



# Irish Society

Of The National Capital Region  
IRISHSOCIETYNCR.COM

## Canadian, eh? Not so fast

Mo chara. Imagine you are travelling anywhere outside of Canada, you come across a local and say something like “What a beautiful day it is, eh?” Two things immediately happen.

One, the local will ask if you are American. To which you reply “No, I am Canadian”. Two, the local asks why Canadians say ‘eh?’ at the end of a sentence.

Well, you can tell them it’s from Irish!

As Canadians we use the colloquialisms we include ‘eh’ when speaking at the end of a sentence at least once a day! We use the Canadianism ‘eh’ whenever we need to state something emphatically as well as pose a question. All at the same time. It’s almost an onomatopoeia!

The word ‘eh’ was further entrenched in our language when the famous duo Bob and Doug MacKenzie entertained Canadians back in the 1980s, yet the genesis of it all most likely came from the Irish language. Just one more thing to proud of!

Consider that in the Irish language, the letter ‘e’ can stand alone at the end of an Irish sentence. The lone letter ‘e’ (pronounced ‘eh’) triggers how we pronounce other letters in the preceding words, and it denotes an emphatic. Pretty cool, eh?

When our Irish ancestors immigrated to Canada and mixed with English-speaking Canadians it is speculated that when we say our Canadian ‘eh’ is a natural progression from the Irish language. Americans have “huh” and the Brits have “innit”.

All are used to connect with the listener.

**Barbara Ann Vocisano**



## Potatoes and Literature

Seamus Heaney wrote the *When all the others were away at Mass*, one of eight sonnets that make up his poem, *Clearances*. The sonnet lyrically captures quiet moments he spent with his mother, peeling potatoes, and the bond that endured to her dying day.

Leopold Bloom, the main character in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, embarked on his daily journey across Dublin with a potato in his pocket. He used it as a protective **talisman**.

Patrick Kavanagh wrote, *Spraying the Potatoes*. Kavanagh appears 14 times in the *Irish Times* list of top 100 Irish poems.

‘The poem *The Famine Road*,’ by Eavan Boland, captures the horrors of the potato famine against the imperialism of the English. Famine roads were part of England’s relief policies to qualify for basic food assistance. They required Irish men, women and children to work 12 hours a day without tools or shoes to build “roads to nowhere”.

## Potatoes and Music

Of course there are songs about potatoes, from heart-wrenching ballads to toe-tapping folk tunes. Why not check out:



*Colcannon*, a traditional parlour/children’s song that celebrates the Irish dish that features mashed potatoes and cabbage

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VGRnE2Y3e0>

*The Potato-Digger’s Song*: the humble potato, drawn from the earth, was once the “real gold of Ireland.”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a5L\\_y\\_K1Bk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a5L_y_K1Bk)

*Skibbereen*, released by the Dubliners in 1973, is a lament from a father to his child on why he left Ireland and what he lost in the famine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cj4ifPsTe2I>



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### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

WITH

### CANADIAN TRIVIA

1. Which famous board game about general knowledge was invented in Canada?
2. What is the official address of the residence of the Prime Minister of Canada?
3. "I Am Canadian" was the slogan first used for what Canadian Product?
4. Which Canadian singer is the best-selling French language artist of all time?
5. Canada has 2,860 of these, twice as many as the United States. (2023 data)
6. Name a Canadian province that is landlocked?
7. What is a double-double?
8. What do Canadian's call sneakers?
9. Which one is NOT a Canadian slang: toque, Eh! soda, keener, mickey, serviette
10. What is Canada's national cocktail?

## TRUE or FALSE

1. Canada is the largest country in the world by surface area.
2. The national animal of Canada is the moose.
3. There are two Irish symbols featured on Canada's coat of arms.
4. There are 7 time zones in Canada.
5. Manitoba has a "bear jail."
6. Quebec produces more than 70% of the world's supply of maple syrup.
7. Canada has more doughnut shops per person than any other country.
8. Canadians invented the zipper, garbage bags, whoopee cushion and Hawaiian pizza.
9. There is a desert in Canada.
10. Canada has more freshwater lakes than the rest of the world combined.

