



## HYDRO-QUEBEC DONATION BRINGS IRISH MONUMENT CENTRE A STEP CLOSER TO REALITY

MONTREAL, MAY 15 2021 - Hydro-Quebec will transfer ownership of over 13,000 square metres of land surrounding the "Black Rock" to the [Montreal Irish Monument Park Foundation](#). The land lies near the Victoria Bridge in Pointe St. Charles, and takes in the site where more than 6,000 Irish lie buried in mass graves. This gift provides new momentum to the building of an interpretive centre to tell the story of the 1847-49 epidemic and the history of the Montreal Irish community.

Fergus Keyes, Board Member of the Foundation, describes the transfer of land as a "Wonderful gift." He adds, "We have been working closely with Hydro-Quebec ever since they purchased the land. This has been the culmination of a collaboration and the beginning of a great partnership."

Hydro-Quebec acquired the land around the monument in 2017 to build a substation to serve the new REM transit service. When it was approached by the Irish Monument Foundation to partner, it was very conscious of the historical and cultural significance of the site to Montreal's Irish community. It has subsequently consulted extensively with the Foundation, and ensured the substation conforms with its surroundings.

Hydro Quebec's member on the foundation board, Marie-Claude Durand, says, "Hydro-

Quebec is very pleased to be involved with this project, and to assist in any way to see it become a reality. We expect it will be a major tourism attraction for people from around the world, but especially for the Irish diaspora in North America."

The Irish Monument Centre will feature information on the history of the Irish Famine, the departure of millions of Irish during and after the Famine and the story of Montreal's Irish community to the present day. It will honour the many Montrealers of every background who ministered to the dying Irish and gave their lives in this great humanitarian effort. The "Black Rock" was placed on the location by labourers constructing the Victoria Bridge in 1859, who discovered the remains of the Irish dead.

Close to 40 per cent of all Quebecers can trace their roots to Ireland, and the vibrancy of the Irish community in Montreal has been evident in the annual St. Patrick's parade, one of the oldest in North America. The Montreal Irish Monument Foundation was established with the objective of building a permanent monument on the site of the "Black Rock."



Montreal Irish  
Monument Park  
Foundation

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# SPS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By KEN QUINN, PRESIDENT, SPS

This is the third installment of my comments in Nuacht as President. As of now, I have yet to meet any member face to face other than the majority of the Executive and several directors. But as the saying goes, ça va bien aller. People are being vaccinated. New COVID cases are decreasing as are net hospitalizations. The government is gradually loosening up on their strict but necessary measures. I am looking forward to meeting you at the Golf Tournament in September, hopefully unmasked if it's safe. We will get there.

This Irish Season was like no other. There was no Queen's Selection Evening, no Charity Ball, no Irishman of the Year Breakfast, no Luncheon, no Green Mass at the Basilica, no parades (plural, for there are a number of them). The Society relies on the community's generosity to help it fund its cultural, educational, and charitable endeavours. COVID has definitely impacted our operations. Our friends at CN have committed to again donate a significant amount to the Luncheon. We are most thankful and grateful for their commitment to our endeavours.

Speaking of the Luncheon, congratulations are in order to Chairperson Pamela McGovern and her team. I won't lie and say organizing a virtual luncheon of such magnitude is easy. It was hard. There were so many unknowns and so many considerations. We had never even thought to organize something of that magnitude to be held over the Internet. Thank you COVID for getting the Society to think outside the box. With a lot of hard work and a little faith that it would work out, we forged ahead and it did work out rather well.

Although the Society did make a small profit on the event, we didn't come close to raising the funds that we do in a normal year. Having said that I want to again remind you that as a registered charity the Society does issue tax receipts for donations, which you can make online at <https://spsmtl.com/charitable-giving/donate/>

After the success of the trivia session following the Luncheon it was decided to hold a trivia evening in June. That committee is hard at work. We hope you will indulge and attend one more virtual activity. The questions are varied in content and in difficulty, ideal for everyone to participate. If an Ontario resident with no connection to Montreal can finish in the top few at the Luncheon's trivia session, I know each of you can do well. Monies collected from this event will be sent to the Montreal Irish Monument Park Foundation, which continues its work largely outside of public view during the pandemic. They (and we) will have more to announce in the days and weeks ahead.

Finally, although there is an article within the pages of this edition, I want to say how sad I am at the sudden passing of one of our newest directors, Catherine Polson. Despite being new to the team, she jumped in feet first and got involved in various committees, which is so Catherine. We jumped in feet first together from 2017-2019 in the Polar Plunge benefitting Special Olympics. She even did it with another team in 2016, which we successfully raided.

The work that stands out to me is the voice work she did for the Luncheon, introducing entertainment and speakers. I have no doubt that Cat was carving out a wonderful niche within the Society. I had the immense privilege to be invited by the family to the visitation on May 17<sup>th</sup>. On your behalf I did express our condolences to the family. Caring, inviting, inclusive are but three words to describe Cat.

Have a wonderful summer, my fellow members. We'll see you at the Golf Tournament.

**NUA<sup>CH</sup>T**, Community Newsletter of St. Patrick's Society of Montreal

**Production:** Martina Branagan (Editor),  
Dave Dubeau, Maureen McCormick  
Geoffrey Kelley, Christie Brown &  
Ken Quinn, (Editorial Board)

**Email:** [nuacht@spsmtl.com](mailto:nuacht@spsmtl.com)

**Advertising:** [office@spsmtl.com](mailto:office@spsmtl.com)

**Printing:** Centre de copie commerciale,  
460 St. Catherine Street West,  
Montreal, QC H3B 1A7  
Tel.: (514) 842-2545

Please address all contributions to the Editor at the Society Office.


Tel.: (514) 481-1346 Fax: (514) 481-9048

E-mail: [office@spsmtl.com](mailto:office@spsmtl.com)

St. Patrick's Society of Montreal,  
St. Patrick Square,  
6767, Côte St. Luc Road, #1  
Montreal, QC H4V 2Z6

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

Submissions for Spring edition: **May 15, 2021**




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1/2 page	\$250	\$700	\$300

All submissions are to be forwarded directly to our editor,  
Martina Branagan at [nuacht@spsmtl.com](mailto:nuacht@spsmtl.com)

The deadlines for submissions are usually: **September 3<sup>rd</sup>**,  
November 15<sup>th</sup>, January 15<sup>th</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>.

Rates do not include layout or art. Please submit all art work in  
JPEG/PDF, sized accordingly. Rates do not include GST and  
PST, if applicable.

Thank you to our committee chairs for all your hard work  
and dedication to the society.

# CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY TRIUMPH OVER COVID ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY

By MARTINA McLEAN

The only luncheon I've missed since coming to Montreal was four years ago when my youngest brother got married on St. Patrick's Day in Dublin. For me, the luncheon is one of the great highlights of the Irish season in Montreal, a not-to-be-missed event. In 2020 it was cancelled in the interests of public safety, a great decision albeit disappointing. This year, we knew it needed to go ahead. It was important for the community to gather, to remember, to celebrate, to recognize, to honour and to look forward. How did they manage during the so-called "Spanish Flu" pandemic last century – who knows? According to past-President, Alistair O'Hara, there doesn't appear to be any record of how the pandemic affected the SPS luncheon if it at all. If you've any stories to share, please contact the editor: [nuacht@spsmtl.com](mailto:nuacht@spsmtl.com)



While I'm sure we all would have preferred to meet in person downtown for the Annual St. Patrick's Luncheon this year, pandemic times called for a different approach and the SPS Luncheon committee rose to the challenge. Donning their creativity hats, they set to work months before the big day. The result was that St. Patrick's Society of Montreal's annual luncheon went ahead, online, on March 17, 2021 with 160 connections, many of which had multiple viewers. It was an informative and entertaining event, where planning had required a lot of consideration about approach and content (live or pre-recorded segments) when usually the chosen venue's team would have implemented and complemented the work to be done by the committee.

Performers included Solstice, The Bernadette Short School of Irish Dance (all dancers were wearing masks), Kathleen McAuliffe (soloist for the two National Anthems – Ireland and Canada) and Terry Clahane (accompanist), as well as IDance Duo.

St. Patrick's Day greetings were recorded by prominent and well-known members and friends of the Irish community in Montreal as well as some past presidents of the SPS. Pre-recorded messages were also sent from the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, Mayor Valerie Plante, Premier Francois Legault, and the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau.

2020-2021 departed SPS members and friends were remembered in a moving photo memorial. For those who have not seen it or would like to view it again, please visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1mIVPU3cfU>

The Community Award recipients for 2020 and 2021 were honoured by Community Award Chair, Martina Branagan. In

their response and acceptance of the award, both Peter O'Brien (2020) and James Acker (2021) were keen to recognize the many volunteers who also helped and continue to help in their areas of outreach. Congratulations to all involved.

Usually our guest speaker would deliver a much anticipated speech to the gathered crowd. This year, we got to know our special guest, Ambassador of Ireland to Canada, Dr. Eamonn McKee in a unique format, through his virtual conversation with Dr. Michael Kenneally, Honorary Consul General of Ireland, and Principal and Chair, School of Irish Studies. There was also an opportunity to post questions in the chat.

Keen to get out and about to meet the Canadian Irish Community, Dr. McKee told us about the highlights of his career to date, including the tense and rewarding "Peace Process", mentioning the talents of those with whom he worked; "Bloody Sunday"; being in New York when 9/11 happened; the lesson-sharing and cross border cooperation in South Korea, the Irish charity's model farm in North Korea, and the monument to the Irish veterans in the Korean war; a small peace-building project in Israel, and the amazing city of Jerusalem. Having been to Montreal before, he visited Grosse Ile, Montreal and Toronto. His sense over the last six months is that the rest of the world is far away because there are oceans on both sides of the country, that Canada is the world's largest village because of the interconnectedness between people despite the enormous scale of the country; that Ireland and Canada embrace diversity and both are very focused on the future and the kind of society we'd like to be; and we make a genuine effort to deal with our respective pasts that have some commonalities. Among the project areas envisaged are political cooperation between the two governments (security, climate change, Irish heritage); economic promotion (e.g. CETA), public diplomacy; Irish services abroad, and research, innovation and skills (need to map them and encourage them along with the partner relationships). The team is looking to consult with the Irish Community to understand where the partners are and where the potential is. And though they've a small presence here in Canada, with another consulate in Toronto, it's leveraged by the local committed community and they will "follow the energy".

On COVID, the Ambassador appeared positive, seeing an end in sight, hoping lessons would be learned (e.g. the importance of community, contact, outreach and our common humanity) and the expectation of an economic resurgence due to repressed demand. That said, he feels that Brexit has complicated life in Ireland. In his opinion, the Irish leaders have been brilliant in protecting national interests, (peace in NI, ensuring that the UK & EU deal is a good one so that the UK can continue to be a prosperous Irish partner), but it's creating a lot of work for Ireland with the UK outside the EU, resulting in a need to reconstruct the bilateral relationship with the UK.

After the Q&A, moderated by SPS President, Ken Quinn, we were treated to IDance Duo, two teachers from the Bernadette Short School of Irish Dancing – see article starting on page 12 for further information and a link to the entertaining video they specially prepared for St. Patrick's Day (see page 18).

An overwhelming success was the online trivia quiz that took place after the event. The overall winner was Patrick Shea with an impressive general knowledge and speed in response-time.

Our thanks go to Pamela McGovern, Luncheon Chair and her committee for all the preparations and the work on the day to bring the Annual SPS Luncheon into our homes and workplaces. They even organized the possibility of ordering lunch for delivery or pickup. We are very grateful for the technology that enabled the extended Irish-Canadian family (the Irish and the Irish for a day) to gather together virtually on such an important day for us all and to all those who pre-recorded their segments to ensure quality in the viewing. We are also very appreciative of all the sponsors and those who attended this virtual luncheon because the proceeds will help us support our charitable giving.

If you missed the 2021 virtual St. Patrick's Day Luncheon, you can still view it here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSyyQ7\\_PeHc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSyyQ7_PeHc)

Let's hope that next year will see us being able to gather together in person for all the Irish events that are so well supported and eagerly enjoyed during "The Irish Season". In the meantime, see our back page for upcoming events.



# POST-BREXIT VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND – NO RETURN TO THE BAD OLD DAYS

By KEVIN CALLAHAN



In April, media around the world carried images from Northern Ireland of riots and confrontations between gangs of masked youths in impoverished working class Loyalist communities and the police. There were several nights of violence marked by petrol bombs and vehicles being burned. Pundits warned of the danger of returning to the grim days of “the Troubles”, which were finally ended by the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. In reality, the current crisis is taking place within Ulster unionism more than within Northern Irish society as a whole.

The Democratic Unionist Party, founded by Ian Paisley, has always prided itself on being the unapologetic defender of a ‘No Surrender’ mentality and asserting an unswerving loyalty to the union with Great Britain. Remarkably, Paisley himself was able to transcend this attitude when he was First Minister for Northern Ireland and worked cordially with former IRA leader Martin McGuinness, his deputy minister. This was an anomaly, however, and the party has largely remained true to its uncompromising origins. Shockingly, the DUP has still not signed on to the Good Friday Agreement. The party is also ferociously pro-Brexit, which it saw as an opportunity to strengthen ties to the UK and lessen those

with the Republic of Ireland. Nevertheless, this position was out of step with the people in Northern Ireland who voted in favour of remaining in the European Union in the 2016 referendum. From 2017 to 2019, the DUP held the balance of power in the British parliament and played a dangerous game of pushing a hard Brexit and sabotaging Prime Minister Theresa May’s backdrop plan for resolving the tensions between Brexit and the Good Friday Agreement. The DUP also foolishly believed British Prime Minister Boris Johnson when he promised that he would never allow a border in the Irish Sea. When push came to shove in 2020, Johnson, under pressure from the US, Canada, and the EU, bowed to reality and signed the Northern Ireland Protocol, which effectively did put a border in the Irish Sea. This was the inevitable result of a hard Brexit in the legally binding context of the Good Friday Agreement.

