CIMPN/RCPMI

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

Saint-Colomban Irish Heritage Day Draws Record Turnout

La Journée du patrimoine irlandais de Saint-Colomban attire une affluence record

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Réseau canadien de préservation de la migration irlandaise

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By Samara O'Gorman

On Saturday, September 26th, the CIMPN hosted its annual Irish Heritage Day in Saint-Colomban, celebrating history, community, and culture. Held at Saint-Colomban City Hall, the event brought together local history enthusiasts, community leaders, and artists for an afternoon filled with films, archival presentations, and hands-on heritage preservation activities. As the CIMPN Oral History Interviewer and Researcher, I organized and hosted the event, which was made possible through the generosity of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network (QAHN). They supported us with funding from their SHARE grant program for our project, *Footsteps of Exile: Interpreting the Bronze Shoes and Irish Famine Memory in Quebec*.

We kicked off the afternoon with our President, Kelley O'Rourke, and Vice-President, Fergus Keyes, sharing a brief history of the Irish in Saint-Colomban. They highlighted the success of recent initiatives, including The Irish Mile™ and its connection to The Global Irish Famine Way heritage trail. (View the presentation slides.)



Fergus Keyes and Kelley O'Rourke giving their presentation. Photo credit: Louis Parent

Following their presentation, local dignitaries delivered speeches, including Saint-Colomban Mayor Xavier Lalonde and city councillor Isabel Lapointe. Greg Giroux, the newly elected President of the United Irish Societies, also shared a few words about Irish culture and community. Carol McCormick, President of the St. Patrick's Society, concluded the speeches by announcing that the SPS accepted our grant application for the Saint-Colomban Irish

Heritage Burial Register Project. She expressed pride in supporting our organization and hoped the funds would positively contribute to our ongoing work.

A personal highlight of the afternoon was the premiere of my new documentary, which focuses on Irish identity and memory in Saint-Colomban. The film features Scott Phelan, Kelley O'Rourke, Fergus Keyes, and Bill Gossage, and will be available to watch soon on our social media channels. Attendees also had the opportunity to explore a curated exhibition of historical artifacts and archival documents presented by Histoire et Archives Laurentides. Their President, Henri Prévost, was present to award the CIMPN with the prestigious *Prix d'Histoire et Archives Laurentides* in recognition of our outstanding contributions to preserving local history.



Henri Prévost (center) and attendees examining artifacts in the exhibition. Photo credit: Louis Parent



Henri Prévost. Kelley O'Rourke, and Fergus Keyes with the Prix d'Histoire et Archives Laurentides. Photo credit: Kevin Rafferty. Photo credit: Kevin Raferty

The afternoon concluded with a demonstration led by Laurie McKeown of CIMPN on cemetery mapping at Saint-Colomban Cemetery, where guests learned how to document historic gravestones firsthand. Throughout the event, attendees enjoyed live classical Irish music, had professional photos taken on a 'green carpet' featuring an official CIMPN backdrop, and sampled a variety of sweets and refreshments. Whether visitors had deep ancestral ties to the area or simply appreciated local history, our Irish Heritage Day provided a wonderful opportunity to connect with the past and celebrate the community's living heritage. The event was a huge success with a record turnout, and we want to thank everyone who attended and made it all possible.



Laurie McKeown demonstrates cemetery mapping to attendees. Photo credit: Kevin Raferty



Memorial wall and Cross in the Saint-Colomban Cemetery. Photo credit: Louis Parent