26.



MYSTERY SOLVED! The owner of a mysterious craft that washed up on the shores of Co. Mayo has been traced to Vancouver, B.C. [Read more on page 20]



WINTER SOLSTICE ~ Celebrating the Return of the Sun

ILLUSTRATION by Wendy Andrew [Read more about the artist on page 2]

Also Inside

- British diplomat in Washington resigns over having to ‘peddle half-truths’ on Brexit
- Scottish indie musicians join forces for pro-environment ‘Band Aid-style Christmas single’

SEE OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS GREETING SECTION - PAGE 15



GET YOUR ENTRY IN TO WIN FREE LOOT!

WIN a weekend pass to Maillardville’s Music Festival, Festival du Bois on March 6-8 at Parc Mackin, Coquitlam. (See page 7 for details). Mark your entry ‘Festival du Bois’ and include your name and daytime telephone number. Entry by January 28.

YOU could win an Irish Christmas basket with all of the fix-in’s for a real Irish breakfast, includes special Irish bacon, black & white pudding and Irish sausage from Black Pudding Imports in Langley. Check out their weekly sales on Facebook (see page 9 for more info). Mark your entry ‘Irish basket’ and include your name and daytime telephone number. Entry by December 19.

WIN a CD titled *Sociable!* The Celtic Kitchen Party includes some well-known Irish and Newfoundland songs. Great music for your next kitchen party. Mark your entry ‘Sociable’ and include your name and daytime telephone number. Entry by December 18.

WIN a pair of tickets to see Irish comedian Dara O Briain Voice of Reason in Calgary, March 21 at Bella Concert Hall, or in Vancouver on March 23 at the Vogue Theatre (see pages 5 & 7 for more details). Mark your entry ‘Dara’ and specify if tickets are for Calgary or Vancouver and include your name and daytime telephone number. Entry by January 28.

All entries by e-mail only to: cbutler@telus.net (only one entry per event).

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'I encourage all Irish women in B.C. to come out and participate in the 2020 St. Brigid's Day Festival'



Ard-Chonsalacht na hÉireann | Vancouver
 Consulate General of Ireland | Vancouver
 Consulat général d'Irlande | Vancouver

By **JENNIFER BOURKE**
 Vice Consul General
 Consulate General of Ireland
 Vancouver

laboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and HerStory.

It celebrates the lives of 21 pioneering Irish diaspora women of the 19th and 20th Centuries who blazed a trail in a wide range of fields.

I encourage all Irish women in B.C. to come out and participate in the 2020 St. Brigid's Day Festival Vancouver.

It will be a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the achievements and stories of the women who inspire us, and for us to embrace our own power and influence as Irish diaspora women and as female role-models for those around us.

[See sidebar on the right to learn more about how to participate in the HerStory Vancouver Project.]

VANCOUVER – The Consulate General of Ireland in Vancouver is proud to support and participate in the 2020 St. Brigid's Day Festival in Vancouver.

A large part of our role here in British Columbia is to support the Irish community and help promote Irish culture.

St. Brigid's Day, being in honour of Ireland's triple goddess and patron Saint, gives us an opportunity to celebrate the important and under-recognised role of Irish women and girls in all aspects of history, mythology and culture.

In order to shine a light on female contribution and participation, the Consulate will facilitate a "Pop-up Illumination" as part of the International HerStory Light Festival which is focussed around St. Brigid's Day.

HerStory is an Irish women's storytelling movement that tells the life stories of historical, mythical and contemporary women.

Participants are invited to nominate a woman who inspires them, explain why, come to the Consulate and get a photo taken with a projection of their chosen role-model.

The images will be shared on social media in advance of the St. Brigid's Day Festival and projected on the day.

The aim of the project is to celebrate, honour and "illuminate" those women who inspire us – a friend, family member, historical figure or contemporary icon.

The Consulate is excited also to present the exhibition *Blazing a Trail: Lives & Legacies of Irish Diaspora Women* as part of the St. Brigid's Day festival. It will be the first time that this exhibition has ever been shown in Canada.

Blazing a Trail was created by EPIC, the Irish Emigration Museum, in col-

This is the Solstice

"...This is the solstice,
 the still point of the sun,
 its cusp and midnight,
 the year's threshold
 and unlocking, where
 the past lets go
 and becomes the future;
 the place of caught breath,
 the door of a vanished
 house left ajar..."

— Margaret Atwood,
Eating Fire: Selected Poetry

ABOUT OUR COVER ARTIST

WENDY ANDREW lives, dreams and paints in the beautiful mystical countryside of Southern England. She has been a professional artist for over 20 years and her work has been published internationally. Her paintings are inspired by the ancient mysteries that are wrapped in the turning of the seasons, and the voice of The Goddess whispering through the mythical realms. To order images by Wendy and see more of her paintings please visit her website at: www.paintingdreams.co.uk. You can contact Wendy by e-mail at: info@paintingdreams.co.uk.

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HerStory 'Pop-up' Illumination for St. Brigid's Day Vancouver 2020

IRISH WOMEN across British Columbia are invited to participate in HerStory, an exciting project to celebrate, honour and "illuminate" those women who inspire us – be it a friend, family member, historical figure or contemporary icon. This is an Irish women's storytelling movement that tells the life stories of historical, mythical and contemporary women.

In order to shine a light on female contribution and participation, the Consulate of Ireland Vancouver will facilitate a "Pop-up Illumination" as part of the International HerStory Light Festival which is focussed around St. Brigid's Day.

Participants are invited to nominate a woman who inspires you, then submit an image of the woman who inspires you, along with one or two short sentences explaining why.

You will then be invited to attend a photo session at the Consulate on Friday, January 10, 2020 between 1-4 PM to have your photo taken alongside a projection of your chosen role-model.

The images will be shared on social media in advance of the St. Brigid's Day festival and projected on the day.

Things to consider when choosing an image:

1. High-resolution images will look best. Colour also looks great, but black & white is fine.
2. It will look best if there is a blank or plain space in the photo beside the subject where the participant can stand (but not essential), similar to the examples that HerStory provide. For more information, see: www.herstory.ie/light.

Submit images to: maura@telus.net
 Deadline to apply: January 3, 2020

An Irish Christmas Music * Dance * Craic

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22 SHOW STARTS AT 5:30 PM

Holiday Magic with Traditional Irish Music Featuring:
 10 session musicians • 50/50 draw • Raffles • Great Prizes

Bring the whole family and enjoy a roast beef Sunday dinner with all Irish pints \$1 off

Admission by donation. Proceeds to: **The Irish Benevolent Society of B.C. and Féile Bríde 2020 Vancouver**

Don't miss our silent auction of this beautiful limited edition fine art print of St. Brigid by Irish/Canadian artist Deirdre Keohane

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FÉILE BRÍDE - CELEBRATING THE WOMEN OF IRELAND BRINGS YOU

WRITING WORKSHOP - YOURS ALWAYS: IRISH WOMEN WRITING THE DIASPORA

Presented by Professor Dara Culhane

Across the Irish Diaspora, women write and read "letters home:" This workshop invites eight women to co-create a 90 minute "Readers Theatre" performance – tentatively titled "Yours Always" – where we will invite people gathered to celebrate St. Brigid's Day in Vancouver to join us as we read aloud from our "letters home."

TO REGISTER E-MAIL DARA CULHANE AT: 2019VIVAVOCE@GMAIL.COM.



LÁ FHÉILE BRÍDE
 Ag Ceiliúradh Cruthaitheachta na mBan
ST BRIGID'S DAY
 Celebrating the Creativity of Women

Saturday, February 1, 2020

Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre Campus
 515 West Hastings Street (at Richards) in Downtown Vancouver

*Presented by the Irish Benevolent Society of B.C.
 in association with the Irish Women's Network of B.C.
 & Simon Fraser University*

**A CELEBRATION OF HEALING, LIGHT, AND CREATIVITY
 FEATURING A FULL DAY OF ACTIVITIES**
 Doors Open at 12 noon to 4 PM — Evening event 6-10 PM

• **Legends & Mythology of Brigid:
 Triple Goddess and Matron Saint**
 12:15 PM to 1:45 PM

With storyteller Philomena Jordan from the west of Ireland
 Panel and round table discussion:
 'What does Brigid~St. Brigid mean to you?'

• **Healing: Addiction Recovery
 & Mental Health Workshop**
 2:15 PM to 4 PM

Leading activists and mental health professionals
 will lead a discussion on issues faced by the Irish diaspora
 including addiction, suicide prevention and sexual identity.
 Following an introduction the panel will open for discussion

• **Letters from the Diaspora
 'Yours Always: Irish Women Writing the Diaspora'**
 12:15 PM to 1:45 PM

Presented by SFU Professor Dara Culhane
 Listeners are invited to hear women of the diaspora
 share their correspondence home to friends and loved ones

• **Brigid Cross-Making Workshop**
 2:15 PM to 4 PM

Presented by Deirdre Keohane
 Irish/Canadian artist Deirdre will also display her artwork

• **Drop-in Hospitality**
 2:15 PM to 4 PM

Irish women are invited to gather and share
 stories and ideas throughout the day

• **Exhibits & Displays include:**

'Blazing A Trail: Lives & Legacies of Irish Diaspora Women'
 (currently on display at EPIC the Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin)

**HerStory: A cultural movement that tells the life stories
 of historical, mythic and contemporary women.**

Local Irish women are invited to participate in HerStory:
To participate, submit a digital image by e-mail of a woman who
 has inspired your life...be it an historical figure,
 a friend, or a family member. Send to: maura@telus.net.
 Participants will be then be invited to attend
 a photographic session at the Irish Consulate Vancouver
 in early January to create a pop-up illumination exhibit standing
 beside a projection of the image
 of their inspiration.

See more details in this issue of The Celtic Connection.

**[DEADLINE for digital image submissions for HerStory:
 FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 2020]**

To learn more e-mail: maura@telus.net
 or visit: www.brigidfestivalvancouver.com.

One of *Time Magazine's*
 'Most Influential People' of 2019
 for her work as Co-Director
 of 'Together For Yes'
 and as Convenor of
 'Coalition to Repeal
 the 8th Amendment in Ireland'



Don't miss AILBHE SMYTH
 our evening keynote speaker
 direct from Dublin:

Leading Irish activist and former head
 of Women's Studies at University College Dublin

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE OUR SPONSORS



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Government of Ireland
 Emigrant Support Programme
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 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



**More Information visit online:
www.brigidfestivalvancouver.com
 e-mail: maura@telus.net or call (778) 238-1522**



Rogue Folk Club

Celebrating 32 Years of the best Celtic & Roots!
www.roguefolk.com

Friday, January 10th & Saturday, January 11th
Ace Canadian/Scots songwriter

David Francey ON

Friday, January 31st
Cape Breton fiddles, pipes, piano, step-dancing - and heaps of fun!

Beolach NS

Thursday, January 16th
Countrified rock & roll troubadour
Fred Eaglesmith ON

Thursday, January 23rd
Quebec/Portland old time quartet
Foghorn Stringband

Thursday, February 6th
Loudon Wainwright

St. James Hall (3214 West 10th Ave.)
Tickets & Info (604) 736-3022

Reflections on another great year... and looking forward to 2020

ROGUE FOLK CLUB



By
**STEVE
EDGE**

WELL, it's that time of year again. Time to look back and recall the best moments and maybe select some very special musical recommendations for you.

As ever, there were some incredible concert nights at The Rogue in 2019.

Amongst my favourites were **Ashley MacIsaac** making a very rare appearance in town – with **Quinn** and **Kristina Bachand** – in February. Ashley also gave a fiddle workshop that afternoon. It was a snowy day and a few folk decided it was too dangerous to drive in.

We still had a full house, though, and repeated that the next night with two great trad. bands from Quebec: **De Temps Antan** and **Genticorum** defying the weather.

A quite different experience came with Saskatchewan swing/folk trio **Rosie & The Riveters** a couple of weeks later.

Coig remains one of my favourite Canadian Celtic bands and they filled the hall a week later. (They have just released a Christmas CD, *Carols Too*. It's excellent!).

Other standout shows included our Bluegrass double-bill of **Frank Solivan & Dirty Kitchen** with **Rob Ickes & Trey Hensley** in May.

The induction of legendary dulcimer player and singer **Rick Scott** into the B.C. Entertainment Hall of Fame – with performances by his bands **Pied Pumkin** and **Roots & Grooves** in July.

English trad/folk singer **John Smith** teamed up with B.C.'s **Sarah Jane Scouten** for a memorable concert in August.

The amazing Quebecois gypsy jazz sextet **Christine Tassan et les Imposteures** (paltry crowd, but an absolutely magnificent performance at Performance Works) was my pick of the shows in September.

Young American blues artist **Jontavious Willis**, veteran English guitarist and blues/trad/folk singer **Martin Simpson**, **The Young'uns** and their spirited three-part harmonies from Yorkshire starred in October.

And November saw the launch of a new CD by founding Rogue **Stephen Fearing**, and, perhaps the very best shows of the year chez Rogue: **Tim O'Brien Band** and **Le Vent Du Nord**.

Here's a list of my favourite Celtic/trad albums of 2019 – all of them highly recommended by yours truly:

- *Ashlar* by **Coig**
- *Territoires* by **Le Vent Du Nord**
- *Rooted* by **Martin Simpson**
- *Poets Philosophers & Kings* by **Kate Rusby**



THE Cape Breton quartet **Beolach**, celebrating the release of their first CD in 14 years, will play The Rogue Folk Club on January 31.



L.J. MOUNTENEY will add her voice to the gypsy jazz quartet **Van Django** for the annual seasonal show **Cool Yule** at The Rogue on Friday, December 13.

- *The Cabin Sessions* by **Mairi Rankin** and **Eric Wright**
- *The Tim O'Brien Band's* eponymous CD
- *Sketches* by **Natalie MacMaster**
- *Ancora* by **Flook**

and two brand new releases:

- *All Hands* by Cape Breton's **Beolach**

- *The Crannua Collective* – an Irish supergroup featuring the likes of **Moya Brennan**, **John Doyle**, **Mick McAuley**, **Cathy Jordan**, **Dave Curley**, and **Lunasa's Colin Farrell**.

Margaret and I love to visit as many folk festivals as we can squeeze in, and there have been many highlights this year.

Top of the list must be **Celtic Colours** in Cape Breton, which afforded us the chance to witness **The Chieftains** and a cast of dozens; Scotland's **Talisk**, **Kinnaris Quintet**, and **Breabach**; Cape Breton's **Coig**, and **Beolach** – plus a host of upcoming youngsters, and that unbelievable guitar duet with **J.P. Cormier** and **Tim Edey**.

We also made it over to Denmark for the 45th annual **Tonder Festival**, where we saw Cathy Jordan's trio **The Unwanted**, Hebridean diva **Julie Fowlis**, the breathtaking Celtic quintet **Imar**, PEI's wonderful **East Pointers**, and a Scottish band in the **Runrig** tradition called **Tidelines**.

Edmonton Folk Fest always boasts the best line up at Canada's summer festivals, and we were delighted to hear **Dervish** in full flight, along with the fine trad trio **Socks In The Frying Pan** from Clare, amongst others.

Mission featured an especially stunning set from Wicklow-born singer **Irish Mythen**, who played heaps of festivals this summer. Her performance at Mission was my favourite. She will be back at **The Rogue** on **March 26**.

Vancouver Folk Festival featured

Newfoundland's amazing trad. quintet **The Dardanelles**, and Quebec's **Le Vent Du Nord** (and my personal faves of the not-so-Celtic variety – **Dwane Dopsie** from Louisiana and **Larkin Poe** from Tennessee.)

Our travels took us to Alaska, Denmark, Holland, Montreal, and Cape Breton, but special mention must go to the **St. Patrick's Day celebration** at St. James Hall – when almost 1,000 people passed through the doors and many of them enjoyed a pint of Guinness in the sunshine.

There are more exciting shows coming up at **The Rogue**, starting with our annual seasonal show **Cool Yule**, with gypsy jazz quartet **Van Django** augmented by the gorgeous vocal stylings of chanteuse **L.J. Mounteney** on **Friday, December 13** at St. James (3214 West 10th Avenue in Kitsilano).

This show is dedicated to the memory of **Keith Bennett**, who starred in the show on vocals and harmonica for the last few years before his untimely passing a few weeks ago.

In 2020 watch for the long-awaited return of Scottish-born singer **David Francey** (accompanied by fiddler **Pierre Schryer** and guitarist **Adam Dobres**) on **January 10 and 11**; **Fred Eaglesmith** (**January 16**), **Foghorn Stringband** (**January 23**), and Cape Breton quartet **Beolach** – celebrating the release of their first CD in 14 years (**January 31**)!

At the end of February the **Driven Bow Fiddle Festival** will feature the likes of **J.P. Cormier** and **Daniel Lapp**, and in March watch for details of the return of **Sharon Shannon**, **Dervish**, **Altan**, **Martyn Joseph**, and **Irish Mythen**. Full details can be found on www.roguefolk.com.

I'm on the air every Saturday from 8 AM to noon on CiTR FM 101.9 and www.citr.ca *The Saturday Edge On Folk* special annual features are the **Solstice/Christmas Show** (December 21) and **Best of 2019 Show** (December 28). I hope you can join me!



Merry Christmas from the Wolf & Hound!

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Another great family friendly event planned for CelticFest Vancouver 2020



VANCOUVER – CelticFest Vancouver will return in March 2020 with an ever-expanding line up of guests and events. The festival will return with a fresh new vigour taking centre-stage in Vancouver once more.

This year’s line-up will include new additions, and a family day building on the demand brought to light

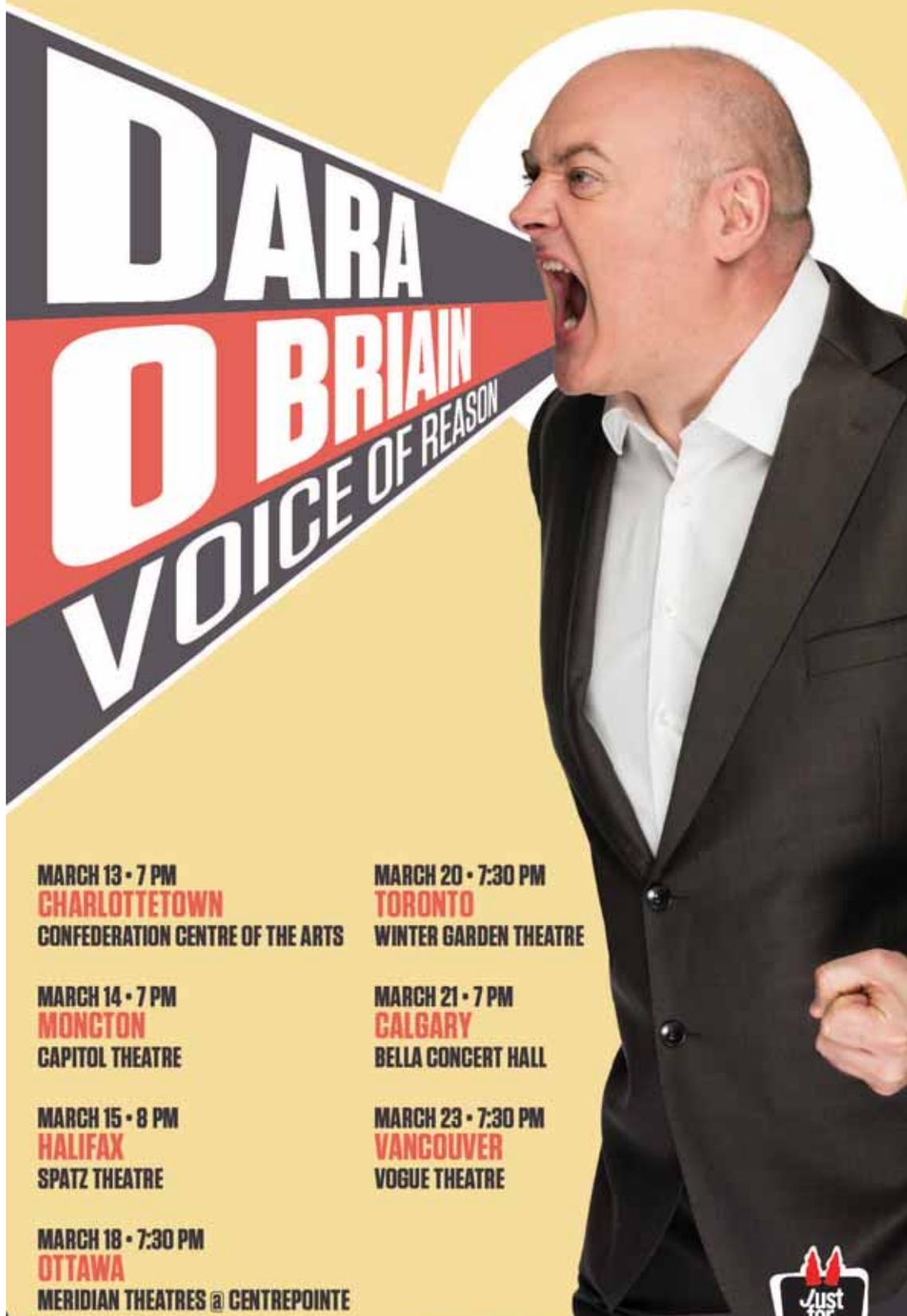
during the 2019 CelticFest Family Day for Celtic orientated days that families can spend together learning and enjoying Celtic culture.

The Irish and Celtic community here in Vancouver has grown exponentially in the last few years, and this year organizers are making an effort to cater to larger numbers again so the community can come together for one day and celebrate St. Patrick’s Day together.

CelticFest Vancouver will also be presenting a line-up of smaller gigs and events throughout the whole of March to keep the celebrations rolling.

More details will be announced in early 2020, so keep your eyes on social media and online at: www.celticfestvancouver.com. Also, watch the next issue of *The Celtic Connection* to learn more.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!



MARCH 13 • 7 PM
CHARLOTTETOWN
CONFEDERATION CENTRE OF THE ARTS

MARCH 20 • 7:30 PM
TORONTO
WINTER GARDEN THEATRE

MARCH 14 • 7 PM
MONCTON
CAPITOL THEATRE

MARCH 21 • 7 PM
CALGARY
BELLA CONCERT HALL

MARCH 15 • 8 PM
HALIFAX
SPATZ THEATRE

MARCH 23 • 7:30 PM
VANCOUVER
VOGUE THEATRE

MARCH 18 • 7:30 PM
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'In The Claddagh Ring': Celebrating 25 years of spinning some of the best in folk and Celtic music

By DENISE DALTON

VANCOUVER – *In The Claddagh Ring* is celebrating its 25th birthday this year and it seems like just yesterday when the radio show was set up by host Erin Mullan.

Erin had a passion for folk music and an especially warm place in her heart for Celtic music as she hails from Irish decent. She found a way to bring the music of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, Quebec and the Maritimes to the kitchens and living rooms of people around the Vancouver area.

Co-Op Radio Vancouver, CFRO 100.5 FM was more than happy to bring the show to the listeners and *In the Claddagh Ring* continues to air every Friday at 6:30 PM for an hour and a half, broadcasting from the downtown eastside at Colombia and Hastings.

Since then the listenership has grown exponentially and continues to expand. Surprisingly though some people haven't had the pleasure of tuning in on a Friday evening yet.



