

Global Irish Civic Forum 2026

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In May 2026, Gregg Thomassin and I had the honour of attending the fourth Global Irish Civic Forum at Croke Park in Dublin, myself representing both the Montreal Irish Monument and the Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network (CIMPN) and Gregg representing CIMPN. Organized by Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs, the Forum brought together approximately 250 delegates from 21 countries, representing Irish organizations, cultural groups, researchers, support services, business networks, and community leaders from across the global Irish diaspora.



Catherine Connolly, President of Ireland, addresses the 2026 Global Irish Civic Forum.
Source: [The President of Ireland's website](#).

A major theme throughout the Forum was the recognition that Ireland's diaspora represents one of the country's greatest strengths. Ireland sees itself not simply as a small nation, but as a global community connected through culture, history, family, and identity. Several speakers noted that Ireland's long experience maintaining relationships with its diaspora has become a model studied by other

countries. At a time when many nations appear increasingly inward-looking, Ireland is actively expanding and strengthening its international connections.

One of the central purposes of the Forum was the launch of Ireland's new [Diaspora Strategy 2026–2030](#), presented by Minister Neale Richmond and representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs. Delegates learned that the strategy had been shaped through extensive consultation with diaspora organizations and through feedback gathered from more than 10,000 participants worldwide.

The newly launched strategy is built around five pillars: Wellbeing and Advocacy, Identity and Culture, Connection and Contribution, Departure and Return, and Sharing Our Experience. The discussions emphasized a broad and inclusive understanding of "Irishness," including not only those born in Ireland, but also descendants of Irish emigrants and individuals who feel a deep cultural connection to Ireland.

One of the most valuable aspects of the Forum was the breakout sessions. Delegates were divided into small groups to discuss collaboration, sustainability, communication, and the future of Irish community engagement abroad. These discussions created meaningful opportunities to share experiences and ideas from different regions of the world.

Many common challenges emerged repeatedly during the sessions, including funding difficulties, volunteer burnout, coordination between organizations, and the need for better communication tools to help people connect with Irish communities abroad. Some organizations focused heavily on social services, providing assistance to elderly Irish emigrants, undocumented individuals, or vulnerable communities. Others concentrated on preserving Irish culture and heritage through music, dance, sports, language, genealogy, and historical preservation.

For us, it was particularly interesting to see where the work of CIMPN and the Montreal Irish Monument fits within this wider global network. While many organizations focused on direct social support, our work aligns more closely with heritage preservation, public history, genealogy, oral histories, and commemorative initiatives connected to Irish migration history in Canada.

The networking opportunities throughout the Forum were equally important. We made valuable connections with delegates from several countries, including Emma Smith representing the Liverpool Irish Famine Trail, Carolin Callery of the

National Famine Way and Global Irish Famine Way, and Bryan O’Gallagher, Ireland’s Honorary Consul for Quebec, whose work also focuses on Irish migration history and commemorative trail development. Conversations explored the possibility of future collaboration linking Ireland, Liverpool, and Canada through shared migration histories connected to 1847 and the wider Global Irish Famine Way network. These kinds of international partnerships have the potential to help fill historical gaps, strengthen public understanding of the Irish migration experience across the Atlantic world, and further connect commemorative sites and stories across multiple countries.

One particularly useful resource highlighted during the Forum was the Global Irish Diaspora Directory maintained by the Department of Foreign Affairs. The directory serves as an international listing of Irish organizations worldwide. However, in a follow-up review, we discovered that neither CIMPN nor the Montreal Irish Monument are currently listed or any other Quebec Irish society for that matter. This reinforced the importance of ensuring that Canadian organizations outside major urban centres are also represented within Ireland’s global diaspora network.

Overall, the Global Irish Civic Forum demonstrated the remarkable diversity, dedication, and passion that exists throughout the global Irish community. It also highlighted the importance of collaboration, storytelling, and preserving shared histories for future generations. For Gregg Thomassin and me, attending the Forum reaffirmed that the work currently being done in Montreal, Saint-Colomban and other parts of Quebec forms part of a much larger international effort to preserve and share the stories of the Irish diaspora worldwide.

Video recordings of the conference are available at Global Irish Civic Forum 2026: [Day 1](#) and [Day 2](#).