



## Meet the Team

The strength of the St. Patrick's Society lies not in individual effort, but in the dedication of our Board and the support of our members and volunteers. Together, we provide the strong foundation that allows the Society to thrive and to continue supporting our cultural, educational, and charitable beneficiaries.

In May, we were delighted to hold an in-person meeting at St. Patrick's Square. After so many virtual gatherings, it was wonderful to reconnect face-to-face and enjoy each other's company.



*Back row (left to right): Geoff Kelley, Tom Ireland, Richard Church, Kevin Callahan, Louise Guimond, George McCourt, Laurie Bennett, Laurie McKeown-Thomassin, David Dubeau*

*Seated (left to right): Sherri McGurnaghan, Mark O'Neill, Pamela McGovern (Past President), Carol McCormick (President), Ryan Morris, Patrick Short, Maureen McCormick*

This team, along with so many volunteers and members, keeps our mission alive. I thank each of you for your commitment and generosity.

Looking ahead, I invite you to join us for our Members' Appreciation Cocktail on October 2nd at the Beaconsfield Golf Club, where we will recognize our Past Presidents and Volunteers. To register, please visit [spsmtl.com](https://spsmtl.com).

Finally, please mark your calendars for our Annual General Meeting on November 13th. More details will follow soon.

*With gratitude,*

Carol McCormick  
President



*Absent from photo (listed alphabetically): Christopher Deehy, Mark Gallagher, Douglas Leahy, Brian Marcil, Lori Morrison, Kim Sullivan*



# Bronze Shoes Memorial Unveiled to Honour Irish Famine Refugees

By Kelley O'Rourke and Mackenzie Sanche

On July 19, 2025, the City of Saint-Colomban—officially founded by Irish settlers in 1836—marked a milestone in its heritage with the unveiling of the Global Irish Famine Way Memorial. Known as the Bronze Shoes, it honours the 1847 Famine refugees and connects the community to a worldwide story of resilience.

Installed in front of Saint-Colomban City Hall, the monument stands as a powerful symbol of Irish migration during the Great Famine. The Global Irish Famine Way extends from Ireland's National Famine Way, tracing the journeys of Irish Famine emigrants across the world. The evocative Bronze Shoes and accompanying interpretive panel, first seen along the National Famine Way—the “Mother Trail”—will now mark each key location on the [Global route](#). In Saint-Colomban, they reflect the city's rich cultural heritage, especially its pre-famine cemetery. Some refugees found new lives here in Canada, while others—like young [Mary and John Phelan](#)—did not survive their 1847 journey and are buried in the historic cemetery.

The project began when Kelley O'Rourke, President of the Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network (CIMPN), presented her research to Ireland's National and Global Irish Famine Way Steering Committee. In collaboration with them and with the support of Mayor Xavier-Antoine Lalande and his team, Saint-Colomban became an official site on the Global Irish Famine Way. The monument will be listed in Québec's inventory of commemorative heritage and entered into the Répertoire du patrimoine culturel du Québec.

The day began with a beautiful bilingual Mass celebrated by Father Lévi Cossette and Deacon Ciaran Pitchford at Saint-Colomban Parish. Carol McCormick, President of the Saint-Patrick's Society of Montreal, served as MC, with readings by Lori Morrison, President of the United Irish Societies of Montreal, Elyna Bergeron and David Conway from the Embassy of Ireland, and historians Dr. Mark McGowan and Michael McBane. Samara O'Gorman recited her original poem The Bronze Shoes, followed by Esme Cavanagh's moving performance, before the sound of Alexis Ceallaigh's uilleann pipes led the procession to City Hall.

Kelley O'Rourke and Carol McCormick welcomed guests. “These Bronze Shoes are a powerful symbol of resilience and remembrance,” Kelley O'Rourke said. “They honour the Irish famine refugees who fled Ireland in 1847 and recognize the people of this community who welcomed and supported them.”

