

# Líofa

Lúnasa 2015

August 2015

## Féile na Banna seolta i bPort an Dúnáin

Bhí lúcháir ar Oifigigh Líofa a bheith i láthair nuair a seoladh Féile na Banna i bPort an Dúnáin Dé Sathairn, an 4ú Iúil. Is í Féile na Banna an t-aon fhéile Ghaeilge i dtuaisceart Ard Mhacha agus is í seo an chéad uair a reáchtáladh an fhéile. Is i mBunscoil Eoin Baiste a bhí na himeachtaí agus bhí na céadta páiste agus tuismitheoir i láthair leis an Ghaeilge a cheiliúradh agus le tacú le pobal na Gaeilge i bPort an Dúnáin.

Is í Naíscoil na Banna a d'eagraigh an fhéile lae. Cuireann an naíscoil oideachas réamhscolaíochta ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge i bPort an Dúnáin agus cuireann sí an teanga chun cinn sa cheantar máguaird. Lá spraoi a bhí san fhéile do theaghligh, le gníomhaíochtaí ceoil, spóirt agus eile do na daoine óga. Bhí ceoltóirí áitiúla den scoth ann, ina measc FastTrad, The Rising of the Moon agus grúpa ceol traidisiúnta Bhunscoil Eoin Baiste. Chomh maith leis an cheol, bhí seisiúin spóirt agus drámaíochta ann do na páistí, marcaíocht ar ainmhithe, bia blasta agus cuid mhaith gníomhaíochtaí eile do gach duine, idir óg agus aosta.

## Féile na Banna has been launched in Portadown

Líofa Officers were delighted to be present at the launch of the very first Féile na Banna in Portadown on Saturday 4th July. Féile na Banna is north Armagh's only Irish-language festival. This inaugural celebration took place on the grounds of St John's Primary School and hundreds of children and parents flowed into the grounds to celebrate and support the Irish-language community in Portadown.

Organised by Naíscoil na Banna, which provides Irish-medium pre-school education in Portadown and promotes Irish in the area, the one-day festival included a family fun day, music, sports, youth activities and much more. This inaugural festival boasted an impressive line-up of local musical talent, including contributions from FastTrad, The Rising of the Moon and the Bunscoil Eoin Baiste traditional music band. As well as the music, children were able to enjoy sport and drama taster sessions, animal rides, fantastic food and many more activities for both young and old - all in all there was something for everyone.

Féile na Banna ag Naíscoil na Banna i bPort an Dúnáin.

Féile na Banna at Naíscoil na Banna in Portadown.



Ag seoladh Féile na Banna, seo an méid a bhí le rá ag Mary McGinity, cathaoirleach an choiste: “Is í seo an chéad bhliain a bhfuil an Féile á reáchtáil againn agus táimid thar a bheith sásta leis an tacaíocht ó phobal na háite agus leis an spéis atá léirithe inti ag muintir na háite. Tá súil againn go mbeidh ról tábhachtach ag an fhéile seo i gceiliúradh theanga agus chultúr na nGael i mórcheantar Ard Mhacha thuaidh sna blianta fada atá amach romhainn.

“Taobh amuigh de pháistí a bheith ag freastal ar Naíscoil na Banna agus ar Bhunscoil Eoin Baiste, níl mórán eile ag tarlú ó thaobh na Gaeilge de i bPort an Dúnáin. Is mian linn tuismitheoirí agus an pobal a mhealladh le bheith páirteach sa lá mór seo ar son na bpáistí agus na ndaoine fásta sa cheantar seo a labhraíonn Gaeilge.

Speaking at the launch of Féile na Banna, the committee chairperson, Mary McGinity, said: “This is the very first year of our Féile and we are absolutely delighted with the response from the local community and the interest it has generated in the local area. We hope that this festival will play an important role in celebrating the Irish language and culture in the greater north Armagh Area for many years to come

“Apart from children attending Naíscoil na Banna and Bunscoil Eoin Baiste, there isn’t much happening in Portadown with regarding to the Irish language. We wanted to get our parents and the community involved and provide a great day out for the Irish-speaking children and adults in this area.

## **Dianchúrsaí Gaeilge Líofa SAOR IN AISCE**

**Dé Sathairn 5ú Meán Fómhair 2015**

**Tapaigh an deis!**

Tá dianchúrsaí Líofa á n-eagrú ag Líofa, ag Oifigigh Ghaeilge sna comhairlí áitiúla agus ag grúpaí pobail ar fud an tuaiscirt ar 5ú Meán Fómhair le ceiliúradh a dhéanamh ar cheithre bliana ó bunaíodh Líofa. Beidh na cúrsaí ar siúl ó 10rn go dtí 4in. Cé gur ‘dianchúrsaí’ iad, beidh siad iontach taitneamhach. Beidh deis agat bualadh le cainteoirí eile Gaeilge agus le foghlaimeoirí de gach leibhéal agus am a chaitheamh ina gcuideachta. Sna ranganna, díreofar go príomha ar fheabhas a chur ar do chuid scileanna comhrá agus ar níos mó muiníne a mhúscailt ionat féin agus tú ag baint úsáid as an teanga.

