



Irish Society

of the National Capital Region
irishsocietyncr.com

Volume 12

December 2025



Mark Your Calendar

Dance Party with an Irish Twist

January 24, 2026 6:30 pm - 10:00 pm

Irish Breakfast

January 25, 2026 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Irish Breakfast

February 22, 2026 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Irish Society NCR Continues to Update and Expand

This month the Irish Society launched its new website. It has a fresh look, updated information & forms and amazing photos. Take a few minutes to check it out!

<https://www.irishsocietyncr.com/welcome/>

While on the website click **f** to connect and follow us on Facebook. This too has a fresh new look. Stay informed as to what is happening with the Irish Society in the National Capital Region.

Irish-Canadian Valley Boy Makes Good in NHL

Frank, "The Shawville Express" Finnigan: Finnigan joined the Ottawa Senators in 1924. In 1927 the Senators, with a team of 11 players, took on the Boston Bruins in a best-of-five series. It was then Finnigan won his first Stanley Cup. He won his second Stanley Cup while playing for the Toronto Maple Leafs. In 1937 Finnigan retired from the NHL. He advocated for the return of the Ottawa Senators of today. Unfortunately, he never got to see them play a game. Frank Finnigan, Sr. the last surviving member of the 1927 Senators' team passed away on Christmas Day 1991.

In recognition of his contribution as one of the original Ottawa Senators, the organization retired his number, 8, in 1992. That same year he was also inducted into the Ottawa Sports Hall of Fame. Did you know that the main entrance to the Canadian Tire Centre is located on Frank Finnigan Way?

FINGERS CROSSED

The Irish Society NCR is in talks with Mayor Maude Marquis Bissonnette and the Municipal Councillors of the City of Gatineau to have the city join us in the Irish Festival Days in 2026. The National Capital Region is home to a large and vibrant Irish community on both sides of the river, so fingers are crossed that all goes well.

The NHL had a ST PATRICKS TEAM

The Toronto Maple Leafs were once known as the St. Patricks. The team began playing in the NHL 1917 as the "Arenas". Two years later, on December 13, 1919, the NHL transferred the Toronto franchise to the Querrie-St. Patricks group, for the fee of \$5,000. The incorporation date of the club was December 22, 1919. The St Pats team won their first and only Stanley cup in 1922. On Valentine's Day in 1927 the team was sold to Conn Smythe for \$160,000.

"This Christmas may you have...

Walls for the wind,

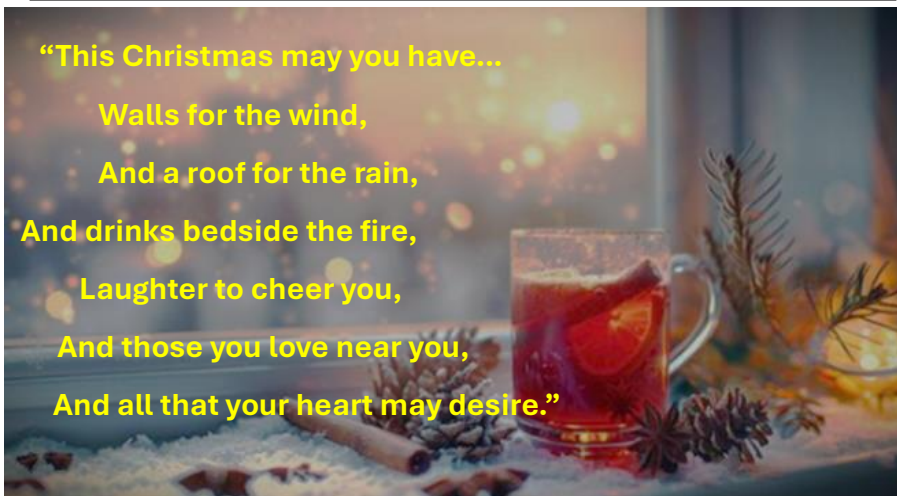
And a roof for the rain,

And drinks bedside the fire,

Laughter to cheer you,

And those you love near you,

And all that your heart may desire."





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December A Month full of Changes



December is a time for changes in weather, in seasons, and in activities. It is a time of hustle & bustle, and a time of quiet reflection. It is a time for traditions and a time for trying new things. A Dhia! How can we pack so much into one month? With typical daytime temperatures between 2° C and 9 °C, and frigid evenings, December in Ireland is cold, rainy and windy. While we here can enjoy a lot of snow, little daylight, and extremely cold temperatures that can often feel colder

due to a wind chill.

