



Canadian Irish Studies Foundation

FUNDAMENTALS

NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF IRISH STUDIES

Despite COVID, Irish Studies moves forward

As with many universities around the world, Concordia shifted courses online for the fall and winter terms. Despite the challenge that virtual courses pose for students, all 18 courses in Irish Studies have very healthy enrollment numbers.



Other pandemic-related adjustments at the School include the cancellation of the annual Peter O'Brien Visiting Scholar and the Irish Public Lecture Series. Nevertheless, the School began the new academic year on a very positive note, with the appointment

of **Máirtín Coilféir** as the permanent professor of the Irish Language and Its Cultures.

BOARD APPOINTS PETER MCGOVERN AS NEW TRUSTEE

The CISF recently approved the appointment of **Peter McGovern** as a new trustee. For many years, the late **David Scott** represented the Ottawa area. The appointment of Peter will continue the tradition of the Foundation having a trustee with high-profile connections in the capital.



In addition, with the completion of **Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin's** term as holder of the Johnson Chair in Quebec and Canadian Irish Studies, **Jane McGaughey** is being nominated to assume this prestigious research and teaching position.

These two developments reflect the evolution of Irish Studies and hold exciting prospects for the mission of the School going forward.

For more information on the School of Irish Studies visit:

concordia.ca/irishstudies

INAUGURAL CANADA-IRELAND BEACON LECTURE DELIVERED BY JEAN CHAREST



In a bold and exciting initiative, The Ireland Canada University Foundation has launched a prestigious new partnership with the creation of the **D'Arcy McGee Beacon Fellowship**. This new program, which aims to expand collaborations between Ireland and Canada, was launched on October 29 with a lecture by former Irish president **Mary McAleese**.

Following this successful event, the reciprocal **Inaugural Canada-Ireland Beacon Lecture** was given by the Honourable **Jean Charest** on November 27 at the Centre for Canadian Studies at University College Dublin. The former Deputy Prime Minister of Canada and Premier of Quebec spoke on "The Role of the Irish in the Making of Canada." Details on how to hear the lecture will be made available from the School shortly.



THE FOUNDATION'S CHAIRPERSON AND TRUSTEES WISH ALL OUR SUPPORTERS A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND GOOD LUCK IN 2021!

Peter McGovern: new CISF trustee

At a recent meeting of the CISF board, a unanimous vote approved the nomination of Peter McGovern as a trustee. A native of Montreal, Peter completed a Bachelor of Arts in Honours History at McGill University in 1976. He then enrolled at Birkbeck College, University of London, where he wrote a DPhil thesis on Canadian-British diplomatic relations during the Second World War. Peter began his diplomatic career with Canada's Department of External Affairs in 1982.

In 2001, his career path with the Department of Foreign Affairs took him to Milan, where he served as consul general for four years. Back in Ottawa, his many roles in the department included: director general of both the Asia and Latin America bureaus; assistant deputy minister for the Summits Management Office (where he helped manage G8

and G20 summits and, later, Canada's 2018 G7 presidency); assistant deputy minister for investment, innovation, business development, Asia; and the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. From 2013 to 2018, Peter served as Canada's Ambassador to Italy, as well as High Commissioner to the Republics of Malta, San Marino and Albania. He also served as Canada's Permanent Representative to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

On his appointment, Peter said that he was delighted to become a trustee of the CISF. He looks forward to serving in whatever way he can to advance teaching and research on Ireland and the rich story of the contribution of the Irish to the development of Canada.

Máirtín Coilféir

In August, Máirtín Coilféir was welcomed as professor of the Irish Language and Its Cultures, an appointment the School had hoped for since 2012.

A native of Navan, County Meath, Máirtín received his degrees from University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin. He has taught at several Irish universities and, most recently, at the University of Toronto. His teaching and research focuses on contemporary Irish-language literature, translation and creative writing. His critical and creative writing has been published widely in Ireland. *Titley*, his first full-length study and a monograph on one of the most distinguished contemporary writers in Irish, was published in 2019 and shortlisted for the Irish-language Book of the Year award.

Among Máirtín's current projects are two volumes of essays on contemporary writing in Irish, an Irish-language detective novel and a project on the internationality of the Irish-language literary translation tradition. In the current academic year, Máirtín is teaching courses on the Irish language and Irish mythology and folklore.

"I'm excited and very enthusiastic to join the academic team at the School of Irish Studies at Concordia," says Máirtín. "I'm eager to introduce students to a new method of Irish-language learning, as well as explore with them the imaginative brilliance of Irish folklore and the technologies of the language's book culture."

Jane McGaughey

Jane McGaughey came to the School of Irish Studies in 2012 as a professor of Irish Diaspora Studies. She has since taught courses such as "The Irish in Canada," "The Irish in Montreal" and "Rebellions in Ireland and the Canadas." Jane's publications include *Violent Loyalties: Manliness, Migration, and the Irish in the Canadas, 1798-1841*; *Ulster's Men*; and, as co-editor, *Ireland and Masculinities in History*.

Jane says she is absolutely thrilled to be nominated for the Johnson Chair in Quebec and Canadian Irish Studies.