Powerful presentations from Dr. Mark McGowan and Michael McBane of the Global Irish Famine Way Steering Committee, Elyna Bergeron and David Conway from the Embassy of Ireland, Fergus Keyes, President of the Montreal Irish Monument Park Foundation, and Mayor Xavier-Antoine Lalande ensued, before a heartfelt blessing by Deacon Ciaran Pitchford to unveil the monument.



Photos: CIMPN Collection

# Bronze Shoes Memorial (cont'd)

Afterward, guests were invited to touch the Bronze Shoes, which are cast from an actual pair of children's leather shoes from the 19th century held in the collection of the National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park in Ireland.

While the day was rooted in remembrance of the Irish Famine and its tragedy, it was equally a celebration of the resilience and spirit of those who endured. The afternoon came alive with music from Bill Gossage, Mike Bleho, and Glen Roy keeping toes tapping, Pierre Savaria calling the square dancing, and Bernadette Short's Irish dancers filling the stage with colour and joy.

In the community centre, exhibitions with the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN), Mayo historians, and the CIMPN Irish Mile Project, "Preserving and Showcasing Irish Heritage in Quebec," were set up to share stories, displays, and resources. Guests wandered the cemetery with self-guided maps, chatted with volunteers about Irish ancestors, and joined a tour of the church's stained glass windows with Rose Labonnière.

Descendants of the Saint-Colomban Irish joined representatives from additional Irish organizations, including Danny Doyle from the Erin Sports Association, and Joe Lonergan, John Bertrand, and Peter Murphy from Irish Heritage Quebec, alongside local groups such as Histoire et Archives Laurentides, represented by Linda Rivest (Directrice générale et archiviste) and Henri Prévost (Président), Le Colombanois community news, and well-known local historian Claude Bourguignon. Together, these participants created a rich blend of voices, making the day a true coming together of the Irish-Quebec community.

We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to all who participated, volunteered, and supported this memorable day.

*With thanks to our partners and supporters*



*Photo top right: QAHN; others: City of Saint-Colomban*

# 29th Annual St. Patrick's Society Golf Tournament

*A Wonderful Day on the Course*



Photo Credit: Laurie McKewen-Thomassin

*Golf Co-Chair Dave Dubeau with participants at the 29th Annual Tournament.*

On June 6, the St. Patrick's Society proudly hosted its 29th Annual Golf Tournament, and we are pleased to share that it was another tremendous success. Under the leadership of our Co-Chairs, Dave Dubeau and Richard Church, the event brought together sponsors, participants, and friends of the Society for a day filled with great golf, camaraderie, and community spirit.

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and the enthusiastic participation of our golfers, this year's tournament once again raised valuable funds that will allow the Society to continue supporting deserving charities and organizations in our community.

The tournament's success is made possible by the ongoing commitment of our volunteers, donors, and players. We extend our sincere gratitude to all who contributed to making this year's event such a memorable one.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back next June as we celebrate a milestone—the 30th Annual St. Patrick's Society Golf Tournament.



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# Bringing David Ireland's Work to New Audiences in Québec

By Marc-André Thibault

THEATRE **BISTOURI**

With thanks to the St. Patrick's Society

Thanks to the generous support of the St. Patrick's Society, Théâtre Bistouri was proud to present *Pas maintenant* (Not Now), a French-language production of David Ireland's powerful and darkly funny play.

Originally written in English by the Belfast-born playwright, *Not Now* explores questions of identity—both personal and political—with biting humour and deep emotional insight.

The play follows a young man as he navigates the delicate threshold between adolescence and adulthood, haunted by the recent death of his father. At its core, the play also confronts the complexities of Irish and British identity, asking what it means to belong, to inherit history.

In the 2024–2025 season, *Pas maintenant* was performed 24 times across Québec, from Montréal to La Sarre, bringing Ireland's voice to francophone audiences who may never have encountered his work otherwise. Many performances were followed by warm conversations with the public—many of whom were struck by the play's honesty, humour, and bold storytelling.

