

## **Institute of Irish Leadership, Pomeroy**

**AGM Thursday, 17th October 2024 (7:30 PM – 11:00 PM)**

**Committee Present:** M Quinn, K Burns, K Mc Aleer, M O’Coinne, B Burns

### **Overview of 2023**

2023 was another outstanding year for the Institute of Irish Leadership, with continued growth in both engagement and programming. Building on the momentum of previous years, we expanded our activities to reach more participants and serve diverse age groups and communities. Through cultural, educational, and health focused initiatives, we have continued our mission to enrich our community’s connection to Irish heritage, language, and overall wellbeing.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of our volunteers, funders and community partners, whose contributions have been pivotal in delivering many of these programmes. Some funders this year included the Public Health Agency (PHA), Mid Ulster District Council, Community Foundation, and the Telecommunity Fund, among others. Their support has allowed us to offer a rich variety of activities for community members of all ages.

Some of the key activities we delivered in 2023 include;

### **Language and Cultural Promotion**

- Seachtain na Gaeilge: This annual event featured traditional Irish music, conversation, and storytelling (caint agus ceol). The event brought together individuals from various backgrounds, celebrating the Irish language and culture in a vibrant and inclusive setting.
- Ciorcal Comhrá: Supported by the Ultach Fund and Mid Ulster District Council, we ran a 10 week Irish conversation programme that catered to beginners and experienced speakers alike. Sessions combined social elements with structured reading classes, helping participants engage more deeply with the language and build confidence. These sessions were held both in person and online, enabling global participation.
- Feile Gaeltacht Thir Eoghain: In its 13th year, this annual Irish language festival offered three days of immersive language activities, with beginner, intermediate, and advanced classes. Led by expert tutors, sessions included storytelling, music, and community building exercises, fostering a stronger connection to Irish culture and language. Participants of all ages engaged in this highly impactful event. This event was supported by the Ultach Fund and Mid Ulster District Council.

### **Educational and Youth Programmes**

- Cultural Storytelling Programme: Funded by the Community Foundation’s Cregganconroe Fund, this 6 week programme targeted local primary school children aged 6 to 8, enhancing their communication skills and knowledge of local folklore. The sessions used interactive reading exercises to spark an appreciation for Irish heritage.
- Local History and Poetry Programme: With support from the Community Foundation’s Inishaetive Fund we ran this programme across July and August, which introduced local primary school students to Irish poetry and history, strengthening their literacy, speaking, and cultural knowledge.
- Irish Storytelling Programme: this 6 week storytelling series, supported by the Telecommunity Fund, engaged 60 young participants from St. Mary’s Primary School. Through songs, storytelling, and discussions about personal heritage, the children built

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connections with Irish culture, socialised with peers, and developed conversational skills in the Irish language.

### **Health and Wellbeing Initiatives**

- **Elderly Exercise Class:** This 8 week exercise class, funded by the PHA, targeted rural elderly community members, emphasising fitness and wellbeing. Through accessible, supportive sessions, participants benefited from physical activity and social interaction, helping to combat isolation in rural settings.
- **Irish Environment Programme:** This initiative combined environmental awareness with Irish language learning. For five weeks in September and October, participants explored local ecology, all through the medium of Irish. The programme increased participants' appreciation for their surroundings while reinforcing language skills, supported by the Mid Ulster District Council.

### **Ongoing Community Engagement**

- **Weekly Walking Group:** Held every Monday, this group brought together community members for both physical activity and Irish language practice. Aimed primarily at older adults, this group fosters regular social interaction and engagement with Irish culture in a relaxed, welcoming environment.
- **Coffee Mornings and Informal Language Sessions:** Throughout the year, we hosted casual coffee mornings that provided a space for community members to socialise and learn about the Irish language informally. These gatherings have been instrumental in fostering community spirit and introducing new members to the language in a comfortable setting.
- **Online and In Person Programme Delivery:** While our physical events and activities resumed fully following the impact and restraints of covid, we also retained online options in response to community feedback. This hybrid approach allowed us to reach a broader audience, including those unable to attend in person, extending our impact and reach.

In 2023, we saw growth in engagement, serving a diverse array of participants across ages, backgrounds, and interests. The activities delivered this year deepened connections within the community, enhanced knowledge of Irish culture, and supported well-being in tangible ways.

We have continued to create a wider platform for promoting Irish language and culture globally and are particularly proud of our community focused approach, which continues to prioritise inclusivity and accessibility, offering everyone a chance to connect with their heritage.

We extend thanks to our dedicated volunteers, funders, and partners for their invaluable contributions throughout 2023 who were all instrumental in enabling us to provide quality programming.

As we have moved into 2024, we have had another busy year and we are eager to build upon the strong foundation and impact created in 2023. We have and will continue to seek funding opportunities that allow us to grow and adapt our offerings in response to community needs, with a focus on promoting the Irish language, cultural enrichment, and overall wellbeing.

Thank you to everyone involved in making this year a success. We look forward to the continued growth of the Institute of Irish Leadership in the year ahead.