**Tá na cúrsaí saor in aisce agus ar fáil do chách. Tapaigh an deis agus cuir d’áit in áirithe inniu!**

Beidh deis ag na rannpháirtithe (ar mian leo é) scrúdú beag neamhfhoirmiúil a dhéanamh le measúnú a dhéanamh ar an dul chun cinn atá déanta acu agus, b’fhéidir, suaitheantas ‘cúpla focal’ a ghnóthú nó fáinne airgid nó fáinne óir.

Cuirfear lón agus sólaistí ar fáil.

## **FREE Líofa Intensive Irish-Language Courses**

**Saturday 5th September 2015**

**Don’t miss out!**

Líofa and Irish-Language Officers from local councils and community groups are organising Líofa Intensive Courses all across the north to celebrate Líofa’s fourth anniversary on 5th September. The courses will take place from 10am to 4pm and although they are called ‘intensive courses’ they will be very enjoyable. You will have the chance to meet and socialise with other Irish speakers and learners of all levels. Classes will concentrate mainly on improving your conversational skills and raising your confidence in using the language.

**The courses are free of charge and open to everyone so book your place today to ensure you don’t miss out!**

Participants will have the opportunity (if they wish) to sit an informal speaking test to measure their progress and perhaps be awarded with a ‘cúpla focal’ badge or a gold or silver fáinne.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

**Beidh cúrsaí ar siúl sna háiteanna seo a leanas. Gabh i dteagmháil leis an hoifigigh ar na huimhreacha agus ar na seoltaí ríomhphoist thíos le do rogha cúrsa a chur in áirithe.**

**Cathair Ard Mhacha – An Pháirc Lúthchleasa C.L.G**

sean@cairdeteo.com

028 3751 5229

**An Sruthán – Ardscoil Naomh Pól**

cmccoy605@c2kschools.net

**Béal Feirste (Tuaisceart) – Áras Mhic Reachtain**

eolas@mhicreachtain.com

(028) 9074 9688

**Béal Feirste (Deisceart) – An Droichead**

fionnuala@androichead.com

028 90 288818

**Béal Feirste (Iarthar) – Coláiste Feirste**

oifig@glornamona.com

028 9023 4442

**Cathair Dhoire – Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin**

carolmc@culturlann-doire.ie

028 7126 4132

**Dún Pádraig - Teach Micheál**

eolas@leathchathail.ie

028 437 70331

**An Droim Mór – Bunscoil Naomh Damhnait**

kevin.goodwin@fermanaghmagh.com

**Machaire Rátha – An Carn**

leonne.niloinsigh@ancarn.org

028 7954 9978

**Comhairle Ceantair Lár-Uladh**

Bunleibhéal – Leabharlann na Coirre Críochaí

Meánleibhéal – leabharlann Oileán an Ghuail

Ardleibhéal – Leabharlann Dhún Geanainn

seamus.kilpatrick@midulstercouncil.org

0792 001 6106

**An Srath Bán – Ionad an Ghaelphobail**

gaelphobal@btconnect.com

028 7188 3300

**Is féidir tuilleadh eolais a fháil ar na cúrsaí agus ar na grúpaí Gaeilge atá á n-eagrú ar: [www.liofa.eu](http://www.liofa.eu)**

**Courses will take place in the following areas. Please use the contact numbers and emails below to book a place on your course of choice:**

**Armagh City – GAA Athletic Grounds**

sean@cairdeteo.com

028 3751 5229

**Bessbrook – St Paul’s High School**

cmccoy605@c2kschools.net

**Belfast (North) – Áras Mhic Reachtain**

eolas@mhicreachtain.com

(028) 9074 9688

**Belfast (South) – An Droichead**

fionnuala@androichead.com

028 90 288818

**Belfast (West) – Coláiste Feirste**

oifig@glornamona.com

028 9023 4442

**Derry City – Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin**

carolmc@culturlann-doire.ie

028 7126 4132

**Downpatrick - Teach Micheál, Irish St.**

eolas@leathchathail.ie

028 437 70331

**Dromore - St Dympna’s Primary School**

kevin.goodwin@fermanaghmagh.com

**Maghera – An Carn**

leonne.niloinsigh@ancarn.org

028 7954 9978

**Mid-Ulster Council**

Beginners Level - Cookstown Library,

Intermediate - Coalisland Library

Advanced Level - Dungannon Library

seamus.kilpatrick@midulstercouncil.org

0792 001 6106

**Strabane – The Gaelphobal Centre**

gaelphobal@btconnect.com

028 7188 3300

**More information on the courses and the Irish language groups providing them can be found at: [www.liofa.eu](http://www.liofa.eu)**



Loch an Iúir i gcontae Dhún na nGall.