The radio station is situated near Gastown, and only a stone's throw from the Irish Heather which is known to many for its lively sessions.

Vancouver Co-op Radio is a non-commercial community radio station run mainly by volunteers. It has been in existence since 1974 and brings over 100 diverse programs to the listeners each week.

In The Claddagh Ring currently has four hosts: Erin Mullan, Michael Viens, Sal Gallagher and Denise Dalton. Each take their turn ensuring that the show airs every Friday evening.

Each presenter has their own style and focus, making the show organically interesting and varied.

Some weeks there is an Irish slant, while others are more Scottish or eastern Canadian or Quebecois.

Other times there is a live interview in studio or a local band pops in to entertain.

This year the show had the pleasure of interviewing the newly appointed Irish Consulate General Frank Flood who arrived armed with his selection of music.

The show takes requests from the listeners and sometimes has competitions for tickets to various events. It's also a great platform for various concerts and gigs to advertise their shows.

This year much *craic* is guaranteed for all (*craic* is the Irish word for fun). If you're interested in checking it out on a Friday, you can tune in on your radio 100.5 FM or through the Internet on Co-Op Radio's website. You can

also listen to an archive of past shows.

All the hosts are volunteers and the enjoyment they get out of the job is reward enough. Others might be interested in getting involved, perhaps by hosting or helping out with fundraising events.

If you would like to get involved, contact the show by e-mail: inthecladdaghring@gmail.com, or via Facebook @inthecladdaghring.



SAL GALLAGHER



DENISE DALTON

Scottish indie musicians join forces for pro-environment 'Band Aid-style' Christmas single

GLASGOW – Scottish indie musicians have joined forces for a Band Aid-style festive charity single featuring Rudolph the reindeer getting shot out of the air after being mistaken for a drone, Santa getting detained at border control due to visa hassles and "school kids marching in the streets to stop the planet dying."

Adam Ross, frontman with the Glasgow-based folk-pop band Randolph's Leap, has penned the catchy pro-environment song *Christmas, Burn It All*, sales from which will benefit Friends of the Earth Scotland.

The Nairn-born singer-songwriter describes the nation's new festive anthem as a "slightly nihilistic goodbye and good riddance to 2019."

His record label, Olive Grove, which will release the single, says of the song counterbalances "some of 2019 rubbishness with the cathartic idea of starting afresh in 2020."

The song, which was recorded at Castlemilk Youth Centre in Glasgow, includes the chorus: "It's Christmas time and all your heroes are dead. So love yourself, your family and friends tonight instead."

Another verse states, "We're waiting for a victory. We're hoping for a sign. We're waiting for the winter sun to slowly rise and shine."

Ross's seven bandmates all play on the single and appear in the accompanying video, along with Carla J Easton and members of Broken Chanter, Pocket Knife, Campfires in Winter, The State Broadcasters and Henry & Fleetwood, all Olive Grove label mates of Randolph's Leap.

Ross said "As a musician it can be hard to offset the carbon impact of your own constant travelling or trying to move beyond the abundance of plastic cups and water bottles in music venues.



THE OLIVE GROVE All-Star Choir recorded the new festive single *Christmas, Burn It All* at Castlemilk Youth Centre in Glasgow.

"The natural world plays an important role in my songwriting and Friends of the Earth Scotland are doing great work on climate and other environmental issues."

Kerrigan Bell, development manager at Friends of the Earth Scotland, said, "Music has the power to bring us together – which is needed more than ever as we tackle the climate crisis.

"This was a big year for the environment in Scotland with the new Climate Bill, the rise of the Scottish youth climate strikers and more, and 2020 is looking set to be even bigger as Glasgow will host the UN Climate Conference."

FULLYRICS

It's Christmas time and all your heroes are dead
So love yourself, your family and friends tonight instead
There's panic on the streets you know, it's looking rough out there
They mistook Rudolph for a drone and shot him out of the air

We're waiting for a victory
We're hoping for a sign
We're waiting for the winter sun to slowly rise and shine

It's Christmas time and all your heroes are dead
So love yourself, your family and friends tonight instead

It's Christmas time and all your dreams are gone
But Santa's on his way to bring a new and hopeful dawn
They said that Santa got detained while trying to cross the border
They said he hadn't got his visa paperwork in order

Brian, 60, mortgage paid, screams scientists are lying
School kids marching in the streets to stop the planet dying

(Chorus)

It's Christmas time and all your heroes are dead
The ghost of Daniel Johnston came and hovered by my bed
We talked about some random things then finally he said
Merry Christmas and True Love Will Find You In The End

(Chorus)

Burn it all, throw it all on the fire
It's Christmas Day; a new age is on the way



MICHAEL VIENS is one of the four volunteer hosts on the radio show 'In The Claddagh Ring' on Co-Op Radio which airs every Friday evening at 6-30 PM.



TOP 10 CELTIC HITS FOR DECEMBER

Celt In A Twist is local contemporary Celtic radio heard weekly on AM 1470, CJVB in Vancouver.

www.worldbeatcanada.com.

The following is the *Celt In A Twist* Contemporary Celtic Top 10:

1. High on Highland Life by Barleyjuice - *The Old Speakeasy* on Ryf Records.
2. *Borderline* by Skerryvore - *Evo* on Tyree Records.
3. *Pull Me Down* by Debra Lyn - *Blue Sun Rises* on Palette Records.
4. *Des Chemins Creux* by Dom Duff - *7vet Kelc'h* on Coop Breizh.
5. *The Airt O The Deil* by Yoko Pwno - *ArteFacts* on Skye Records.
6. *Three Reels* by Natalie MacMaster - *Sketches on Independent*.
7. *The Bunker Hill Set* by Tradish - *Homemade Tales* on GO' Danish.
8. *The Capable Wife* by Coig - *Ashlar* on Coig Music.
9. *The Rambling Irishman* by Dervish - *The Great Irish Song Book* on Rounder.
10. *Ocean Child* by Flook - *Ancora* on Flatfish Records.

Celt In A Twist - Pick Of The Month:
BARLEYJUICE - The Old Speakeasy
(Ryf Records)

Celebrate Spring with music and dance at Festival du Bois on March 6-8, 2020

COQUITLAM – As we make our way through the often cold and gloomy winter months, it's heartening to know that spring will come again.

So make a plan to celebrate by marking your calendars now for the 31st Festival du Bois on the weekend of March 6-8, 2020?

The largest francophone festival on Canada's West Coast always delivers a weekend full of fun, fabulous music, family entertainment and lots of great food – more than enough to brighten every life.

Along with a warm invitation to spend time in the dynamic francophone community and culture in our midst, the fest presents dynamic francophone, world and folk music featuring some of the finest musicians around.

In 2020, the festival welcomes a brilliant lineup of Québécois, Celtic, world and folk groups to Mackin Park in Maillardville/Coquitlam, located right near IKEA.

Walk on site to the sound of fiddles and accordions, some fiery podorhythmie (foot percussion) along with hot world rhythms and new sounds. For fans of Celtic music, for fans of great music in general, there's a sonic feast in store (along with some delicious poutine!).

All weekend long in the massive heated tent (the Grand Chapiteau) you'll enjoy everything from traditional tunes to Latin vibes and more.

This year, the festival is thrilled to welcome back Quebec's musical stars with **Yves Lambert and his Trio**.

If you know La Bottine Souriante,



Quebec's musical stars Yves Lambert, the charismatic singer and accordionist, and his Trio Olivier Rondeau (acoustic and electric guitar); and Tommy Gauthier (fiddle, feet, bouzouki) will return.

you'll know this charismatic singer and accordionist, whose moustached image and brilliant playing were at the beating heart of that iconic band for years.

His talent and creativity made him one of the most important players in the renaissance of traditional Québécois music. He's joined by Olivier Rondeau (acoustic and electric guitar); and Tommy Gauthier (fiddle, feet, bouzouki).

The festival opens with an all-ages dance with the **Sybaritic String Band** featuring caller Maureen Collier.

Over the weekend enjoy one of B.C.'s favourite groups, **Blackthorn**, and **Tipsy 3**, a trio of talented gals from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and

Quebec who share a passion for the traditional music of Quebec, Acadie, Ireland, Scotland, and the Maritimes. Beauséjour, singer-songwriters Danny Boudreau and Jocelyne Baribeau, raise their glorious voices to create some truly beautiful music.

They are joined at the fest by the Colombian-inspired music of singer-songwriter and activist **Cristian de la Luna**, Ottawa's **LeFloFranco**, "trad'badour" Roger Dallaire, and others.

There's a performance tent especially for kids and the young at heart, lots of fun on-site activities, traditional Québécois food and treats, shopping, and so much more! See full festival info and get your tickets in the new year at www.festivaldubois.ca.

Irish comedian Dara Briain coming to western Canada



MONTREAL – Just For Laughs is excited to announce that for the first time Irish comedian Dara Briain will be bringing his 'Voice of Reason' tour to Calgary on March 21 at the Bella Concert Hall, and Vancouver on March 23 at the Vogue Theatre.

One of the most recognizable faces on British television, Dara Briain goes back to his day job as a world class stand-up comedian with this tour.

It will take one of the most charismatic, intelligent, fast-talking and downright funny live performers working today back in his natural environment.

As well as his adept comedic work, Dara is in demand on British TV as host of BBC Two's hugely successful *Mock The Week*, *Stargazing Live*, *Robot Wars* and *Dave's Go8Bit*.

Dara has also previously released five classic stand-up DVDs with Universal Pictures (U.K.); *Crowd Tickler* (2015), *Craic Dealer* (2012), *This Is The Show* (2010), *Dara Briain Talks Funny Live In London* (2008) and *Dara Briain Live at the Theatre Royal* (2006) - all of which have also aired on BBC TV as one hour specials.

In 2017, Dara's first children's book *Beyond The Sky: You and the Universe* was released by Scholastic U.K.

A world class stand-up comedian, Dara is a master of audience interaction, armed with his supersonic wit and provocative observations, in this eagerly awaited new show.

Tickets are \$45.50 (+ facility & service charges) and go on sale on December 6. In Calgary, tickets are available online at: tickets.mru.ca. In Vancouver, tickets are available online at: voguetheatre.com.

For all the information you need, including prices and where to buy tickets, visit: www.hahaha.com/daraobriain.

DARA BRIAIN will be bringing his 'Voice of Reason' tour to Calgary on March 21 at the Bella Concert Hall, and Vancouver on March 23 at the Vogue Theatre.

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How to support a loved one struggling with alcohol addiction over the holiday season

The holidays can be a stressful time, particularly for those struggling with drugs or alcohol addiction.

To begin with the culture of the season includes a lot of indulgence and drinking. Additionally, there is often an expectation of perfection – the image that everyone is going to have a picture perfect family holiday.

People suffering from grief and loss or facing any kind of emotional challenges can find this time overwhelming, so we asked Lorinda Strang, Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Orchard Recovery Center on Bowen Island if she could offer insight into the issues of addiction and how to help support a loved one who is struggling.

By LORINDA STRANG

A question that we are frequently asked at the Orchard is, “What causes alcoholism?” – and the truth is that there is no single cause.

More importantly, it is defined by the American Society of Addiction Medicine as a primary, chronic, progressive, brain disease, which when left untreated, can be fatal. The good news is that it is a very treatable disease, and recovery is possible.

“Addiction is a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interac-

tions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual’s life experiences.

People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences. Prevention efforts and treatment approaches for addiction are generally as successful as those for other chronic diseases.”

– ASAM Board of Directors

The first step is to recognize that there is a problem – but before that, there are signs and symptoms that you can keep an eye out for. It is also important to keep in mind that the signs and symptoms will be different depending on the progression of alcohol use.

Am I drinking too much?

If you have ever wondered, or have been told by others, that you may be drinking too much, here are some questions you might ask yourself:

- Are you having a lack of control when you are drinking?
- Do you have an obsession to drink (or use drugs)?
- Are you having adverse consequences, repeatedly?
- Are you making yourself promises that you can’t keep?

For a person who suspects they may be struggling with alcohol use, those are often some of the first signs: when they are trying to control their drink-

ing, and no matter what promises they make, or how they try to shift their behaviour, they still end up over-drinking and having negative consequences.

If you find yourself asking these questions of yourself, those are early warning signs that you might have a problem.

What are the myths around ‘When is a person an alcoholic?’ Most people think of an alcoholic as a daily drinker – someone who has to wake up and have that first drink to steady their nerves or to feel normal, and that is actually late stage alcoholism.

Long before that occurs, other signs of an alcohol use disorder are binge-drinking, overuse of alcohol, black outs, or using alcohol to cope with emotions.

Start thinking about your intention when you go out to drink.

If you find yourself asking those questions above, then see if you can pull yourself back.

If you can, do. And if you can’t, then you need to ask for help – and the sooner you ask for help, the better.

High Functioning Alcoholics

There is still a lot of stigma around the word “alcoholic” – and as with so many other mental health issues, one of the goals we strive for is to erase the stigma

of what it means to be alcoholic or an addict.

We often picture people who have lost their jobs or their families – but most of the people who we see at the Orchard are still working, attending school, and their families are intact.

They may have started to lose things (like trust, accountability, or respect); everything may be hanging by a thread and about to come crashing down, but it hasn’t yet.

The elevator doesn’t have to go all the way to the basement; you can get off whenever you want, without having to hit rock bottom.

What do I do if I have a loved one who is drinking too much?

It’s not easy to know how to best approach a friend, family member, or coworker who may be struggling with their alcohol consumption, but here are a few ideas about how to frame your conversation.

Approach them carefully, and from the heart. It’s really important to keep in mind that no one chooses to become an alcoholic or an addict.

Often, they will be left with thoughts like, “This isn’t fair. Why is this happening to me? How come I can’t drink normally, like everyone else?” So approach them with love, compassion, and understanding.

Other phrases to keep in mind when approaching this hard conversation: “Learn to listen, Listen to learn.” “Say what you mean, and don’t say it mean.”

And don’t forget that even if you are the one who is trying to help, that you can ask for help for yourself.

As their loved one, you may actually not be the right person to talk to them about the way their alcohol or drug use has affected those around them.

Seek help for yourself

You are going to need strength and support to have these conversations, so having outside help can be really beneficial. Groups such as Al-Anon and Co-Dependents Anonymous offer mutual support meetings all around the world.

Al-Anon members are people, just like you, who are worried about someone with a drinking problem.

Co-Dependents Anonymous is a twelve-step program for people who share a common desire to develop functional and healthy relationships.

The Orchard Recovery Center is an internationally credited private drug and alcohol treatment center located on Bowen Island, British Columbia. For more information, visit: <https://orchardrecovery.com> or call 1-866-233-2299 or (604) 947-0420.

Return of the Light as the Season turns to Spring

By CYNTHIA WALLENTINE

THE growing season is on arrival. While ancestral communities looked to the earth, sky, and their societies to support survival – what bearing does that have on us today?

The welcome of spring is ancient, built into our DNA. At winter solstice, the sun is reborn to our world as the days imperceptibly begin to lengthen.

By Imbolg on February 1, our eyes and brain receptors sense the lengthening of days. In the Celtic world, this is the feast day of the goddess Brigid. The first day of spring arrives with Brid.

In the Celtic worldview the year divides along the two great fire festivals of Samhain on October 31, and Beltaine on May eve.

Samhain signals winter darkness and the work of the underground, while Beltaine marks the first day of summer, of light, aspiration, and labor.

Because the natural year is not polarized along light and dark, there are two other festivals that also turn the wheel of the year. Imbolg, in February, and Lughnasadh on August eve.

Marking the beginning of spring and autumn, these feast days break the tension and fatigue of what would otherwise be unnaturally dark – and unnaturally light – seasons.

Solstice and equinox celebrations occupy a unique niche on the Celtic calendar.



These observances and the practices around them propitiate our brightest star, the sun.

The archaic fire festivals of the Celts are influenced by our closest celestial neighbor, the moon.

The Keeper of these seasons is the ancient triple goddess who withstands many a culture across the globe.

In Ireland, she is Bride or Brigid the Maiden, Danú the Mother, and simply, the Crone. This feminine form nurtures idea to fruition and dissolution, and earthly and agricultural life from birth to decay.

From there to here

Whether individual or society, the timeless whirl of the seasons supports and counts our days and lives. We are part of the cosmic dance until we too return to earth and air to continue our journey.

Today we live in a society deeply involved in reinventing itself. No longer

land masses divided by treacherous straits, ours is a connected globe, where virus and visitor can reach the other side of the planet in a day.

Nativist attitudes rise in direct conflict with those who see and seek planetary peace, uniform prosperity, and environmental restoration.

The struggle to define self is transposed into possession of wealth, property, and ownership of geographical regions on the planet, “what is mine is mine.”

It becomes simple math, “I am what I see around me,” instead of “I am what I know inside of me.”

Tribal attitudes are age-old. For thousands of years, living within the defined society of a tribe was anyone’s best shot at survival of self and family.

Today, finding one’s “tribe” remains critical but has, in western countries, come to define the search for completion of self, of finding others who think, feel, and revere in a similar way. Tribe

is found by heart, not by blood.

Around the world, there are individuals and societies reaching out. There are others that shrink back, sure that this time of change will soon end and life will return to “normal.” Yet, there is no more constant process in all of nature than that of change.

The Old and the new – Feile Bride

There is a tendency to brush off the deep wisdom of myth and folklore as a product of then, when it is just as vibrant now. The Old Ways are not gone.

In the Celtic worldview, Bride is Bringer of spring and much more to the mortal world.

Bride is an immanent spirit, of the earth. With a smithy in the underground, she forges the vessels that hold our small lives.

Once she formed the cauldron of the Dagda, the original witch’s cauldron. Now she whispers into our ear when we need the space to contemplate our ideas, protect ourselves or others, and build the strong relationships that now constitute those containers.

Bride is inspiration. To every woman, child, or man who has wondered how to engage their creative spirit, or create a meal with little means, she stands witness.

She is muse to the writer or poet, she midwifes idea to word, she is present in the moment of connection and then fades back. Long revered for her craftwork, her engagement of heart and hand is an integral spark in every artisan.

Bride of many names is protector of the hearth and of childbirth. She speaks at the moment of life, and of death, because no childbirth is guaranteed,

even in our day and age.

Brigid too, is associated with the custom of keening death, and thus may share sisterhood with the Bean Sidhe, the woman of the sidhe, the Banshee.

The Banshee is not an unkindly spirit, she justifies mourning and the essential act of grieving. Bride gives voice to grief, and also validates the moments of exquisite knowing that we all have in life – but which are quickly dismissed as “impossible.”

And Brid is fire, she stokes fire for warmth, creation, and war. She is Brig, Brigantia, an associated sister of war. She is of our times.

As Saint Brigid, Bride withdrew to the family and homestead setting, and of course, became the legendary foster-mother of Jesus Christ to complete the Christian image.

In these forms, Bride has relevance to anyone interested in engaging their potential, knowing there is an energy standing by who appreciates and nurtures their creativity, their life, and their aims. Bride has the valor and strength to literally fight fire with fire.

Bride is a powerful goddess who has seen her people born, die, suffer, create, and love.

She is a goddess of our time, and while her history and legacy establishes her credibility, it does not confine her to the past.

From dark to light, archaic to contemporary, Bride transcends time. Present at the outset of every voyage, endeavor, and life, Brigid is creativity in moments of question, stability in times of fear, and a powerful and loving member of the tribes and global community of today. Brid is come, Brid is welcome.

Vigils held for victims of London Bridge terror attack

LONDON – Tributes were paid to victims of the London Bridge terror attack, as the government said it was reviewing the early release from prison of dozens of convicted terrorists.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the main opposition Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn and London Mayor Sadiq Khan all joined a vigil to honour Jack Merritt (25) and Saskia Jones (23).

They were both killed on Friday, November 29 when Usman Khan (28), who was wearing a fake suicide device, went on a knife rampage before being shot dead by armed police.

The memorial event in the City of London's financial district, a short distance from the scene of the attack, involved members of the emergency services and the public.

A minute's silence was also held in Cambridge, where the two victims were university graduates, and were working on a prisoner rehabilitation scheme that Khan had attended.

Three men are being commended as heroes after they used a fire extinguisher and a narwhal tusk to pin down the attacker. Dramatic video captured at the scene shows three men taking him to the ground, allowing others to escape.

The footage shows one man wielding a fire extinguisher to spray the man, as another pokes him with a long narwhal tusk. A third grabs the man, throwing him to the ground.

According to a *Guardian* report, it is believed the tusk – a long, sharp tooth



TWO University of Cambridge graduates Saskia Jones (23) and Jack Merritt (25) were stabbed to death by Usman Khan during his deadly rampage on Friday, November 29.

– was pulled from the wall of Fishmongers' Hall, a nearby building.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan thanked the members of the public for their "breath-taking heroism," while Toby Williamson, chief executive of Fishmongers' Hall, paid tribute to the staff at the venue who tried to help the injured and fight off the attacker.

Khan (28) had been released early from a 16-year prison sentence for an Al-Qaeda-inspired plot to attack central London after being deemed to no longer be a risk to the public.

The incident has provoked questions about legislation, and triggered accusations that the government was seeking to make political capital from the tragedy before the December 12 general election.

Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson has blamed legal changes made by a previous Labour government for the fact that Khan was freed from prison a year ago after serving half of a 16-year sentence for terrorist offences, without parole officers assessing whether he still posed a risk.

The family of Jack Merritt cautioned against knee-jerk responses. His father David Merritt said his son "would not want this terrible, isolated incident to be used as a pretext by the government for introducing even more draconian sentences on prisoners, or for detaining people in prison for longer than necessary.

"Don't use my son's death, and his and his colleague's photos to promote your vile propaganda," he said in a tweet.

British diplomat resigns over pressure to 'peddle half-truths' on Brexit

LONDON – A U.K. diplomat in charge of Brexit at the British embassy in Washington has quit.

In her resignation letter, seen by U.S. broadcaster CNN, Alexandra Hall Hall said she could no longer "peddle half-truths" on behalf of political leaders she did not "trust."

She said she has become "dismayed" by the reluctance of politicians to "honestly" address the "challenges and trade-offs" involved in leaving the EU.

The Foreign Office said it would not comment on details of her resignation.

However, it did confirm Hall Hall had resigned as U.K. Brexit Counsellor at the British embassy in Washington – a post which involves explaining the U.K. Brexit policy to U.S. lawmakers and policymakers.

In her letter, dated December 3, she wrote, "I have been increasingly dismayed by the way in which our political leaders have tried to deliver Brexit, with reluctance to address honestly, even with our own citizens, the challenges and trade-offs which Brexit involves."

She also criticised the use of "misleading or disingenuous arguments" and "some behaviour towards our institutions" by politicians, adding that "were it happening in another country, we would almost certainly as dip-



ALEXANDRA HALL HALL

lomatics have received instructions to register our concern."

Hall Hall added, "It makes our job to promote democracy and the rule of law that much harder, if we are not seen to be upholding these core values at home."

BBC diplomatic correspondent Paul Adams described her letter as "stunningly blunt."

Hall Hall, who is a former ambassador to Georgia and has worked in the diplomatic service for 33 years, did not name any specific politicians in the letter, but took aim at the current Conservative Government.

In her resignation letter, she wrote, "I am also at a stage in life where I would prefer to do something more rewarding with my time, than peddle half-

truths on behalf of a government I do not trust."