Unionists are now angry to find themselves in a position their own hardline positions created. They are also panicking about a steady loss of political power. While the DUP is still the largest single party, Unionist parties are now a minority in the Northern Ireland Assembly with the Alliance Party attracting more and more disillusioned

# POST-BREXIT VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

cont. from page 6

Unionist voters and Nationalists opting for Sinn Féin or the Social Democratic and Labour Party. In addition, there is the question of the links between the DUP and Loyalist paramilitaries which are deeply involved in the drug trade. There is speculation that some of the recent violence was in part orchestrated by the paramilitaries to protest recent police crackdowns on their illicit activities. Last February, DUP leaders met with the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC), an umbrella group representing the Ulster Defense Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force, both responsible for hundreds of sectarian murders during the 30-year conflict. The stated reason for the meeting was to discuss a response to the Northern Ireland Protocol, and it is noteworthy that LCC chair David Campbell boasted that Loyalists would 'fight physically' to maintain 'freedoms in the UK'. These paramilitary groups should have been disbanded after the Good Friday Agreement, so it is disturbing that they not only still exist but are being courted by Unionist and British politicians. On May 12<sup>th</sup>, it was revealed that Brexit Minister Lord Frost and Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis met a delegation from the Loyalist Communities Council (LCC) to discuss Brexit concerns. The idea that the British government and the DUP are consulting with paramilitaries over policy is troubling to say the least.

Further signs of disarray within unionism appeared at the end of April when Arlene Foster resigned both as First Minister and as head of the DUP. Foster was essentially forced out by her colleagues who are angry at the current situation and needed a scapegoat. The ostensible reason for the loss of confidence in her leadership was her abstention on a motion in the Stormont assembly calling for a ban on gay conversion therapy. The DUP members largely voted against the motion and Foster's abstention was considered a sign of liberalism and weakness.

DUP members are also unhappy that the Irish language is to be given improved status in Northern Ireland, but their fundamental angst is based on any perceived weakening of the emotional link to Great Britain. They maintain a fanatic allegiance to a United Kingdom that shows little interest in that loyalty.

Foster has now been replaced by hard-liner Edwin Poots, who has stated he believes that the Earth is only 6,000 years old and opposed lockdown measures to stop the spread of Covid in Northern Ireland. The DUP is now planning a legal challenge to the Northern

Ireland Protocol, and some unionists are even calling for boycotting all-Ireland institutions.



Photo: Getty

Nostalgia for a past era is a dead end. People on the island of Ireland have moved on, and there can be no going back to the old Orange state where Catholic Nationalists were second class citizens. Threats and violence, whether rhetorical or physical, have no place in contemporary Irish society. Unionist politicians must show leadership and bring their community into a discussion on a positive way forward for the whole island of Ireland.

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# JUSTICE AT LAST – AFTER 50 YEARS!



On May 12<sup>th</sup>, a long-awaited coroner's report on British army killings in 1971 in a Belfast neighbourhood exonerated the ten victims and presented a chilling account of the actions of the Parachute regiment.

Most people with any knowledge of Ireland know about Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972 when British paratroopers fired on a peaceful civil rights march and killed 13 people. This became one of the most iconic moments of the 30-year conflict in Northern Ireland. Not so many are aware of the horrific events that ensued over a 36-hour period in the nationalist area of Ballymurphy in August 1971. The British army had just implemented internment without trial and swooped into nationalist areas and arrested hundreds of men without charge. In a 36-hour period in Ballymurphy, 10 people, one woman and nine men, were shot dead by British soldiers. One of those killed was a Catholic priest, Fr. Hugh Mullan, who was giving last rites to another victim. The official British army position, parroted by the media at the time, was that those killed were either armed IRA volunteers or caught in crossfires. For five decades, the families of the dead campaigned for an impartial enquiry into the killings. Finally, in 2018 their prayers were answered, and an inquest began.

The conclusions of the report are unequivocal. The coroner, Mrs. Justice Keegan stated that "All of the

deceased in the series of inquests were entirely innocent of wrongdoing on the day in question." She also rejected claims by soldiers that some of the victims had been armed and shooting.

Joan Connolly, one of eight children of Joan Connolly who the soldiers had branded an IRA gunwoman after they had shot her dead, said she felt "The joy and the peace and mixed emotions that my mummy has been declared an innocent woman."

After the report was released, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson apologized for the actions of the soldiers in a phone call to Northern Ireland's first minister, Arlene Foster, and the deputy first minister, Michelle O'Neill. This third-party approach to acknowledging the massacre provoked considerable backlash, and Johnson now says he will write letters of apology to the families of the victims. However, they are calling on him to apologize in the House of Commons as former prime minister David Cameron did in 2010 over the Bloody Sunday victims.

While the revelations of the report are welcome for bringing some closure to the families of the victims, it is a sad commentary that it took 50 years of hard campaigning for the truth to come out.



# THE POINT MARCHES AGAIN IN 2021

By FERGUS KEYES

It was unfortunate and sad that the main 2021 St. Patrick's Parade in Montreal was cancelled again this year. However, to ensure that there was indeed a 2021 Parade in Montreal, a small group of residents of Point St. Charles, along with some neighbours from Verdun did march through the neighbourhood, again, this year.



Respecting all the Covid precautions in place, we did indeed have some fun, with passing cars (including a Montreal Police car); and many pedestrians cheering us on.

Let's hope the main St. Patrick's Parade returns in March 2022, but in the meantime, it can never be said that there was no St. Patrick's Parade in Montreal in both 2020 & 2021.



## BEANNACHTAÍ NA FÉILE PÁDRAIG ORAIBH GO LÉIR!



# NATIONAL FAMINE COMMEMORATION 2021

By MARTINA McLEAN

PHOTO: [HTTPS://PRESIDENT.IE/EN/MEDIA-LIBRARY/PHOTOS](https://president.ie/en/media-library/photos)

At Glasnevin Cemetery, Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Michael D. Higgins, Uachtarán na hÉireann - President of Ireland addressed the Lord-Mayor of Dublin, Minister, Representatives of the National Famine Commemoration Committee, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, and the people of Ireland about the never-to-be-forgotten and avoidable “[event imposed on Irish people in the history of modern Ireland, that is An Gorta Mór, the Great Hunger, The Irish Famine.](#)”



This is an address worth reading for all of us, Irish, Irish-Canadian and the world at large. Not only is it an overview of our history, pointing to the vulnerabilities and consequences for the poorer Irish at the time forced to eek a living on a miserable potato patch or be evicted. Between 1846 and 1855, some 2.1 million people left Ireland, more than in the previous 250 years, with 70% going to the United States. But it also calls us to deeper analysis and reflections on the long-term consequences on Ireland, Irish society and culture, and how the famine informed our psyche, outlook and politics as well as our relationships with our neighbours across the waters on both sides of the country. It also raises the red flag about what is happening in the world today.