Loch an Iúir in Donegal.

### Ar theacht an tsamhraidh achan bhliain...

Bhí deis ag Oifigigh Líofa ar na mallaibh cuairt a thabhairt ar roinnt coláistí samhraidh i nGaeltacht Dhún na nGall lena fheiceáil cad é atá ag titim amach sna coláistí i mbliana. Turas siar ar bhóithrín na smaointe a bhí ann agus iad ag cuimhneamh ar na laethanta a chaith siad féin ar choláistí Gaeltachta agus iad ag teacht i méadaíocht.

I gColáiste Mhachaire Rabhartaigh dó, arsa Dean Ó Sluagháin, “Tá sé ar dóigh a bheith thíos anseo i dTír Chonaill agus na mílte déagóir agus duine fásta ón tuaisceart agus ó gach cearn d’Éirinn a fheiceáil i mbun fhoghlaím na teanga. Níl bealach níos fearr ann leis an teanga a fhoghlaim agus í a thuiscint ná tú féin a thumadh sa teanga agus cainteoirí dúchais a bheith thart ort. Tá deis ag na foghlaimeoirí blaiseadh a fháil ar amhránaíocht, ar cheol, ar dhamhsa agus ar chluichí Gaelacha fosta.”

Bhí faill ag Oifigigh Líofa bualadh leis na daoine fásta agus leis na déagóirí uile a bhí ag freastal ar chúrsaí samhraidh ceangailte le Scéim Sparánachtaí Gaeltachta Líofa. Bhí siad iontach sásta leis an dul chun cinn a bhí á dhéanamh ag faighteoirí na sparánachtaí agus b’ardú croí dóibh tiomantas na bhfoghlaimeoirí don teanga.

**“Cuireann Líofa suas le 100 sparánacht ar fáil gach bliain do dhaoine d’aoiseanna éagsúla freastal ar ranganna Gaeilge sa samhradh i rogha coláistí samhraidh sa Ghaeltacht.”**

Mhínigh an tAre Ní Chuilín a thábhachtaí atá an scéim seo agus í ag seoladh Scéim Sparánachtaí Líofa i mbliana:

### When summer arrives every year...

Líofa Officers recently visited a number of the Gaeltacht summer colleges throughout Donegal to see for themselves the level of learning in the colleges this year and to relive some of their own summers as teenagers attending Gaeltacht Colleges.

Speaking at Coláiste Mhachaire Rabhartaigh, Dean Ó Sluagháin said, “It is brilliant to be up here in Donegal to see the thousands of teenagers and adults from all over the north and from every corner of Ireland learning the language. There really isn’t a better way to learn the language or understand the language than becoming immersed in the language, surrounded by native speakers. The learners are also enjoying the opportunity to get involved in Irish song, music and dance, as well as Gaelic games.”

It was also a wonderful opportunity for the Líofa Officers to catch up with all of the adults and teenagers who were attending the summer courses through the Líofa Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme. They were both impressed by the progress that the bursary recipients were making and encouraged by their commitment to learn the language.

**“Each year, Líofa offers up to 100 bursaries to people of various ages to attend Irish-language classes during the summer at a number selected Gaeltacht summer colleges.”**

Launching the Líofa Bursary Scheme this year, Minister Ní Chuilín explained the importance of such a scheme:

“Ar na buaicpointí ag cuid mhaith daoine, agus ar na huirlisí is éifeachtaí leis an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim, tá freastal ar chúrsa teanga sa Ghaeltacht agus an Ghaeilge a shú isteach agus iad i measc cainteoirí dúchais ina bpobail féin.”

“For many people one of the highlights and one of the most effective tools for learning Irish is to attend an Irish-language course in the Gaeltacht region, absorbing the language in the heart of native speakers and communities.”

“Is é an fáth a raibh mé ag iarraidh an scéim seo a fhorbairt ná deis a thabhairt don oiread daoine agus is féidir blaiseadh den eispéireas Gaeltachta. Leis an scéim seo, táimid in ann a chinntiú go dtig linn tacú le daoine nach raibh fáil acu ar an eispéireas saibhir cultúrtha Gaeltachta go dtí seo mar gheall ar shrianta airgeadais.