When the BBC put Hall Hall's comments to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, he said, "I'm not going to talk about employment issues in the civil service."

Diplomats are supposed to be politically neutral and Hall Hall stressed her decision to resign was not tied to her personal views on leaving the EU.

"I took this position with a sincere commitment, indeed passion, to do my part, to the very best of my abilities, to help achieve a successful outcome on Brexit," she wrote, but added her position had become "unbearable personally and untenable professionally."

With a week to go until the U.K. heads to the polls, Hall Hall insisted she had stood down before the election to avoid her resignation being portrayed as a reaction to its outcome.

CNN reported that she had also filed a formal complaint about being asked to convey overtly partisan language on Brexit.

Hall Hall suggested her role as a diplomat had been diverted to convey messages that were "neither fully honest nor politically impartial."

The U.K. has been without an ambassador to the U.S. since Sir Kim Darroch resigned in the summer over a row about leaked e-mails critical of President Trump's administration.



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VANCOUVER WELSH SOCIETY

Reflections on a great year and a busy Christmas season

VANCOUVER – Following its highly successful Cambrian Hall 90th anniversary celebrations, Welsh Society members are now busy planning Christmas and New Year events.

The Society's Christmas celebrations begin with a mulled wine evening on Saturday, December 7. On Sunday, December 8, the annual bilingual Christmas carol service was held at the Cambrian Hall.

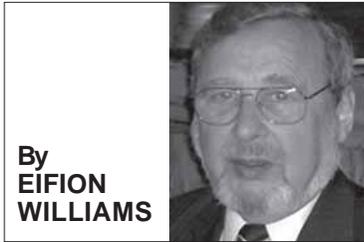
The service was chaired by Jane Byrne, with Emyr Honeybun as the accompanist. *A te bach* (light refreshments) was served to participants following the service.

At 2 PM, following the carol service, there was a children's Christmas party in the hall. Members brought the children in their families to this event where Santa made an early Christmas season visit.

The Vancouver Welsh Society's annual Christmas dinner will be held on December 14, commencing at 7 PM in the Cambrian Hall.

This is always a popular event and members are urged to reserve early as tickets sell out quickly. Information and/or tickets for the above events are available from Gaynor Evans via the Vancouver Welsh Society website.

The Vancouver Orpheus Male Choir, led by artistic director Liana Savard, with accompanist Barry Yamanouchi, has scheduled a series of concerts over the Christmas season. Two concerts have already been held – St. Andrew's Anglican Church in Langley and a joint concert with the Harmony Women's Choir at Trinity United Church in Port Coquitlam.



By
**EIFION
WILLIAMS**

On Friday, December 13, the Orpheus Male Choir will hold a joint concert with St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School Choir at St. Catherine's Anglican Church, 1058 Ridgewood Drive, North Vancouver.

On Sunday, December 15, there will be an afternoon joint concert with Crescent Church Children's Choir at Mount Olive Lutheran Church, 2350-148th Street, South Surrey.

Tickets for these upcoming concerts are available through the choir's website: <http://vancouverorpheus.org>.

The Vancouver Welsh Men's choir, under the direction of Music Director Jonathan Quick, with accompanist Karen Lee-Morang, are also presenting a series of Christmas events, entitled Christmas Traditions Around the World.

The choir has already appeared in concerts in White Rock on November 30, with the North Surrey Secondary School Choir, and in New Westminster on December 1 with the ensemble Winter Harp.

The VWMC has also performed in North Vancouver, together with the Argyle Secondary School Choir, as well as two Vancouver concerts in Christ Church Cathedral and

Shaughnessy Heights Baptist Church, the latter with the Magee Secondary School Choir.

Proceeds from the November 29 Christ Church Cathedral Concert went to support music education programs for children and youth in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside community.

The next two concerts will be at the Surrey Arts Centre on December 10 and at the Chilliwack Cultural Centre, Hub International Theatre, on December 15.

Tickets for these upcoming concerts are available through the VWMC's website: <http://vancouverchoir.ca/tickets-events>.

Everyone is welcome to join in the Vancouver Welsh Society's regular Cambrian Hall activities in the New Year. These include the Cambrian Bookworms, the Genealogy Group, Twmpath Dances, quiz nights and the monthly bilingual religious service.

Two major upcoming events are the St. Dwynwen's Night celebration on January 25 and St. David's Day festivities around March 1. Details on these and other events will appear later on the Society's website at www.welshsociety.com.

The Vancouver Welsh Society also offers free Welsh language classes to the public. Designed for all levels of Welsh learners, participants can join at any point in the term.

The teacher is Antone Minard, who has a doctorate in folklore and mythology from the University of California, specializing in Celtic Studies. Winter classes will begin on Thursday, January 16, 2020.



PHOTO: National Trust Images/lolo Penri Photography/PA
EXPERTS say the 16th Century bible helped standardize the Welsh language and is considered to be the single most significant step in ensuring the survival of the language today. It is on display at 6th Century farmhouse Ty Mawr Wybrnant, near Betws-y-Coed, Snowdonia.

Hydropower deployed to protect centuries-old Welsh bible from damage

CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH, Wales – A renewable power system is helping to heat a farmhouse in Snowdonia, where the first bible translated into Welsh is on display.

The "hugely important" Welsh bible which is more than 400 years old is being protected from damage with the help of hydropower, the National Trust said.

The bible has been increasingly at risk of deterioration from flooding and damp at the 16th Century farmhouse Ty Mawr Wybrnant, near Betws-y-Coed, Snowdonia, where it is on display.

But now the Trust, which cares for the property, says it has found a sustainable solution by installing a "pico" or small scale hydroelectric turbine to use water from the nearby stream to help power the heating system to prevent damp.

It means the bible is being protected by the very thing, water, that is also putting it at risk through increasingly heavy and persistent rainfall, flooding and damp, as the climate changes.

The book, on display with more than 200 other bibles in different languages, is one of only 24 known copies of the first bible translated into Welsh.

The translation was undertaken by Bishop William Morgan, who was born at Ty Mawr Wybrnant, and printed in 1588.

Experts say it helped standardize the Welsh language and is considered to be the single most significant step in ensuring the survival of the language today.

But the bible, along with the rest of the collection, is susceptible to moisture in the air.

Now the hydroelectric turbine will generate power for the electric radiators that control levels of humidity in the Grade II listed farmhouse, with the switch to renewable energy protecting the books in a sustainable way, the Trust said.

It will only take a proportion of water from the stream to drive the turbine when water levels rise to a certain point – likely to be just when the electricity is most needed, as the air is full of moisture after rainfall.

The turbine, discreetly housed in a larch-clad shed, is expected to cut the property's carbon dioxide emissions by 5.2 tonnes a year.



THE 400-year-old bible was translated into Welsh by Bishop William Morgan, who was born at Ty Mawr Wybrnant, and printed in 1588.

Keith Jones, the National Trust's climate change adviser, said, "Earlier this year we experienced the worst flood at Ty Mawr Wybrnant in living memory and that extra moisture meant we needed to use more heating to ensure the humidity levels didn't get too high.

"Climate predictions indicate likely increases in the severity and frequency of rainfall in the area. This small-scale technology is allowing us to adapt to future changes more sustainably."

He added, "The energy is consumed directly on-site, solely for the conservation of this priceless bible collection.

"We must reduce our impact on the climate, but we can harness the tools nature gives us to adapt to the challenges we are facing."

It is the first time the National Trust has used hydroelectric power for the primary aim of protecting a historic collection.

Jones said the organization would be looking at how the approach, developed with the help of the Dwr Uisce Project which includes researchers from Bangor University and Trinity College, Dublin, could be used where other collections may also be at risk.

Tim Pye, the National Trust's libraries curator, said, "Extreme weather is one of the threats to our collections, with sensitive and fragile objects like books, manuscripts and other documents especially susceptible to conditions such as damp.

"The energy-efficient and sustainable pico hydro solution for Ty Mawr Wybrnant will help greatly in its efforts to safeguard the Bible collection for today's and future generations to enjoy."

British-Irish Council summit focused on Brexit and tackling drug abuse

DUBLIN – Political leaders from across the U.K. and Ireland have met in Dublin to discuss how to deal with "shared issues" such as Brexit and tackling drug abuse.

The British-Irish Council (BIC) summit in November was attended by senior figures from the U.K. and devolved governments, along with Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

The council was set up 20 years ago to bring the U.K. and Irish Governments together, alongside various devolved administrations on the islands.

As well as the summit, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon held bilateral talks with both Varadkar and Welsh First Minister Mark Drakeford. Northern Ireland Secretary Julian Smith represented the U.K. Government at the event.

The group said they spent time discussing Britain's exit from the EU and the potential fall-out for each of their jurisdictions.

"We also touched on Brexit," Varadkar said in his opening remarks. "Much of the next steps depends on what happens in the U.K. elections.

"I think we'll all reassess the situation

when we receive the results of the election.

"Whatever happens, we're all very keen to ensure that there is a close relationship between Ireland and the U.K.

"We also spoke about the future of the British-Irish Council which was established under the Good Friday Agreement, is 20 years old, and we all believe it could have an enhanced role in a post-Brexit environment, and we've asked the secretariat to do some thinking with regards to that in advance of the next summit."

The group also expressed "deep regret" that no representatives of Northern Ireland could attend the event as Stormont remains deadlocked.

"We are all expressing our deep regret that Northern Ireland is absent, as there is no first minister, or deputy first minister to attend," Varadkar added.

"The British Council was agreed to in the Good Friday Agreement and the council is not whole without being able to hear from Northern Ireland.

"Efforts as you know continue to re-establish the executive assembly.

"There is a deadline of January to do that, and opportunities potentially and hopefully rising after the elections and before Christmas to speak to the

parties and encourage them to come together again."

The group, which they joked had become an "ex-health minister's club", as four out five of those present held the role, also discussed substance and alcohol abuse.

"The focus was very much an issue of substance misuse and the British-Irish Council very often is an opportunity for us to learn from each other and to hear about those policies, what works, what doesn't work, to get advice from each other on very practical issues," Varadkar said.

"Today was on the issue of substance misuse which affects our jurisdictions in different ways but affects us all.

"We certainly were of the view, as a consensus, that the approach should be primarily health-led but not health only."

He said there was also a useful discussion on the way different jurisdictions were dealing with alcohol which "gets misused very frequently."

"Scotland has already led the charge on that, and has implemented minimum-unit pricing and seen a reduction in sales," he said.

Senior figures from the Crown Dependencies of the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey also attended the summit.

Fund managers deploy machines to decipher British election riddle

LONDON – Question: How do you predict the outcome of a snap election when so many polls have been so wrong, half of voters haven't made up their minds and the crucial factor may not be who wins, but how much they win by?

Answer: Unclear.

So financial investors, who could make or lose fortunes on the result of Britain's December 12 vote, are taking matters into their own hands and arming themselves with every predictive tool at their disposal – from artificial intelligence analysis to private polling and sports betting techniques.

Faced with such an unpredictable and financially pivotal election, fund managers say they can't put their faith in pollsters who failed to accurately call the last two British elections and dramatically dropped the ball on Brexit and Trump.

"In the past opinion polls accounted for 85 percent of your input, now maybe it's 30 percent," said Stephen Jen, macro hedge fund manager at London-based Eurizon SLJ. "The world has become so complicated that polls, the standard metrics of the past, don't capture the picture anymore."

More than two dozen big investors were interviewed asking for their opinion, including Aviva, Legal and General, NN Investment Partners, State Street Global Advisors and M&G Investments.

Most said they had turned to AI-based tools that variously analyzed news reports, social media, web traffic, opinion polls and betting odds to decipher how the vote might play out.

Brexit has scrambled traditional political allegiances, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservatives pledging a swift split from the EU, the main opposition Labour promising another referendum and others vowing to stay in the bloc.

It will not be enough for Johnson simply to win more seats than any other party – he needs a parliamentary majority to ensure Brexit happens. Any other outcome is likely to lead to a second referendum on EU membership.

British parliamentary seat projections are complicated by a first-past-the-post voting system – in each of the 650 electoral districts, the candidate with the most votes wins the seat. This can undermine gauges of the overall national vote.

While opinion polls show the Conservatives around 10 points ahead, BNP Paribas noted that at this point in the 2017 campaign, the party had an even bigger lead, only to see it evaporate by election day.

A model created by pollsters YouGov shows the Conservatives on track to win 359 seats but has a margin of error of 50 either way – the difference between a majority and a hung parliament, potentially Brexit and no Brexit.



THE RESULTS of the December 12 U.K. General Election could determine the fate of the country – whether Britain leaves the European Union or whether a second referendum will be held.

Britain cannot return to normal after deal, says shadow Brexit secretary

LONDON – Britain's shadow Brexit secretary said the country "won't go back to normal" after Brexit or a vote to remain.

During a meeting in support of Edinburgh Labour candidate Ian Murray, Keir Starmer said, regardless of the decision made after his party's proposed second referendum, the country will remain divided.

The claim comes on the same day the Labour Party released its manifesto with a promise to negotiate a new deal with the EU and hold a second referendum on the issue within six months.

Starmer said the only way to unite the country will be to take action to ensure people no longer feel disenfranchised.

"Anybody who thinks that the deal with Europe is going to resolve the issue, needs to think again," he said. "This isn't going to be resolved. There isn't going to be a happy day, when it's either the deal or remain is decided and it just goes back to normal. That's never going to happen."

Speaking alongside former prime minister Gordon Brown on November 21, he said the people who feel disenfranchised should be listened to and actions taken to change their views.

"If millions of people tell you that a political or economic situation isn't working for them, you've got to listen to that," he said.

He also believes that it is important to give the people of the U.K. another vote on the issue.

"We're never going to get past Brexit if we only focus on one part of it: the deal. We've got to focus on the other bit, which told us that we need much greater change than we've had for a long time.

"That told us that people feel disenfranchised at almost every level. The workers, in their health service, in their ability to believe they could trust their politicians and that has got to change.

"This will never be resolved if we don't match the deal that we come up with a completely different offer for our country."

Is the Monster Raving Loony Party the only sane choice left in the U.K. General Election?

gREETINGS from a cold and soggy Bournemouth. You may have heard that there will be a General Election in the U.K. on December 12, which means that we, the voters, are being promised more goodies than Santa Claus could dream of putting under the tree.

If the Conservative Party wins we will kick Johnny foreigner into touch and Brexit will become a reality. After that they will rebuild the country which they have done their best to destroy.

A stronger well-funded health service with 50,000 more nurses! More police on the streets, a higher basic wage, and lower taxes. The big problem is that nobody believes a word Boris Johnson says.

If the Labour Party wins they promise to spend 83 billion pounds on social services. New roads, railway lines and thousands of new houses will be built.

If we feel unwell there will be hundreds of new hospitals, with doctors and nurses just waiting for us to arrive.

Everybody will be able to retire early on full pay, and it won't cost us a penny because it will be paid for by those nasty rich people (the same ones who will be heading for the Cayman Islands faster than you can say tax avoidance).

If the Liberal party wins there will be a new referendum on whether to leave the EU. If it is the same result as last time, then presumably they will keep going until they get the "Remain" result they desire. They call this democracy.

The Scottish National Party cannot win a general election covering all the

POSTCARD FROM BOURNEMOUTH



By ELFAN JONES



SIR ARCHIBALD Stanton Earl Eaton pictured here with his right-hand man Gilly Nicholls.

U.K. so are not promising anything. The polls suggest that they will win at least 50 of the 59 Scottish parliamentary seats.

In a hung U.K. parliament they would be in a powerful bargaining position and would look for a second referendum to leave the U.K.

Scotland voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU, so would presumably join the Liberals in demanding another referendum on Europe as well.

Plaid Cymru the Welsh independence party would also demand a second EU referendum despite the fact that Wales voted to leave in 2016 (seems like a lifetime ago).

According to Adam Price, the Plaid Cymru leader, Wales is now a "Remain" country. I have no idea how he juggled figures to arrive at that conclusion.

Then we have Nigel Farage, the ultimate Brexiteer, who might or might not be the leader of the Brexit party.

Everything is vague with him. He reminds me of a jolly fellow who buys everybody in the pub a drink, but leaves you wondering where the money came from to pay for it.

He does not believe in a manifesto, so is not promising anything. He says he does not want to break any promises, but it also allows him to make things up as he goes along.

If the Green Party wins then, of course, we would not be allowed to cut down a Christmas tree, but we will be healthier happier vegans breathing fresh air.

Cars will be banned so by walking and cycling we will become fitter, and air travel will be by glider only. Smoking will become a criminal offence and farmers will have to put bags around cows' bottoms to stop the methane polluting the atmosphere.

So those are our nationwide choices in this train wreck, except for the Monster Raving Loony Party.

The party was founded in 1983 by a pop singer called Screaming Lord Sutch. He died in 1999 and for the last 15 years the party has had two joint leaders, Howling Laud Hope and his pet cat Catmando.

They are the longest serving political leaders and claim that they are the party responsible for the pubs being open all day.

They are fielding 12 outstanding candidates including Lady Lily the Pink, Baron Von Thunderclap, Lord Bucket Head, and Sir Archibald Stanton Earl Eaton.

Merry Christmas, Elfan

A new murder mystery book by Elfan Jones entitled *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie* will be launched on Amazon.co.uk on December 12 just in time for Christmas with all proceeds donated to Crisis U.K., the national charity for single homeless people and dedicated to ending homelessness.

Donald Tusk predicts a 'second rate' Britain

BRUSSELS – The President of the European Council Donald Tusk has predicted that Britain will lose influence in international affairs and become a "second-rate player" after it leaves the European Union.

Backers of Britain's 2016 vote to exit the EU say that the country – the world's fifth largest economy – will achieve a new global status unshackled from EU rules and closer to the United States.

Tusk said only a united Europe could confront an assertive China and play an effective global role.

"I have heard repeatedly from Brexiteers that they wanted to leave the European Union to make the United Kingdom global again, believing that only alone, it can truly be great..." Tusk said in a speech at the College of Europe in the Belgian city of Bruges.

"But the reality is exactly the opposite. Only as part of a united Europe can the U.K. play a global role, only together can we confront, without any complexes, the greatest powers of this world. And the world knows it," he said.

"I have heard the same in India, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and South

Africa – that after its departure, the U.K. will become an outsider, a second-rate player."

Tusk has repeatedly voiced a wish for Britain to change its mind and stay in the EU. The former Polish prime minister stepped down from his post on December 1, handing over to former Belgian prime minister Charles Michel.

Britain is set to leave the bloc on January 31, 2020, if British Prime Minister Boris Johnson wins a majority in the British election next month, thereby securing parliamentary ratification of his EU withdrawal deal.

Britain's status as an influential power in the EU has also given it clout to diverge from Washington when it disagrees – something it has frequently done since U.S. President Donald Trump came to office.

Many Western diplomats believe Britain after Brexit must be careful not to alienate itself from other friendly countries who have a more multilateral approach to world politics.

"Why are they doing this?" – I was asked this regretful question everywhere I went," Tusk said. "One of my English friends is probably right when he says with melancholy that Brexit is the real end of the British Empire."

Season of Celebration Starts early in Scotland

EDINBURGH – The season of celebration is getting longer in Scotland and not just because Christmas displays now appear in stores well before the clocks go back.

I am writing this on St. Andrews Day which, not so long ago, passed with little fanfare other than among those who were members of societies set up in the patron saint's name.

However, since the passing of the St. Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Act 2007 by the Scottish Parliament, there has been a significant rise in public awareness concerning our national saint.

Part of this could be because he now provides the opportunity for a day off work even though the act did not oblige employers to offer one or require banks to close.

Internationally, St. Andrew's Day celebrations have become an exercise in soft power with Scottish politicians swinging by Scottish Government offices around the globe to party with the locals.

For myself, this St. Andrew's Day is not just a time for celebration but a time for reflection.

Ten years ago newspaper designer Graeme Murdoch and I were ourselves at the centre of the Scottish Parliament's St. Andrew's Day celebration when we rounded out Homecoming 2009/10 years of devolution with our "this is who we are" reception and exhibition.

The project saw us travel across Canada from east coast to west, interviewing people about their Scottish connections, dropping in to towns with names like Inverness and New Glasgow and encouraging the locals to tell the story of their communities using their digital cameras.

It was the most remarkable experience and drew a level of media attention that was far beyond anything that we anticipated.

However, the pleasure of looking back at the pictures from St. Andrew's night 10 years ago is tempered by the realisation that some of the people in them are no longer with us.

One of the speakers that night was Presiding Officer Alex Fergusson who passed away in 2018 and earlier this year we lost a good friend in Dennis MacLeod.

Dennis not only provided some of the funding that allowed the project to happen in the first place, but travelled from Victoria to Edinburgh to join us at the Parliament.

But life requires you to move forward and, at 3:30 in the afternoon and 55.5 degrees north, the sun is already set-



By
**HARRY
McGRATH**

ting on St. Andrew's Day and it's time to think about Christmas.

The two celebrations have something in common. Christmas wasn't a public holiday in Scotland either and only became one in 1958.

Now it's much the same as anywhere else with Edinburgh in particular competing for the Christmas tourist gaze with other cities across the globe.

They were so keen to get on with it this year that the giant Christmas market that consumes Princes Street Gardens in the city centre was erected without planning permission.

The outcry was only compounded when it was discovered that the market didn't have planning permission last year either.

Still, the tourists pour in and fill the ever-increasing number of Airbnb properties around the city.

There may be a breaking point approaching with Edinburgh named along with places like Venice and Barcelona as one of the cities in the world suffering from over tourism.

There are also signs of resistance with historian Sir Tom Devine recently teaming up with writers Ian Rankin and Alexander McCall Smith to back a campaign by the Edinburgh World Heritage charity to help protect the city.

According to Devine, "there is the threat of unregulated tourism and the potential destruction of eminent sites."

It may not be exactly what Sir Tom has in mind, but already Princes Street has lost two of its iconic department stores.

Last year the House of Fraser closed and is soon to be transformed into the Johnny Walker Whisky Experience.

Last week newspapers were reporting that Jenners is to leave the building it has occupied since 1838. It has been a Christmas hub for generations of Edinburgh shoppers, but will now be a hotel.

And yet for all that Edinburgh tourism could be better managed, it's hard not to feel proud when you wander the city you live in and see people from all over the world admiring it just as you do when you visit their cities.

Some years ago, I read a paper which argued that people think of themselves as travellers and others as tourists.

It's a kind of benign version of the anti-immigrant "expat" who shows up on television here being interviewed from his home in Spain.

With Brexit on the horizon, Scotland can use all the tourists it can get as it struggles to keep a window open to the world that others seem determined to close.

Last week, I was back in touch with the place where we started "this is who we are."

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia is now helping me get the word out in eastern Canada about the dotscot domain.

The museum's motto is "Countless Journeys, One Canada" and I would recommend it to anyone as a pre-Christmas tonic and antidote to the kind of anti-immigrant rhetoric that we are constantly exposed to on this side of the pond.

And so with the museum's celebratory message echoing in my head, it's time to wish everyone the best of the season. I hope you had a great St. Andrew's Day and have a wonderful Christmas and New Year when they come. *Slainte!*



HARRY McGrath and Graeme Murdoch at the Scottish Parliament's 2009/10 St. Andrew's Day celebration when they rounded out the Homecoming year of devolution with their "this is who we are" reception and exhibition.