Since its founding, Théâtre Bistouri has been interested in English-speaking and Irish culture, seeking out works that challenge and connect. This project is a perfect example of how language and theatre can build bridges, open minds, and spark necessary conversations—especially when given the right support.

To the St. Patrick's Society and its members: thank you for helping us share this remarkable play and introduce Québec audiences to the sharp, singular voice of David Ireland.



# From the Hearth

Stories, Reflections, and Writings from Our Members

## The Benevolent Irish Society of PEI celebrates 200 years



*Samara O'Gorman with Deputy Head of Mission Elisabeth O'Higgins from the Embassy of Ireland to Canada, and Councillor Raymond Aughey from the Monaghan County Council in Ireland.*

Celebrating two centuries of heritage, the Benevolent Irish Society of PEI recently marked its 200th anniversary with a special reception. The event, which took place at their charming Irish Hall, was a testament to the influence of Irish culture on Prince Edward Island, an area with deep historical ties to Ireland.

Samara O'Gorman, SPS Anthem Singer and member, was present and surrounded by a distinguished group, including poet laureate Julie Pellissier-Lush, Deputy Head of Mission Elisabeth O'Higgins, MP Sean Casey, Raymond Aughey from County Monaghan, and Mayor Philip Brown. "The highlight of the event was the exciting news that the Global Irish Famine Way heritage trail will soon include a stop in PEI, with the Bronze Shoes finding a home at the Irish Settlers Memorial in Charlottetown," says O'Gorman.

This new addition will honour the thousands of Irish immigrants, many of whom were pre-famine, who found a new life on the island. The shoes will be placed next to the pre-existing granite Celtic cross with thirty-two flagstones representing each of Ireland's counties.

Irish settlers, a significant portion of whom were Catholic farmers and tradesmen, began arriving in waves in the 18th century, seeking better opportunities and escaping religious discrimination in their homeland. By the mid-19th century, they constituted roughly a quarter of the island's population, making them the second-largest cultural group.

Samara noted the similarities between the two countries: "It was my third time visiting the island, and the connections between PEI and Ireland were more apparent than ever. Things like hospitality, kindness, humour, music and more. It truly feels like a second Éire."

The Benevolent Irish Society, founded in 1825, was established to support these immigrants and continues its mission to preserve Irish culture today.

*Stay up to date with the Benevolent Irish Society of PEI at [benevolentirishsocietyofpei.com](http://benevolentirishsocietyofpei.com)*

# The Future of Ireland

## The Conversation in Canada Continues

BY KEVIN CALLAHAN



*Sinn Féin TD Rose Conway-Walsh at Toronto Irish unity event*

The Irish diaspora in Canada is continuing the conversation which began in Montreal last March about what a united inclusive Ireland should look like. Over 90 members of the Toronto Irish community gathered at Toronto City Hall on Saturday June 28 to hear Sinn Féin TD Rose Conway-Walsh and panelists from the Toronto area discuss the key elements needed to build a new Ireland of equals.

The Commission began with Conway-Walsh engaged in a fireside chat with Professor Pa Sheehan from the Celtic Studies department at the University of Toronto. This stimulating conversation was followed by presentations from a diverse panel chaired by Hugo Straney, and including Geraldine Browne, Toronto Irish Person of the Year (2019) and producer at the Toronto Irish Players; Gerry O'Connor, Toronto Irish Person of the Year (2020) and recipient of the Governor General of Canada Sovereign Medal for Volunteers; Kirsty McLeod, business analyst and member of Na Píarsaigh camogie team of Toronto GAA; and Pat Sheridan, Executive Board Member, of LIUNA Local 183. The final speaker was Ciarán Quinn, the Sinn Féin representative to North America. Quinn made the connections between the Commission events happening in Ireland and those in Canada. He stressed the importance of dialogue with the Irish nation abroad as the support for Irish unity increases.