“Creidim go mbaineann an oidhreacht shaibhir chultúrtha ar an oileán seo le gach duine againn agus go dtig linn uile tairbhe agus taitneamh a bhaint as. Ba chóir go mbeadh an Ghaeilge ar fáil do gach duine, beag beann ar an traidisiún, ar an chúlra agus ar na cúinsí airgeadais a bhaineann leo.”

“Is mian liom gach duine atá ag tosú amach ar bhóthar na líofachta a spreagadh. Tá an toil agus an mhian leis an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim láidir, agus tá tarraingt na teanga níos leithne inniu ná mar a bhí le tamall.”

“Guím gach rath ina gcuid foghlama orthu siúd atá ag freastal ar chúrsaí sa Ghaeltacht an samhradh seo agus san am atá le teacht.”

“By developing this scheme I wanted the Gaeltacht experience to be open to as many people as possible and we have been able to ensure that we can support people who may previously have been unable to access this enriching Gaelic cultural experience due to financial constraints.

“I believe that the rich cultural heritage on this island is something we all share and something we can all embrace and enjoy. The Irish language should be open to everyone, irrespective of their tradition, background or financial circumstances.

“I offer every encouragement to those who are on their first stages on the road to fluency. The willingness and desire to learn Irish is strong, and the appeal of the language is broader today than it has been at any stage of its recent history.

“I wish all those attending the Gaeltacht courses all the best with their studies both this coming summer and beyond.”



Seán Ó Maoilisté, Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge le CAIRDE Teo

Seán Ó Maoilisté, Irish-Language Development Officer with CAIRDE Teo

## I gCónagar agus i gCéin

### I gCónagar: Seán Ó Maoilisté

Seán Ó Maoilisté an t-ainm atá orm agus is í Doire Mhic Cais an áit inár rugadh mé agus tá mé go fóill i mo chónaí inti. Tá idir Bhéarla agus Ghaeilge agam agus tá mé ag obair mar Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge le CAIRDE Teo i gcathair Ard Mhacha.

## Home and Away

### Home: Seán Ó Maoilisté

My name is Seán Ó Maoilisté. I was born in Derrymacash and I still live there today. I speak both English and Irish and I'm working as an Irish-Language Development Officer for CAIRDE Teo in Armagh City.

Thosaigh mé ag foghlaim na Gaeilge agus mé ar an mheánscoil ag Coláiste Phádraig in Ard Mhacha. Bhí múinteoirí den scoth againn a spreag mé le spéis a chur sa teanga. Is cuimhin liom nuair a bhain mé an fáinne airgid amach gur luaigh mé le m'athair mór go raibh an fáinne bainte agam agus labhair sé ar ais liom sa Ghaeilge. Ní raibh a fhios agam roimhe sin go raibh suim aige sa teanga. Rinne mé an Ghaeilge don GCSE agus don Ard-leibhéal agus lean mé leis an Ghaeilge san ollscoil. Thug mé roinnt cuairteanna ar cheantair éagsúla Gaeltachta agus bhí mo chroí agus m'anam istigh sa teanga ó shin.

**"Is maith liom na daoine ar bhuail mé leo trína bheith ag foghlaim na Gaeilge agus á cur chun tosaigh. Tá cairde saoil déanta agam mar gheall ar an teanga."**

Sílim go bhfuil dáimh nó bá ar leith i measc phobal na Gaeilge agus is maith liom i gcónaí nuair a bhuaílím le duine atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge agus ag déanamh a d(h)ícheall í a labhairt. Thug an Ghaeilge an oiread deiseanna dom nach mbeadh agam i saol an Bhéarla agus bainim sult as an chraic a bhaineann leis na deiseanna sin.

Bhí roinnt post agam ó d'imigh mé ón ollscoil ina raibh an Ghaeilge mar phríomhtheanga ann. Chaith mé seal ag obair in earnáil na teilifíse ag cur fotheidil Béarla ar chlár Ghaeilge agus chuir mé Gaeilge ar chartún a craoladh ar RTÉ. Bhí mé fostaithe mar Oifigeach Gaeilge sa státchóras in oirthuaisceart na hÉireann leis an Roinn Oideachais ar feadh cúpla bliana. Tá mé anois ag obair le grúpa Gaeilge in Ard Mhacha darb ainm CAIRDE Teo leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa bhaile mór agus sa cheantar thart air.