PHOTO: Photos from Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 THE CANADIAN Immigration Story Exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Immigration. The museum is situated in Halifax, Nova Scotia at Pier 21, the National Historic Site that served as the gateway to Canada for one million immigrants between 1928 and 1971. Today, the museum shares the stories and experiences of all immigrants to Canada, past to present day.

Love Scotland? Tell the world with a .scot email address

People of Scottish heritage – anyone with a love of things Scottish – can profess that publicly by signing up for an e-mail address or web domain that ends in .scot.

Organizations that use .scot range from the Scottish Government (gov.scot) and Scottish Parliament (parliament.scot), to businesses and bloggers based in Scotland, to ex-pats and Scotland enthusiasts around the world.

The not-for-profit DotScot registry launched in 2014 and now encompasses 18,000 members.

Harry McGrath, the chair and head of engagement and global outreach for the registry, said the domain allows people to easily express their connection to Scotland on the Internet.

"The idea was that we would band the Scots at home and people with a Scottish connection abroad, something I've been trying for years in various ways, but this seemed like a modern way to do it," McGrath said in an interview with CBC Cape Breton's *Mainstreet*.

McGrath said unlike many other country domains, people do not have to live in, or be from, Scotland to sign up. "We wanted to keep this as wide and as liberal as possible," he said.

"So we managed to slip the word affinity into the application. And to our relative surprise, it got accepted. So it can be heritage, it can be the fact that you were born in Scotland, it can be the fact that you simply feel some sort of affinity with the place."

McGrath lived in Canada for 25 years and taught for several years in the School for Scottish Studies at Simon

Fraser University in British Columbia.

He said five million Canadians identify themselves in the national census as having some sort of Scottish connection, and that connection is particularly strong in Nova Scotia.

People can also sign up for a free DotScot email address. Canadians typically choose one that ends in @canadian.scot or @blether.scot. Blether is a Scottish word for "chattering or chatty," said McGrath.

The eventual goal is to build an online community, he said. One possibility, he said, would be to break down subscribers into groups of interest around such things as Highland dancing, piping or Gaelic speakers, perhaps through online forums.

"The most wonderful of all would be if we could get people communicating as part of this international family of Scots," said McGrath. "It would be great."

Nicola Sturgeon crowned Scottish Politician of the Year

EDINBURGH – First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has been crowned Scottish Politician of the Year for a record fifth time.

The SNP leader faced off against fellow finalists Scottish Conservative leader Jackson Carlaw and Scottish Green MSP John Finnie before taking the top award at this year's event.

When collecting her award Sturgeon said that she, and the other politicians in the room didn't come into politics to "win awards," and that they would much prefer to "win elections."

She added that though they may have much that divides them, every Scottish politician does the "very best they can" for those they serve.

Her party won big on the night, with Joanna Cherry named Best Scot at Westminster, Finance Secretary Derek Mackay taking the Politics in Business award, and Glasgow City Council leader Susan Aitken crowned Local Politician of the Year.

Sir Paul Grice, who stepped down as Holyrood's chief executive in June after 20 years in the role, was honoured with a special lifetime achievement award.

Sturgeon's fellow finalist and Holyrood rival Jackson Carlaw was named as the Donald Dewar Debater of the Year by the judges with praise given to his performances in the Holyrood chamber.

Scottish Green MSP Ross Greer was named the One to Watch, while Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser was given the title of E-Politician of the Year.

Are you .Scot yet?

.Scot is the domain name for the worldwide family of Scots

It's now available for individuals, groups and businesses connected to Scotland



TO FIND OUT HOW TO BECOME A .SCOT VISIT
WWW.DOTSCOT.NET



PHOTO: Scottish Government/PA

ALEX SALMOND as he issued a statement at Bute House that he would be standing down as first minister after the 2014 referendum defeat.

Former First Minister Alex Salmond charged with sexual assault

EDINBURGH – Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has insisted due process must be respected after her predecessor appeared in court on a series of sexual assault charges.

Alex Salmond pleaded not guilty on November 21 to 14 separate allegations involving 10 women.

He faces charges of one attempted rape, one assault with intent to rape and two indecent assaults at the official residence of the first minister of Scotland during the independence referendum campaign.

Speaking outside the High Court in Edinburgh, the former Scottish National Party leader said, "I am innocent and I will defend my position vigorously."

With a trial date set for March 9, he said, "I am innocent and I will defend my position vigorously but the only

place, the only proper place to answer criminal charges, is in this court – and that's exactly what we intend to do next spring."

Sturgeon refused to comment further on her predecessor. She said her only interest was that "justice is done, whatever that might be."

Campaigning in Glasgow in the run-up to December's General Election she said, "This is a live, ongoing criminal trial so there is nothing it is appropriate for me to say, in fact there is nothing it is appropriate for anybody to say because it is absolutely essential that due process is allowed to take its course.

"My only interest as first minister and as an ordinary citizen is that justice is done – whatever that might be. So I will say nothing that in any way might influence or prejudice that trial because it is vital that goes ahead and due process is respected."

EDINBURGH – As the UN launched 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence on November 25, Scottish Government minister Christina McKelvie urged people to never stop being shocked by the sheer extent of domestic abuse as she set out the action being taken to reduce it.

McKelvie is the Minister for Older People and Equalities and since 2016 she has been the Convener of the Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee.

She stressed that gender-based violence is an affront to human dignity, damages health and well-being, it limits freedom and potential, and is a violation of the most fundamental human rights.

It can take numerous forms that result in physical and psychological harm or suffering to women and children and includes threats, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life.

The minister said, "We should not stop being shocked that such violence is prevalent across the world, including here in Scotland.

"For example, did you know there were 59,541 incidents of domestic abuse recorded in Scotland (2017/18) and 82 percent were female victims?"

"These figures are stark. And should remind us all that each and every part of government, the public sector and wider society has an important role to play in tackling this violence."

She explained that specialist organisations like local women's aids and rape crisis centres remain key in supporting those affected by violence and

abuse, but it is not just an issue for them.

It needs the engagement of local authorities, Police Scotland, the NHS, local authorities, the justice system, social work, housing, media, the business sector, trade unions, third sector organisations and individuals and communities too.

Equally Safe, the government's joint strategy with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), has a strong focus on tackling the underlying attitudes that create the societal conditions for gender-based violence to flourish.

They are working to raise awareness of all forms of gender-based violence at a community and an institutional level.

This strategy is backed up with investment of over £12 million a year to support prevention work, frontline support and advocacy services, and perpetrator programmes. The government also continues to invest in important work to improve the justice system response to victims and survivors.

Making sure the law works to safeguard those at risk of domestic abuse has been a significant focus according to Minister McKelvie.

The flagship Domestic Abuse Act, passed last year, creates a specific offence of domestic abuse that covers not just the physical but also other forms of psychological abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour.

Recently, the first minister also announced plans to bring forward further legislation to ensure that the police and courts have new powers to remove suspected domestic abusers from the homes of their victims.

Many people fleeing abuse and violence of themselves and/or their children, become homeless in the process, and this new protection order will change the reality for so many women and children whose only way of escape is to leave their home.

Community partners are taking important steps too. Police Scotland has established a National Domestic Abuse Task Force to target the most prolific perpetrators.

They are taking forward the training of over 14,000 police officers on the new Domestic Abuse offence in partnership with a consortium led by domestic abuse charity SafeLives.

More broadly, Equally Safe is working with schools, workplaces, universities and colleges to embed efforts to tackle violence against women and promote gender equality. In secondary education, funding has been allocated for the Equally Safe project in schools which is being taken forward by Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance.

"Ultimately," the minister said, "it is men that, in the vast majority of cases, are the perpetrators of violence against women and girls and we want them to stop.

"That is why we announced new funding of £2.8 million last year to expand the innovative Caledonian System domestic-abuse programme so that more male perpetrators of domestic abuse can receive specific rehabilitation services."

The UN's 16 Days of Activism is the perfect time to highlight the steps being taken to eradicate every form of violence against women and girls. Everyone in society has a vital part to play in ending this violence and abuse for good.

Nicola Sturgeon sets out SNP demands to Labour if there is a hung parliament



NICOLA STURGEON wants Trident to be scrapped and more powers devolved to Holyrood, as well as backing for a second Scottish independence vote if she is asked to support a minority Labour government.

EDINBURGH – Nicola Sturgeon has laid out a list of demands she says would have to be met for the SNP to support a minority Labour government.

The Scottish first minister has insisted she would want to see Trident nuclear weapons scrapped and more powers handed to Holyrood, as well as the granting of a second independence vote.

Halting Brexit and bringing about a "real end to austerity" were also among the "progressive policies" Sturgeon would push for if there is a hung Parliament after the December 12 General Election.

She insisted these would "resonate strongly with many people across the U.K.", as well as her supporters in Scotland.

The SNP leader made the comments as Labour's shadow chancellor John



McDonnell said it could be "two or three years" before a Jeremy Corbyn administration would give the go-ahead for Scotland to have a second vote on leaving the United Kingdom.

Sturgeon – who has already said she wants a fresh ballot on independence to take place in the second half of 2020 – said that stance was not acceptable.

Speaking on Sky News, she insisted an election which ended up with a hung Parliament where the SNP held the balance of power "would give Scotland maximum influence."

She added, "That would be a pretty good outcome I think in terms of making sure Scotland's voice is heard."

She repeated her assertion that the

SNP would "never, ever put Boris Johnson into Downing Street" and that she would not enter into a formal coalition with Corbyn, saying instead there would be a "less formal arrangement."

Sturgeon also said the SNP would have other key demands, including halting Brexit, a "real end to austerity," the devolution of powers over migration, workers' rights, and drugs laws, and "an end to the misery of Universal Credit and welfare cuts."

Her comments came after McDonnell told the same programme a Labour government would not support a second Scottish independence vote in "those first few years when we're getting on with the job."

McDonnell stated, "I wouldn't expect anything in the first two or three years because the Scottish people themselves are saying we've got to concentrate on austerity and get that sorted.

"We've got to concentrate on sorting out Brexit. Above all else we've got an existential threat of climate change.

"That's a huge agenda. We see the independence issue in terms of a poten-

tial referendum as a distraction from that." He insisted there would be no change to that stance, even if the SNP made holding a referendum in 2020 a red line in post-election negotiations.

Gary Mulvaney, the Scottish Conservative candidate for Argyll and Bute, hit out at the first minister for including the scrapping of the Trident nuclear weapons system in her demands.

He said, "Not content with taking us back to another divisive referendum on independence, Nicola Sturgeon wants to destroy the 11,000 jobs on the Clyde that depend directly or indirectly on our nuclear deterrent."

The Tory insisted, "Trident is good for Britain's security, and good for Scottish jobs. Jeremy Corbyn and Nicola Sturgeon want to do a deal that would wreck both.

"Jeremy Corbyn has already made clear he will concede another independence referendum if he becomes prime minister. Everyone should now know that a vote for Labour at this election is a vote to help Nicola Sturgeon get her way."



Wishing all our readers Nollaig Shona

WHETHER you'll spend the holiday listening to *Stiofán ag Simí* (Shakin' Stevens) or *Síscéal de Nua-Eabhrac* (Fairytale of New York), spend Christmas Eve in the teach *tábhairne* (pub) with friends or *sa bhaile* (at home) with family, we can all come together under our love of the teanga.

So without further ado... 18 common Christmas words as *Gaeilge* and how to pronounce them:

- 1) December – *Nollaig* – Nuh-lig
- 2) Christmas – *Nollaig* – Nuh-lig
- 3) Santa Claus – *Dadaí na Nollaig* – Daddy na nuh-lig (How easy is this?!)
- 4) Snow – *Sneachta* – Shnock-ta
- 5) Snowman – *Fear Sneachta* – Far Shnock-ta
- 6) Gift – *Bronntanas* – Brun-ta-niss
- 7) Family – *Teaghlach* – Ty-lock
- 8) Jesus – *Íosa* – Eeo-sa
- 9) God – *Dia* – Dee-a
- 10) Christmas Tree – *Crann na Nollaig* – Crown na Nuh-lig
- 11) Cold – *Fuar* – Foor
- 12) Church – *Séipéal* – Shape-ale
- 13) Singing – *Canadh* – Kon-na
- 14) Coal – *Gualchan* – Gool – kan
- 15) Holidays – *Laethanta Saoire* – Lay-hinta See-ra
- 16) Christmas jumper – *Geansaí na Nollaig* – Gan-zee na nuh-lig
- 17) Turkey – *Turcaí* – Turkey
- 18) Merry Christmas – *Nollaig Shona* – Nuh-lig hun-na

Irish Women's Network celebrates Nollaig na mBan Vancouver

By EILIS COURTNEY
IWN President

VANCOUVER – Looking back on 2019, it's been quite the year for not just the IWN but the Irish community in British Columbia. What made it so? The opening of the new Consulate General of Vancouver and the arrival of Consul General Frank Flood and the team.

There is no doubt that the community is more engaged, involved and connected than ever before and exciting



things are happening within our community.

The IWN was proud to have been commissioned by the Consulate to under-

take a Community Mapping Project and if you haven't already done so, check out the results on www.irishinbc.ca.

And finally, the IWN will kick off 2020 with our annual celebration of Nollaig na mBan (Women's Christmas) on Sunday January 5, 2020 at Mahonys, Stamps Landing.

All women are invited to attend there is no cost but please reserve a spot by e-mailing irishwomensnetwork@gmail.com.

Wishing you all the best for the holiday season and the new year from the IWN.



New staff join the team at the Irish Consulate in Vancouver

VANCOUVER – The Irish Consulate General Vancouver confirmed a change of staff in a November newsletter. It read, "As many of you will know, it was with heavy hearts that we said goodbye to staff members Krystel Aquino and Katherine Kiss at the beginning of November.

"However, after a successful recruitment campaign with over 150 applications we are very happy to introduce our new staff members, Kamilla Losik and Bláithín Noone.

"Bláithín is from Ireland and has been living in Vancouver for about 18 months. She is an active member of the Irish community and the chairperson of the ISSC GAA club.

"Bláithín is the Consulate's event coordinator and executive assistant to the Consul General.

"Kamilla is from Poland and moved to Vancouver with her family in the summer of 2018. She is our finance and administration officer and will also take the lead on Consular matters. We are thrilled to have both Bláithín and Kamilla on the team!"

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Merry Christmas from PW Trenchless

Beannacht Nollaig

PAGE 1



Merry Christmas from the
Western Canada Division
of the GAA



- Calgary Chieftains
- Cú Chulainn Vancouver
- Edmonton Wolfe Tones
- Fraser Valley Gaels
- ISSC Vancouver
- Regina Gaels
- Vancouver Éire Óg
- Winnipeg Trinity
- JP Ryan's Vancouver

To get involved in your local GAA Club,
visit www.gaelicgamescanada.com/clubs/west-division

Peace to all
our Cherished
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from all of us

the
celtic connection

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& many volunteers who continue
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to you each month.

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ALL OUR SUPPORTERS AND ADVERTISERS -
YOUR SUPPORT HAS BEEN THE LIFEBLOOD
OF THIS NEWSPAPER.



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NOLLAIG SHONA AGUS ATHBHLIAIN FAOI
MHAISE DAOIBH GO LÉIR!

From all in the Consulate General of Ireland, Vancouver,
Wishing the readers of The Celtic Connection
Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year.



For 2020, please sign up to our mailing list
for monthly updates and notice of events on the Consulate
website at www.dfa.ie/Vancouver & follow us on:
Twitter: @IRlinVancouver • Facebook: IRLinVancouver

CELTICFEST VANCOUVER
2020 Line-up to be announced in the New Year!



Keep an eye on our social pages & website for info



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CelticFestVancouver.com

Merry Christmas

PAGE 2



The Welsh Society of Vancouver

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to all our
IRISH CELTIC FRIENDS
from



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and a New Year filled
with health, happiness
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Beannacht Nollaig

PAGE 3



**NOLLAIG SHONE DHAOIBH
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

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The ISSC would like to thank members, supporters and sponsors for their much appreciated generosity and continued support throughout the year. 2019 was a hugely successful year for all our teams and we couldn't have done it without you.

Nollaig shone daoibh go leir agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh uilig.
Happy Christmas to all and we wish you all a Happy New Year

We are looking forward to getting back to playing Gaelic Football, Hurling and Camogie in February 2020!

New players are always welcome! Please see our website and Facebook page for Spring and Summer Tournament dates and also for our Academy for all levels.

For more information about club activities
www.facebook.com/isscvancouver • www.isscvancouver.com

from our family to yours,
**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**
and happy new year!

*During the coming
Christmas season
May you be blessed
With the spirit of the season,
which is peace,
The gladness of the season,
which is hope,
And the heart of the season,
which is love.*



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their senseless acts.
May people live in freedom, worshipping
as they see fit, loving others.
May the sanctity of the home be ever preserved.
May peace, everlasting peace, reign supreme."*

- Soundings, Vol. 2, #12

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Merry Christmas

PAGE 4



Nollaig fé shéin is fé mhaise dhaoibh go léir

A very Happy Christmas to everyone
around the Pacific Northwest!
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ISSC: A night of sparkling silverware as club celebrates 45th anniversary

By **GRÁINNE McDERMOTT**
BLÁTHIN NOONE

VANCOUVER – ISSC (Irish Sporting and Social Club) Vancouver and JP Ryan’s Hurling Club celebrated their 45th anniversary with a dinner dance at the Pinnacle Hotel Harbourfront Vancouver on Friday, November 22, 2019.

45 years is an incredible milestone for us to be able to celebrate, alongside a fantastic year of success for all of the teams within ISSC and JP Ryans.

In 1974, Dublin had beaten Galway to claim the Sam Maguire, while Kilkenny played Limerick to win the Liam McCarty. The championship wins coincided with the creation of a new Gaelic outpost, the Irish Sporting and Social Club in Vancouver.

The Vancouver Harps Hurling team’s subsequent creation came in 2008, for the team to be renamed JP Ryans in 2010 after their first North American win.

Joseph P Ryan, for anyone who may not know, was a founding member of the GAA who emigrated to Canada and is now buried in Cranbrook, British Columbia.

A lot has changed in the 45 years since the first members of the ISSC came together, but not the message behind both of these teams.

The concept of bringing together and helping to expand the local Irish com-

munity socially, while actively promoting the games of Gaelic football, hurling and camogie within Vancouver and the wider B.C. area.

Although, it seems the camogie girls have done a great job of promoting the football this year with their wins in the Vancouver Spring League and San Diego 7’s.

For many people within the clubs, not only has this been an opportunity to promote Gaelic Games abroad, but it’s also given us a sense of a home away from home.

A team to belong to and life-long friends who have become our support system while we’ve been away. A valuable connection to those of us who may have come alone or finding it hard living away from home for the first time.

In attendance on the night were the Consul General of Ireland, Frank Flood and his wife, Orla Ní Bróithe, Jim and Maureen Speiran.

John O’Flynn attended on behalf of his late father Thomas O’Flynn, who became an honouree ISSC president in 2015 along with Jim Speiran.

ISSC and JP Ryans would like to thank all our sponsors for 2019; Donnellans, Seva, Tegan Law Corporation, Whistler Water, the IRL Group and Rob Mawe Productions; their generous support and contribution makes it possible for this idea of club, community and family intertwined to continue within ISSC & JP Ryans, in Vancouver and the wider B.C. community for another 45 years to come.

Congratulations to our 2019 Award Winners

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Ladies Football Most Valuable Player | - Sarah Hourigan |
| Ladies Football Best Newcomer | - Rhina Julian |
| Ladies Football Most Improved | - Aisling Slevin |
| Camogie Most Valuable Player | - Bláthín Noone |
| Camogie Best Newcomer | - Claire Murphy |
| Camogie Most Improved | - Gráinne Mc Dermott |
| Mens Football Most Valuable Player | - Daniel Nea |
| Mens Football Best Newcomer | - Jamie Burke |
| Mens Football Most Improved | - Stephen OBrien |
| Club Person of the Year | - Lorraine Muckian |
| Volunteer of the Year | - Oisín Doyle |



Photos Courtesy of Juan Sanchez



ISSC CAMÓGIE TEAM



CAPTAINS SHOW THEIR CUPS



ISSC MENS FOOTBALL TEAM



ISSC (LADIES) FOOTBALL TEAM



JP RYANS HURLING TEAM




Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme
An tAidmheirceoireacht do na hÉireann

Okanagan Irish Society

To all our members and friends everywhere we wish you a happy and meaningful Christmas!

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‘Mystery solved’: owner of houseboat washed up in Ireland found in Canada

VANCOUVER – The wooden houseboat washed ashore on Ireland’s Atlantic coast three years ago, prompting two questions: how did it get there? And who was Rick Small?

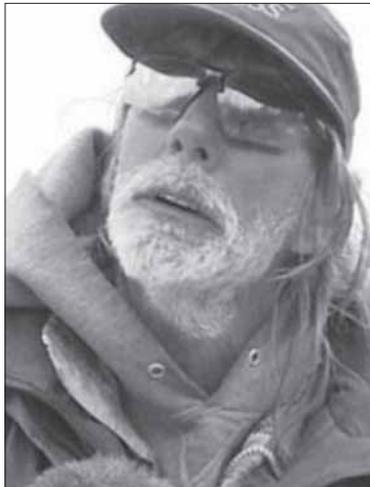
The 20-foot (six-metre) craft, made with driftwood and polystyrene and fitted with solar panels, had no one at the helm when it turned up at Drum beach, near Belmullet in County Mayo, in November 2016.

There was a message written on the ceiling: “I, Rick Small, donate this structure to a homeless youth to give them a better life that Newfoundland chose not to do! No rent, no mortgage, no hydro.”

It has since emerged that Small is an environmentalist from Vancouver. Known as an eco-adventurer, he trekked across Canada on a three-wheeled bicycle powered by solar panels in 2015.

This week the CTV News network found him in Vancouver. “Mystery solved,” he said. The 62-year-old said he built the vessel in 2016 and planned to sail from Newfoundland to the Arctic to raise awareness about the climate crisis and vanishing Arctic ice.

But when he failed to source an appropriate motor he gave the boat away. He said he had no idea how it ended up at sea. He expressed pride that it survived a voyage of more than



RICK SMALL a Vancouver environmentalist who is known as an eco-adventurer was the creator of the vessel that washed ashore in Ireland in November 2016.

1,800 miles largely intact. “It didn’t sink. I must have done a good job.”

Small says he continues to experiment with solar devices in the hope of creating eco-friendly and cost effective solutions for future generations.

Volunteers in Mayo refurbished the vessel in 2017. It is now on display in a community garden in the village of Binghamstown a few miles from Drum beach. RTÉ reported that locals have invited Small to visit.



THE Cu Chulainn hurling club was established in 2019 with the goal of getting people together to play hurling while creating a social outlet at the same time.

THE BIRTH OF CU CHULAINN VANCOUVER GAA CLUB

By **ADRIAN LYNCH**

VANCOUVER – With the ever increasing Irish population in Vancouver, an idea sprung to mind in late 2018 to formulate a second hurling club in the region.

Founded just this year in 2019, Cu Chulainn hurling club was established with the goal of getting people together to play hurling while creating a social outlet at the same time.

In just a few short months the club had managed to recruit enough playing members to field two hurling teams (junior and senior) in what was an historic day for Vancouver hurling in May at the UBC Thunderbird Stadium where we took on our soon to be local rivals, the JP Ryans.