Yes, the fullness of the horror, grief and sadness at the deaths, emigrations and other losses incurred as a result of An Gorta Mór must be acknowledged and spoken about; the sources and responses recognized and understood; and the consequences addressed if we are to be healed and able to move forward in our humanity.

It is also a stark reminder to us all to not look the other way as we watch contemporary devastating events unfold elsewhere around the world e.g. “the threat of

famine affects 34 million of our fellow global citizens today”. Solidarity and empathy to suffering are key to our humanity: peoples did come to our aid, and we should not only pass it forward but more than that, we should influence international diplomacy “not to surrender in our time to any indifference” or inaction but rather challenge friends and opponents alike to cooperate within and across borders for an inclusive and universal care for all humankind.

In the words of the President:

“We in Ireland should understand, better than many, the bitter residue that persists for generations when human beings, consciously or unconsciously, abandon our behaviour as the core values of our most basic humanity give way to a callous doctrine, dispossession of the vulnerable, of self-interest at any cost, a dangerous greed for land, and militaristic geo-political jostling.”

The full speech can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/YogxdP1hNeA> or read here: <https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/speech-at-the-national-famine-commemoration-2021>

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# THE BLACK STONE VICTIMS NOT FORGOTTEN

PHOTOS: KEN QUINN

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the Ancient Order of Hibernians organized an intimate gathering at the Black Stone on Bridge Street to commemorate the more than 6,000 Irish immigrants who died and were buried in the area in 1847, fleeing the “Gorta Mór” (Great Hunger) in Ireland as well as the Montreal “caregivers” who also succumbed to the fever in their great humanitarian effort towards the Irish.

Thank you to the representatives from the various Irish groups who went to lay wreaths and flowers at the graveside of these remembered victims.



L-R: Scott Phelan, Fergus Keyes, Victor Boyle and Lynn Doyle



# A JOURNEY THROUGH IRISH MONTREAL

BY NATASHA WOYTIUK & LUCAS LAWTON (@IDANCEDUO)

IDanceDuo is a world class Irish dancing duo made up of Lucas Lawton and Natasha Woytiuk, two professional dancers and teachers from the Bernadette Short School of Irish Dance. Established on the foundations of a decade of professional dance partnership, IDanceDuo was created during the pandemic to provide ourselves with the opportunity, as artists, to share our passion and creativity as far and wide as possible. In the beginning, the nature of IDanceDuo's work was of virtual Irish dance performance, shared via social media platforms. Shortly after, we were awarded a grant from The Montreal Arts Council to stage "pop-up" outdoor performances at seniors' residences throughout Montreal with the goal of spreading some joy to seniors and their care-givers who have been particularly affected by the isolation restrictions throughout the pandemic.

Given the virtual nature of IDanceDuo's beginnings, we were thrilled when asked by St. Patrick's Society to put together a short video for the virtual edition of their annual luncheon. Inspired by our Irish ancestry and our sense of belonging to the Montreal community, we knew immediately that we wanted to create a project that showcased the various important Irish historical monuments and landmarks all around Montreal. Because this project was being pre-recorded and presented virtually, we wanted to take this special opportunity to bring the Irish community together by displaying the "Irishness" of our city in a way that isn't possible at our usual in-person events. Since, for the past two years, Montreal was not able to "parade" its pride in its Irish heritage through the streets in its usual fashion, we attempted our own parallel to this tradition, by taking our Montreal viewers through its city's streets on a virtual tour of the sites where our community's Irish heritage and culture is highlighted. And thus "A Journey Through Irish Montreal" was born.



With the help of what Lucas learned through his minor in Canadian Irish Studies from Concordia University, and some helpful input from luncheon committee members Pat Short and Laurie McKeown-Thomassin, we developed a list of Irish landmarks throughout the city of Montreal. This list included the Old Port, St. Patrick's Basilica, the Black Rock, the tomb of Thomas D'arcy McGee, Victoria Bridge, the ruins of St. Ann's Church, the Lachine Canal, Horse Palace, Griffintown, Joe Beef's Tavern, Hurley's Irish Pub and the Bernadette Short School of Irish Dance. Filmed over two days, much like the title, this truly was a journey for us. Traveling to each monument and landmark reminded us of the vastness and impact the Irish community has had across Montreal, and also brought to light the ever-changing landscapes surrounding these very important historical sites.

On a personal level, this journey also brought to light some family history as we learned about Natasha's Irish ancestry from her grandmother, Audrey Woytiuk (née Audrey Walsh), who while following our artistic process over social media, informed us on the family's marriages that took place at the two church locations on our journey. Given that this was filmed in the days leading up to St. Patrick's Day, our green attire and dancing across the city garnered much attention and inspired many passing pedestrians to stop to watch us and wish us a Happy St. Patrick's Day. This truly put us in the spirit of our favourite holiday, something that has been sorely missed for the past two years.

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# TIME TO RE-JOYCE!

## FESTIVAL BLOOMSDAY MONTRÉAL CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

### MUSIC | READINGS | HISTORY | LECTURES | STORYTELLING | FOOD

Blooming and Zooming

Saturday, June 12 to Wednesday, June 16 (Bloomsday)

Celebrated worldwide, Bloomsday is June 16 - the day in 1904 when main character Leopold Bloom took his walk around Dublin as depicted in James Joyce's masterpiece, the novel *Ulysses*. Festival Bloomsday Montréal is a celebration of Irish-Montreal heritage, culture and literature.

Festival Bloomsday Montréal is the largest Bloomsday Festival outside Dublin with events spread over five days. For the second year in a row it has moved online. Forty percent of Quebecers have some Irish ancestry and this eclectic festival boosts local pride along with building awareness of diverse cultures and identities. Festival Bloomsday Montréal president Kevin Wright is pleased to invite Montrealers and people from around the world to this online Irish culture fest filled with performances, literature, cuisine, discussions and art, starting on June 12 and leading up to Bloomsday, June 16, when local actors and Joyce enthusiasts read selections from *Ulysses*. With the exception of the popular Sunday morning walking tour, which is the only in-person event, all events are free.



Margie Gillis

One of the highlights for this 10th anniversary year is internationally acclaimed dance artist **Margie Gillis**, who will inaugurate the celebrations by presenting "The Whole Bloomin' Thing", a video of a work-in-progress built on Molly Bloom's reverie from *Ulysses*. Gillis explains, "The flow of the spoken word is such an inspiration. I created a solo work to Siobhan McKenna's luscious reading and have performed it around the world. I'm now developing an ensemble work to include the characters of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus that explores the merging and overlapping of the masculine and feminine consciousness. I was so happy to learn there's a Bloomsday Festival right here in Montreal." There will be an open Q&A after the performance moderated by award-winning broadcaster, Dennis Trudeau, who also hosts two other events.