Nuair a chuala mé faoi Líofo, cheap mé gur céim chun cinn é nó chuir sé le h-infheictheacht agus le h-ábharthacht na Gaeilge. Cé go bhfuil pobal láidir Gaeilge ann i roinnt áiteanna in Éirinn, tugann Líofo aitheantas d'fhás agus d'fhorbairt na teanga, go háirithe san oirthuaisceart. Tá sárobair á déanamh ag grúpaí pobail ar fud an oileáin leis an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn agus bheadh an obair sin ar siúl ar scor ar bith, ach an rud a thugann Líofo ná sprioc pearsanta d'fhoghlaimoirí leibhéal áirithe Gaeilge labhartha a bhaint amach agus eolas a thabhairt do phobal níos leithne fá dheiseanna foghlama.

**Bainim úsáid as an Ghaeilge gach lá le mo phost agus bíim ag teagasc Gaeilge ag ranganna agus ag úsáid Gaeilge i gclubanna óige. In Ard Mhacha, tá grúpa aclaíochta agus cnocadóireachta againn do Ghaeilgeoirí agus d'fhoghlaimoirí.**

I started learning Irish when I was in secondary school, St Patrick's College in Armagh. We had excellent teachers who inspired me to take an interest in the language. I remember when I got my silver fáinne; when I told my grandfather I had the fáinne, he spoke Irish back to me. Before that I didn't know he had any interest in the language. I did Irish for GCSE and A-Level and continued in university. I made several visits to various Gaeltacht areas, and I have loved the language ever since.

**"I like the people I've met through learning and promoting the Irish language. I have made life-long friends because of the language."**

I think that the Irish language community has a certain empathy and affinity and I always like to meet a person who is learning Irish and doing his or her best to speak it. Irish has given me many opportunities I wouldn't have had in English, and I enjoy the craic that is an integral part of these opportunities.

I have had a number of jobs since leaving university where Irish was the main language. I spent some time working in the television sector, putting English subtitles on Irish language programmes, and I translated cartoons that were broadcast on RTÉ into Irish. I was employed as an Irish-Language Officer in the state system by the Department of Education in the north for a few years. I am now working with an Irish language group in Armagh called CAIRDE Teo that promotes Irish in the town itself and surrounding area.

When I heard about Líofo, I thought it was a big step forward because it increased the visibility and relevance of Irish. Although there are strong Irish language communities in parts of Ireland, Líofo recognises growth and development of the language, especially in the north-east. Community groups throughout the island are doing excellent work to promote Irish, and this work would be happening anyway, but what Líofo adds is personal goals for learners to reach a certain level of spoken Irish and information for the public about learning opportunities.

**I use Irish everyday in my job and I teach Irish classes and use Irish in youth clubs. In Armagh, we have a fitness and hill-walking group for Irish speakers and learners.**

Labhraím Gaeilge le mo chairde, le mo dheirfiúr agus le colcheathracha liom agus tá cúpla teaghlach sa cheantar a bhfuil páistí acu ar Ghaelscoileanna agus labhraím leo sa Ghaeilge. Bainim úsáid as an Ghaeilge sna ról atá agam sa Chumann Lúthchleas Gael. Tá ról an Oifigigh Chaidrimh Phoiblí agam le Bord Contae Ard Mhacha den CLG agus bainim úsáid as an Ghaeilge go minic agus mé ag plé leis na meáin agus le clubanna. Tá an Ghaeilge mar chuid de mo shaol shóisialta chomh maith agus tá neart cairde agam nár labhair mé leo i mBéarla riamh. Taobh amuigh de na h-imeachtaí agus de na ranganna a reáchtáilim féin mar Oifigeach Gaeilge le CAIRDE Teo, bíim ag freastal ar imeachtaí Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht agus lasmuigh de.

Tá an Ghaeilge anois lárnaigh i mo shaol agus tá sé mar chuid de m'fhéiniúlacht. Tá roinnt rudaí sa saol atá tábhachtach agam agus ceanglaíonn an Ghaeilge achan cheann acu le chéile, bíodh sin teaghlach, m'áit dhúchais, an pobal thart orm agus an cultúr agus spórt a bhfuil mé sáite ann. Nuair a amharcaim ar an dochar atá déanta don tír agus don chosmhuintir, tchím a thábhachtaí is atá sé cloí le d'fhéiniúlacht féin agus le do mhuintir féin.

Déarfainn le foghlaimeoirí coinneáil oraibh nó tiocfaidh sí sa deireadh agus bainigí úsáid as cibé Gaeilge atá agat. Bíonn lúcháir ar Ghaeilgeoirí cluinistín fá dhaoine atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge agus is cuma má dhéanann tú meancóg.

