



CIMPAN/RCPMI

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

A Day in Dorval: CIMPAN's Inaugural Genealogy Workshop / Une journée à Dorval : premier atelier de généalogie organisé par le RCPMI

Kelley O'Rourke

© 2026 Canadian Irish Migration Preservation Network
Réseau canadien de préservation de la migration irlandaise

A Day in Dorval: CIMPN's Inaugural Genealogy Workshop

by Kelley O'Rourke

On Friday, September 4, 2026, CIMPN President Kelley O'Rourke presented Getting Started with Family History, a beginner genealogy workshop for the St. Veronica Seniors' Club at the Sarto-Desnoyers Community Center in Dorval. The workshop was made possible in part through the financial support of the Secrétariat aux relations avec les Québécois d'expression anglaise (SRQEA) as part of the project Preserving & Showcasing Irish Heritage in Quebec. The event was organized by Margot Heron of the St. Veronica community, and participants gathered for lunch before the presentation began.



Kelley O'Rourke and Margot Huron at CIMPN's inaugural genealogy workshop, Getting Started with Family History, held for the St. Veronica Seniors' Club in Dorval on September 4, 2026. Photo: Evita-Marie Di Falco.

The workshop introduced participants to the basic methods and tools of family history research. Its central message was simple: start with what you know, question what you find, and cross-reference the evidence. O'Rourke discussed census records, baptismal, marriage and burial records, family documents and free genealogy resources, while emphasizing the importance of placing people and records in their historical, geographic and community context.

Participants were also introduced to newer research tools, including artificial intelligence. O'Rourke explained that AI can be useful for organizing information, comparing records, building timelines and suggesting questions to investigate, but it should never be treated

as a source. AI can make mistakes or invent information, so conclusions must be checked against reliable records. The workshop also addressed family stories, bias and presentism, reminding participants that inherited stories can provide valuable clues but still require verification.

Margaret Lowe's family history provided the workshop's main case study. Margaret had won a draw among members of the St. Veronica Seniors' Club to have part of her family history researched for the presentation. Records from England and Canada revealed changing surnames, conflicting immigration dates and evidence that members of the family crossed the Atlantic more than once. By comparing census records, parish registers, passenger lists and other sources, the group could see how apparently contradictory records begin to make sense when they are considered together.

Participants received practical handouts, including research shortcuts, reference sheets and keys for reading historical records. The lively discussion that followed showed how quickly one family's story can lead to new questions about another. O'Rourke answered questions about databases and research approaches and discussed how participants might begin investigating their own families.

CIMPN was also pleased to welcome special guest Enrico Ciccone, Member for Marquette in the National Assembly of Quebec and Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Energy and Natural Resources.

The Dorval workshop marked the launch of CIMPN's genealogy research services and workshop program. Information about these new services and future workshops will be available on the CIMPN website shortly.