After the panel, several members of the Irish community asked questions or presented additional elements for discussion and consideration. These included dealing with the legacy issues of the 30-year conflict (“The Troubles”), the importance of an accessible and affordable healthcare system, and the need for international support for the referendum process.

Following the Saturday Commission, TD Conway-Walsh and Ciarán Quinn visited our nation's capital for the Commission event in Ottawa. Fear an tí (master of ceremonies) Pat McDonald, General Manager of Brigid's Well, introduced the panelists and gave a warm welcome to the Sinn Féin TD who delivered opening remarks and explained the provisions in the Good Friday Agreement which give the people on the island of Ireland the power to vote for reunification. Then the panelists Kerry Mortimer, Past Chairperson of Canada GAA; Wayne Gudbranson, CEO Branham Group; Jackie Gilna-Turton, Founder of the Ireland Canada Business Council; and historian Micheal McBane gave presentations on a range of issues for consideration in building a new Ireland. The Ottawa Irish community actively engaged in the lively discussion that followed.

The Commissions on the Future of Ireland will continue in September with Sinn Féin MP John Finucane visiting Vancouver for what promises to be another valuable contribution to the growing conversation in the Irish diaspora in Canada about a united Ireland.





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# The Siamsa School of Irish Music: 34 years and Going Strong

A NUACHT spotlight on our sister Irish societies across Quebec

Irish music, ensemble playing, trad sessions and céilís bring out the best in all of us as players, listeners, or dancers. Sitting at the back of a pub revelling in the magic of fiddles, flutes, and drums, it's a sure bet we all want to play along. Yet as adults, we stop, second guess our capabilities of not being good enough to learn Irish music let alone play at a trad session.

And then there comes along The Siamsa School of Irish Music, located in Montreal, Québec Canada, where experienced, passionate and talented teachers of traditional Irish music impart their knowledge to the trad session backbenchers. After a year or two of lessons and many many hours of practice, they join in.

The idea for Siamsa came about at the United Irish Society's Saint-Patrick's Day party in 1991, where Irish music enthusiasts, Brendan and Bernadette Walsh, recognized the need for a space to teach the tunes being played that night. Just two weeks later, Siamsa enrolled its first 16 novice students under the guidance of three teachers. In those early days, word of mouth and paper flyers brought students through the doors, while dedicated volunteers worked hard to keep lessons affordable and accessible for the Montreal community.

34 years later, the Siamsa community is thriving and growing with an active online presence, vibrant classes and trad sessions happening weekly throughout the city. Siamsa offers lessons to adult learners through the fall and spring every year in bodhrán, fiddle, tin whistle and Irish flute, C#/D accordion, concertina, guitar, banjo, mandolin, harp, set and céilí dancing, Irish choral singing, and Gaelige Irish language. Its devoted teachers open their students up to the world of traditional Irish music which can lead to actively participating in the various Siamsa-led trad sessions happening around Montreal.



By Mayu Egan and Allison Haggart  
Siamsa Board of Directors



*Smiles all around at the Siamsa Slow Session at The Lord William Pub*

The music doesn't stop there. Once a month, the Siamsa Céilí band, led by Steve Jones, can be found in full form playing tunes from 7pm until 11pm, with an experienced caller guiding an often at-capacity hall of lively dancers of all ages, from all walks of life who have made their way to the Siamsa céilí for an evening of levity, dancing and conviviality.

This sense of conviviality encompasses the true vision and nature of Siamsa. From lessons, sessions and céilís, to cultural outings, festivals, banquets and parades, Siamsa remains true to its founding goal of promoting Irish culture in Montreal through music, dance, song and language. Winning the prize for "Best Authentic Irish Group" in the 2025 Montreal Saint Patrick's Parade is testimony to its vibrance and dedication. Siamsa remains active thanks to many dedicated volunteers who value Siamsa's mission, creating a welcoming spirit for all.