**An rud is tábhachtaí ná í a úsáid agus í a chur ar aghaidh chuig an chéad glúin eile. Labhair í agus mairfidh sí.**

I speak Irish to my friends, my sister and some of my cousins and there are a few families in the area whose children are attending Irish medium schools and I speak to them in Irish. I use Irish in the roles I fulfill in the GAA. I am the Public Relations Officer for the Armagh GAA County Board and I often use Irish when dealing with the media and clubs. Irish is also part of my social life and I have plenty of friends with whom I've never spoken English. Apart from the events and classes I run myself as Irish Language Officer for CAIRDE Teo, I also attend Irish language events in the Gaeltacht and elsewhere.

The Irish language is now central to my life and it's a part of my identity. There are several things in life that are important to me, and the Irish language links all of them together: family, my home place, the community around me and the culture and sport in which I'm immersed. When I look at the harm that has been done to this country and ordinary people, I see how important it is to stick with your own identity and with your own people.

I would say to learners to keep going – it will come eventually – and use whatever Irish you have. Irish speakers are delighted to hear about other people learning the language and it doesn't matter if you make a mistake.

**The most important thing is to use it and pass it on to the next generation. Speak it and it will thrive.**



Terry McBride atá ag foghlaim na Gaeilge i gCeanada

Terry McBride, who is learning Irish in Canada.

### I gCéin: Terry McBride

Terry McBride an t-ainm atá orm. Rugadh agus tógadh mé in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Cheanada, agus tá mé go fóill i mo chónaí ann inniu. Is é an Béarla mo mháthairtheanga, tá roinnt Fraincise agus Spáinnise agam agus, ar ndóigh, tá mé ag foghlaim na Gaeilge fosta.

### Away: Terry McBride

My name is Terry McBride. I was born and raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Canada and that is where I still live today. My birth language was English and I speak some French and Spanish and I am, of course, also learning Irish.

**Nuair a bhí mé 38 bliain d’aois, dúirt m’aintín Ellen liom gur ghnách le mo sheantuismitheoirí Gaeilge a labhairt ar an fheirm acu in Saskatchewan sna 1920idí agus sna 1930idí.**

Baineadh siar asam, mar bhí mé i mo chónaí le mo sheanathair go dtí go raibh mé cúig bliana d’aois agus níor chuala mé ach Béarla óna bhéal. Nuair a rinne mé taighde ar mo mhuintir, fuair mé amach gur Pádraic Mac Giolla Bhríde an t-ainm a bhí ar sheanathair mo shin-sinseanathair thiar san ochtú haois déag i dTír Chonaill. Shocraigh mé gur chóir dom iarracht a dhéanamh an teanga a labhair mo shinsir a fhoghlaim. Cheannaigh mé cúpla leabhar agus caiséad agus rinne mé staidéar ar leabhair le frásaí Gaeilge iontu ar feadh uair an chloig gach lá ar feadh sé mhí sula ndeachaigh mé ar mo chéad chuairt ar Éirinn i 1997. Bhí lúcháir orm bualadh le mo chol-ochtaracha i dTír Chonaill, ach d’éirigh mé as an Ghaeilge a labhairt nuair a fuair mé amach go raibh Béarla líofa ag mo ghaolta Conallacha.

**“Bhí mé chóir a bheith réidh leis an sprioc a bhí agam an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim a ghlanadh den liosta rudaí a bhí mé ag iarraidh a dhéanamh sula gcaillfí mé, ach ansin, go tobann, 20 bliain ar aghaidh, cuireadh deis iontach os mo chomhair ag seisiún ceol Gaelach sa teach tábhairne is fearr liom.”**

Thug beirt mhúinteoirí áitiúla Gaeilge (Meaghan agus Hanna) cuireadh do dhaoine clárú i rang seachtainiúil leis an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim. I mí Eanáir 2013, agus 61 bliain slánaithe agam, shocraigh mé an deis a thapú. Mura ndéanfainn ansin é, ní dhéanfainn choíche é. Le dhá bhliain go leith anuas, tá mé ag freastal ar ranganna seachtainiúla a mhaireann dhá uair an chloig gach Satharn i dteach tábhairne áitiúil.

Is é ceann de na rudaí is fearr liom faoi bheith ag foghlaim na Gaeilge ná na huaireanta sin nuair a thuigim de splanc cén chiall atá le seanfhocal nó le focail in amhrán nó i ndán. Tá cuid de na frásaí ó na hamhráin Ghaeilge neadaithe anois i mo chluasa. Tá na hamhráin atá déanta ag Coláiste Lurgan ar YouTube greanta i m’aigne, agus is mó an pléisiúr a bhainim astu nuair a thig liom ciall a bhaint as na focail. Bíonn tuiscint i bhfad níos fearr agam ar logainmneacha na hÉireann nuair a fhoghlaimím cad é a chiallaíonn siad i nGaeilge. Is maith liom go mór comhrá príobháideach a dhéanamh le Gaeilgeoir eile agus lucht an Bhéarla thart orainn ag cúléisteacht agus ag iarraidh a dhéanamh amach cad é faoin spéir a bhfuil muid ag caint faoi.

