

The IRISH - POTATO/SPUD KINSHIP

It can be said that the potato is to Ireland what pasta is to Italy. Not only is the lowly spud a source of nutrition, but it can also be found across Irish culture. With that in mind, we thought we'd have a little fun with this issue. Mixed among our always informative content, we've included small articles on potatoes. On the last page, you'll find a quiz to test yourself on what you've learned.



Ode to the Potato

From Andean peaks to Ireland's shores,
A treasure pulled from earthen floors.
The squat, brown king of Emerald soil,
Brought forth through history and toil.

In steaming mash and savory pie,
You hold the tear and laugh and sigh.
A steadfast friend in hungry times,
You live in verse and spoken rhymes.

Oh, hearty *práta*, peeled and boiled,
By ancient rains and hearths well-oiled.
No finer comfort can be found,
Than this great gold from underground.

An Irish Connection on Canada's World Cup Team

Alistair Johnston is a 27-year-old professional soccer player who plays for the Canada men's national team and the Scottish Premiership Club, Celtic. Johnston secured his place on the Canada national team in January 2021.

Johnston was born on October 08, 1988, in Vancouver to a Canadian father and Irish mother. His mother, Catherine, comes from Poleglass, an area West of Belfast in Northern Ireland. His father, Bill, played with Westside FC, Vancouver. His brother Malcolm (born February 12, 2001) is also a professional soccer player and most recently played with USA club Portland Timbers 2 (T2).

SAVE the DATE

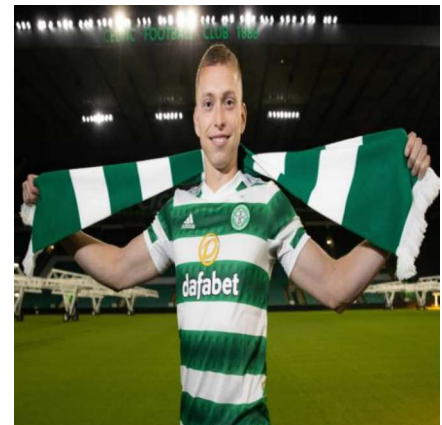
July 3-5 Almont Celtfest

August 3: [Celtic Cross Ceremonies](#)

August 8: Jim Kelly Memorial

Tournament 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Sept. 16: ISNCR AGM





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An Irish Connection Cont.

Johnston's family was deeply involved in soccer due to his mother's Irish heritage and his father's Scottish and English connections.

He started his senior career with Vaughan Azzurri* in Ontario in 2015, moved to Nashville SC in 2020 and then to CF Montréal briefly in 2022. In December 2022, he signed with Celtic F.C. in Glasgow, Scotland, and is under contract with them until 2029.

*(Vaughan Azzurri is a Canadian semi-professional soccer team based in Vaughan, Ontario) **

Club successes with Celtic F.C. include the Scottish League championships from 2023 to 2026, the Scottish Cup Champions in 2023, 2024 and 2026 and Scottish League Cup 2023 and 2025.

He plays at right-back and has scored 12 times in his professional club career and once at international level (Canada vs Cayman Islands 2021, World Cup 2022 qualification round).

By: **Mary Garry**

Johnston's International Career Highlights

- Called up to CONCACAF (Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football) 2021, 2023 and 2025
- COPA AMERICA (South America + CONCACAF) 2024
- FIFA World Cup 2022 and 2026.



Science World
dome in
Vancouver, B.C.



Sources:

<https://canadasoccer.com/profile/3772/alistair-johnston/>
<https://www.celticfc.com/>



Are you thirsty?

Potatoes were used to make *poitín* in Ireland starting in the 17th and 18th centuries. Potatoes remained a staple ingredient for illicit distillation right through to the 19th and early 20th centuries. Poitín is brewed like vodka, with an earthy, starchy, and surprisingly sweet profile.



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Irish Seniors Social Group Ottawa Garden Party 2026



Frank Cassidy



Nora Pat Marshall

The ISSGO held their annual Garden Party, generously hosted by HE Ambassador John Concannon (Mary Concannon had an emergency in Ireland), at the official Irish Residence, on May 31, 2026. The garden was in full bloom, and the weather was perfect. We enjoyed a beautifully sunny day in the back garden. There was a wonderful buffet in the dining room. We were entertained in the foyer by Harpist Nora Pat Marshall as guests arrived, and then music in the garden by Frank Cassidy and the Rideau Ramblers, plus singing by the Embassy's own Aengus Finnan.

There was a special presentation and tribute to Kay O'Hegarty, on her retirement as Chairperson of the Irish Seniors Social Group Ottawa.