Soon after, 12 hurlers set off to compete in the West Coast San Diego Sevens tournament. The club surpassed all expectations in San Diego by narrowly losing the showpiece of the weekend in the senior hurling final to a well-established Tipperary of San Francisco.

The club travelled to Edmonton in July to compete in the Western Canadian Championships. With victories over Calgary, Edmonton and the JP Ryans, Cu Chulainn ensured automatic qualification to the final of the senior hurling championship.

It was here where we faced our local rivals the JP Ryans once again in what was to be a titanic battle between the two clubs. The game was forced into extra time where the JP Ryans eventually came out on top.

The final tournament to be competed was the local Vancouver Championship where a “best out of three” series would define the championship. In game one, Cu Chulainn’s senior hurlers came out on top in an epic clash, while our junior hurlers were defeated by the slightest of margins.

The JP Ryans senior hurlers managed to pull back a victory in game two, however, our junior hurlers balanced this out with a victory of their own which meant both the senior and junior championships would be decided in a winner takes all clash in game three.

In what was a nip and tuck battle in both the junior and senior finals, Cu Chulainn were unfortunate to come away with two defeats losing by the slightest of margins of two points in both finals. Credit must be given to both clubs for displaying a high level of intensity and skillset to the spectators on show.

The club would like to extend its warmest congratulations to the JP Ryans who created history by capturing the

North American Senior Hurling Championship this year. No doubt the local challenge presented by Cu Chulainn also raised the standards to allow JP Ryans to capture victory.

The rise of the club would not have been possible without the club committee and the dedication from each hurler that contributed throughout the year. A foundation has now been set which will allow the club to prosper in 2020 and beyond.

Although no silverware was won, many highlights were created on the field throughout the year, but the stand out highlight for the club was the camaraderie that was formed among all the club members in such a short space of time.

A special thanks must be given to the Donnellan family of William, Laura and Larla, along with club sponsors the GPO bar & kitchen and EasyFix who both assisted in getting the club up and running.

To build on the success of 2019, the club welcomes hurlers of all levels (both Irish and non-Irish) to get involved and if interested please reach out to us on our facebook page www.facebook.com/CuChulainnGaaClub/ or e-mail at cuchulainnvancouver@gmail.com.

Garda Commissioner ‘concerned’ about right-wing extremism

DUBLIN – The Garda Commissioner has said he is concerned about the increase in right-wing extremism in Ireland.

Drew Harris told a meeting of the Policing Authority last month that Ireland is not immune to the rise of far-right extremism that is spreading across Europe.

On the issue of hate crime legislation and online abuse, Harris welcomed the fact there is now a clear-cut definition of hate crime.

“I am concerned about right-wing extremism. We can see evidence of it on our shores as we have seen it spread across Europe,” he said.

He said minority communities are most affected by it and the motivation for it is one of discrimination and prejudice.

To counter the threat, the government has launched a public consultation process ahead of an expected strengthening of hate speech laws and the introduction of a specific new offence of “hate crime.”

The meeting also heard that 3,000

gardai nationwide are unable to drive a patrol car using blue lights and sirens to emergencies.

Many Garda divisions across the country have an insufficient number of members who are authorised and trained to drive at high speed in emergency situations.

Only gardai trained to the higher standard are allowed to use flashing lights, sirens and drive at higher speeds when responding to serious crime incidents.

The meeting also heard there has been an increase in sexual offences recorded and that there is no clear-cut explanation for the increase.

Harris said it could be down to a combination of more people having confidence in coming forward to report such crimes and an increase in sexual offences generally.

“There was significant under-reporting in sexual offences up until recently so we welcome more reporting of sexual offences.

“The advantages of the new Garda operational model is that there will be a detective inspector in protective service units to deal with domestic violence and sexual assaults and who have training and expertise in this area,” said Harris.

St. Finnian: Carlow Saint turned Vancouver GAA Club

By **OISIN DOYLE**

Background

The sky was clear, cloudless and a light shade of blue. The sun was seeping through the skyscrapers of downtown, beaming into our eyes from our view at Lonsdale Quay.

GAA was the topic of discussion over our meal, pondering what GAA in Vancouver needs.

It was here where the idea of St. Finnians GAA Club was forged.

Five days and a few phone calls later, on a wet and windy September night, the committee was put in place and the green light was given to pursue our dreams of starting a new club.

It was Friday the 13th, unlucky for some. Close to three months have passed and we sit here as a fully-fledged member of Canada GAA and Vancouver’s sixth GAA club.

Purpose

The Irish community is growing year-after-year in Vancouver and GAA has kept up with the influx over the last few years with several new clubs forming.

We, St. Finnians, happen to be the next club in line in providing a place to play GAA, meet people and forge connections. Our mantra, “More than a Club,” portrays our purpose and vision going forward.

Built on the pillars of family, support and life, we aim to support our members, other GAA clubs and the Irish community by giving back as much as possible through assistance in getting jobs, networking and support on mental health issues.

With mental health being a prevalent issue in modern society, we have collaborated with Darkness Into Light, in order to provide assistance to those who might face difficult times.

Sometimes GAA is not enough, but we hope that through this partnership we can provide a helping hand to those outside the realms of our sport and de-stigmatize the issues around mental health.

The year ahead and beyond

It is an exciting time for GAA in Vancouver and for us at St. Finnians.

We are looking forward to our inaugural year in the Vancouver championship and the excitement the year will bring.

As a newly formed club, we are welcoming newcomers, both men and women, to the club. For those interested, we are on all social media channels and at info.stfinnians@gmail.com.

Saint Finnian changed the landscape of Irish culture. We hope St. Finnians GAA Club will leave an equal legacy on the Irish community and GAA in Vancouver in a similar manner to our namesake.

Hemochromatosis: Also known as the Celtic Curse is the world's most common genetic disorders

By PAUL JOHNSTON

President, Canadian

Hemochromatosis Society

With the holiday season upon us, I would like to share some information on the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society and how the society is making an impact.

Hemochromatosis, also known as the Celtic Curse, is the most common genetic disorder in the western world, causing the body to absorb and retain too much dietary iron.

Left untreated, iron overload can cause severe damage to organs and irreversible damage. Hemochromatosis affects an estimated one in 300 Canadians, primarily of Northern European descent, and current research estimates that one in nine Canadians are carriers.

The mission of the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society is to increase awareness and advocate for early detection.



PAUL JOHNSTON and his wife.

Due to the invaluable work of our staff and volunteers, awareness for this condition is increasing – my wife was extremely lucky to be diagnosed early in life and the society helped her navigate her diagnosis.

Unfortunately, there is still a large population of undiagnosed Canadians

and the society relies on the generous support of the public to create awareness and drive diagnoses.

I would like to share the following story from a recent donor.

“I found out that I had hemochromatosis about nine years ago. It was by chance as I had no symptoms.

“A doctor included ferritin in my blood test I was having for something else. My ferritin level was only about 500 but subsequent DNA testing showed I had hereditary hemochromatosis.

“I heard of hemochromatosis for the first time just a couple of years earlier from a friend who (along with his father) had the condition.

“In retrospect, having hereditary hemochromatosis was not too surprising as DNA testing indicates I am 50 percent Irish and 25 percent English. Knowing my children would be carriers I informed them so they and their spouses could be checked.

“I started making donations to the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society as well as becoming a Lifetime member in order to help promote awareness of the disorder several years ago.

“I have never seen any information about hemochromatosis in any of the brochures at doctor's offices, pharmacies or magazines and newspapers.

“My wife and I feel strongly about supporting the society knowing that it is a small organization so our support is going to be fully used where it is needed compared to the many large charities.”

Happy holidays to you and yours from the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society.

IRELAND CANADA MONUMENT PROJECT

A magnificent site truly worth waiting for

By ESTHER NORTH

VANCOUVER – Brendan Flynn will admit there have been times over the past 14 years when he doubted. But quitting was never an option.

A site on Main Street in Vancouver had been granted and quickly withdrawn because of an existing memorial. It was disappointing but there would be another year.

Brendan and Eddie Reynolds looked back to March 2005 when, in Dublin, they shook hands affirming a vision of a monument that would be built honouring the Irish in Canada who contributed so much to the great nation that is Canada today.

Another 10 years followed but, even as directors came and went, the Ireland Canada Monument Society non-profit society never gave up.

Then, the Vancouver Park Board pointed the way to a bosque of mature ash trees, all 32 of them, at George Wainborn Park in False Creek Vancouver.

Many changes. “Improvements,” Brendan says. “Canada, and the Irish, have now moved west with Consul General Frank Flood in Vancouver opening new opportunities and support.

“Canada is so big with many diverse cultures. Looking at our history we understand the Irish had great respect to the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

“Did you know that prior to 1536, the Irish sailed across the Atlantic to fish along the island we call Newfoundland? They called it Talamh an Éisc which means Land of Fish.”

Brendan and Eddie exchange ideas and share news. Canada is changing. Expanding. Nunavut in the far north is a new territory east of the Northwest Territories.

Canada's First Nations lawyer in western Canada was William Wuttunee. He



GEORGE WAINBORN PARK in False Creek Vancouver has been selected as the site for the new Ireland Canada Monument and the committee is now undertaking a fundraising campaign with the assistance of the Vancouver Park Board to finalize the project.

was co-founder and first National Chief of the National Indian Council with Irish ancestry. You can meet Wuttunee on the Ireland Canada website.

“Some things don't change,” says Brendan. “No doubt we're still dancing – we are Irish! And story-telling – the written word, that voice, history and imagination.

Awards and volumes that will never leave libraries. And, for sure, there's hurling and ice hockey when Canada's game of ice hockey evolved from Ireland's game of hurling circa 1800 at the Long Pond in Windsor, Nova Scotia.”

Brendan pauses and looks at the bottom line of completing the Ireland Canada Monument. “Now,” he says, “we are looking at serious deadlines finalizing the monument design.

“People have asked why there isn't a listing of the nearly 300 names gathered on the website. Technology has moved us out of etched names into life's stories told on websites, e-books and printed books that will be available to enjoy and research around the world.”

“Thanks to the Vancouver Park Board we have a wonderful site.” Brendan

and Eddie agree that it couldn't be improved.

They also appreciate the work PWL Partnership, Landscape Architects. “They have given us a very creative design. Bottom line – all that is needed is to raise the money.

“And all we can say is the Park Board is making all donations to the monument, easy and absolutely tax deductible!”

Donations can be made at your VanCity Branch by directing it to The Ireland Canada Monument.

If you prefer online, simply go to the Ireland Canada Monument website home page. You can be connected to the Park Board site there, specify your donation amount and designate it to “Ireland Canada Monument - George Wainborn Park.”

When you have completed your transaction, you will receive an e-mail acknowledging your donation and confirming that you will receive a tax receipt.

The Park Board makes donating easy, absolutely secure and tax receiptable.

Visit online: www.irelandcanadamonument.com.

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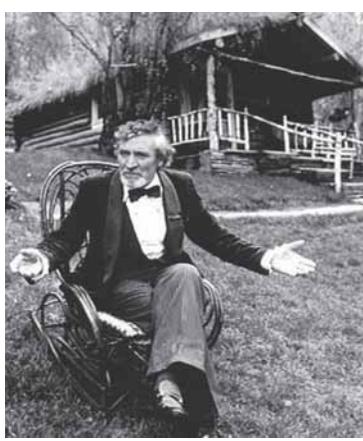
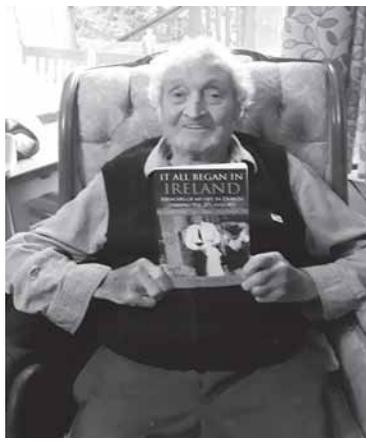
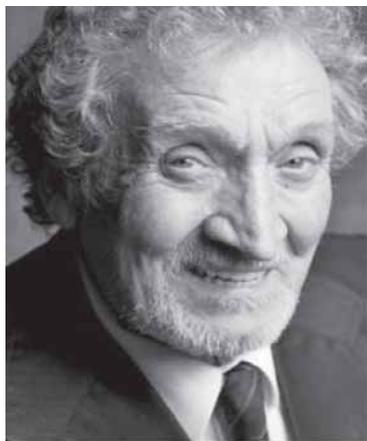
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IN MEMORIAM



TOM BYRNE

January 10, 1924 – November 19, 2019

Tom was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1924. He came to Canada in 1956 and settled in Vancouver.

Tom's love of acting, led to him co-founding The Emerald Players Theatre Group, (later renamed Stage Eireann). He was also involved in creating The Arts Club, and produced the first Vancouver St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Tom was an award-winning actor and director and he appeared on both stage and film, but Tom is most reknown for his one-man show called 'The Robert Service Show' which ran for 31 years

in Dawson City, Yukon.

His contribution to Irish culture in Canada is undeniable and he will not be forgotten by anyone lucky enough to have known him.

His last big accomplishment was finishing his autobiography about his life in Ireland during the 1920s and 1930s.

We were able to put the first printed copy in his hand the week before he passed. The look on his face was priceless.

Tom was a charming, witty, Irishman who would fall into song at the drop of a hat, tell a jovial story to anyone who'd listen and captured the hearts

of all he met.

The curtain has closed for the last time on Tom's life but he will live on in our hearts forever.

An open Catholic Mass will be dedicated in Tom's honor at his parish in Gibsons, B.C. on December 1, 2019. A funeral will be held on January 3, 2019, 2:30 PM at St. Mary's church in Gibson's, 956 Gibson's Way. A reception in the church hall will follow in celebration of Tom's life.

Tom's full obituary is at: www.devlinfuneralhome.ca

[Submitted by Tom's daughter, Christine Byrne.]

THOMAS FRANCIS (FRANK) HORAN
March 21, 1931 - November 15, 2019

FRANK HORAN was born in Ballymacandrew, Ardfert, County Kerry, Ireland in 1931. He had an idyllic life on the Horan farm, but more than anything else he wanted to see the world and read any book he could about different countries and travels.



When he was 18 he attended a school in Dublin and learned to be a radio operator. He gained employment with the Marconi Company and became a radio communications officer working aboard seagoing ships and he finally realizing his dream of travelling the world.

One day, while docked in Liverpool, he visited the Atlantic House, a refuge for deep-sea sailors. It was a place where you could go for a nice meal and a drink and it was here that he met the love of his life, Theresa (Terry) Taylor.

Frank and Terry were married in Liverpool in 1956 and one year later their first child Annemarie (Anne) was born. When Anne was a mere eight weeks old, they emigrated to Canada and went straight to Vancouver.

Frank had known about Vancouver for some time and he had decided that was where he wanted to live.

He found work with CP Ferries and worked as the radio communications officer and purser. He worked on the ferries plying the waters between Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle until BC Ferry corporation took over. At that time many CP employees were laid off, including Frank.

Frank then landed a permanent position with the tax department at Vancouver City Hall where he worked for many years before moving to the Van-

couver Resources Board (VRB) which oversaw social services for the province.

Eventually the VRB was amalgamated with various other resources and at that point Frank became a provincial government employee where he stayed until his retirement in 1980.

While living in Vancouver, Frank and Terry were busy raising their four children, Anne, Kathleen, Michael and Meghan.

There were a number of Irish ex-pats living in their neighbourhood and they became like family for the Horans. Many a kitchen party was held in these homes where the craic was sharp and songs were plenty.

Through all this Frank hadn't lost his desire for travel. He and Terry drove all the way to Mexico with the kids and a tent trailer which required cranking up. He loved to tell stories of pulling up next to gigantic winnibego-type campers in American camp grounds with the radiator steaming and then hand-cranking the little tent trailer up for a family of six to sleep in!

In their retirement years, Frank and Terry moved to Kelowna, where their (at that time) two grandchildren lived.

They sold their property in Vancouver and bought a lovely home on the lake in Kelowna with its own sandy beach.

The family had many happy times at that beach, including weddings, polar bear dip parties (there was a sauna to rescue frozen feet!) and lots of barbeques and bonfires.

Frank and Terry caught the cruise bug and travelled on over 30 cruises all over the world.

During his time in Kelowna, Frank became the president of the Okanagan Irish Society – a position he held for four years. The Horans met many wonderful people through that organization and enjoyed sharing Irish culture with new friends.

As Frank and Terry began to grow older a decision was made to move to Victoria, where their daughters lived and son Michael lived just over the water in Vancouver. It became much easier for the children and grandchildren to be near and visit more often.

Sadly, after suffering a stroke and with mild dementia and COPD, Frank gave up the daily struggle to breathe and passed away on November 15. RIP Frank.

CORRECTION

In our November issue we have a correction on page 12 in relation Irish Heritage Quebec. The correct French translation of Irish Heritage Quebec is *Héritage Irlandais Québec*. Also, in paragraph seven, it should read as follows: "There was a time in the 1860s when the Irish would have made up 23 percent of the population." We apologize for any confusion.

Man drowns after car slips off pier on Co. Donegal island

ARRANMORE, Co. Donegal – One man has drowned, and another survived, after a car slipped off a local pier on Árainn Mhór (Arranmore) off the coast of Donegal on November 18.

Lee Early (26), who worked on the Árainn Mhór ferry and was a volunteer on the island's RNLI lifeboat, was one of two men in the car when it became submerged underwater.

Local sources say they may have been trying to turn the car on the pier when it slipped into the sea.

The tightly-knit island community, which has a population of around 450 people, is grieving following the freak accident which claimed Early's life.

A 30-year-old man managed to get out of the vehicle but Early, who was the driver, was trapped inside.

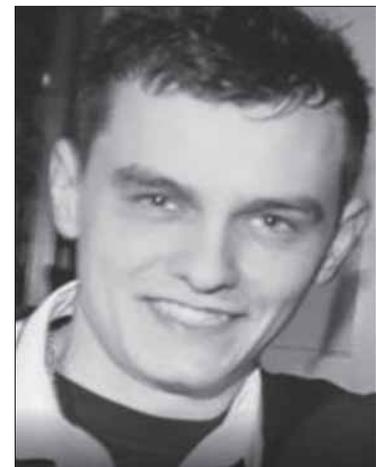
Gardaí say Early's body was removed to Letterkenny University Hospital for a post mortem examination. A garda investigation into the cause of the incident is under way.

Early's father is the coxswain on the local lifeboat. Members of the lifeboat crew, whose station is close to the scene of the incident, desperately tried to save their colleague but were unable to resuscitate him.

RNLI area life-saving manager for Ireland Owen Medland said Early's death was a huge loss to the island.

"The deceased was one of our volunteers and was very close to us. He was a super young man who would be a loss to any community, never mind a small community," he said.

"As an organisation, our thoughts are with the family, and our volunteer crew



LEE EARLY, a 26-year-old local man, was named as the victim of the accident.

who fought valiantly to save the young man's life.

"We would like to assure the community that after what appears was a tragic accident, we are maintaining our lifeboat service on the island which is further testimony to the crew in Arranmore."

Many will recall a similar tragic accident in March 2016 when another car slipped off a pier in Co. Donegal.

Five people, including three children, died in that accident when their car went off a pier in Buncrana.

The cause of that accident was attributed to the driver losing control when the wheels of the vehicle started to skid on algae as he attempted to do a three-point turn on the pier to leave and return home.

A four-month-old baby girl was rescued by a passerby in that incident.



THE CAR went into the sea at Poolawaddy Pier on Arranmore just after 5 AM on the morning of Monday, November 18.

A HOMELESS CHRISTMAS

Where do you hang your stocking in your little cardboard home which you have insulated with some discarded foam?

How does it feel to hold your 'will work for food' sign as most people drive by to go home where they dine?

Do you wonder at the people and think it is so odd they ignore your desperation while arguing about God?

Do you know you're like Jesus and he was just like you? There is no room in the inn so he was homeless too.

Dear Lord, we ask you to open our eyes and be sensitive to your spirit. Help us to be aware of the needs of your people.

Father, one person can make a difference and help us to be that one. When we feed and clothe your children, we are feeding and clothing Jesus. Bless all the ones who labour to make a difference in this world.

– Offered by Larry R. Linville

Irish women's group says the Government is failing victims of domestic abuse

DUBLIN – A leading Irish advocacy group and those directly impacted by domestic violence have demanded increased supports for families bereaved due to domestic homicide and suggested the issue of unseen coercive control perpetrated by hidden abusers is an underlying problem in society.

The calls were made as a new report revealed that nine in 10 women who have been killed in Ireland over the past 23 years have died at the hands of a man they knew.

That was one of many stark statistics contained in the Femicide Watch 2019 report launched by Women's Aid on November 22 in Dublin.

Five women have died violently thus far in Ireland in 2019, while last year Women's Aid dealt with 17,000 disclosures of abuse.

More than 60 percent of women killed in Ireland lose their lives in their own



A NEW REPORT revealed that nine in 10 women who have been killed in Ireland over the past 23 years have died at the hands of a man they knew.

homes, a place that should be a "sanctuary" according to Women's Aid chief executive Sarah Benson.

The latest report reveals that 230 women have been killed, and 16 children have died alongside their mothers, since Women's Aid began keeping such records in 1996.

Benson said, "These figures should

shame Irish society. The lives of the women and children named in our report were so valuable, so full of potential which is now unrealised."

It was noted at the event that not one politician or representative in their place attended the launch, Benson said she was "disappointed" and encouraged delegates to take it up with politicians during the general election.

Legendary Irish actor and comedian Niall Tóibín dies aged 89



NIALL TÓIBÍN

DUBLIN – The death of the actor and comedian Niall Tóibín who died in Dublin on November 13 after a long illness.

The actor was working up until last year when he appeared in an Irish short film *Remains*. His film career saw him play an array of memorable characters including Tom Cruise's father in *Far & Away*, Judge Ballaugh in *Veronica Guerin*; a poteen-maker in *Poitín* and as islander Seán alongside Pierce Brosnan in *The Nephew*.

Television appearances included RTÉ's *The Clinic*; with his screen credits including: *Ballykissangel*, *RAT*, *The Ballroom of Romance*, *King of the Castle*, *Brideshead Revisited* and *Frankie Star-*

light amongst others.

President Michael D. Higgins paid tribute to Tóibín and praised his "unforgettable performances in all of the Irish theatres."

On-stage highlights included when he played Behan in *Borstal Boy* both in the Abbey Theatre and on Broadway, he was in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* at the National Theatre, London. He also played Andy in Brian Friel's *Lovers* at The Gate Theatre.

In 2011 he was awarded an IFTA, with actor Stephen Rea paying tribute to Tóibín calling him a "dream to work with" adding "he is one of the great figures in our business, in our art, I have an immense fondness for him, he has a very sweet nature as well."

He is predeceased by his wife, Judy, and is survived by his children Sean, Muireann, Aisling, Sighle and Fiana and his seven grandchildren.

Tragedy in Co. Antrim

A WOMAN has died and another is in hospital after a group of swimmers got into difficulty off Ballycastle beach, Co. Antrim on the morning of December 9.

A Coastguard spokesman said it received a call after reports of two women in the water. Inspector Mick Wood said, "Police received a report from the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service shortly after 8:30 AM for the concern for safety of two female swimmers at Ballycastle beach in the Cushendall Road area.

