



CIMPAN / RCPMI

COMMITTED TO THE PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION AND PROMOTION OF IRISH HERITAGE
S'ENGAGE À PRÉSERVER, CONSERVER ET PROMOUVOIR LE PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

CIMPAN at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling / Le RCPMI au Centre d'histoire orale et de récits numérisés

20 Years of Oral History in Practice /
20 ans de pratique de l'histoire orale

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Réseau canadien de préservation de la migration irlandaise

CIMPN at the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling



Sign outside the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling on September 18th, 2026, at Concordia University. © 2026 Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network.

On September 18th, 2026, members of the Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network's (CIMPN's) research team visited the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling (COHDS) headquarters at Concordia University, Montréal. The early afternoon event was not only organized for COHDS's affiliates to attend the research centre's annual general meeting, but also to hear from Professor Ioana Radu, who delivered this year's keynote speech. This visit was supported by a grant from the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA).

The Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling is a research centre which primarily focuses on promoting the collection and preservation of oral historical records, both in audio and visual forms. As a centre, COHDS places immense value on the core tenets of

ethical practice and shared authority. The community-based organization promotes collaboration between individuals, communities, and all others interested in oral history. The Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network's vested interest in promoting the oral histories of the diverse Irish-Canadian population became an affiliate of COHDS in March 2026.

The event began with a greeting by COHDS's co-director, Dr. Steven High, who founded the centre. Dr. High recognized that 2026 marks an important anniversary year for the centre, which was originally founded in 2006 with financial support from the Canada Foundation for Innovation and Concordia University. Since then, over fifty graduate students who received training at COHDS now work around the globe in both academic and community spaces. Their diverse careers, ranging from historians, educators, artists, and more, reflect what Dr. High considered to be oral history's greatest disciplinary strength: bridging differences.

Dr. High then formally introduced keynote speaker Ioana Radu, professor at the School of Indigenous Studies at Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue (UQAT). Radu, who received her training at COHDS while pursuing a PhD in Humanities in 2015, has worked alongside Indigenous communities in Québec for twenty years and is currently member of the Aboriginal Peoples Research and Knowledge Network (DIALOG). Radu said that speaking at COHDS felt like a "homecoming" to her, as she has been affiliated with the centre for much of her career.

Radu's work currently focuses on research creation and knowledge mobilization with Indigenous communities in the James Bay region of Canada. Her keynote speech, entitled "Nurturing worlds of care and belonging: Indigenous Kinscapes and Oral History", not only encompassed the various projects she has been exploring with Indigenous communities during her time as a researcher, but also the strong relationships she constructed with individuals and families over the years.

Radu highlighted the massive importance of placing knowledge and relationships at the centre of any and all historical projects. Radu placed particular importance on the strong relationships she built with community elders Eddie Pash and Larry House, who ensured Radu developed a deep appreciation and understanding of Indigenous systems of knowledge. As Radu stated, "Knowledge is socially constructed and context-dependent", which is why it remains essential to place mutual understanding, curiosity, respect, and relational accountability at the core of all cultural research projects.

Following Professor Radu's presentation, guests were invited to gather for a communal lunch. The spirit of community exchange that informs much of COHDS' practice was on display as affiliates and guests alike mingled and discussed their current projects and research interests. The afternoon ended with the centre's annual general meeting, which promoted several of the centre's upcoming events, including their upcoming four-day-long

Storytelling Festival. From October 6th to October 9th, a diverse group of community members, oral history practitioners, and storytellers will gather at Concordia University to share their most recent works. From podcasts, to film screenings, and even cooking demonstrations, the Storytelling Festival will be one of the biggest events of COHDS' anniversary year. The CIMPN hopes to return to COHDS to attend the Storytelling Festival and make use of their incredible tech resources in the near future.

The CIMPN extends a sincere thanks to the COHDS team for undertaking the organization of such a successful event.



Research team members attending COHDS annual general meeting on September 18th, 2026. From left to right: Bernice Djaballah, Katherine Diamond, Samara O’Gorman, and Evita-Marie Di Falco. © 2026 Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network.