Advent is a time of intense Christmas preparation in Ireland. The first Sunday of Advent is always the Sunday nearest the feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle.

In Ireland, Advent is an important time to prepare for Christmas both practically and spiritually, combining religious observance with customs and social events. Placing a large, lit candle in the front window on Christmas Eve is a common and long-standing tradition. This serves as a welcoming for Mary and Joseph, who are seeking refuge and as a memorial for immigrants living overseas.



December also brings the Holiday season or Christmas season, and the winter season beginning with the **Winter Solstice** (December 21st), which is known in Ireland as Grianstad an Gheimhridh or simply An Grianstad, translating to "the sun stop." The winter solstice has been marked in Ireland for at least 5,000 years!

Newgrange, a prehistoric monument in Ireland's County Meath, is one of the well-known ancient locations connected to the solstice. The passage tomb at Newgrange was constructed more than 5,000 years ago, and it faces the rising sun on the winter solstice. On this day, as dawn breaks, a slender beam of sunlight reaches the chamber, illuminating it in a spectacular display that highlights the Celts' respect for the sun and understanding of astronomy.



©National Monuments Service
Government of Ireland

Today thousands of people apply to a lottery in hopes of winning a rare and sought-after ticket as the tomb can only accommodate 20 people. At daybreak, large groups will gather outside the monument to enjoy the occasion even if they don't have a golden ticket.





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A Little Bit of Irish Traditions, Myths and Superstitions

Traditions

On December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, families decorate their homes and put up Christmas trees, marking the start of a joyful season.

Families choose to create personalized Advent calendars packed with chocolates or little gifts.

In Ireland, Advent was a period of intense preparation for Christmas. People start by thoroughly cleaning their homes, inside and out.

Placing a large lit candle in the front window on Christmas Eve has been a long tradition.

Many families decorate with holly wreaths, fairy lights and traditional ornaments to reflect Ireland's long-standing holiday traditions.

Holly grows all over Ireland, even today, and was a way for even the least fortunate family to celebrate in their homes.

Attending Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is a family tradition.

Many Irish families observe a **fast on Christmas Eve**, enjoying fish dishes to prepare for the festive feast.

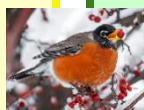
A popular kind of entertainment during the holidays are **pantomimes**, or "**pantos**". They are humorous shows, often based on fairy tales, captivate audiences of all ages and produce treasured family memories.

The robin is a beloved symbol of Christmas and are still popular on Christmas cards and ornaments.

Every Irish home will have at least one tin of "good" cookies for Christmas! Often, bourbon creams and pink wafers. The rule is that you must compete the first layer before moving on to the second.

All decorations are traditionally taken down on Little Christmas or Twelfth Night - the feast of the Epiphany on January 6th.

Christmas day swims take place all over Ireland on Christmas morning.



Myths & Superstitions

The Cailleach is a winter hag who is linked to the formation of the landscape and the chill of winter. Her role is connected to the cold season and the changing of the year.

Evergreen plants were considered sacred and examples of eternal life in the natural world.

According to folklore, no prayer whispered before a sprig of holly on Christmas Eve would go unanswered and an angel is said to stand atop each spike of the holly leaf.

It is a beloved idea that animals are given the ability to speak human language around midnight on Christmas Eve to witness the Nativity. It is unlucky to try and listen in.

In the past, on Christmas Eve night, the door was left unlocked so the dead could return to the household.

If you did not put a light in your window on Christmas Eve it meant that you shared the guilt of the Innkeeper at Bethlehem who said, "No Room"!

Robins are believed to be messengers from deceased loved ones and a symbol of hope and good fortune. I was told the same about Cardinals.

Religious legends say the robin's red breast was earned by fanning the Christ Child or by fanning the flames of the fire to keep Jesus warm.

New shoes at Christmas means bad luck.

It's said to be lucky to eat breakfast by candlelight on Christmas morning.

If you don't eat plum pudding at Christmas, you'll lose a friend before the next Christmas.

Bringing home a small piece of straw from the church nativity scene brings you good luck, good health, and protection.



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During the winter solstice in the Celtic era, Druids celebrated Alban Arthan, also called Yule. To fend off evil spirits and bring them good fortune, they collect mistletoe from oaks. Each home throughout the community would bring a log in to add to the large fire. It was believed to bring good luck and protection to the home, and a small piece of the log was saved to be used to light the next year's Yule log.

Christmas's origins in Ireland can be traced to King Henry II's celebration of the festival in Dublin in the 12th Century.



The Oak King, who stood for the light, and the Holly King, who stood for the gloom, were said to engage in a major conflict every year on the solstice.