The wonderful event was attended by so many ladies and gentlemen, all dressed to impress in their fascinators, hats and top hats. Many door prizes were donated for the occasion.

The Embassy was also delighted to welcome, special guest, Canada's Ambassador to Ireland, HE Dennis King, who joined Ambassador Concannon in reflecting on the deep and enduring connections between our two countries and the important role played by the Irish diaspora in strengthening those bonds.

Clare O'Connell Noon





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**A beautiful day for a lovely garden party
at the official Irish Residence.**



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WORLD CUP FRIENDLY GAME - CANADA meets IRELAND

In a game of two very different halves Ireland held Canada to a 1-1 draw on Jun. 5. The World Cup friendly game was held at a sold-out Stade Saputo, in Montréal, Quebec with an attendance of 19 616.

Canada started strongly, dominating the game with fast flowing football, the pressure resulting in an own goal in the 24th minute Irish defender Jake O' Brien deflected a corner shot from Stephen Eustáquio's corner kick. Canada continued to have control for the remainder of the first half, winning a succession of corners and the sides went to the changing rooms 1-0.

In what appears to have been a very effective half-time talk, Ireland emerged with renewed vigour and energy. Canada appeared to tire and following a moment of ill-discipline from Canadian striker Cyle Larkin, Ireland was awarded a penalty. Canadian goalie, Maxime Crepeau, saved the shot from Irish star Troy Parrot though could not stop the lightening rebound from Chiedozie Ogbene. At the hour mark it was 1-1.



Liam Millar (Canada) against Chiedozie Ogbene in the first half.
(Irish Times)

Canada could not regain momentum though came close with an attempt by Larkin in the 70th minute. Ireland took ascendancy for the remainder of the game and had an excellent opportunity to win the game at 83 minutes. The recently capped 18-year-old Mason Melia was denied the match winner by Maxime Crepeau who was awarded Player of the Match.

The evening ended with a special tribute to Seamus Coleman; his final international appearance having represented Ireland as both player (debut 2011) and captain (2016-) for over a decade.

Mary Garry



Ogbene scores after penalty miss (RTE)



Maxime Crepeau's diving save in the 83rd minute
(Montreal Gazette)



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Ireland Team with Subs (Irish Times)

Mark Travers; Séamus Coleman (Killian Phillips '70), Jake O'Brien, Nathan Collins, James Abankwah, Corrie Ndaba (Liam Scales '46); Conor Coventry (Joe Hodge '88), Dawson Devoy (Jamie McGrath '46); Chidozie Ogbene (Adam Brennan '90+2 mins), Jaden Umeh (Mason Melia '70); Troy Parrott (Kian Leavy '88)

Canadian Team with subs

Maxime Crepeau; Alistair Johnston (Niko Sigur '46), Luc de Fougerolles, Derek Cornelius, Richie Laryea (Zorhan Bassong '62); Tajon Buchanan (Tani Oluwaseyi '87), Stephen Eustaquio (capt) (Nathan Saliba '87), Ismael Kone, Liam Millar (Tani Oluwaseyi '87); Jonathan David, Cyle Larin (Promise David).

Sources:

<https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/2026/06/06/ireland-secures-draw-against-canada-with-ogbene-goal/>
<https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/2026/06/06/ireland-secures-draw-against-canada-with-ogbene-goal/>
<https://canadasoccer.com/national-teams/mens/>



Picture: Instagram Canada soccer

An Gorta Mór

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Ireland's difficult politics, and economy led to the Irish becoming almost entirely dependent on potatoes. During the English occupation, wheat, oats, barley, livestock, ham, butter as well as bacon and eggs were grown or produced in Ireland but were shipped to England as rent for their English absentee landlords. Irish were forced to live on marginal land where the soil was shallow and stony, ideal for the potato. The Irish depended on the potato crop to survive. Given the physical nature of their work, the average Irish adult consumed about 65 potatoes (about 5.5 to 6.4 kilograms) per day.

Then came the Irish Potato Famine, known in Ireland as An Gorta Mór or the Great Hunger. (1845 – 1852) In 1845, the potato crop failed due to a mold that originated in the Americas and travelled across the Atlantic in cargo ships. While the above noted food continued to be shipped to England, the Irish were left to starve with about a million people dying and even more emigrating.





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Summer Solstice/“Grianstad an tSamhraidh” 2026

The summer solstice is the longest day and shortest night of the year. It is when light wins out over darkness. This year it is Sunday, June 21, in the Northern Hemisphere.