Wright acknowledges that Gillis' participation is a dream come true. "It's a testament to the vision of Festival co-founder Judith Schurman, whose sudden death a few months ago has left us heartbroken. Not only was Judith a superb manager, she knew how to bring out the best in artists who shared the Bloomsday spirit. We're dedicating this whole season to her memory." Her grieving husband Dave still recalls being bitten by the *Ulysses* bug back in 1964. He explains, "There's no need to always read it cover to cover; the novel can be sampled with relish by opening pages at random! You are always rewarded with delightful and amusing passages."

Festival Bloomsday Montreal's theme for this milestone year is 'origins'. Artistic Director, Kathleen Fee, says, "It's our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary so we wanted to up the ante. We kicked off 2021 in January with a dramatic reading of **THE MIDNIGHT COURT**, a sexy, satirical Irish poem from the 1700s whose explicit carnality predates Joyce's bold descriptions of bodies doing what they do by more than a century. Over 300 separate devices connected to our live online presentation from as far away as Australia and we hope to attract an even larger audience in June."

Cont. page 20



FESTIVAL  
BLOOMSDAY  
MONTRÉAL

Irish culture  
in Montreal  
La Culture irlandaise  
à Montréal

# THE WATER OF LIFE GRAPHIC NOVEL SERIES

## ONLINE RELEASE 2021

BY G. SCOTT MACLEOD

As *The Irishman - Child of the Gael* St Patrick's Day graphic novel launch was cancelled consecutively on March 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 & March 17<sup>th</sup> 2021 due to COVID-19, we have opted to launch the completed Water of Life graphic novel series online. During the course of the pandemic, we have completed the two remaining graphic novels, *The Abenaki - People of the Dawn* and *The French Canadian*.

This graphic novel series was adapted from the <http://thewateroflife.ca> animated film series, a collaboration between Irish storyteller Mike Burns, myself, film director/ animator/illustrator G. Scott MacLeod from MacLeod 9 Productions and The National Film Board of Canada.

The complete set will be presented at The Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2021 <https://catalog.services.book-fair.com/en/exhibitors-and-directories/exhibitors-a-z/exhibitors-details/ID/1069420/action/detail/controller/Exhibitors/> as part of the Canadian contribution through the London based Tilly-Ink agency <https://tilly-ink.com/talents-d-z>

The graphic novel series will be targeted to youth, schools, libraries, publishers and the general public to open up conversations and learning around indigenous and immigration issues in Canada.

PDF versions of the series are available in Canada at McIntyre Media <https://www.mcintyre.ca/titles/300153N> and internationally with ODILO <https://www.odilo.us/tag/digital-library/>

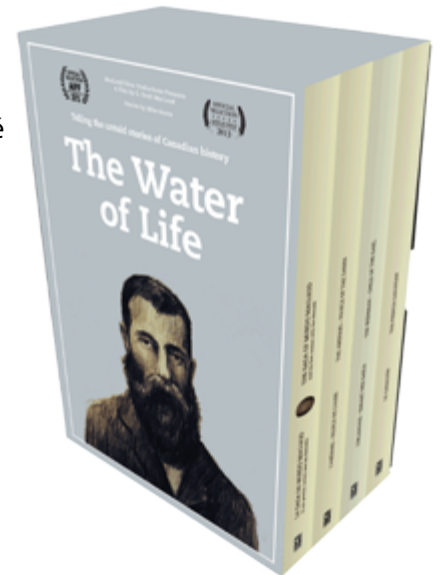
Hard copies of the graphic novels can be ordered through the links below and from our new MacLeod 9 Productions online store <https://www.macleod9.com/store.html>

MacLeod 9 Productions Promo Reel <https://vimeo.com/4475510791>.

We would like to acknowledge and thank St. Patrick's Society of Montreal, Cin  Gael and all individuals that contributed to our Go Fund Me campaigns.

Mike Burns (Author)  
G. Scott MacLeod (Illustrator)  
MacLeod9Productions - [www.macleod9.com](http://www.macleod9.com)

G. Scott MacLeod BFA, MA  
2319 Hampton Ave. #1  
Montreal,  
Quebec,  
H4A 2K5  
Canada  
Tel: 514. 487. 8766  
[macleod\\_nine@hotmail.com](mailto:macleod_nine@hotmail.com)



### Editor's Note:

This [series](#) is worth investigating for many reasons, not least because of its aims, Mike Burns is an amazing storyteller / [seancha ](#) with a distinctive voice evident in the writing and in the telling, and the artwork is compelling, page after page, setting up context, atmosphere and people, complementing the storytelling.

I'd love to see these on the big screen with Cin  Gael when we can all gather again together safely.

# THE WATER OF LIFE GRAPHIC NOVEL SERIES

cont. from page 14



## THE ABENAKI –PEOPLE OF THE DAWN

A dramatic retelling of the history of the Abenaki First Nation, its early experiences with colonialism and its continuing struggle for survival.

<https://www.lulu.com/en/ie/shop/g-scott-macleod/the-abenaki-people-of-the-dawn/paperback/product-1zkr425y.html>

## THE SAGA OF MURDO MACLEOD

The SAGA OF MURDO MACLEOD and his first contact with the Abenaki tells the story of a group of Scottish immigrants to Lower Canada in the 1830s. An unlikely alliance with First Nations inhabitants saves a group of 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish immigrants from certain death.

<https://www.lulu.com/shop/g-scott-macleod/the-saga-of-murdo-macleod/paperback/product-23751842.html>



## THE IRISHMAN – CHILD OF THE GAEL

Our narrator, Sean recounts his maternal and paternal ancestors' dramatic immigrant experiences in Canada from the 1800s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<https://www.lulu.com/en/ca/shop/g-scott-macleod/the-irishman-child-of-the-gael/paperback/product-124e2d4g.html>



## THE FRENCH CANADIAN

Jean-Pierre, a bootlegger from Sherbrooke, tells the iconic tale of his family's arrival in Quebec in the 1640s, their work as farmers on the Seigneuries and as builders on the Trans-Canadian railway.

<https://www.lulu.com/en/ca/shop/mike-burns-and-g-scott-macleod/the-french-canadian/paperback/product-pwvgjd.html?page=1&pageSize=4>



# REST EASY CATHERINE POLSON

BY KEN QUINN



the Ball most years from 2015.