The weather on each of the twelve days of Christmas signifies what the weather will be for the appropriate month of the coming year.



Santa's official home in Ireland is in the Mourne Mountains. You may see the elves at work in the workshop and meet him in this remote cottage. Santa or Santy has graciously constructed a wooded route near Mount Stewart for kids to let off some steam.



In recent years, Christmas markets have become increasingly popular throughout Ireland. These gatherings provide a lively atmosphere that brings local communities together by offering regional cuisine, beverages, and crafts.

Known as the "Odd Day" (or as Lá Crostna na Bliana, the cross day of the year), December 28th is often regarded as the unluckiest day of the year. Traditionally, people avoid beginning any new or significant projects on this day.





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THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS 2025

 CANADA	 IRELAND
<p>1st Day: A charming wooden maple leaf ornament or a local artisan's birdhouse.</p> <p>2nd Day: Two Poutine Kits – Ingredients for making authentic Quebec poutine at home.</p> <p>3rd Day: Three Bags of Premium Canadian Coffee – From small-batch roasters.</p> <p>4th Day: (Four Books by Canadian Authors) – A stack of acclaimed novels or poetry from CanLit stars.</p> <p>5th Day (Five S'well Water Bottles) – For staying hydrated on the go.</p> <p>6th Day : Six Local Craft Beers/Ciders</p> <p>7th Day: Seven-Day Sauna Pass/Wellness Item</p> <p>8th Day: Eight Nanaimo Bars/Butter Tarts</p> <p>9th Day: Nine Tickets to a Local Show/Event</p> <p>10th Day: Ten Bags/bottles of Maple Syrup</p> <p>11th Day: Eleven Cozy Socks/Mittens – Warm, quality wool socks or handmade mittens.</p> <p>12th Day: Twelve Pints of Ice Cream/Gourmet Treats – A mix of decadent Canadian ice cream or gourmet chocolates, perhaps Purdy's Hedgehogs.</p>	<p>1st Day: A Beautiful Irish Tea Set with local brews and a pear tart.</p> <p>2nd Day: A pair of Hand-Knitted Irish Mittens.</p> <p>3rd Day: A basket of Farm-Fresh Irish Eggs & Local Butter.</p> <p>4th Day: Tickets to an Irish Trad Music Session. (or seisiún)</p> <p>5th Day: A beautiful Claddagh Rings (symbolizing love, loyalty, friendship).</p> <p>6th Day: A Woolly Irish Throw Blanket (merino or lambswool).</p> <p>7th Day: A voucher for a Luxury Spa Treatment or a visit to the thermal baths.</p> <p>8th Day: A selection of Artisan Irish Cheeses & Oatcakes.</p> <p>9th Day: A gift certificate for a Ceili Dance Class.</p> <p>10th Day: A bottle of fine Irish Whiskey or Craft Gin.</p> <p>11th Day: A Good Book by an Irish Author (like Sally Rooney, Colm Tóibín) or a new album by a modern Irish musician.</p> <p>12th Day: A Tap for Home Beer System (Guinness!) or a voucher for a traditional Irish pub lunch.</p>



Taken from the Irish Echo



The Canadian Press



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Did You Know?

The popular song "Do They Know It's Christmas?" was written by Bob Geldof?

The carol "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" was written by Dublin-born Nahum Tate?

December 27, the feast of St John, was believed to be a good day for farmers to borrow money to buy new seed for the coming season?

In Ireland leaving out mince pies and a pint of Guinness for Santa is a common practice

January 6 is known in the Irish language as "**Nollaig na mBan**" or **Women's Christmas**. Traditionally on this day women who worked so hard preparing for Christmas are to avoid all housework and go out and enjoy the day. The males of the household are to stay at home, take down the decorations, and prepare all the meals.

Did You Know?

The Ottawa Christmas Market hosts dozens of exhibitors and turns Lansdowne Park into a shimmering village complete with lights, music, regional crafts, and seasonal delights. Started in 2019.

In 1896 Santa Claus arrived in Ottawa mounted on a decorated streetcar of the Ottawa Electric Railway, complete with a snow-covered cabin and chimney.

The Santa who visited the city in 1896 wore a fur cap and a long fur coat, differing from the modern red and white suit popularized later.

The ByWard Market area, with its heritage stone buildings and festive decorations, has been used as a filming location for Christmas movies.

SPORTS

IRELAND

Dec. 20th & 21st the All-Ireland Club Hurling Championship semi-finals.
Loughrea (**Galway**) vs. Slaughtneill (**Ulster**) & Ballygunner (**Waterford**) vs. St. Martin's (**Wexford**).