The term "solstice" means "standstill". During this period, the sun appears to rise and set in the same locations in the East and West for three consecutive days. In Irish, it's referred to as *Grianstad an tSamhraidh* which means 'sunstop'. Interestingly with all the sunlight it is not the hottest day of the year.

Sunflowers are seen as a symbol of the summer solstice.

Ottawa Canada	Ireland
In Ottawa, we will have 15 hours and 43 minutes of daylight.	Ireland is farther north than we are. Dublin will see 17 hours and 4 minutes of daylight with Belfast having even more time in the sun (assuming it doesn't rain) with 17 hours and 16 minutes of daylight In both cities, true nighttime darkness doesn't really happen.
The summer solstice was viewed as a significant agricultural turning point. It meant that the crops were actively growing, and next was a race to get ready for harvesting. In 1996, Governor General Roméo LeBlanc declared June 21 st as “ National Aboriginal Day. ” It is a time to honor and celebrate the customs, cultures and contributions of Métis, Inuit, and First Nations people.	Numerous festivals are held throughout the island Historically, you might see things like lighting bonfires on hillsides or at intersections, leaving unique presents for the fairies and gathering seasonal, native wild herbs and flowers for syrups, meads, salads, and teas.
In 2026, Wesley Clover Parks hosted the Summer Solstice Indigenous Festival (SSIF). The two-day event highlighted culture, performances, artwork and cuisine. There was an International Competition Pow Wow including drummers and dancers.	The Hill of Uisneach (County Westmeath): Known as the sacred center of Ireland, it hosts a popular evening gathering featuring myths, local lore, bards, and a dramatic ceremonial lighting of a solar wheel of willow.



Sources: https://summersolsticefestivals.ca/festival_info/
<https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2026/0616/1056342-summer-solstice/>
<https://www.crazycrow.com/site/event/ottawa-summer-solstice-competition-pow-wow/>
<https://uisneach.ie/events/summer-solstice-on-uisneach/>
<https://irelandwide.com>



Áine is an Irish goddess of summer, wealth, beauty and sovereignty.



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Irish Society NCR Applies for Grant

The Irish Society of the National Capital Region has applied for a City of Ottawa Cultural Capital Grant to acquire a \$21k sound system for the Kildare Room in Saint Brigid's Center for the Arts at 301 St Patrick's Street.

If the grant application is successful, the sound system will be made available to all the Non-Profit Irish Groups using the facility at no cost. This partnership between the City of Ottawa, Saint Brigids and the Irish Society is to help the Irish Community grow and offset or contain the rising costs associated with holding fundraising events.

The Irish Society of the National Capital Region will need to raise \$6,000 to make this dream possible which means we will be looking for volunteers to help us in fundraising events so make this dream a reality so stay tuned to for updates on the grant application or jump on board now by emailing President@Irishsocietyncr.com and volunteer today.



Potatoes and Art

Paul Henry, an Irish artist famous for his painting *Launching the Currach*, devoted his life to painting the west of Ireland. His post-impressionist painting, *The Potato Diggers*, also known as the *Potato Pickers* (1910) captures a man and woman tilling the rocky soil with a storm brewing in the background. It can be found in the Ulster Museum. In Ireland's Great Hunger Museum, you can see Robert Ballagh's stained glass window *An Gorta Mór* (2012). The Great Hunger Museum also holds Daniel Macdonald's painting, *An Irish Peasant Family Discovering the Blight of Their Store*, which shows an Irish family discovering that their only food source, potatoes, was rotten.



Canadian Prime Minister Visits Ireland

On June 13, Prime Minister Carney made a two-day visit to Ireland. This was the first visit to Ireland by a Canadian Prime Minister in almost a decade. Prime Minister Carney and Taoiseach Martin emphasized the longstanding friendship between Canada and Ireland, founded on shared history, values, and strong human ties.

With the upcoming Canada-Ireland 180 in 2027, sponsored by Cultural Ireland and the Embassy of Ireland to Canada, Prime Minister Carney announced a donation of up to \$2 million to support Irish arts and culture in Canada to commemorate the 180th anniversary of the migration of over 100 000 Irish people to Canada.

Following his visit in Dublin, Carney visited County Mayo, where he met with Ireland's President, Catherine Connolly and local officials from the region. Here in County Mayo the locals met him with open arms. Local business flew the Canadian flag, and some restaurants renamed several dishes after him, "Chili Con Carney" and "Mark's Maple Sundae."

Sources: <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/newsreleases/2026/06/14/prime-minister-carney-expands-canadas-partnership-ireland-across>
<https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/ireland-irlande/relations.aspx?lang=eng>



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Ottawa Lads Enjoy Game in Montreal as Canada Plays Ireland in their Final Warm up Game

On June 5, the Irish men's soccer team travelled to Montreal to take on Canada in a friendly game before FIFA World Cup. The Irish team consisted of a few senior players, and many younger players (including some from the League of Ireland).