**When I was 38, my aunt Ellen told me that my grandparents spoke Irish on their farm in Saskatchewan in the 1920s and 1930s.**

This was astonishing news to me because when I lived with my grandfather for the first 5 years of my life, I only ever heard him speak English. When I traced my family tree I learned that my great-great-great-great grandfather, back in Donegal in the 1700s, was named Padraic Mac Giolla Bhríde. I thought I should try to learn the language my ancestors spoke. I bought a couple of books and cassette tapes and studied Irish-language phrase books for about an hour a day for 6 months prior to my first visit to Ireland in 1997. I was happy to meet my second cousins in Donegal but I gave up on speaking Irish when I discovered that all my Donegal relatives spoke English fluently.

**“I had almost completely crossed my goal of learning Irish off my bucket list when suddenly, 20 years later, a wonderful opportunity arose at an Irish music session at my favourite pub.”**

Two local Irish-language teachers (Meaghan and Hanna) invited people to register for a weekly class to learn the Irish language. In January 2013, at age 61, I decided to take up their invitation. It was now or never. For the past 2 and half years I have faithfully attended weekly two-hour classes held on Saturdays at a local pub.

One of my favourite things about learning Irish is the Eureka moments when I can understand the meaning of a seanfhocal or the words of an Irish song or poem. Some of the phrases from Irish songs have become very pleasant “earworms.” The Youtube tunes from Coláiste Lurgan have become stuck in my head, which is a lot more pleasurable after I decode the meaning. Now the place names in Ireland make more sense when I learn their roots in Irish. I enjoy the experience of having a private conversation with another Irish speaker while Anglophones eavesdropping nearby wonder what on earth we are talking about.



Is í an chonstaic is mó ar fhoghlaim na Gaeilge anseo ná an ganntanas múinteoirí Gaeilge sa chuid seo de Mheiriceá Thuaidh. Tá beirt de na múinteoirí a bhí agam sna laethanta luatha, Hannah agus Martin, imithe ar ais go hÉirinn. Dúirt an múinteoir is faide agam liom ar na mallaibh, Meaghan, nach mbeidh sí ag teagasc ranganna Gaeilge níos mó.

**“Níorbh mhiste liom aistriú go cathair eile mar Ottawa nó Bostún, áit a bhfuil na scórtha foghlaimeoirí agus cainteoirí Gaeilge – b’fhéidir go bhfíorófar m’fhís lá éigin amach anseo.”**

Dhá bhliain ó shin, chuala mé léacht ar an teangeolaíocht leis an Ollamh John McWhorter. Dúirt sé go bhfuil an Ghaeilge ar na teangacha is deacra ag daoine a fhoghlaim, seachas naíonáin. Ba bheag nach ndeachaigh an tuairim s’áige i bhfeidhm orm, is í sin an tuairim nach dtiocfadh le duine fásta líofacht a bhaint amach i dteanga ar bith cosúil leis an Ghaeilge ina mbíonn an oiread sin claochluithe ar na cosain ag tús focal. Ar an dea-uair, rinne mo mhúinteoir Meaghan beag is fiú den nóisean sin agus tá mé suite de anois gurb amhlaidh gur féidir le daoine fásta teangacha ina mbíonn go leor infhillte a fhoghlaim, ach caithfidh mé a rá gur ghlac sé tamall orm an smaoineamh nach n-éireodh liom a ruaigeadh as m’intinn. Tá mé diongbháilte anois go bhfuil mé ag dul a chruthú nach bhfuil an ceart ag an Dr McWhorter.

Is iomaí buntáiste atá bainte agam as a bheith ag foghlaim na Gaeilge. Tá cairde nua agam, foghlaimeoirí eile Gaeilge atá ar lorg daoine a labhróidh an teanga leo. Is maith liom é nuair a léiríonn inimircigh Éireannacha meas orm mar taitníonn an smaoineamh leo go dtig leo a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge féin atá ligthe i ndearmad acu a athnuachan. Chuaigh mé go Kingston, Ontario ar na mallaibh le freastal ar dheireadh seachtaine Oireachtais agus bhí sé ar na saoirí is fearr a bhí agam riamh. Bhí mé in ann éalú ar feadh seala ó ghnáthchúrsaí an tsaoil agus sult a bhaint as ceol agus teanga na nGael an deireadh seachtaine sin. Spreagadh mé leis an amhránaíocht agus an damhsa ar an sean-nós a fhoghlaim. Ní bheadh a leithéid d’eispéireas saibhir cultúrtha agam murach an iarracht mhór atá déanta agam le cúpla bliain anuas an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim. Bhí mé ar bís gur bhuail mé le thart ar 50 nó 60 cainteoir dúchais ann. Ba iontach leo gur thaistil mé breis agus 3,000 ciliméadar le freastal ar an ócáid. Is amhlaidh go raibh mé ag iarraidh go mór spreagadh a fháil ó chainteoirí Gaeilge atá níos líofa ná mé féin.