Dec. 26th – Hockey:

Stena Line Belfast Giants V Fife Flyers
Down Royal Racecourse (Northern Ireland)

St. Stephen's Day, charity Gaelic football and hurling matches of "legends vs. current players" are often held. This year it is Manchester United host Newcastle United. This is the only game scheduled for the day.

Dec. 27th - Rugby: **United Rugby Championship** – Munster Rugby V Leinster Rugby

Dec 26th – 29th Leopardstown National Hunt racing
Mr. Binman Christmas Racing Festival in Limerick
Jan 2nd - **BKT United Rugby Championship** – Ulster V Munster

OTTAWA

Home Games

Dec. 23rd - **Sens** vs Buffalo Sabres

Dec. 27th - **Charge** vs. Boston Fleet
Ottawa **Black Bears** vs Philadelphia Wings

Dec. 28th - The Ottawa **67's** vs Kingston Frontenacs

Dec. 29th - **Sens** vs Columbus Blue Jackets

Dec. 30th - The Ottawa **67's** vs Guelph Storm

FYI

One of the most enduring and iconic Irish Christmas Customs is the **Wren!** Traditionally, groups of Wren Boys dressed in straw suits and masks would march through the towns/villages on Dec. 26th. In more recent times, Wren Boys (& girls) have been known to perform traditional Irish music at your door.



How is this a sport? In the beginning teams would compete in the hunting of the wren—a symbol of the old year.



Thomas O'Neill
ISNCR President

Merry Christmas
Nollaig Shona, Joyeux Noël

A Message from the President

As 2025 comes to and end it's my great pleasure on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Irish Society of the National Capital Region to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2026.

It's been an amazing year; we have accomplished a lot with your help and support. Our work with the City of Ottawa to recognize the Irish contribution to this city with the 13 designated **Irish Village Street** signs in the ByWard Market was a major accomplishment for us.

It made all the Irish proud to see the 32 Counties Flags of Ireland surrounding the Heart & Crown Pub on the day of the unveiling which was a new initiative by the board this year.

We lost a few friends in 2025, rekindled old friendships, made some new ones and grew our membership along the way. We've revived our newsletter to keep you informed.

We have made small adjustments to update our new logo and have launched the new website. You are now able to purchase your membership online, buy tickets for ISNCR Special Events online and stay connected on Facebook and Instagram all from your phone.

2026 is looking promising with two Irish Special Events January 24th & 25th, the Bicentennial of Bytown and the return of the St. Patrick's Parade on March 7th, 2026, in Ottawa. It will be the 1st St. Patrick Parade in North America in 2026.

We are making everyone GREEN with envy so its time to get on board and join the Irish Society of the National Capital Region today.

Slán

¡Feliz Navidad Buon Natale! Wesolych Świąt! Feliz Natal Frohe Weihnachten
Eid Milad Majid Miigwech Gitchi-Manitou Giizhigad



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ISNCR 2025 – A look Back

Launched the E-Newsletter to be published monthly.

Introduced newly stylized logo proudly features an Irish harp intertwined with a Canadian maple leaf, symbolizing the union of Irish heritage and Canadian pride. Our new logo is more than just a fresh look – it's a proud declaration of who we are and what we stand for. The Irish harp at its centre, Ireland's iconic emblem, represents the rich cultural heritage, music, and history and the inclusion of 1957 the year we all began.



Toast to our Ancestors - Irish men and women of the Irish Society gathered above the Rideau Canal on the south side of Rideau Street Bridge to share a pint with other Irish Descendants and salute our forefathers who worked to make this engineering feat a reality.

Proclamation of Irish Week was read, and the Irish Society of the NCR flag was raised at City Hall.

Introduction of the 32 County Flags of Ireland sponsorship program

Worked with the City of Ottawa and officially unveiled our area's deep Irish roots with a commemorative street naming: St. Patrick Street and Parent Avenue as the "Irish Village-Village Irlandais -Sraidbhaile Gaelach."

Organized and held The Celtic Cross Ceremony on Aug 4th.

Expanding the Irish Board to include Committee Chairs to make it more inclusive.

Fundraised for plaque and tree planting to honour T.D. McGee 200th birthday on the grounds of St. Patrick's Basilica with the official ceremony and reception on Oct 4th

The Irish Society NCR has agreed to be part of the committee planning celebrations for the 2026 Bicentennial Bytown.

Received approval for a new parade route for the St. Patrick's Parade for Saturday March 7th, 2026, which will take us over the Rideau Canal for the 1st time in our 39th parade history.