I can only describe Cat's friendships as one gigantic Venn diagram. In the days following her passing, I learned a little about her. Cat was a [UIS Princess](#) in 2015. She was passionate about the sport of [Rugby](#), having played at St. Thomas High School, at Dawson College, and as a longtime player and Executive with the Beaconsfield Rugby Football Club (BRFC). Her position was that of a hooker, who plays in the front row during scrums and whose position name comes from their role of 'hooking' or 'raking' the ball back with the foot. In her younger years, Cat was involved in the local [ringuette](#) league as a player and referee, serving as Referee in Chief of the Beaconsfield Kirkland Ringuette Association from 2010-2012. She was a lifeguard. At Christmas time, Cat gathered with her pals to do some baking. She was passionate about politics although I don't think \*we\* talked politics. She served as [Campaign Coordinator](#) in the Fall of 2015 for Melissa Kate Wheeler of the Green Party of Canada, candidate in NDG Westmount. In 2018, Cat took a giant leap in presenting herself as the [Green Party of Quebec Candidate](#) in her hometown riding of Jacques-Cartier, a Liberal stronghold. While she did not win the riding she came in 3<sup>rd</sup> behind Greg Kelley (Liberal) and Karen Hilchey (CAQ), improving the Green Party's fortunes in the riding. Cat, ever cheeky, had on her campaign posters the term "Bonjour-Hi". Anyone from the English-speaking community in Montreal knows the



On May 6<sup>th</sup>, the world became a little less bright and inviting with the sudden passing of SPS Director Catherine Polson, a woman who only recently joined the Society's Board and who was already making her mark. While many of our members may not have formally met Cat, she attended

significance of the term. Cheeky indeed!

Cat volunteered her time with too many organizations to mention individually. What will always stick out in my mind was her willingness to jump in the frigid February waters for Special Olympics. After her 2015 princess year, Cat somehow got involved with Sterling Downey and Luc Gagnon of the Borough of Verdun and joined their Polar Plunge team in 2016. The following year, the United Irish Societies of Montreal raided the Downey/Gagnon team, took Cat, and assembled its own team. For the following three years, the UIS out-fundraised the Downey/Gagnon team, which was its only motivation. All for a good cause. Cat was a major fundraiser for the team. All of these communities belong and intersect on the Venn diagram. Were an actual diagram to ever be drawn, many people would fall into various circles on the diagram. A St. Thomas grad who baked with Cat. Another Irish princess who went to school with Cat. A BRFC member who also played ringuette with Cat. The combinations are endless.

Cat had found herself a wonderful work-family at Haivision, where she worked as a Content Marketing Specialist. She put the skills acquired there to good use for the 2021 (Virtual) Annual Society Luncheon. She served on that committee, offered her opinions when requested, and served as the "Voice of God" for the event, unseen but heard as she introduced the various speakers and entertainment.

We had plans for her. She had plans for us. We will try to see those plans through.

However, beyond everything, Catherine was the much loved daughter of Dr. George Polson and Sharon Ryan and the older sister of Laura and Heather Polson as well as cousin, niece, and friend to many. My hope is, as the days and weeks pass, the family truly understands the impact their daughter had on many, many people. The online Celebration held by her (mainly) rugby pals, is testament to that.

Her loss, OUR loss, leaves a great void in the community and in our hearts.

While the world is a little less bright, if each of us can emulate a little bit of Catherine Polson, I know the world will be a better place.

On behalf of the Executive, Board, and Members we offer our condolences to the Polson family. May Cat's memory be a blessing and may she [Rest in Peace](#).

## AR DHEIS DÉ GO RAIBH A H-ANAM!



# HERE WE GO AGAIN?

By GEOFFREY KELLEY

On Thursday, May 13, Justice Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette tabled new language legislation after months of anticipation in the media. Bill 96, “An Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec” is a wide-ranging overhaul of the existing language legislation. It is 100 pages long and contains 201 articles that will have wide-ranging impacts on education, business, access to English language services, the Canadian Constitution, justice, municipalities (and I may have forgotten some aspects)! Plus, new bureaucracies will be created to oversee and enforce the language laws.

It is impossible for me to summarize the elements of the Bill in a short article for “Nuacht”. Quick recaps have been provided in the media. However, when studying legislation, the devil is often in the details. So here is a series of questions that came to mind after a first reading of Bill 96. No doubt other people specialized in certain areas can add to my initial list of concerns. They are listed here in no particular order:

1. Bill 96 indicates the access to English language government services should be limited to those people who are/were eligible to go to school in English. How will this work? What document will I need to prove I graduated from Beaconsfield High School in 1972? To speak to a police officer in English? To fill out my income tax forms in English? Will I have to wear my Aaron Rand “Historic Anglo” T-shirt wherever I go? Apparently, there will be exceptions in the health care sector, but it all sounds complicated to me, especially in emergency situations.
2. Bill 96 proposes a complex adjustment to admission to English CEGEPs, in order to limit the number of Francophones and Allophones who can attend. How will this work? What impact will it have on the future of our colleges, especially the three campuses of Champlain Regional College in St. Lambert, Lennoxville, and Quebec City?
3. Bill 96 will require the 89 municipalities and boroughs with “bilingual status” to pass resolutions to maintain this status should the number of mother tongue Anglos (the least generous measure) fall below 50%. Leave aside the odd requirement that a minority has to be in the majority to benefit from this measure, what impact will this have on the linguistic harmony in these institutions? Is it really a problem?
4. Bill 96 proposes to restrict the requirement that judges be bilingual in Quebec. What impact will this have on the access to justice for English-speakers? What are the consequences for the independence of the judiciary?
5. Bill 96 proposes a unilateral amendment to the Canadian Constitution, identifying Quebec as a nation, and that “French is the official and common language”. Is this merely an assertion of fact, or will it have a negative impact on minority rights, including linguistic rights, in Quebec?
6. Bill 96 proposes to insert a “right to live in French” into the Quebec Charter of Rights. What does this mean? How will it impact the fundamental freedoms found in both the Quebec and Canadian charters of rights?
7. Bill 96 proposes the use of both notwithstanding clauses found in the rights charters. Why? When questioned by journalists, government officials could not identify one article where a conflict between Bill 96 and fundamental rights might occur. The notwithstanding clauses were meant as a final recourse when all efforts before the courts to protect legislation have failed. To use it from the get-go is abusive.

This is just a partial list of concerns. But members of the English-speaking community have the right to be heard and have their concerns addressed.

I will end on a note of parental pride. In 2019, my son Gregory proposed a private members’ bill to create access to free French language courses for everyone who wishes to improve their ability to use French, an essential skill to participate in the economic, social and political life in Quebec. This idea is now part of Bill 96. Congratulations Greg!

The next steps will be parliamentary hearings in the fall. I invite everyone to be vigilant, and when concerns arise make sure our elected officials hear from you.

# IDANCE DUO CONT.

We chose to end the video where our own personal connection to our Irish heritage began for the two of us, at the Bernadette Short School of Irish Dance. From the traditional steps taught to us by Bernadette, to our participation at feiseanna and other Irish events around the island of Montreal and all over the world, being a part of the Bernadette Short School of Irish Dance is truly at the heart of said connection that has ultimately developed over the years into our career paths and an integral part of our identities.



We would like to thank the St. Patrick's Society of Montreal for providing us, as is their mission, with the opportunity and inspiration to celebrate and represent who we are as Montreal-born Irish descendants through our art. It was truly a pleasure to put this video together for the Irish community and to celebrate St. Patrick's Day virtually with you all. We hope you all enjoyed our journey through Irish Montreal, and whole-heartedly appreciate all the positive feedback and support we have received.