"Unfortunately it appears one of these poor people have got into tragic circumstances, maybe caught in a rip tide. Another person is in hospital, I understand quite seriously ill with hypothermia. My heart goes out to them and their families."

NOVENAS

Novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary (never known to fail). O most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendour of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God. Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. O show me herein you are my Mother, Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee (three times). Sweet Mother, I place this cause in your hands (three times). Holy Spirit, you who solve all problems, light all roads so that I can attain my goal. You gave me the Divine gift to forgive and forget all evil against me. This prayer must be said for three days, even after the request is granted and the favour received, it must be published.

– PMKJ, MJK, CC, CB, LMC, ST

Prayer to St. Joseph in Difficult Times

Holy St Joseph, you were a man of great hope and faith. You faced many difficult times in your life, fleeing into Egypt, caring and fearing for Mary and Jesus, you lived like us today in uncertain times.

Your strength came from knowing that the power and faithfulness of God would always be constant. Fill us with the confidence that you had in the Lord, Our God. Help us to know that God is close to us, that He will deliver us from the trials and troubles we are now encountering.

May the light of the Lord give us hope. May it guide us every day of our lives and uniting our prayers with yours, may we be assured by the peace and joy of the Lord, that will strengthen us in all our difficulties. Amen. Holy St Joseph, pray for us. – CB

Publication of a novena is \$25



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RTÉ Ireland's National Broadcaster facing bankruptcy according to reports

RTÉ, Ireland's national broadcaster for almost 60 years, is facing bankruptcy unless the Irish Government bails it out.

That the word bankrupt has scarcely featured in the debate about the broadcaster's woes is indicative of the degree to which RTÉ believes it can rely on the government to save it.

RTÉ's senior management, which oversees an organisation that ran a deficit of 13 million euro last year, seems to believe that, irrespective of how dysfunctional its operation is, the government will always shield it from itself.

But what exactly can RTÉ now expect from the Irish Government? And can it survive this crisis?

Gay Byrne Tributes

The waves of tributes over the past month in response to the death of Gay Byrne, RTÉ's titular presenter of yesterday, demonstrated quite how central a role the national broadcaster used to play in Irish public life.

Byrne, in particular, helped to modernise discussion at the national broadcaster from the 1960s to 1990s.

The 21st Century, however, heralded a new era in broadcasting. The end of the first decade of this century saw Ireland's banking collapse, the most searing economic crisis in decades and mass emigration from the country.

RTÉ remained considerably immured from these seismic changes and that, in large part, is attributable to the false financial security that the broadcaster has enjoyed.

RTÉ's top 10 paid presenters account for three million euro of expenditure for an organisation with a revenue north of 300 million.

The symbolism of a quasi-bankrupt organisation paying its talent such salaries is a constant source of ire among RTÉ's many critics.

Much of RTÉ's financial difficulties stem from the transference of advertising revenue from traditional platforms such as television to the Internet.

Unlike most other media, however, RTÉ's default response to plummeting advertisement revenue has been to make timid cuts when they are absolutely unavoidable and to seek more money from the public purse.

Government Funding

In 2018, RTÉ received 189 million from the taxpayer via the television licence fee, which constitutes 85 percent of the total licence fee.

By contrast, other channels, such as Virgin Media Television, start with no money whatsoever from the taxpayer.

RTÉ stated that it would announce major cuts and reforms in October to try to bring the broadcaster's finances into order.

That announcement did not actually happen until November, and not before RTÉ's recommendations leaked to the *Irish Times*.

The shambolic nature of the disclosure was matched by the juvenile response of RTÉ staff which heckled its management at a town hall style gath-

THE VIEW FROM IRELAND



By MAURICE FITZPATRICK

ering to discuss the difficult decisions required at RTÉ.

Salary Reductions

The broadcaster recommends that 200 people accept optional redundancy which will, it seems certain, become compulsory redundancy next year if enough people do not avail of it.

Meanwhile, RTÉ's senior management and presenters will heroically endure cuts to their bloated salaries of, respectively, 10 percent and 15 percent.

Yet these cuts, and even the loss of 200 employees, will not stabilise RTÉ's finances.

Its production staff, as many as 800 people, constitute a financial outlay of nearly 200 million euro per year that the broadcaster can ill afford.

RTÉ will have to accept streamlining its services and rely more heavily on independent producers in the private sector to make programmes and films in the manner of many public service broadcasters around the world (full disclosure: RTÉ has been a partial funder of my films in the past).

Advocation that RTÉ peg its salaries to civil service standards has been notably absent from the debate.

Instead, the straw man argument is wheeled out also by the independent mainstream media that public service broadcasting is a crucial aspect of our democracy and therefore RTÉ must be upheld.

RTÉ has no more a monopoly on public service broadcasting in Ireland than it has a right to exist in financial never-never land.

Has it occurred to the defenders of public service broadcasting that the cause they advocate may considerably benefit from RTÉ's demise, or by reconstituting RTÉ in a way that better matches the realities of broadcasting in the 21st Century?

Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), Pauric Travers, has notified the government that the latest research finds that RTÉ risks super-serving older audiences (55+) across services and under-serving younger audiences.

The tendency to super-serve less than a third of a small nation's population hardly justifies an annual governmental subvention of 189 million euro. Consequently, RTÉ has never been so friendless as it is today.

Structural Reforms

While, in 2018, the BAI did recommend that the government inject an extra 30 million euro per annum into RTÉ's coffers, it also recommended major structural reforms.

Yet RTÉ's current proposals have cer-

tainly not convinced the government: cabinet ministers have been publicly and privately unsympathetic.

Minister for Communications, Richard Bruton, has done little to expedite the reformation of the collection of the television licence fee; Minister for Trade, Heather Humphreys, in an interview in November, pointed out that senior figures in RTÉ are paid more than the taoiseach, the British prime minister and the U.S. president.

In addition, Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, did not disburse a single extra euro to RTÉ in his October budget.

Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has said that the television licence fee reform will not happen for another five years, and that the licence fee may then be shared among other media outlets. He said, "We will have to consider that there is more to public service broadcasting than just RTÉ."

The government is considerably focussed on the next general election, which will probably be held next May, and it understands that its unwillingness to bail out RTÉ matches the mood of the Irish public.

The public sees the broadcaster as out of touch, self-serving and shrill defenders of a broadcasting model that is long since broken. Even so, Ireland remains a conservative and sentimental place.

RTÉ will exploit whatever goodwill remains and find some way to hang on into the future. But it should count itself lucky that, unlike the government with which it has locked horns, it does not have to face an election.



RTÉ, Ireland's national broadcaster has played a central role in Irish life for almost 60 years, but is now facing an urgent need for structural reforms to survive changing demographics and collapsing revenue from traditional platforms to online advertising.

RTÉ Background and History

RAIDÍÓ TEILIFÍS ÉIREANN (RTÉ) is a semi-state company and the national public service media of Ireland. It both produces programmes and broadcasts them on television, radio and the Internet.

The radio service began on January 1, 1926, while regular television broadcasts began on December 31, 1961, making it one of the oldest continuously operating public service broadcasters in the world.

RTÉ is a statutory body, overseen by a board appointed by the Government of Ireland, with general management in the hands of the Executive Board, headed by the Director-General. RTÉ is regulated by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

RTÉ is financed by television licence fee and through advertising, with some of its services funded solely by advertising, while others are funded solely by the licence fee.

Radio Éireann, RTÉ's predecessor and at the time a section of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs, was one of 23 founding organisations of the European Broadcasting Union in 1950.

Group vows to keep hunting pedophiles in NI amid unease at legality of methods

BELFAST – A Northern Ireland pedophile hunting group says it will only stop when police and parents are armed with the technology to keep children safe.

Men that have been targeted for stings by Nonce Catchers NI have been from a wide range of backgrounds – including the legal profession, politics and with links to local sport.

The group say they have 'hunted' in both loyalist and republican areas with the support of local communities and also revealed that women suspected of being pedophiles have been in their sights too.

Kenny Abbott (46) fronts the group and is open about his own past troubles, having gone off the rails after being a victim of abuse himself from the age of just eight.

He straightened out his life after going to counselling and it was after becoming a father and seeing his young daughter targeted by an online predator that he was prompted to get involved in becoming a local pedophile hunter.

These groups in Northern Ireland hit



Nonce Catchers NI, a Northern Ireland pedophile hunting group, said that kids are targeted via social media sites and apps like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, as well as the chat facilities on computer games like Roblox and Fortnite.

the headlines for the wrong reasons in 2018 after erroneously rounding on BBC journalist Kevin Magee – but Kenny said he had nothing to do with it, having turned down an invitation to get involved.

Kenny, who said he enjoyed a good relationship with the PSNI initially "for a good two years" until the Kevin Magee incident, claimed that members of the public regularly contact his group.

He said that kids are targeted via social media sites and apps like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, as well as the

chat facilities on computer games like Roblox and Fortnite.

Some of their targets have been before the courts.

In April this year, a former serviceman who had an online sex chat with a decoy he believed was a 14-year-old boy was given two years probation and placed on the sex offenders' register for five years.

Belfast Magistrates Court heard how William Johnston (38), who served in the Royal Navy for a decade, made full admissions after police were called when he was confronted by Nonce Catchers NI in the Pilot Street area of Belfast in December 2017.

Kenny added, "There are pedophile hunting stings roughly four or five times a week in Belfast alone. So what about the rest of Northern Ireland?"

"I've caught maybe three or four women over this last six months alone, they're all in the hands of the PSNI. A couple of women have been from over in England, but there's been one from Lisburn, one from Belfast and one from Newtownabbey.

"I have formed a platform for like-minded people like myself to join, there's more than 25,000 people on the page that does fully support what we do."

Survivors of Irish institutional abuse plead with committee to reconsider Records Bill sealing their evidence



THE RECORDS were transferred to the National Archives by the Ryan Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB) and the Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee.

DUBLIN – Survivors of Irish state and church institutional abuse have told a committee that sealing their evidence for 75 years is wrong and adding to their trauma.

The Education Committee discussed the Retention of Records Bill 2019 on November 26 and were required to send their amendments by the following day as the bill is due to go ahead next month.

The bill was approved by the Cabinet in February 2019, but its passage into legislation has been controversial.

Education Minister Joe McHugh announced evidence of survivors who suffered abuse at state institutions from three key redress bodies will be sealed from public scrutiny for a minimum of 75 years.

It pertains to the records transferred to the National Archives by the Ryan Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse, the Residential Institutions Redress Board (RIRB) and the Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee.

At the time, the minister said the sealing of records would protect the identity and evidence of survivors.

All the witnesses were in agreement that there are other appropriate and ethical ways to preserve records, and that survivors should be granted immediate access to their personal information.

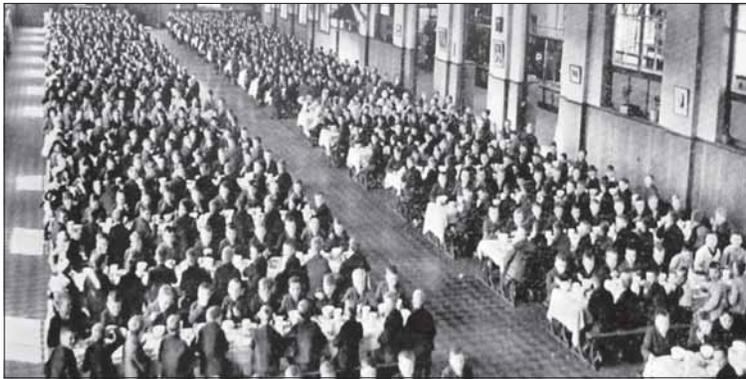
Historians present argued that the current national archives act is appropriate but should be updated and that current retraction protocols could protect identity of those involved.

Survivor Mary Ludato also told Committee members, “I understand our narrative can seem threatening to state bodies, however survivors still live with shame, they need a process of healing and this requires willingness to confront the past.

“Irish society must take responsibility for the abuse of women and children.”

The bill was described as “using a sledgehammer to crack a nut” by Catriona Crowe from the National Archives of Ireland, adding that if the records were sealed for such a long period, it would set an “extraordinary precedent without recourse to the National Archives Act.”

“Why do we need something new for a particular cohort of citizens? It appears it is paving the way it would become a way of dealing with other



Findings of Irish Commissions to Inquire into Child Abuse

AMONG the findings of the commissions which examined documents relating to Irish institutional child abuse, physical and emotional abuse and neglect were features of the institutions. Sexual abuse occurred in many of them, particularly boys' institutions.

Schools were run in a severe, regimented manner that imposed unreasonable and oppressive discipline on children and even on staff.

The Reformatory and Industrial Schools depended on rigid control by means of severe corporal punishment and the fear of such punishment.

A climate of fear, created by pervasive, excessive and arbitrary punishment, permeated most of the institutions and all those run for boys.

Children lived with the daily terror of not knowing where the next beating was coming from.

Poor standards of physical care were reported by most male and female complainants. Children were frequently hungry and food was inadequate, inedible and badly prepared in many schools. Accommodation was cold, spartan and bleak. Sanitary provision was primitive in most boys' schools and general hygiene facilities were poor.

It was originally intended that abusers would be publicly named in the report prepared by Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA). However the Commission was blocked from doing so by a legal challenge from the Christian Brothers.

The Brothers sought and received permission to deal with abusers anonymously. Thus the report does not state whether all abusers were or were not members of the religious orders in charge of the schools, or whether external parties were involved.

The report does not consider the effects of the abuse on the psychological welfare of the parents of children who were in the control of the system.

That at least some parents were concerned about their children was clearly shown by the lengths to which one father went to obtain the return of his children in the celebrated case in re Doyle, which was the subject of the 2002 film *Evelyn*.

The controversial Retention of Records Bill 2019 will see records from the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA), the Residential Institutions Redress Board, and the Residential Institutions Redress Review Committee placed in the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) and sealed for a minimum of 75 years, in what has been labelled “a dangerous and unnecessary precedent.”

kinds of records, such as that of the Mother and Baby Homes,” she said.

Dr. Sinead Ring, an assistant professor at Maynooth University School of Law, said children and women were “incarcerated, tortured forced into servitude, systematically degraded, denied identity and education and separated

from their family members” in state and church institutions.

She said that failure to produce these records, to have them in an archive where individuals can retrieve their family history, and can contribute to national education undermines all other efforts of reparation.



THE TANAISTE Simon Coveney has said it was “clear” during Brexit negotiations there would be checks on the Irish border, despite claims to the contrary from British Prime Minister Boris Johnston.

Coveney: Brexit talks ‘clear’ that border checks would be needed

The Tanaiste Simon Coveney has said it was “clear” during Brexit negotiations there would be checks on the Irish border, despite claims to the contrary from British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Speaking in Brussels, Coveney said, “It was very clear when the deal was done. The EU has made it clear they want to minimize the impact on goods coming from GB into Northern Ireland, but at the same time goods coming from Great Britain into Northern Ireland will need to have some checks to ensure that the EU knows what is potentially coming into their market through Northern Ireland,” he said, according to RTE.

“And, you know, we spent many, many hours of discussion in terms of trying to get that right.”

Coveney, who is also the minister for foreign affairs in the Dail, said there would be east-west checks on goods coming into Northern Ireland. Goods going west-east, from Northern Ireland to Great Britain, would be limited to export declarations.

“Goods going the other way from Northern Ireland into Great Britain will have far less requirement for checks at all, in fact, it will probably be limited to an export declaration because of course, that is a matter internally for the U.K.,” he said, speaking to reporters.

“The British Government has indicated that they want frictionless or unfettered access for goods originating in Northern Ireland going into GB, into the rest of the U.K. single market.

“So, there was always a distinction between goods coming from GB into Northern Ireland versus goods going from Northern Ireland into GB and we spent many hours discussing and negotiating that, and I think explaining it too.”

He said the final agreement was about facilitating both sides.

When asked if it was disingenuous to say there would not be any checks, Coveney said, “That’s a matter for those who are involved in the debate in the U.K. Our job is to make sure that we represent the deal that was negotiated accurately for people who ask.

“I would say the Irish Government’s position is clear. The EU has always said it will work with the U.K. to try to minimize the impact on trade between Northern Ireland and GB – that effectively means unfettered access of goods originating in Northern Ireland going into GB, as well as unfettered access for goods in Northern Ireland entering the EU Single Market.

“So Northern Ireland is effectively getting the best of both worlds here, which is why I think it’s a very good deal for Northern Ireland.

“But there are certain consequences in terms of the need for checks on goods travelling from GB into Northern Ireland because of the commitment, of course, to have an absence of any physical checks or infrastructure between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

“I think that is very much the shape of what is a complex deal, but a deal that tries to take everybody’s concerns into account.”

Ireland Listed by UN in Top 3 in Global Human Development

Ireland has been ranked third in a global Human Development Index by the United Nations Development Programme, which warns that the world is now on “the crest of a wave of inequality.”

The Human Development Report 2019 assesses factors such as latest national data on life expectancy at birth; expected years of schooling; mean years of schooling; gender development and inequality; and gross national income.

It placed Ireland behind only Norway and Switzerland. One area highlighted as lacking was provision of hospital beds, for which Ireland was ranked mid-table, as was the case with youth unemployment and some other categories.

It ranked in the bottom third when it came to “share of graduates from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programmes in tertiary education who are female” and percentage of total land area that is forested. It also showed a slowdown in growth in Ireland in more recent years.

Megan Fearon: 'Brexit is like a political earthquake right across the U.K. and Ireland'

VANCOUVER – On Sunday, November 10, Friends of Sinn Féin (Canada) presented an evening of dinner and music along with an auction at the Anza Club in Vancouver. Guest speaker for the evening was Megan Fearon, the Sinn Féin MLA for Newry and Armagh in Northern Ireland. At 28-years-old she is the youngest public representative in Ireland.

Megan is a vibrant personality and brings a fresh approach to local politics with a keen understanding of the major issues facing her constituents at this time – unemployment, emigration, Brexit, and Irish unity.

She has been the Sinn Féin MLA for Newry Armagh since 2012 and first took her seat after graduating from Queen's University in politics, philosophy and economics.

Before her election, Megan campaigned for Sinn Féin and worked to raise mental health and drug awareness. She replaced party colleague Chris Hazzard as Stormont's youngest MLA and has since been elected in both 2016 and 2017 elections.

Fearon is the party's spokesperson for women, children and young people and has been named as a government minister in the next Northern Ireland Executive.

Despite suffering from a deep chest cold and persistent cough during her visit, Fearon ably carried on and gave an excellent talk to a full house at the Anza Club after speaking to *The Celtic Connection*.

Interview by Catholine Butler
CB: Megan do you believe Brexit will have an impact on Ireland?

MF: Oh, yes! It's difficult to know where to start. It's just been a catastrophe from start to finish. From the Irish perspective there's no such thing as a good Brexit.

I live right on the border and from the north and south it's very difficult to counter just how much disruption there will be in people's lives if there is to be a hard border.

I think the British have acted so recklessly and have shown such complete contempt for Irish interests and for the Good Friday Agreement.

They are supposed to be co-guarantor of that agreement to uphold our peace and help us to build a prosperous society.

But I think what Brexit has done is that it's almost like a political earthquake right across the United Kingdom and Ireland.

There is now a very real sense that things will never be the same again.

I think it's a watershed moment for us it has very firmly put Irish unity on the table and it has become the defining topic of conversation no matter where you go. Everybody is talking about Irish unity.

Don't get me wrong, the European Union has many flaws but I think it's better to be in there to try and change things and not to be on the outside looking in.

"He just doesn't have any regard for Irish people and Irish interests and the way that he has spoken about the Irish Government and our Taoiseach has been disgraceful quite frankly."

CB: Do you think British Prime Minister Boris Johnson understands Northern Ireland and what a hard border would mean?

MF: I think he's a buffoon. He understands but I just don't think he cares.

He just doesn't have any regard for Irish people and Irish interests and the way that he has spoken about the Irish Government and our Taoiseach has been disgraceful quite frankly.

And, that has been the attitude of the very senior members of the Conservative Party over the past couple of years since Brexit.

CB: What are your thoughts on Irish unity?

MF: Well for me Irish unity will happen sooner rather than later.

I am absolutely confident of that because even members of the Unionist community back home are now thinking about it and actually engaging in the conversation.

There has just been a real change and there's something in the air.

For me it just makes political and economic sense because I'm convinced that it will happen and change is coming one way or another because it won't be the same after Brexit.

We have a choice, it can be either chaotic or it can be planned.

What we don't want is a referendum on Irish unity because we have learned our lesson from Brexit. Three years on we are still in this mess. So, it's time to start planning.

CB: What do you think Arlene Foster leader of the Democratic Unionist Party would think about Irish unity?

MF: We all know what Arlene Foster thinks about Irish unity...not very



MEGAN FEARON is joined by the Board of Friends of Sinn Féin Vancouver (L-R) Seán Maloney; Paul Stack; Anita Ingvallsen; Sean og Minagh; Megan Fearon; Val Brennan; Turlough Brennan and Chairman Bernard Ward.

much! To be honest, they have shown time and time again they don't have everyone's best interests at heart.

I personally do not want a united Ireland where people don't feel comfortable. What I want for Arlene Foster is a united Ireland where she feels safe, secure and valued.

It's for everyone and we need to have this conversation together and move forward.

CB: My next question is about the migrants that are coming to Ireland. It seems like they are not very welcome. What are your thoughts on that?

MF: Well, we have seen a rise of the far-right all across Europe and there is a very small section right across Ireland that have a bad attitude towards migrants.

One of our TD's, Martin Kenny has spoken out in defense about people who have had to move to Ireland for various reasons.

First of all he recently had his car bombed outside his home. That is disgraceful but it is not going to deter us because it's the right thing to do at the end of the day – to try to give those people who don't have a voice to try and give them a voice.

If businesses can send money across borders then we shouldn't treat human beings any differently. Migrants and emigrants are net contributors to our economy, such as migrant nurses and doctors.

For me it's just about compassion and a bit of respect, because you never know what has driven a person to leave their country.

Particularly for Irish people it's just so hypocritical since we have been forced to emigrate because of war and starvation in the past. I think we need to have some compassion.

You would never put your children on a boat unless it was not safe to stay at home, and you don't know where they are coming from and what they have just been through.

People say that we should be caring about our homeless first, but I think



JIMMY COLE & The New Fish on stage at the Anza Club.



PAT CHESSELL was also on the entertainment program for the evening.

it's possible to care about more than one issue at a time. And the thing about migrants taking jobs and housing is just not true.

We do have a housing shortage in the south of Ireland at the minute and that's because the Irish Government has completely failed.

I know back in 2017 when I was junior minister I worked with Martin McGuinness, we worked in the same department for awhile.

I had the responsibility of Syrian refugees coming to the North of Ireland

and we designed a program regarding social housing, and it's sad now that something similar couldn't be done for these migrants.

CB: Do you think there could be other car bombings related to the migrants?

MF: I think so. Those problems have always been there, we are just not used to thinking about it on this scale.

I think there will continue to be problems and the people causing the problems may shout the loudest but they are in a very small minority.

CB: If it comes down to it that there is another hard border in Ireland would there be problems?

MF: Absolutely, that's the real danger with Brexit of a hard border and the disruption that it would cause to people such as those who have to go across the border for their work, and obviously you have the worry of illegal trade across the border.