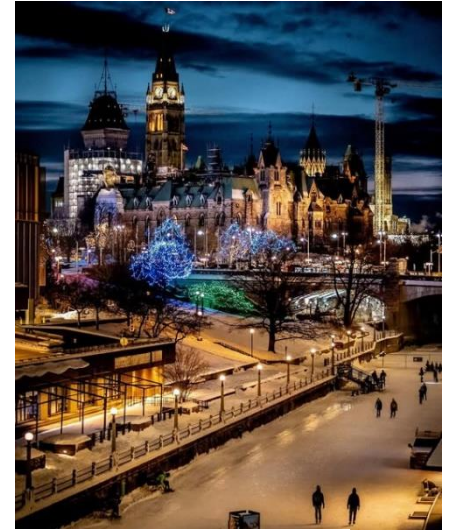
ISNCR unveils new social media - Website, Facebook and Instagram.

Introduced new online membership registration and the ability to sell tickets for special events and more.

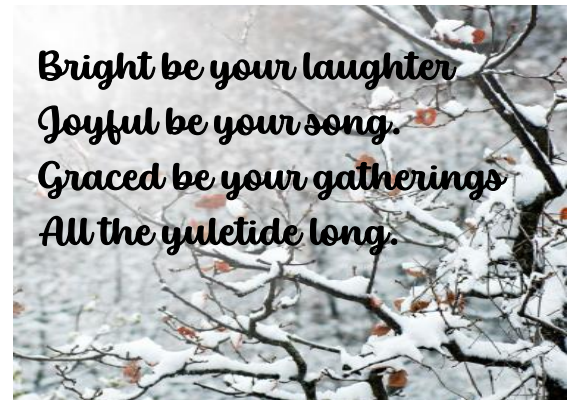


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Ottawa Tourism picture.



HAPPY NEW YEAR

"May you be poor in misfortune,
rich in blessings, slow to make
enemies, quick to make friends.
But rich or poor, quick or slow,
may you know nothing but
happiness from this day forward".





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December

2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Nov 30 ADVENTS Begins 	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 <i>Feast of the Immaculate Conception</i>	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 An Grianstad Winter Solstice 	22	23	24 CHRISTMAS EVE 	25 CHRISTMAS DAY  Lá Nollag	26 Saint Stephen's Day/ Boxing Day  	27 Feast of St John
28 "Odd Day" Lá Crostna na Bliana the cross day of the year! The unluckiest day of the year!	29	30	31  New Year's Eve	1 New Year's Day 	2	3
4	5 End of the 12 Days of Christmas	6 Little Christmas/ Nollaig na mBan/ Epiphany 				



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SPONSORED FLAGS

Provinces of Ireland (Cúigíá na hÉireann)

ULSTER Ulaidh Tom O'Neill	MUNSTER Mumhain Wilson Lo	LEINSTER Laighin Catherine Kitts	CONNACHT Connachta Hugh O'Donnell

Counties of Ireland (Contaetha na hÉireann) Sponsors

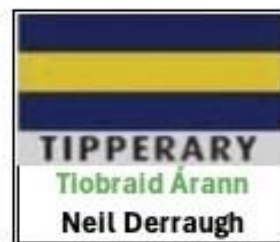
ANTRIM Aontroim Peter McCrank	ARMAGH Ard Mhacha Eve Derragh	CLARE An Clár Clare O'Connell Noon	CORK Corcaigh Shawn Menard
DERRY Doire Stephanie Plante	DONEGAL Dún na Gall Knox Derragh	DOWN An Dún Marty Carr	DUBLIN Baile Atha Cliath Brent Conley
FERMANAGH Fear Manach M. Catharine Carroll	GALWAY Gaillimh Patrick Kelly	KERRY Ciarraí Colleen McBride	KILDARE Cill Dara Clarke Kelly
KILKENNY Cill Chainnigh Cathy Curry	LAOIS Laois Patrick McDonald	MAYO Maigh Eo Stuart Cameron	MEATH An Mhi Sharron Kavanagh



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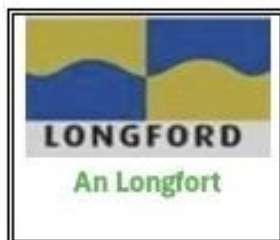
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SPONSORED FLAGS cont'd



STILL NEED SPONSORS

Counties of Ireland (Contaetha na hEireann) Needing Sponsors



Sponsoring an individual county flag for \$170.10 can help support the parade of flags.

***For more information Contact:
Tom O'Neill.***

president@irishsocietyncr.com



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