If you would like to learn more about us, you can find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok as 'IDanceDuo'.

Email: [idanceduo@gmail.com](mailto:idanceduo@gmail.com)

Phone: 438-826-2637

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/IDanceduo-104761707957173>

Instagram: @idanceduo

YouTube:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLAIYuJ-LhsgQ5EMT5XAkIg?view\\_as=subscriber](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLAIYuJ-LhsgQ5EMT5XAkIg?view_as=subscriber)

# THE BEST WAY TO ESCAPE COVID-19 BLUES

By JIM McDERMOTT

While many of us are feeling the desperate need to get back to normality and long to embrace our friends and feel the vibe of our city's suspended joie de vivre, sadly with the pandemic situation, we will need to be patient. Regarding vaccination, we seemed to be on a roll and people of younger ages are now eagerly lining up for their inoculation and fingers crossed... the light at the end of the long tunnel is shining a little brighter. Let's sincerely hope the worst is behind us. Throughout these trying times, the joys of reading a good book have been my ultimate tonic.

I'd like to suggest three books that I've enjoyed immensely. First up [A PROMISED LAND](#) by Barack Obama. This autobiography takes you on a journey where the personal and the political are intertwined. Anyone who is genuinely interested in American politics will find his insights and anecdotes fascinating.

Secondly, the brilliant Irish writer Tim Pat Coogan's epic book [WHEREVER GREEN IS WORN](#). I honestly think every Irish Canadian household should have a copy on their bookshelf. It is indeed the definitive story of the Irish

abroad, it truly reflects the beauty and humility of our precious Irish psyche. Coogan's phenomenal account of the Irish Diaspora is so incredibly captivating, you won't want to stop reading this masterpiece.

The third gem is called [HISTORY THROUGH OUR EYES](#) by Edie Austin and Lucinda Chodan from the Montreal Gazette. This book is filled with beautiful historical events. Our city and the people who played their roles in it are amazingly illustrated. It's a fascinating jaunt and whenever you reach the end you will feel compelled to return to the beginning and reread it again. As the old saying goes, every picture tells a story and in this book every picture is described with dazzling details. This book is dedicated to Montreal photojournalists who have been chronicling the daily life of the city for more than a century. The striking photographs and vignettes were published in 2019 and there are a total of 365 glimpses of life in 20<sup>th</sup> century Montreal. I was so impressed with this book, I read it three times and I bought a few copies to give as birthday gifts.

Cheers. Happy reading to all.



LET READING  
BE YOUR  
MEDICINE  
TO COMBAT  
THE COVID  
BLUES



# FESTIVAL BLOOMSDAY MONTRÉAL CONT.

## JAM-PACKED EVENTS FOR THE 5-DAY PROGRAM

Events this year include a variety concert featuring songs and readings both high- and low-brow on a Joycean theme; a dip into artist, writer and former journalist, Anne Lewis's memoir of Montreal cultural icon Leonard Cohen (to be published by Simon and Schuster in 2023); a cooking class for Irish soda bread by JONATHAN CHEUNG from Appetite for Books; a prestigious international panel of Joyceans including Professor JOHN MCCOURT of Università di Macerata in Italy and Spanish translator of both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, Marcelo Zabaloy of Argentina; and thanks to relaxing public health restrictions, the



annual Irish-themed guided walk returns (for up to 25 people) with historian Donovan King. This year's focus is Postcolonial Old Montreal: An Irish Perspective. For those who prefer to stay home, King will briefly zoom live from Place d'Armes, after which the festival will screen a pre-recorded virtual walk.

Concert performers include singers Geraldina Mendez, Kathleen McAuliffe and Johanne Patry. The Festival will highlight two Canadian novels driven by the Potato Famine, one of the great tragedies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the massive immigration it launched. Martina Branagan will read from her translation of FANETTE, an affecting Québécois novel of a young Irish Famine orphan finding her feet in New France, and Peter Behrens from his gritty Governor General's Award-winning first novel, THE LAW OF DREAMS with its harrowing depiction of life aboard the coffin ships.

Also, Kerry McElroy PhD speaks to Irish podcaster Cian Gill about the origins of Irish cinema. (Fun Fact: James Joyce opened the first dedicated cinema in Ireland, the Volta Electric Theatre.) There will be a link to James Joyce – Friends, Enemies and Influences, UK-based cartoonist Craig Morriss's hilarious



and exquisitely detailed caricatures of James Joyce interacting with figures from literature and history.



As always, Bloomsday itself, June 16 is dedicated to readings from the famous novel. Banned and celebrated for its sex and anticlericalism, shunned and cherished for its stylistic complexity, the book is best savoured by hearing it read aloud. For the occasion, Wright has cherry-picked some of his favourite passages. Readers include stalwarts

Clive Brewer and Pat Machin, and Fee, who brings the Festival full circle back to Molly Bloom. An actor and voice artist, Fee has been reading from the final section of Ulysses since the beginning of the Festival. This last, challenging chapter is a drowsy, blousy reverie of yearning, regret and ultimately, acceptance. As beloved Festival founders Judith and Dave Schurman described it many years ago: "James Joyce's Ulysses is about love, betrayal, forgiveness, nationalism,



otherness, compromise, memory and music. But at its core, it's about a man and a woman, living in a city, asking lots of questions and remembering the past. Basically, it's how we all make it through the day."



For further information and updates, as well as to purchase tickets and register online: [bloomsdaymontreal.com/2021-events](https://bloomsdaymontreal.com/2021-events) or Tel.: (438) 969-3300. Many events fill up quickly!

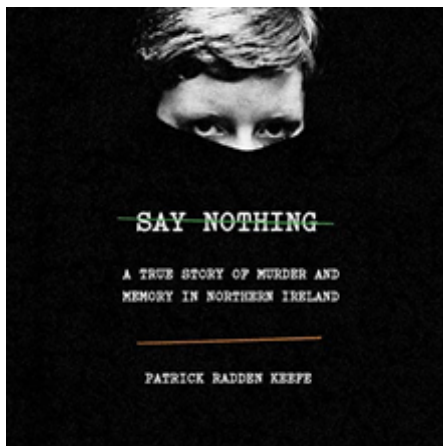


# BOOK REVIEW

## SAY NOTHING: A TRUE STORY OF MURDER AND MEMORY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

### BY PATRICK RADDEN KEEFE

By LAURIE McKEOWN-THOMASSIN



Patrick Radden Keefe's book **SAY NOTHING**, whose title comes from a line in a Seamus Heaney poem which examines the treacherous precedent of speaking plainly about the Troubles in Northern Ireland, paints a comprehensive picture of the historical account of violence in Belfast in the twentieth century. Keefe's focus is the story of the murder of Jean McConville, a 42 year-old widow of ten children who lived in Divis Flats in West Belfast. For four decades her children searched for answers about her disappearance. Her abduction was one of the most notorious episodes of the conflict. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew the IRA was responsible but within a climate of paranoia and fear, no one would speak of it.