It was a beautiful summer's day, and downtown Montreal was a sea of green, white, and orange. Crescent Street and Hurleys Irish Pub seemed to have the greatest concentration of Irish fans. The pub was packed with Irish supporters from Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Ireland, and Ottawa. Getting served at the bar may have been a struggle, but the conversations and laughter made waiting at the bar tolerable.

There was a large contingent of Irish fans that made the journey from Ottawa. One corner of the bar had the Bradley clan and Heart and Crown folk, while the other side of the bar had many former Ottawa Gaels players (from the early 2000s). Everyone reconnected and many stories from the past were retold. Brendan McCabe (coach of the Ottawa Gaels) and roughly ten current players also made the journey. Damian Curley (Ottawa Gaels coach from the 1990's) and Kevin Riley (Tara Players) were also in attendance.

The metro ride to Saputo Field (beside Olympic Stadium) was full of oles and Irish football chants. Inside the stadium there were pockets of green throughout; however, there was a concentrated swathe of 500 Irish shirts gathered behind one of the goals.

The occasion of the event may have exceeded the standard of play on the field. Ireland started cautiously while Canada had plenty of possession without any real threat to the Irish goal. Then out of nowhere a Canadian corner was turned into their own net by an Irish player – 1-0 Canada. As the game went on the Irish team grew into the match. Particularly in the second half when the game started to be played more in the Canadian half. Then in the 60th minute an Irish player was brought down in the box – penalty! Goal scoring hero Troy Parrott stepped up and took the penalty. The Canadian goalie, Crepeau, made an unbelievable save; thankfully, Ogbene followed up and scored the rebound. The Canadian crowd was silenced, but the Irish fans cheered with delight. The remainder of the game became quite dull and tactical, but the Canadian goalie made a world class save on a break away to preserve the tie.

Overall, it was a wonderful celebration of Irish Canadian sports and culture, and a brilliant way to kick off the summer. Best of luck to Canada in the upcoming World Cup and all the best to the Irish lads heading on their holidays!

- David McFall (Vice President - ISNCR)



Kevin Riley and Damian Curley



The Potato and Folk Medicine

The common spud was thought to treat diseases in traditional folk medicines. To relieve back pain, rheumatism, and toothaches, people carried potatoes in their pockets. Grated potato poultices were used to draw infections from septic lesions, while baked potato slices knotted in a stocking were used for sore throats.

IRISH SETTLEMENTS in the OTTAWA VALLEY and AREA



Fitzroy Harbour



St. Michael's Church, Fitzroy Harbour

Fitzroy
Harbour
Park



In the 19th century, the Irish comprised the largest group of European settlers in the Ottawa Valley. In the 1820s and 1830s they arrived to work in the agriculture and forestry industries, and to excavate and clear land for the Rideau Canal. Later, thousands left Ireland for North America to escape the Potato Famine of 1845. Emigrants arrived from Cork, Tipperary, Wicklow, Tyrone, Cavan and Fermanagh counties.

By mid-century, more than half of the settlers on the Ontario side of the Ottawa River were of Irish origin. In Carleton County, Ontario, seventy-five per cent of residents were of Irish descent. Not confined to Ontario only, the Irish molded the history of communities on both sides of the Ottawa River, including Fitzroy Harbour, Carp and Renfrew in Ontario, and Shawville, Bristol and Quyon in Quebec.

Today, Fitzroy Harbour is known mostly for its recreational-class park located west of Ottawa on the Ottawa River at the mouth of the Carp River. But it is also a rural village dating back to the 19th century. During the 1830s, Irish families from counties like Tipperary, Antrim, and Kerry moved into Fitzroy Township to work in the lumber industry and to establish local farms.

The settlers from Ireland had an enduring impact on the village's religious and genealogical spheres. Concerning religion, a Catholic mission was established in 1852 to serve the Irish-Catholic population. A permanent stone church was built in 1861, which eventually became St. Michael's Parish. As regards genealogy, between 1852 and 1864 Father Bernard McFeely recorded his parishioners' counties of origin in their marriage records. Today, the priest's genealogical records are an important resource for historians tracing families back to Ireland.

Of note is that the history of the Irish in Fitzroy Harbour is intertwined with that of the Irish who made their homes in Quyon, a village directly across the Ottawa River in Quebec. In the next edition of this newsletter, we'll take a look at the Irish settlement there.

Mary-Catharine Carroll