The British Government just have not thought this out and we just can't return to that [the Troubles].

We have actually seen protests along the border – they have organized mass demonstrations right across the border.

At the moment it's very peaceful, but people who have never paid much attention to politics are completely awake now and are really getting involved because they know what's at stake.



Friends of Friends of Sinn Féin Vancouver Fundraising Banquet



BURNABY Mayor Hurley joins Megan Fearon in presenting Bernard Ward the annual Rita Adams Saoirse na hEireann Award in recognition of his outstanding commitment and dedication to the Irish Republican cause in Canada.



BURNABY MAYOR Michael Hurley with Megan Fearon and Port Coquitlam Mayor Brad West.



BRIAN MacISAAC and Rebecca Kneen of Crannóg Ales and Left Fields were guests at the Friends of Sinn Féin evening. [www.crannogales.com].



PICTURED at the Friends of Sinn Féin evening – (L-R) Jane Ducharme, Sharon Brown and Joanne Long.

A Northern Ireland woman has appealed to the Irish Government on ruling which states she is British

A NORTHERN IRELAND woman has said she will be raising the issue of funding with Tanaiste Simon Coveney to appeal a ruling which stated she was born British.

Emma de Souza, who is a resident of Derry, will meet Simon Coveney in Iveagh House on December 17.

She won a case against the Home Office in 2017 after it deemed she was British when her U.S.-born husband Jake, a drummer, applied for a residence card.

However, an immigration trial in October upheld an appeal brought by the Home Office.

The Upper Tribunal refused to hear her application in November to appeal a ruling that people born in the North are automatically British citizens.

Judge Rintoul stated that “the Belfast Agreement manifestly is not a constitutional document.”

This followed a ruling by the tribunal in October, when the Home Office appealed a previous ruling by a lower immigration tribunal that de Souza was an “Irish national only who has only ever been such.”

The case came about after De Souza applied for a residence card for her U.S.-born husband Jake in 2015, but was told she had to apply as a British citizen because she was unable to do so as an Irish citizen.

De Souza argued that she had never considered herself British, so could not renounce citizenship she never had, and also insisted that the Home Office position is contrary to the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

However, UK government lawyers successfully argued that the British Nationality Act – not the Good Friday Agreement – was the relevant legislation.

DeSouza announced at the time that she would appeal that ruling.

Emma and Jake de Souza have written to Coveney on a number of occasions and she gave evidence to the Committee on Justice and Equality at Leinster House on December 4.

Chairman Caoimhghin O Caolain said the committee would write to Simon Coveney to recommend considering paying her costs.

She said the Tanaiste has stated that they’re trying to find a resolution and they’re conscious of the fact that the case is costing the couple quite a substantial amount of time and emotional distress.

She also said that she believes that he has raised the case with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

“I think the government is very conscious of the fact that we are going up against the endless resources of the British Government with this case.

“We’re just a normal couple, I’m at work today in a coffee shop.

“Gerry Adams brought up at the committee hearing that if the Irish Government was to fund the case, it would put pressure on the British Government and I think that’s true.

“We would not say no because we



EMMA de Souza with her husband Jake. She is fighting a ruling by the U.K. Home Office which states that people born in the North of Ireland are automatically British citizens.

could certainly do with the help. Financing the case is quite difficult for us and we don’t know how we’re going to deal with it.”

With the threat of deportation and the mounting legal costs, the couple have had to put their lives on hold.

“We don’t know if Jake is going to be deported, which he could be. Depending on which Home Secretary we end up with and what line they take, we might have to abandon the case because we can’t afford it,” she said.

“When you’re in a position where you don’t know if you’re going to be able to stay together, you can’t start your married life together because you’re in a weird limbo.

“All the normal things a married couple do – settling down, buying a house and doing all those things – we can’t even think about doing because we had to funnel all our finances and our money into our case.” No date has as yet been set for the appeal.

Irish Government to oppose rent freeze

DUBLIN – The Irish Government is set to oppose Sinn Féin’s bill on introducing a State-wide rent freeze, even though Fianna Fáil looks set to support it.

At Cabinet, Housing Minister Eoghan Murphy and Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe are to seek approval to oppose the Private Members’ Bill having consistently opposed the idea of a rent freeze.

The Sinn Féin bill seeks to freeze rents on existing and new tenancies for a period of three years; in addition to reducing rents by up to 1,500 euro per year through the introduction of a refundable tax credit for renters.

Proposing the bill, Eoin O Broin, Sinn Féin’s housing spokesman said that if Fine Gael oppose this legislation, it will have to explain to renters in Dublin and elsewhere why they are having to endure rents in excess of 1,700 euro a month.

Government sources said the overriding solution to driving rents down is supply and that is increasing. They also pointed to the impact of the Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs), which limit rent increases to four percent, in deflating the rent pressures relative to other areas.

But during the debate it is expected to be argued that the introduction of a rent freeze will act as a major disincentive to larger landlords from investing and these are a key driver in the market.

Murphy narrowly survived a motion of no confidence by 56 votes to 53 with 35 abstentions on December 3, ensuring that there will be no general election before the new year which would have followed a defeat.

The Government was supported by Independents Noel Grealish, Michael

Lowry and Denis Naughten. Independent Peter Fitzpatrick voted against the Government as did the Rural Independents group.

Fianna Fáil abstained in the vote as part of the confidence and supply agreement.

The motion of no confidence in Murphy was “never going to pass,” Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said in advance of the Dáil vote on the motion about the handling of the housing and homelessness crisis. “It was just a stunt to gain publicity,” he said.

Speaking in defence of his party colleague who previously survived a motion of no confidence in September 2018, the Taoiseach said the housing crisis was not the responsibility of one minister, one party or one ideology.

He said six Cabinet Ministers and three parties had had charge of housing and it was not the fault of any one party, minister or ideology but the economic crisis.

While Fine Gael was in charge of housing for the past three years, the Labour Party had responsibility for five years in the previous coalition with his party. The Green Party had responsibility for four years before that, he said.

Hitting out at the Social Democrats who introduced the motion, he said the party’s co-leader Róisín Shortall had said the country “could not afford an election at Christmas” during a previous crisis when “false allegations” were made against then tanaiste Frances Fitzgerald.

The motion of no confidence came as the latest figures showed an increase of 117 people in homelessness to 10,514. The Taoiseach said the figures were “terrible” and “shameful” but he said 14,000 people had been lifted out of homelessness.

ICCCVan to present panel discussion 'Women Leading Change'

VANCOUVER – The Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce Vancouver will present a panel discussion on Thursday, January 30, 2020 from 5:30 to 8 PM. It will be held at the Vancouver Club, 915 West Hastings Street in downtown Vancouver.

This event will be held in advance of St. Brigid's day, Ireland's female patron saint, when ICCCVan will present a panel to discuss the topic of "Women Leading Change."

The event will bring together notable speakers who drive the change we see, both across the industries we work in and society at large.

Doors open at 5:30 PM with pre-panel drinks and networking. The panel discussion will be held from 6:15 to 7 PM, followed by drinks and networking from 7-8 PM.

The event will be an opportunity for the women and men of the Irish Chamber of Commerce Canada Vancouver community to hear from leaders who are the vanguard of transforming the established norms of business and civic life.

Three panelists and one moderator on



stage will face attendees in theatre style seating. The moderator will lead each of the panelists through a series of pre-determined questions and then open up to audience Q&A.

Participation: attendees will be invited to submit their question upon purchase of their tickets. An audience mic will also be available.

The ICCCVan members and subscribers are a diverse mix of the British Co-

lumbia business community who either come from or have strong ties to Ireland.

The Chamber is very excited to announce that Ailbhe Smyth will be participating in the event.

Former head of Women's Studies at UCD and co-founder of the Appeal the Eighth Coalition, Ailbhe has been an activist at the forefront of social change in Ireland for over 35 years.

For more details about the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce Vancouver and further updates on this event as they become available, visit online: <https://icccvan.ca>.



AILBHE SMYTH, former head of Women's Studies at UCD and co-founder of the Appeal the Eighth Coalition, will be one of the panelists on the ICCCVan 'Women Leading Change' event.

U.S. Congress votes unanimously to support Good Friday Agreement

WASHINGTON – The U.S. House of Representatives has voted in favour of a resolution reaffirming support for the Good Friday Agreement.

The bill, which calls for strict adherence to the Good Friday Agreement during Brexit negotiations, was passed by unanimous voice vote following a debate on December 3 on Capitol Hill.

The legislation urges the U.K. and the EU to ensure that Brexit does not threaten peace on the island of Ireland and strongly opposes the reintroduction of a hard border.

It also insists that any trade agreements between the U.S. and the U.K. are contingent on meeting the Good Friday Agreement's obligations.

The bipartisan resolution was co-sponsored by Democratic Congressman Thomas Suozzi and Republican Congressman Peter King.

"The United States played an important role in the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, a momentous achievement that has been largely responsible for the relative peace over the last two decades," Congressman Suozzi said.

Republican Congressman Peter King also welcomed the passage of the resolution. "It is imperative that the United States do all that it can to not only support the Good Friday Agreement but prevent any return of a hard border," he said.

The bill was unanimously passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee in October.



NANCY PELOSI, the U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives, along with U.S. Congressman Richard Neal, Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, met with Tainiste Simon Coveney during a two-day visit to Ireland on April 16, 2019. At that time, Pelosi, the third most powerful politician in the United States, warned U.S. President Donald Trump and the Brexiteers not to even think about a U.S.-U.K. trade deal if there is any threat of a border in Ireland. She said a trade agreement that damages peace in Ireland "just can't possibly happen."



A number of senior members of Congress had earlier warned that they would oppose any U.S.-U.K. trade deal that undermines the Good Friday Agreement.

Those who had voiced their opposition include the House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee Congressman Richard Neal, and Democratic Congressman, Brendan Boyle.

Last month, former U.S. vice-president Joe Biden who is seeking the Democratic Party nomination for president voiced his support for protecting the Good Friday Agreement and avoiding a return to a hard border after Brexit.

He said he would continue to put pressure on the U.K. and that he has made it clear in the past that he does not support "breaking down" what is currently in place.



THE STORMONT INSTITUTIONS have been collapsed for almost three years following a breakdown in relations between the DUP and Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein and DUP 'hopeful' of return for Northern Ireland power-sharing Executive

BELFAST – Fresh talks to restore devolved government at Stormont will start on December 16, Northern Ireland Secretary Julian Smith has said.

Smith added that, unless agreement is reached by January 13, fresh Assembly elections will be triggered.

The DUP and Sinn Fein are hopeful of restoring Northern Ireland's power-sharing institutions according to a report in the *Belfast Telegraph*.

The five main political parties were represented recently at a panel discussion with business leaders hosted by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Northern Ireland.

The DUP's Jeffrey Donaldson spoke of his hopes for a resumption of devolved government.

"Whilst we can go to Westminster and we can do what we do, I believe it is ultimately much more powerful if there is a collective voice from Northern Ireland saying what we need," he said.

The Stormont institutions have been collapsed for almost three years following a breakdown in relations between the DUP and Sinn Fein.

Sinn Fein South Down candidate Chris Hazzard said he also felt hopeful that devolved government could be restored.

He repeated his party's position that there had been a compromise on the talks table last year over one of the sticking points in negotiations – calls for an Irish Language Act.

"I hate to be a broken record, but there was a compromise on the table last year. It was not the all-encompassing Irish language act that is held up some times to frighten people. Unfortunately that has not been agreed to yet but I am hopeful we can."

SDLP South Belfast candidate Claire Hanna said if the petition of concern was reformed that could go a long way to breaking the deadlock. She said there was a growing consensus around that issue.

She said there could be a "break in the clouds" if Brexit was resolved. "I think if the Conservatives and DUP aren't in their arrangement, I think that changes the dynamic quite fundamentally in terms of how the U.K. Government approaches this," she said.



JULIAN SMITH Northern Ireland Secretary of State.

"We will come back to the answer of power sharing, compromise and partnership because there simply isn't another one."

Ulster Unionist leader Steve Aiken, however, sounded a warning that devolved government in the region might be beyond restoration.

The East Antrim candidate described himself as a "realist" as he said there needed to be a "fundamental shift in the culture of how we do government in Northern Ireland," describing how it had been "not a partnership."

"After this General Election we have got three weeks probably to see whether Northern Ireland's government is savable."

"If it is not, we are going to have to get into direct rule because we must have decisions which are going to work. We need to make Northern Ireland work again."

Meanwhile, the Alliance Party's North Down candidate, Stephen Farry, said while he was not hopeful, the stalemate needed to be sorted.

Smith added that, unless agreement is reached by 13 January, fresh Assembly elections will be triggered. He also remarked that Northern Ireland is only an afterthought in the Brexit negotiations.

"The only people who care about this place are the five parties up here on this panel. We have to get it together."

"While I'm not hopeful because of what has happened in the past, the logic of us getting back round the table and getting this sorted is ever clearer."

SEATTLE IRISH NEWS

PASSINGS

• Tere Boyle, 80, a longtime member of the Irish Heritage Club, died in Renton November 25.

• John Majeska, husband of Úna and brother-in-law of Martin O'Malley, both Seattleites who are natives of Co. Mayo, died in Edmonds November 18.

• Martin Egan Russert, 33, son of IHC Board Member Betty Egan, died in Seattle November 13.

• Patricia O'Malley, who lived in the Seattle area in the 1960s/1970s with her husband George O'Malley, died in Dublin November 3.

• Fr. Kevin Heneghan, 95, a Columban Father and brother of Seattle's Fr. Jarlath Heneghan, died in Navan, Co. Meath, September 22.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílse
– May their faithful souls rest at God's right hand



By JOHN KEANE



IRISH TAOISEACH Enda Kenny with U.S. President Donald Trump on St. Patrick's Day 2017 at the White House. Kenny will be Grand Marshal of Seattle's 2020 St. Patrick's Day Parade.

IRISH WEEK 2020 – For those planning ahead, the main events of Irish Week 2020 in Seattle will be the Mayor's Irish Week Proclamation Luncheon on Friday, March 13; the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Saturday, March 14; and the Irish Festival at the Seattle Center on Saturday and Sunday, March 14 and 15.

See the full list of Irish Week 2020 events in Seattle at IrishWeek.org (although we're still in the process of updating our website).

We're always looking for extra hands and new ideas. If you want to get involved in helping organize any of our Irish Week events, call (253) 237-2811 or e-mail IrishWeek@irishclub.org.

GRAND MARSHALS – Former Irish Taoiseach Enda Kenny has tentatively agreed to be Grand Marshal of Seattle's St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 14.

A native of Co. Mayo, Kenny served as taoiseach from 2011 to 2017. He is also the longest-serving TD currently in Dáil Éireann, which makes him the incumbent Father of the Dáil.

Joining him as Honorary Parade Grand Marshal will be Co. Offaly native Jim Cummins who lives in Kennewick, east of the Cascade Mountains.

In 2001, Jim helped found the Seattle Irish Immigrant Support Group and served as Chair of the group for probably 15 years. He also served for six years as National Treasurer of the Coalition of Irish Immigration Centers around the U.S. More information later.

IHC AGM – At the recent annual gen-



HONORARY Grand Marshal of Seattle's 2020 St. Patrick's Day Parade will be Co. Offaly native Jim Cummins.

eral meeting and election of officers for the Irish Heritage Club, Frank Gill, Jean Roth, Nanci Spieker, and Seán Bailey were newly elected or re-elected to three-year terms on the board of directors.

Officers for the coming year were elected as follows: President: David Jacobsen; Vice-President: Ralph Kosche; Secretary: Janet Mount; Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Caron McMahan.

For more information on the Irish Heritage Club and its activities, visit irishclub.org or call (253) 237-2811.

IRISH FILM FESTIVAL – The Irish Reels

Film Festival did not operate in 2019 and a much smaller Irish Film Festival was held at the Seattle Center as part of the 2019 Irish Festival.

There are now plans to have a one or two-day stand-alone Irish Film Festival Seattle in the fall of 2020, in addition to a smaller film festival as part of Irish Festival Seattle in March.

If you're interested in getting involved and supporting this effort, please send an e-mail to film@irishclub.org or call (253) 237-2811.

IRISH MUSIC – Next year's Cascadia Irish Music Week runs from July 19 to July 25, 2020 at The Evergreen State College in Olympia. Registration for the 2020 season will open in January.

About 120 students attended the Irish music camp in 2019. The week is an immersion program in Irish music for beginner and advanced musicians.

Students hear the music all week long, played by the teaching staff and by fellow students. You play in sessions, attend classes, hear afternoon talks by the teachers and participate in intimate evening concerts.

By the end of the week the student will come away with some new tunes and a deeper sense of how the music feels and sounds, as well as advice on technique from excellent musicians, many of whom have traveled from Ireland. More details can be found at cascadiairish.org.

SEATTLE GAELS – Gaels members had a great day on the course at the Seattle Gaels Turkey Bowl / Poc Fada held November 23 at the Lakewood King County Disc Golf Course.

It was a little chilly, but was not raining for the first time in perhaps a decade! Congratulations to the winners and better luck next year to everyone else!

Turkey Bowl Champions: Hurling - Sean Bennet; Camogie - Vanessa Asari. Poc Fada Champions: Hurling - Nick Jones; Camogie - Vanessa Asari.

1929 PHOTO – While browsing a postcard and photo exhibit in Portland, Casey McNerthney, the Honorary Grand Marshal of Seattle's 2016 St. Patrick's Day Parade, recognized Matt McAlerney, his Irish grandfather, in a 1929 photo of Seattle Railroad Workers that he found and purchased.

McAlerney, a native of Co. Down, had emigrated from Ireland in 1911 and came to Seattle where in 1917 he met and married Lily Kempson, a member of Cumann na mBan who had been heavily involved in the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin.

McAlerney worked for the railroad all his life until retiring in the mid-1950s. He and Lily raised seven children in Seattle, and almost 30 of their descendants recently posed for a new photo in the exact same location as the 1929 photo. See both photos at <http://bit.ly/2Y1cTxl>.

MISCELLANEOUS

• Contact Seattle's Irish Book Club at jaadams095@gmail.com (note new e-mail address).

• The 40th Annual Magical Strings Celtic Yuletide Concerts throughout the Northwest, through December 21 with Seattle's concert on December 15. Visit magicalstrings.com.

• Mark your calendar for Nollaig na mBan, the Irish Women's Christmas celebration on Sunday, January 6,



MEMBERS of the Seattle Gaels at the Turkey Bowl / Poc Fada held November 23 at the Lakewood King County Disc Golf Course 2020. Call (253) 237-2811 for details.

• Also mark your calendar for 2020 Irish Night at the Seattle Mariners on Saturday, August 22, vs. the Chicago White Sox. More details to follow.

Go raibh síochán na Nollag agus Bliain Nua faoi shéan 's faoi shonas ort 's ar do mhuintir!

May the peace of Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year be with you and yours!



Seattle Irish Immigrant Support Group



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P.O. Box 75123, Seattle, WA 98175 www.irishseattle.com



A SECTION of a 1929 photo of Seattle Railyard Workers showing Co. Down native Matt McAlerney second from right wearing the jaunty fedora.




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Feminist, LGBT social activist Ailbhe Smyth has been on the front lines of enormous social change in Ireland for over 35 years

AILBHE SMYTH has been at the forefront of some of the seismic social changes taking place in Ireland these past few years. She is a feminist, LGBTIQ and socialist activist. The founding head of Women's Studies at University College Dublin, she has published widely on feminism, politics and culture.

Ailbhe has played a leadership role in many campaigns, including the equal marriage campaign in 2015. She has been fighting for women's reproductive rights for decades and was Co-Director of the Together for Yes national referendum campaign which removed the ban on abortion from the Irish Constitution in 2018.

She convenes the Coalition to Repeal the 8th Amendment, and is a regular contributor to media and national debate on this and other issues in Ireland. She was named as one of *Time Magazine's* 100 Most Influential People in 2019 for her work in repealing the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution.

This amendment, enacted in 1983, gave equal value to the life of the unborn fetus as that of its mother, effectively prohibiting abortion.

Ailbhe will be a special guest and keynote speaker at the upcoming Féile Bride~St. Brigid's Day Festival in Vancouver on Saturday, February 1, 2020. She spoke to *The Celtic Connection* recently about her role in changing Irish society.

Interview by Maura De Freitas

CC: Ailbhe you have been a human rights activist for a very long time. You have been at the centre of some of the most remarkable changes in contemporary Irish society, including political campaigns to legalize divorce, same-sex marriage, and the historic 2018 vote to repeal a constitutional ban on abortion. How did it feel to experience victory after such a long and difficult journey?

AS: Well you know, of course it's wonderful to actually win victories which really mean something in people's lives and which make a difference. I think certainly those big social and socio-sexual issues that I've been involved in are human rights issues.

I think of the victories that we have won over the decades, and which have taken such a long time, that means a lot to me to feel that I've been able to be involved in those and to contribute to making life more livable for people in very different ways.

However, you know a victory always opens up the horizon to reveal what still needs to be done. This is the work that follows on from a victory that opens a pathway that was closed before.

If we take the example of the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, it's pretty obvious I think that was about removing an obstacle from the Constitution. It wasn't about doing anything positive in one sense, it was about removing what was in the way of positive action.

But, of course, that means that ever since the referendum in 2018 we are now embarked on trying to open up and to make sure that there is real ac-

cess for all women in this country to decent abortion services.

And when I say decent I mean abortion services that are provided close to home, that are kind, that are effective and efficient, and that respect the different situations of the women that come along for them, and that's a very difficult thing to do.

Around the same time as winning the equal marriage referendum, we got very good trans-gender recognition legislation in Ireland, but we certainly didn't get the services that need to accompany that and we didn't get all parts of the law sorted out.

That's actually ongoing at the moment, so I think as I say the victories are really wonderful in and of themselves because they do make real changes for people in their lives, but at the same time you are very conscious of what remains to be done.

In my own case, I sometimes do look back on 35 years specifically around pro-choice issues and I think that there is so much else that women need, there is so much else that we need to change and to shift.

In a way winning something gives you the time and the space to think about what's still there on the horizon, what's still there on the agenda. I need to at least be asking myself where next can I place my energies, and where would I be most useful.

So, sorry, that's rather a mixed answer to your question. Usually people want you to say I'm elated and overjoyed, and I was overjoyed because I do think it was incredibly important, both of those referendums.

You couldn't not be overjoyed, but at



AILBHE SMYTH is pictured above addressing a group while an image of herself on the front lines with a megaphone is projected onto a screen behind her.

the same time there is always a part of my head that is actually saying 'so what will be next, what is the work that we do after this victory. What are the rights and provisions and general thriving in life that you still have to fight for'.

CC: But wouldn't you say that those victories gave hope for the future? That real change is possible?

AS: Yes they do, they absolutely do, and I think that everybody in Ireland actually felt that. At the same time, I think we have to recognize that Ireland was living in some kind of dinosaur, antediluvian, history.

People do say, particularly in relation to abortion, 'oh my goodness that was fast' because they see three months of a referendum campaign and I will say 'no, actually that was really five years of a referendum campaign'.

And, we were actively fighting on pro-choice issues from the beginning of the 1980s so making that breakthrough of course was really important.

In relation to marriage equality it's a little bit different. When I came out as lesbian in 1990, the thought to lesbians and gays might at some point even want to get married...it simply wasn't there.