To learn more about Siamsa, the locations and times of their classes, trad sessions and the monthly céilís, and other cultural events visit their website or Facebook page:

<https://www.siamsa.org>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/siamsamontrealpublic> .

# Siamsa Activities

## *Siamsa Music Classes:*

Registration for Fall 2025 classes is happening at Hurley's Irish Pub on Tuesday, September 2, 2025 during the trad session from 7:30pm to 10:30pm.

Registration can also be done online through their website.

Classes begin September 18 and run for 10 weeks on Thursday evenings at College Notre Dame at 3791 Queen Mary Road. And yes, there is a trad-session-style recital at the end of every 10-week session.

## *Monthly Céilís:*

- Saturday, September 27, 2025
- Saturday, October 25, 2025 - Halloween themed : costume-wearing dancers are much welcomed!
- Saturday, February 28, 2026
- Saturday, March 21, 2026 - the very popular St. Patrick's pre-parade céilí. Get your tickets early!
- Saturday, April 25, 2026
- Saturday, May 30, 2025

7:30pm - 11:30pm / doors open at 7pm - All ages welcome.  
The Siamsa website has location information and notifications of last minute changes to dates/times.

## *Weekly Siamsa Trad Sessions : Come to listen. Come to join in.*

Hurley's Irish Pub at 1225 Crescent Street, Montreal gathers experienced musicians ready to play tunes by ear and at tempo on Tuesday evenings 7:30pm - 10:30pm\*

The Lord William Pub at 265 rue des Seigneurs in Griffintown hosts the much loved Slow Session (a rare find in trad music circles) for singers and the beginner / intermediate instrumentalists on Saturday afternoons 2pm to 5pm\*

The Dépanneur Café at 206 rue Bernard in Outremont is a fun eclectic mix of the experienced musician and those who are working their way up. A growing number of singers and instrumentalists gather on Sunday afternoons 3pm to 5pm\*

*\*Please refer to the Siamsa Facebook page for any changes to location and/or times of the sessions.*



*A Saturday Céilís!*



*A Saturday at the Siamsa Slow Session at The Lord William Pub*



*An ensemble of Siamsa members happily arriving at the end of the St. Patrick's Parade - March 2025*

# The 200th Anniversary of the Nine Ships: Remembering the 1825 Settlers

By Sherri McGurnaghan

This year marks a significant milestone in the story of the Irish in Canada — the 200th anniversary of the “Nine Ships,” a series of voyages in 1825 that brought nearly 2,000 impoverished Irish families to new lives in Upper Canada. Their journey is remembered not only as a tale of hardship and survival, but of courage, hope, and legacy.

## ***A Bold Experiment in Assisted Emigration***

In the early 19th century, poverty and famine gripped Ireland. Seeking to relieve this pressure, the British government launched a relocation initiative led by Peter Robinson, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada.

In 1823 and again in 1825, Robinson organized voyages that brought over 2,000 settlers — most from County Cork, with others from Tipperary and Limerick. After weeks at sea, they landed in Quebec City before moving onward to the frontiers of Peterborough and Lanark County. Thanks to careful planning, including provisions and medical support, survival rates were far higher than most migrations of the era.

*“Their story is not only a tale of hardship and survival, but of courage, hope, and legacy.”*

## ***Québec’s Own Irish Foundations***

While the Robinson settlers are best remembered in Ontario, Quebec also welcomed Irish immigrants in the early 1800s. Families established roots in the Eastern Townships, the Gaspé, and along the St. Lawrence.

Communities such as Saint-Colomban and Rawdon trace their origins to these early settlers, who arrived through the port of Quebec City and built parishes, farms, and villages that remain strong to this day.

Their resilience and identity continue to shape Quebec’s Irish heritage as we remember the Nine Ships and all who crossed the Atlantic in search of a better life.

## ***Roots That Still Run Deep***

Many descendants of the Robinson settlers remain in the Peterborough region today. Their legacy is found in the farms, churches, and schools they built, and in the communities that still bear their names.