Keefe introduces us to a few of the main people responsible for much of the violence caused by the IRA, such as Gerry Adams, Brendan Hughes, Bobby Sands, Dolours and Marian Price to name a few. Dolours Price wearing a

balaclava is featured on the book's cover.

This book is a result of four years of research with more than one hundred interviews. Keefe considers his book a work of narrative nonfiction more than a history text. He examines how difficult it is to cultivate a historical record when different accounts contain conflicting information. Even though the Troubles are still a strong force in collective living memory, most people who lived through the conflict are reluctant to talk about it, even after it has been officially resolved. Along this narrative, the reader is then introduced to the secret recordings known as the Boston College Tapes. The tapes contain interviews with ex-paramilitaries, both republicans and loyalists about their involvement in various attacks and murders during the Troubles. Participants would tell their stories in secret and were promised that the tapes and transcripts would only be made public after their deaths. However, this was violated after a lengthy court battle between Boston College and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, who launched an investigation to find the bodies of 16 people killed by the Provisional IRA.

**SAY NOTHING** is a well-researched and incredibly crafted account of the Troubles and is packed with remarkable historical information which keeps the reader engaged from beginning to end. It is a fast-paced enlightening read and I would highly recommend this book for anyone interested in Irish history or a gripping true story of murder and its repercussions.

Irish poet Seamus Heaney reads an extract of one of his most famous poems, "Whatever you say, say nothing" about the Northern Ireland "troubles"-in a Channel4 News recording in 1999.



## PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Former St. Patrick's Society President, Patrick Shea, and his wife, Laurie Birbilas, are very happy to announce the birth of their son, **CIARAN HARRINGTON SHEA**, who arrived on April 1, 2021. Ciaran's older brothers, Liam, Hugo, Griffin and Elias are delighted.

Ciaran's middle name honours his great-great-great-great-grandmother, Hanora Harrington, who, along with her sons, Denis Shea and Daniel Shea Jr., emigrated from Kenmare, County Kerry, widowed (her husband, Daniel Shea Sr., likely died either in Ireland or during the voyage over to Canada), and arrived in Montreal in 1851. Hanora's first recorded address in her new city in 1852 indicated that she lived on the corner of McCord Street and William Street, where she worked as a laundress.

**COMHGHAIRDEAS LIBH!**



The St. Patrick's Society sends very best wishes to **KATIE IRVING**, our Office Manager who will be leaving us temporarily for the imminent birth of their second baby. While she is on leave, Robin Brokrick will be with us. Welcome Robin.

## SAVE THE DATE: SPS GOLF TOURNAMENT

By Dave Dubeau

The 25<sup>th</sup> annual St. Patrick's Golf Tournament will take place **Friday September 17<sup>th</sup>**.

This will be the first in-person event hosted by the society in over a year. Please note the significance of the date as it is exactly half way to St. Patrick's Day 2022.

As the pandemic has greatly affected the ability of the society to raise funds, we are especially counting on your support this year so the society can continue to fund all its worthy charities and organizations.



Additional information will follow. Until then enjoy the nice weather and stay healthy.

If anyone has questions, concerns or suggestions, feel free to contact me: [ddubeau7@gmail.com](mailto:ddubeau7@gmail.com)

# KUKUM by Michel Jean

## Book Recommendation

By MAUREEN McCORMICK



Photo: [Chapters-Indigo](#)  
where you can read  
a sample in French

Michel Jean, whose name is becoming more and more familiar to Quebecers, is an author, journalist and television news anchor (TVA), who hails from the Innu First Nation community of Mashteuiatsh.

His most recent novel, named **KUKUM**, has won several prestigious literary awards including the Prix littéraire France-Québec, in the fall of 2020.

Kukum, which in the Innu-aimun language, means grandmother, is not only a wonderfully told personal memoir about the author's great-grandmother, but it is also historically very poignant and moving.

In Kukum, we first meet Alminda Siméon, a young orphaned girl, adopted by her aunt and uncle and living in a rather bleak village named St-Prime. Even at a very young age, we learn of her strong vision of place and liberty, and feel that her existence will not be limited to that small village and its narrow mentality. Her life will change dramatically the moment she sets her eyes on a young Innu man named Thomas Siméon. At the mere age of fifteen, she marries this handsome Innu and then slowly but determinately grows into the heart of the Innu culture and clanship.

Alminda participates in the harsh hunting and trapping expeditions, all set near and north of Lake Pekuakami (Lac St-Jean), and triumphs as a natural in all aspects of nomadic life. The novel's descriptions of rugged mountain and translucent lake are so vivid and luminous, that they captivate the sense of territory that make up the First Nations nomadic lifestyle.

The family lives through all the trials and tribulations of the nomadic clans, including birth, death and famine, and so the story of the circle of life is told. The heartbreaking aspect of the story recounts the dispossession of the First Nations lands and of course, that of the devastation of the residential school system. The touching aspect is that they are told through the vision of the narrator, Alminda, who demonstrates resolve, strength and courage to protect the land and Innu culture for her eight children.

Remarkably, at the end of the story, we find out that Alminda is in fact an orphan whose parents died on the ship journey from Ireland, escaping the ravages of the Great Famine. The link between the story of the Irish in Quebec and that of the First Nations is somehow of a similar fabric, as beautifully told in this story!

Kukum is Michel Jean's eighth novel. At this time, it has been published in French only, but it certainly merits to be translated into several other languages. If you can, pick it up and you'll be more than rewarded!

We wish to **thank** the following who contributed articles and/or photos to this issue of **NUA<sup>CH</sup>T**:

Ken Quinn  
Pat Short  
Patrick Shea  
Mike Burns

Kevin Callahan  
Dave Dubeau  
Natasha Woytiuk  
G. Scott MacLeod

Carol McCormick  
Fergus Keyes  
Lucas Lawton  
Maureen McCormick

Geoffrey Kelley  
Jim McDermott  
President Michael D. Higgins  
Laurie McKeown-Thomassin



# COMMUNITY EVENTS 2021

## SPS Trivia Night

Thurs June 10, 2021 at 7:30 PM

<https://spsmtl.com/membership/transactions/>

## Festival Bloomsday Montreal

Sat June 12 - Wed June 16, 2021 (Bloomsday)

[bloomsdaymontreal.com/2021-events](https://bloomsdaymontreal.com/2021-events)

Tel.: (438) 969-3300

## 25<sup>th</sup> Annual SPS Golf Tournament

Fri Sept 17, 2021

[ddubeau7@gmail.com](mailto:ddubeau7@gmail.com)

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### ANDREA T. BOBKOWICZ

Investment Advisor, Conseillère en placement

Tel.: 514-871-4339

[andrea.bobkowicz@bnc.ca](mailto:andrea.bobkowicz@bnc.ca)

1 Place Ville Marie, Bureau 1700,  
Montréal, Québec H3B 2C1

<https://advisors.nbfwm.ca/en/andrea-t-bobkowicz/>