That thought wasn't in our heads, it wasn't in our minds, and I think that the demand for marriage, certainly in Ireland, was very much propelled by a kind of gradual, you could say normalization up to a point of lesbian and gay sexuality.

Therefore, it seems to me that those two struggles while they often went side-by-side, they were somewhat different. They were also very different campaigns in many ways.

I think with marriage equality, what you're doing is asking a society in a way is to let you be the same as them. To not make a difference between you

as lesbian or gay and people who are heterosexual.

And you are specifically asking them with marriage to give you the same sort of chance at happiness in a way, whereas with abortion you are not.

With abortion, what you are saying is 'look, this is not about a chance at happiness, it is about relieving women of burdens which for one reason or another they can't or won't or don't wish to carry'. It is about a need and a necessity to resolve a difficulty or a problem.

Whereas, I think marriage is also about need and necessity, the need for love, the need for stability, the need for family and for security in our family lives. But it is not a need that springs from desperation, it is an aspiration. It is to try to achieve that stability and happiness in your life.

And, it doesn't matter how many times you quote divorce statistics at people, we know that when people marry they're not thinking about those statistics, they're thinking about the security, they're thinking about the happiness, and they're thinking quite rightly about the love that there is between them.

Abortion is about a much more difficult and what is for many women quite an ambivalent situation.

CC: Don't you think abortion is a very personal decision?

AS: Well, I think they're both quite personal, but marriage becomes a public institution, whereas your body and your own health and well-being are of course as you say much more personal, and should actually be private.

For that reason, the wonderful women who spoke up about the abortions that they had in Ireland, sometimes recently or sometimes as long as 30 or 40 years ago, for the vast majority of them they did so for the very first time in their

lives.

It was hugely meaningful for them. It was a very profound and I'm sure you know a very difficult thing for them to do. But they did that because it was so important for us to repeal the Eighth Amendment.

Actually, they should never have had to do that. I admire them hugely, while at the same time wishing that it didn't have to be like that.

That being said, it was very interesting that women had to keep their abortion so deeply secret. I mean in many cases they hadn't even told their families, some women hadn't even told their partners. They may have had their abortion before they met their current partner, you know all kinds of situations.

But what many of those women actually said words to the effect that this released something, this liberated something. It was like a kind of catharsis that they were able to say 'this happened to me and this is the choice that I made at the time'.

After repeal, women kept sending stories in to the different websites – everyday stories – and 'In Her Shoes' [In Her Shoes is a powerful platform on Facebook for women who were brutally impacted by the 8th amendment in Ireland], and so on.

It was an unburdening of that awful weight of secrecy and of having to repress something for such a very long time.

CC: You mentioned 'In Her Shoes', and I was intrigued by the imaginative use of art and social media during the campaigns to open discussions on previously taboo subjects. These platforms reached a much wider audience that might otherwise have been closed to some of these discussions.

AS: Well, I will leave social media to one side for the moment. I think that there was this blossoming, this opening out of creative expressions around repeal which I think on one level was a manifestation of how important people felt this to be.

That it was an issue which symbolized something really important about a break with the past and the desire to express something new – a new and different society in Ireland. And this was something that needed to be and was pushing to be expressed creatively.

I think that was a very interesting dimension of the campaigning because artists and writers and musicians, and dancers, and jewellers – all kinds of people – said 'we have a part to play in this, we have our contribution to make'.

It's a different vision in a way of the world where you had both the exorcising of a very painful history through those creative means, and at the same time the beginning of a process of re-envisioning what Ireland might look like. Of course that's an ongoing process.

So, the wonderful artists for repeal got together quite early on – I think about

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'This was an issue which symbolized a break with the past – a new and different society in Ireland'



PHOTO: Alastair Moore [Used with permission from London-Irish ARC]

A PROTEST staged by the London-Irish Abortion Rights Campaign in 2016 in which women marched to the Irish Embassy in London demanding a referendum to repeal the Eighth Amendment.

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2016 – and began to gather strength. And they contributed an enormous amount.

One of the things that they did, for example, was to bring together testimonials from women who had had abortions and to gather women actors to read and to retell these stories in a theatrical setting, which made it come to life so to speak in a very different way.

It was very powerful. I remember very well the evening that I was there, it was incredibly powerful and it was of course followed by discussion.

They also made these incredibly beautiful banners. Very large banners which they held up at a couple of marches and rallies which are now in the museum in Limerick. Many different artists from many different art practices contributed to these wonderful banners.

Writers who wrote incredible stories or poems, Marian Keyes had a novel which came out at the time which dealt with the question of abortion, so women writing, doing, making, saying 'that's the way I express myself'.

Young women made scenes for instance that were incredible, they were absolutely fabulous. Musicians sang and did gigs which were fundraisers, but where they also expressed their views.

Young musicians made videos which they put out on social media. Other filmmakers made videos and films. We also had artists turn to other fundraising activities by making badges and necklaces and bangles with repeal. These were sold to raise money for the campaign.

We had the incredible mural that Maser made to put up on the wall of the Project Arts Centre in Dublin.

The story of the Repeal Mural, which was a lovely red heart with blue all around it and repeal written across it – it was a big mural – was that Dublin City Council instructed the Project Centre to take down the mural because there was no right to place these political statements on the walls of Dublin city.

And, of course, what happened was the mural project went completely viral on social media. The putting up of the mural went viral, but so did the taking down of the mural!

I remember the Irish Council for Civil Liberties actually got the right from Maser the artist to put a blow up ver-

sion of the mural on the windows of its offices in Dublin.

It became kind of an iconic image, and I mean iconic in the real sense, not in some kind of loose contemporary throw away fashion. It became a real statement, a visual statement about the campaign and the meaning of the campaign.

You know there were so many...when I think of so much work. You know I'm skipping out, I'm forgetting so many. People contributed however they could, using the means and the medium that they were familiar with.

What was so very moving about the campaign was that so many people wanted to contribute, wanted to become actively involved, wanted to do something.

Even nowadays, you know a year and three quarters later, sometimes people come up to me and say 'I'm afraid I couldn't do very much because of my kids, or my job, or because I wasn't well, or I was away, or for whatever reason', but I canvassed solid for the last two weeks....so they did do something enormous.

One woman told me that while waiting for her kids outside school, she went and spoke to all the other parents outside the school and asked if they were voting for repeal. I thought 'what an incredible thing to do'. That's a pretty brave thing to do outside an Irish school.

So, it was pretty remarkable. I should also mention that Together for Yes, which was the lead campaigning organization, we did not organize all of that.

So much of this was happening spontaneously and connecting in with us or connecting in with local people, but all of this creative did not happen by some sort of fiat from headquarters.

People around the country used to say 'we don't know what goes on up in HQ'. And I used to say to them sometimes 'well you know, HQ doesn't know what's going on around the country!'

And that was the whole beauty of the thing. We did set a tone, we did set an approach, and we did set a way of speaking about abortion and a way of thinking about it. We did set kind of an agenda I suppose that people generally speaking more or less did go along with.

CC: Well in days past even the actual word abortion was almost taboo, one didn't dare speak of abortion.

AS: That's right.

CC: One of the most remarkable memories was the 'Home To Vote' campaign which encouraged people from the Irish diaspora around the world to come home to vote. This campaign was most effective in helping to deliver marriage equality in 2015 and again in 2018 to repeal the eighth.

AS: Absolutely. In the marriage equality campaign we didn't plan that from the Yes Equality headquarters.

That happened from abroad and somebody started the #HometoVote and this was just within the last two weeks I think of the campaign. So, we suddenly realized that people were coming home to vote.

Then, of course, it was more organized through social media by the Yes Equality people and we sort of drew it all together.

As people started coming home to vote two or three days before the marriage equality referendum we had Yes Equality people out at the airport.

They were welcoming everyone with banners reading 'Welcome Home to Vote!' and goodie packs filled with all the lovely things the Irish people miss when they emigrate, particularly young people.

They miss our Tayto crisps, they like Twix bars, and they like Barry's tea, so there were packets of Tayto crisps were being thrown around the airport, or people would be rushing toward the chocolate.

We realized of course in the repeal campaign that this was going to be very important. I think that from the marriage equality campaign, we realized that we had a lot of groups all around the diaspora, including Canada, who were organizing to do whatever they could to highlight the issue, to make it visible, to find Irish people wherever they were living and encourage them to be in contact with their families in Ireland to say 'I hope you're voting for marriage equality'.

And it was particularly marked with repeal. I think all of us understood the power of the diaspora by the time that the repeal campaign came along.

I can remember, going back quite a long way, probably around 2017, getting a phone call from someone in San Francisco to say they were actually starting a repeal group.

At the time we had a very strong London Irish group which was really part of the abortion rights campaign. So these were really important moments but the #HometoVote captured the imagination of people in Ireland.

Mostly, because it was largely young people who were coming home to vote and what they were saying with their journeys was 'this is our future that you're voting for, think of us. We're the people whose lives are really going to be impacted by your vote, yes or no. Yes for marriage equality, yes for repeal, yes for abortion, you are shaping our lives'.

CC: You're saying they understood the importance.

AS: Yes they knew that, but also everybody looking at them on social media and on traditional media too, was seeing them back home in their towns and villages, back home with their families and in their communities understood the importance.



PHOTO: Olivia Harris

THIS IMAGE 'Blessed Be the Fruit: Ireland's Struggle to Overturn Anti-Abortion Laws' was among the winning pictures of the 2019 World Press Photo Contest. Women are pictured here folding a cloth in front of a banner reading 'Our toil doth sweeten others'. It was created by Sarah Cullen at the Eva International Art Festival in Limerick and was used to open conversations on topics previously considered off-limits in a conservative Irish society.

They understood 'yes, we're voting for their future. It's not just those of us who are here. These are the young people who by and large had to emigrate during the crash or who were going abroad for experience and who really see their lives as you so well know in Canada very differently from those who emigrated in my generation.

I'm in my early seventies and my generation emigrated knowing that it was highly unlikely that they would ever be living in Ireland again. Many who emigrated, probably to western Canada, to Australia, left thinking they may never get back to Ireland in those days.

So it was a different kind of migration, whereas young people now whether they do come back or not isn't the question. They feel that they have that freedom to move around and because they're young, white and European, they do have that freedom unlike so many other migrants.

I think they know that and they do understand the privilege that they have. They knew it was important to come home to vote for all of those sorts of reasons. They didn't have to say anything, they just had to step off the plane, step off the ferry.

But the scenes at the airport were most remarkable. I mean people were just in floods of tears the whole time. You only had to mention #HometoVote and people would start to cry.

I also think Irish people, and I say this at great risk of course, are appallingly sentimental, they cry at the drop of a hat. But, of course there is a real history of a lot of sadness and loss when we think about migration.

So I do understand it. I have been known to shed a tear at #HometoVote myself as well, it was so touching.

And, of course, that was where social media really came into its own because social media carried all of those messages – that is what did it.

There were also many people who would have dearly loved to have come home to vote but who couldn't. If they were in the U.S., many of them didn't have legal status so they wouldn't have been able to go back if they came home to vote, and they were very sad stories.

But there were many others around the world living in very far flung places who couldn't afford it, or because they couldn't get time off work, or because their family situation didn't permit it, and who were sending messages to say they wished they could come home to vote.

We have small population in Ireland, I mean we've grown a lot since I was young, but we're still under five million but we have this enormous diaspora.

It's interesting how those two referendums have brought up those connections, those very profound ties that cross the world between people who are in Ireland and people of Irish origin who are elsewhere. And the awareness of those ties is very acute I think.

CC: I believe the death of Savita Halappanava, who died of septicemia in Galway hospital after a fetal heart-beat meant doctors failed to intervene as she experienced a miscarriage, caused national outrage at the impact the Eighth Amendment had on pregnant women. Was this a crucial turning point in Ireland's fight for abortion rights?

AS: I think the reasons for change are multiple. The death of Savita Halappanava was tragic in the real sense of the word because it was an unnecessary death.

She should not have died, and would not have died, had she been able to access a termination of a pregnancy which was a much wanted pregnancy, but one where she was having an inevitable miscarriage.

One very simple reason why we had to wait so long after 1983 to have that obnoxious Article taken out the Constitution was because no government asked us.

In 1992 we had a referendum on abortion and that referendum asked us if the threat of suicide should be considered grounds for an abortion in so far as it constituted a threat to a woman's life. The Irish electorate said yes it should be considered as a threat to a woman's life.

We were asked if we wanted the right for women to travel abroad for an abortion, and we said of course we do. We were asked if we wanted women to have the right to information if they wanted it, and we said yes we do this is a democracy.

But we were not asked in 1992 if we wanted to repeal the Eighth Amendment, and pretty much the same thing happened in 2002 where there was a rerun referendum of the threat of suicide which we had already had in 1992.

I think one of the very simple reasons is we didn't have a government over those 35 years that had the courage to give the leadership necessary to the people to make the argument, to state the position.

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Brian Lawless / PA Wire/PA Images

CO-DIRECTORS of Together For Yes Orla O'Connor (left) Grainne Griffin (centre) and Ailbhe Smyth arrive at the count centre in Dublin's RDS as votes are counted in the referendum on the 8th Amendment of the Irish Constitution on May 25, 2018.

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To state that every day 12 women – then this went down to 10 women over the years because of access to the abortion pill – but every day 10-12 women were going to Britain for an abortion.

Do you not think as a people we should be honest and say that what we are actually doing is exporting abortion and we do have abortion in Ireland...we just have it performed elsewhere so we can keep our hands pristine clean.

So we didn't have a government that was prepared to take that leadership at that time and it would have required leadership, it would have required courage but I think it was doable and it was certainly doable I think from the mid to late nineties.

That was one problem but I think that you can take a much longer look and say that really Ireland only started to enter the modern post-industrial world at the end of the 1950s which was much later than other countries in the western part of Europe in particular.

So that our economy remained a very poor economy for a very long time and as a result you tend not to have that degree of socio-sexual change in economies that are very poor.

We were also a very isolated economy and we were very isolated in terms of communication. It wasn't until we became somewhat more prosperous and began to travel a bit more. You must remember that our emigrants didn't come home, they were there for the duration.

And, we got the right to free second level education for everybody in the mid-1960s when Ireland began to open up to international communications with the advent of television.

So you had travel, you had education, television, all of that was coming later in one way or another than Canada or certainly the U.S. or Britain or France, or Germany, and so on.

It was a very different kind of trajectory because we were this small isolated island economy which was very firmly under the thumb of an extremely authoritarian Catholic Church which had been so closely involved with our struggle for national independence that no government would go against it.

If you look at the foundation of the Irish State and the Constitution which was drafted by Eamon De Valera with the help of Jesuit priests and other theologians, you have an understanding of the involved and engaged nature of the Catholic Church as institution and the Irish State as institution was exactly like that.

It wasn't until the early 1990s when

the revelations of child sexual abuse started to come forth and we then began to understand the extent to which women and babies had been treated with such brutality and cruelty by the Catholic Church and its agents.

They were being supported by the State which paid for the upkeep of women and babies and led to the maltreatment of children in these institutions.

So you had a lot of things that were coming together in the nineties. We were becoming more prosperous, we were becoming much better educated, in fact we have one of the most highly educated young populations in the world.

That was all coming together in the nineties and we were beginning to dismantle the foundations of Irish Catholicism and to show the corruption and the cruelty on which those foundations were built.

These are all contributory factors to helping us explain why the Irish population – the voters – were willing to vote for change which they weren't willing to do in 1983.

I think over the 1990s and the 2000s the situation changed and began really before the death of Savita Halappanava.

A number of us began to talk and were beginning to plan how we would put the issue of abortion and the Eighth Amendment back on the political agenda.

There had been a judgement in the European court for example which instructed the Irish Government to clarify its legislation on abortion because we didn't have any.

All we had was this 1861 Act on abortion and it needed to be clarified following the referendum we had in 1992, but no government had touched it and this was 2010.

So there was lack of courage from our politicians and a rapidly changing mentality, culture, economy, and a breaking of that kind of absolute link with the Catholic Church as institution. And, it's really important for me to make that point.

Irish people did not stop being Catholic and they have not stopped being Catholic – 87 percent of the population describe themselves as Catholic.

What we found during our campaigning over the years, was that people were saying 'yes, I am Catholic, but I make my own mind up about these moral issues because I don't believe the Catholic Church is right about divorce. People should be able to get a divorce.

Women have been popping birth control pills here for decades. Our birth

rate began to drop I think it was around 1979-1980 when the then-pope came to visit Ireland.

I always say that women went to listen to the Pope in the Phoenix Park and these great big rallies...and then they went home to pop their birth control pill and they didn't see any contradiction.

If you say to Catholics 'but isn't contraception against Church law?' they will say 'well, yes, but I have to do'. So there is no question or doubt about it.

It's not that much of a jump to say 'well, what about abortion?' Now, there is something because people have been brought up in schools that are Catholic which tell them that abortion is the murder of a baby.

Obviously, there is a moral issue still there for people but they begin to understand the logic of it when you explain that this is a path that they themselves have actually been following.

As for equal marriage, I think that was really the first concrete sign that Ireland really had changed. We had decriminalized male homosexuality in 1992, we had said this is not a crime, so that path was absolutely open.

It wasn't a done deal, we had to fight very hard to win that referendum, but I always thought we would win that. And, I thought that meant we could not have a repeal the Eighth Amendment referendum until we had actually won the right to equal marriage.

That was the path opener, that was the door opener really. It built on a sense that people in this country had and still have in many ways that we do have to change and what was very clear in the aftermath of both of those referendums was how pleased and relieved people were that we had at last made those changes.

There was a huge heaving of a national sigh of relief. We didn't have the cruelty, we didn't have the violation of human rights, we didn't have the disrespect for people on our collective conscience anymore.

That's not to say that everybody's mind is changed utterly, no there is still stigma around abortion, there is still difficulty. The law is taking forever to get properly implemented in services. Of course you've still got all those difficulties and problems, but we got over a huge, big mountain of an obstacle which was both equal marriage and abortion.

CC: On November 25, the United Nations launched 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence but the statistics are still shocking on the level of violence against women and children, many of whom are killed in their own home.

AS: Absolutely, and it is a very key issue here in Ireland as women and men all around the world have been marking the 16 Days of Activism.

For example, I was in Wexford on Monday evening which was the first day – the 25th – launching an exhibition of artwork which was extremely moving.

Women who had been subjected to coercive control by their partners had worked through a wonderful art project expressing their experiences, their feelings and their views about what had happened to them.

It was also about the kinds of ways forward they had found for themselves and the kinds of solutions that we need to have because coercive control became a criminal offence in this country in 2019 – just this year.

But we have discovered that the courts

here are still having difficulty in recognizing coercive control as the serious problem – as the criminal offense – that it is.

It's proving very difficult for women to bring those cases. I'll just give that as an example but there have been a great many other things going on that I have been involved with – even just this week.

While the U.N. figures are one in three women have experienced or will experience some form of violence from men in their lifetime, in Ireland the figure is somewhere between one in four and five.

So there have been some improvements here but considering how sophisticated, considering how egalitarian Ireland likes to think of itself – and the same is true of Canada which considers itself quite rightly to be a very egalitarian country – we are light years away from women's equality.

We know that men's violence against women contributes massively and unquantifiably to women's inequality.

Last night I was speaking on a panel marking World AIDS Day and the focus of the panel was on women and girls who have HIV and AIDS related illnesses and one of the huge problems for girls and women globally in relation to disclosing HIV or AIDS or even going for testing is violence.

They are in violent relationships or they are in relationships where they are afraid of violence if they disclose, if they go to seek support, if they go to seek help.

Or where they are so intimidated by their partners that they do not think for themselves – they cannot think for themselves. This happens in Ireland as well as sub-Saharan Africa.

The problem of men's violence against women is a massively unresolved problem and we absolutely have to fight it. We have to talk about, we have to keep pushing.

We still don't have equality in the workplace, we don't have economic equality with men, we don't have it and we can say all we like about the progress that women have made.

Yes, some middle class women like myself have made progress, although not as much as we should have done, but we have made progress.

But, here in Ireland, in Canada, throughout the world women are still doing the vast majority of part-time work for which we are paid per hour far less than men in full-time jobs are paid per hour.

CC: Here in Canada we will be marking the 30th anniversary of a massacre which took place at École Polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989. This is when a gunman entered an engineering school affiliated with the Université de Montréal and murdered 14 people. In one classroom, he ordered the women and men to opposite sides of the room and stated that he was "fighting feminism" before opening fire, shooting all nine women in that room and killing six. I think I speak for a great many young women of that era when I say that level of hatred was almost beyond our comprehension. It was a terrible day and a terrible shock to realize that level of misogyny existed in our society.

AS: Yes, I remember that very vividly. Even here in Ireland it shocked and affected us. I think women right across the world were affected very badly, but what I think is very important for us to recognize is that actually in every day life that misogyny is there – that hatred of women is there.

I mean I'm in favour of our being hope-

ful always, but I wouldn't call myself optimistic. I think this is an incredibly difficult and an incredibly dangerous time for women and in fact for all of those in the world who are all vulnerable.

We absolutely haven't tackled world poverty, we haven't tackled the huge imbalances between countries whatever we say, we simply haven't done that.

For women in particular, when we look at the rise of right-wing extremism, and right-wing populism – I mean, I'm looking at it here in Europe, and I'm not even talking about the U.S. ...not even going there for the moment – when I see the rise of that right-wing extremism and the rise of right-wing populism, its three major targets are always historically and in the present women, lesbians, gay and trans people – LGBTIQ – and, of course, people who are poor and in vulnerable situations and that nowadays is migrants.

Those are the three key populations that are being targeted by extreme right-wing populism and the problem is that what we used to think of as extreme right-wing populism is now becoming right-wing.

Now it's not seen as extreme as it was and in many countries it's actually the ruling party or it is a political party which is vying for government.

Look at Poland, look at Hungary, look at parts of Britain even, so this is a time when first of all I think we need huge solidarity internationally, and I think that certainly as a feminist I know that we must have solidarity with all those who are especially vulnerable and exposed and in danger.

We can only do that by working collectively across the inequalities and the differences between us – we have to work collectively. And we have to keep naming it.

You know I use the word patriarchy regularly and I don't just say violence against women, I say men's violence against women because it is not being carried out by robots.

It's too easy for us to say that violence is part of human life, there are lots of things that are part of human life that we want to stop and end, and that violence is one of those things.

I just feel very proud to be a feminist and I feel very fortunate to have grown up at a time and to have lived in a place where it was possible to be a feminist. There is still so much work to be done and I feel very strongly that we need to work together, this is not a time to leave our feminism behind.

CC: Finally, I would like to say that we're looking forward with much anticipation to welcoming you here to Vancouver to attend our Feile Bride~St. Brigid's Festival. You know I have heard so many women say that Brigid holds a deep symbolic meaning for them. So I was wondering what does St. Brigid represent for you?

AS: Well, I'm not a historian but for me Brigid has always symbolized for me a great strong woman.

And I only learned as an adult that Brigid had stood up against her local bishop and more or less told him to get lost – to go and stuff himself – that she was going to do it her way. And I thought that's my kind of woman!

One of the things that I love about Brigid is that while she seems to have been very strategic and very political, she was also a healer.

I also suspect that she was a poet, so somehow she brings together many different kinds of threads that are present in so many of our lives.