To mark the 200th anniversary, the Ballyhoura Development group in County Limerick will host a Homecoming Festival from September 15–21, 2025. Events will include heritage walks, genealogy workshops, music, and storytelling — a chance to honour those who left Ireland two centuries ago and to rekindle the ties between Ireland and Canada.



*An 1874 engraving published in The Illustrated London News shows Irish emigrants preparing to leave the Queenstown port in County Cork, Ireland for North America. (Public domain image)*

*“Go n-éirí an bóthar leat — May the road rise to meet you.”*

# SPS Donation Helps Deliver Meals to Pointe Saint-Charles Seniors

Saint Columba House is proud to thank the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal for its generous donation of \$1,000 in support of our Meals-on-Wheels program. This vital service delivers nutritious meals to low-income seniors in Pointe Saint-Charles, many of whom face mobility challenges that prevent them from attending our community lunch program.

In 2023, the program delivered more than 8,400 meals, making Maison Saint Columba the sole provider of Meals-on-Wheels in the neighbourhood. Many of the seniors served are members of Pointe Saint-Charles's Irish community, historically one of the largest in the area since the 19th century. According to the 2021 census, 11% of residents—over 1,600 people—report Irish ancestry.

For over a century, Maison Saint Columba has been addressing food insecurity in Pointe Saint-Charles. Today, the Meals-on-Wheels program not only provides a hot, freshly cooked meal five days a week, but also a friendly visit that helps reduce social isolation—especially for anglophone seniors with limited access to unilingual programming.

This year's donation from the Saint Patrick's Society helped offset the cost of food containers, the program's single largest expense.

"The containers are essential because they allow us to bring fresh food from the kitchen to the seniors' doorstep, ensuring they eat the same meal as those attending our community lunch.

Without this funding, the program could not continue."

**Laura Smith**, Seniors Coordinator, Maison Saint Columba

With the Society's support, Maison Saint Columba is able to carry on its mission of uplifting vulnerable seniors and fostering a stronger, more connected community.



*Meals prepared for delivery through Maison Saint Columba's Meals-on-Wheels program, supported by the Saint Patrick's Society donation.*

## Celtic Music Festival in the Eastern Townships

The autumn air in the Eastern Townships will be filled with the sounds of fiddles and harps as the Celtic International Festival will take place from October 4th to the 12th, Musicians from Quebec, the Maritimes, Scotland, Brittany, and Ireland will come together for 11 days of ceol agus craic. This is a not-to-be missed event, so come join in the fun.

*For more information: [www.harmoniesceltiques.ca](http://www.harmoniesceltiques.ca)*

# CLÁR IMEACHTAÍ

DATE	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
<b>2025</b>		
September 29, 2025	Montreal Irish Monument Golf Tournament	montrealirishmonument.com
October 4 - 12, 2025	Celtic Harmonies Internation Festival	celticharmonies.ca
October 25, 2025	The Muddy Misfits Tour (rugby)	montrelirish.com
December 21, 2025	The Irish Nutcracker	shortschoolirishdance.com
<b>2026</b>		
February 20, 2026	St. Patrick's Society Annual Charity Ball	office@spsmtl.com
March 13, 2026	St. Patrick's Society Annual Luncheon	office@spsmtl.com
March 22, 2026	201st St. Patrick's Day Parade	unitedirishsocieties.ca

## MOVING FORWARD!

St. Patrick's Society of Montreal, built on a strong support of over 100 years, want to continue growing in members, giving the society the strength in numbers it requires to continue its work in the community.

## NEW GENERATION

We are building our "New Generation" division. All those between the ages of: 18-30 are welcome to build with us new ways to reach out to our community besides: The Ball, The Luncheon and The Golf Tournament. New events will give us a way to expand our help to the community. Won't you join us?

Sign up on our website: [www.spsmtl.com](http://www.spsmtl.com)

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