"My first research project would be to examine mental illness among Irish migrants and their descendants in nineteenth-century Quebec. In addition, I would hold community roundtables to examine current and historical issues for the Irish in Quebec, and organize a podcast series highlighting key Irish people and Irish-related events from the province's past. As with so many aspects of Irish Studies at Concordia, I'm grateful to the Canadian Irish Studies Foundation whose partnership with the university and the Government of Quebec led to the creation of the Johnson Chair."

Three of the 11 courses offered at the School of Irish Studies, winter 2021



The Irish in Montreal *Jane McGaughey*

How Irish is Montreal? How did the Irish shape the character of the city? How have their legacies continued in our modern society? This course combines history, gender studies, literature and urban mythology to illuminate the experiences of the Irish in Montreal from the eighteenth century to the present day.

Image: In nineteenth-century Montreal, the Irish were the largest group after the French, and are referenced on the city's coat of arms and flag.



Irish Mythology and Folklore *Máirtín Coilféir*

This course examines the vast body of Irish myth and folklore, and its practices and practitioners. It features stories of the fairy kind (the sí people), famous figures such as the banshee, mythological characters like Fionn Mac Cumhaill and Cú Chulainn, songs, material culture, social customs and religious observances. Class materials will include digitized primary sources, accounts of early collectors, historical surveys, theory and modern versions of traditional tales.

Photo: In traditional Irish folklore, a lone Hawthorne tree in the middle of a field or near a holy well is called a fairy tree. It is considered a gateway or portal between the world of the mortals and the world of the fairies and, more recently, to that of saints. Pieces of cloth are left as an expression of prayers or wishes for good fortune.



Irish Cultural Traditions in Quebec *Gearóid Ó hAllmhuráin*

Drawing on historical, ethnographic, musical and literary sources, this course will explore the story of the Irish in Quebec since the early 1700s, from community settings in the Gaspé peninsula and the Gatineau Valley, to working class and mercantile enclaves in Montreal, Quebec City and Sherbrooke. Particular attention will be given to Irish commemorative practices and how the Irish have maintained their own sense of cultural memory and historical place in *la belle province*.

Photo: An Irish community gathering in Sainte-Agathe-de-Lotbinière in the 1920s. © Steve Cameron

ANN SADDLEMYER DONATES HISTORICAL RECORDINGS TO THE SCHOOL OF IRISH STUDIES

The School of Irish Studies was very pleased to receive a donation of several dozen vinyl recordings by Irish writers and other cultural figures from **Ann Saddlemeyer**, LLD 00, former Master of Massey College and professor at the University of Toronto. The records include works by and about Irish writers such as Yeats, Joyce, Synge, Beckett, Patrick Kavanagh, Austin Clarke, Dylan Thomas and others, as well as the music of Seán Ó Riada, Grainne Yeats, and the Chieftains. These rare recordings will be an invaluable research resource for students and will complement the extensive collection of primary and secondary literary works dealing with the Irish Literary Revival which Professor Saddlemeyer has already donated to Irish Studies.

Professor Saddlemeyer received an honorary degree from Concordia in 2000. The annual Ann Saddlemeyer Lecture in Irish Studies was created to acknowledge her pioneering work in Irish literary studies in Canada and around the world, as well as her support of Irish Studies at the university.



TRUSTEE MARY MCGOVERN RETIRES FROM CISF BOARD

Mary McGovern has announced her retirement from the board due to changing personal circumstances. Mary commended the work of the trustees and expressed the hope "that the close ties between the students of Concordia's Irish Studies program and Saint Patrick's Basilica will continue."

Six years ago, Mary established the partnership by which Irish Studies students worked at the Basilica as summer tour guides. **Pamela McGovern** thanked Mary for her commitment and support of Irish Studies, and wished her well as she begins a new stage of her life.

Support for students needed now more than ever

While COVID has affected everyone, university students have been particularly hard hit by the dramatic changes the global crisis has caused, most notably as they adjust to online-only coursework.

The pandemic experiences of individual students can vastly differ. Some are in a crowded home environment not conducive to study. Some lack a proper computer or internet setup, and some live alone and have limited virtual contact with loved ones.

The inability to interact with peers is a major challenge, despite the extraordinary technological advances offered by online platforms. Social isolation, loss of summer employment and part-time jobs, and uncertainty about future career prospects are added factors students face.

The Canadian Irish Studies Foundation is pleased that it can offer modest financial support to some students, and we are deeply grateful to our donors who help make this possible. In the last academic year, the CISF provided \$103,400 to 41 undergraduate students in the form of scholarships and fee remission awards.

In the current year, with the help of our faithful donors, we would like to do more to increase our support to students, especially given the personal and financial challenges caused by the pandemic lockdown measures.

No matter how modest, a contribution to increase a named scholarship endowment fund or to the general fee remission fund will make a difference in the lives of students. Please consider a donation today and thank you, as always, for your generous support.



Pamela McGovern
Chair, Canadian Irish Studies Foundation

On behalf of all the students who benefit from the generosity of donors, the CISF expresses sincere thanks to the dedicated supporters who have made contributions in 2020:

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