The biggest obstacle to learning Irish here is the fact that there is a scarcity of Irish teachers in my part of North America. Two of my early teachers, Hanna and Martin, have moved back to Ireland. My longest-term teacher, Meaghan, has recently told me that she will no longer be teaching Irish language classes.

**“I dream of moving to a city such as Ottawa or Boston that is home to many dozens of Irish learners and speakers – maybe one day.”**

Two years ago I heard a lecture on linguistics by Professor John McWhorter’s. He declared that Irish is one of the most difficult languages to learn for anyone other than a toddler. He almost convinced me that an adult could never learn to be fluent in a language as full of consonant mutations at the beginnings of words as Irish. Fortunately my teacher Meaghan scoffed at that nonsense and now I am convinced that adults can indeed learn languages that are full of inflections but it did take me a while to get past that mental roadblock. Now I am determined to prove that Dr. McWhorter was wrong.

Learning Irish has benefited me in many ways. I am making new friends with fellow Irish language learners who are looking for someone to talk to. I enjoy the respect of Irish immigrants who like the idea of reviving their long-neglected Irish language skills. My recent trip to Kingston, Ontario to attend an Oireachtas weekend was one of my best vacations ever because I completely escaped the routine of my work-a-day world and enjoyed a weekend of Irish music and language. I came away eager to learn sean nós singing and sean nós dancing. I would never have had that enriching cultural experience if I had not first made the diligent effort to learn Irish over the past couple of years. I was thrilled to meet 50-60 Irish speakers there. They wondered why I travelled over 3000 kilometres to attend. I really wanted to get inspired by other, more proficient Irish speakers.

Tá an Ghaeilge mar chuid de m'oidhreacht. Is gné de m'fhéiniúlacht féin anois í. Tá mé i mo bhall de chumann Toastmasters agus tá óráidí déanta agam faoi na buntáistí a bhaineann le teanga eile a fhoghlaim, mar atá an intinn a aclú agus an aois a choinneáil ó dhoras. Is iomaí duine a iarrann orm rud éigin a rá i nGaeilge mar tá siad fiosrach agus ba mhaith leo í a chluinstin as siocair nach bhfuil sí cluinste acu riamh. Nuair atá rud éigin ráite agam, deir siad de ghnáth nach bhfuil sí cosúil leis an Bhéarla ar chor ar bith. Ar dhóigh, tá cosúlacht idir focail na n-amhrán Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus a thuiscint agus eochair a fháil ar dhoras isteach chuig domhan úr draíochta. Dúirt mé le mo mhúinteoir go bhfuil sé cosúil le Alice a bheith ag siúl tríd an scáthán isteach i ndomhan eile.

**Casadh inimirceach ón Rúis orm ar na mallaibh agus chuala mé é ag caint Rúisise lena mhac a bhí trí bliana d'aois. Bhí sé ag iarraidh a mháthairtheanga a choinneáil beo agus deis a thabhairt dá mhac an Rúisise a fhoghlaim sula rachadh sé isteach i gcóras scolaíochta an Bhéarla. Mothaímse mar an gcéanna. Is mian liom teanga álainn mo shinsear a choinneáil beo. Agus gach seans gur féidir linn é sin a dhéanamh le chéile.**

The Irish language is part of my heritage. It is now part of my identity. In my Toastmasters club I have given speeches about the brain-stimulating, anti-aging benefits of learning another language. Many times, people ask me to say something in Irish because they are curious what it might sound like, since they have never heard Irish spoken before. After they hear me speak, they usually say, "Hey, that's not at all like English, is it?" In many ways, learning the words to Irish songs and understanding what they mean is like a key opening up a whole new, magical world. I told my teacher it is like Alice walking through the looking glass into a different world.

**I met a Russian immigrant recently and heard him speaking in Russian to his three-year-old son because he wanted to keep his mother tongue alive and give his son a chance to learn Russian before he enters the Anglophone school system. That's how I feel, too. I want to keep my ancestors' beautiful language alive. Together, we might just be able to do it.**

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