10. T  
9. T  
8. T  
7. T  
6. T  
5. T  
4. F  
3. T  
2. F  
1. F  
Answer

## VISITING IRELAND? HOW ABOUT a POTATO FESTIVAL?

**Comber Earlies Food Festival (County Down):** a yearly celebration of the early Comber potato, which is protected PGI (Protected Geographic Indication). It usually includes family entertainment, live music, and culinary demonstrations by regional chefs.

**Féile an Phráta / The Potato Festival (Ballydavid, Dingle Peninsula):** This popular West Kerry festival, which began in 2009, is held in mid-July each year. It celebrates the cultural significance of potatoes and culminates in the crowning of the "Laoch a Phráta" (Potato Champion).

**Potato Day at The Organic Centre (Rossinver, County Leitrim):** This family-friendly event which highlights seed potatoes, gardening demonstrations, planting methods and local boxty making is held sometime in mid-February to March.

## Irish Potato Sayings

**"It's easy to halve the potato where there is love."**

Translation: *When you are in **love** you will share everything together.*

**"That you might have nicer legs than your own under your table before the new spuds are up."**

Translation: *It was hoped a bachelor looking for a wife would find her before the end of the summer.*

**"That's small potatoes altogether."**

Translation: *Don't worry about the little things.*

**"You must take the little potato with the big potato."**

Translation: *We must take our potatoes both big and small, and likewise we must accept everyone equally.*

## More About Potatoes

Potatoes are a great source of carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals.

While Samwise Gamgee in *The Lord of the Rings* claimed that there were "precisely 467 ways" to prepare the simple spud, it boils down (*pun intended*) to five boiled, mashed, pancakes, stews & soups, roasted & baked.



They've even been used as weights!





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## Honouring a Diplomatic Legacy: Jim Kelly Memorial Tournament

The Irish Communities of Ottawa (ICO) and the Eire Óg Hurling Club (Ottawa GAA) announce the launch of the Jim Kelly Memorial Tournament, a Gaelic sport event set to take place on August 8, 2026, at the Twin Elm Rugby Club, Richmond, Ontario. **Time: 10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.**

The tournament will feature both hurling and Gaelic football matches and will serve as a living tribute to Ambassador Jim Kelly, who served as Ireland's Ambassador to Canada (2016-2020) and later as Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations before his sudden passing on St. Patrick's Day 2022. It is a chance to celebrate Ambassador Kelly's contributions to the Canadian Irish community and to promote the cultural values he championed.

**"The Tournament is more than a game;** it's a celebration of Jim's legacy and the vibrant ties he cultivated between Ireland and Ottawa," said Craig Hamm, Chair of Irish Communities of Ottawa.

"It's a fitting tribute that will keep his memory alive through the sports he loved and the friendships he formed here," said Austin Comerton chair of the Selection sub-committee.

**"We are honoured to carry forward Ambassador Kelly's memory,"** said Noel McDonnell, President of the Eire Óg Hurling Club. "The Memorial Tournament will bring together players, families, and community members in a friendly, spirited competition that reflects the spirit of service, camaraderie, and cultural pride for which Jim was known."

### Jim Kelly Memorial Tournament

Sunday, 8 August 2026

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

(match schedule to be released in the coming months)

Twin Elm Rugby Club,  
Richmond, Ontario

Guests of Honour: Ambassador Kelly's wife, Anne Martin, and the Irish Ambassador or other representation from the Irish Embassy to Canada will be in attendance.



### Presentation of the Irish Communities of Ottawa \$2500 donation to Eire Óg Hurling Club (Ottawa GAA).

From L-R: H.E. John Concannon, Clare O'Connell Noon (ICO donation subcommittee), Minister for International Development and Diaspora, Neale Richmond TD, Craig Hamm (ICO Chairperson), Austin Comerton (ICO donation subcommittee).

Photo courtesy of the Irish Embassy in Canada, Ottawa

Information from news release by Craig Hamm

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## Irish Potato Candy

### Ingredients

- ½ cup (105 g) plain mashed potatoes
- ½ cup (113 g) salted butter, softened
- 6-7 cups (800-910 g) powdered sugar, plus additional for dusting
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Creamy peanut butter, for filling

### Instructions

1. Combine mashed potatoes, butter, and one cup of sugar in a large bowl and use an electric mixer to stir until combined.
2. Add remaining sugar, 1 cup at a time and stirring until combined after each addition. Once you've added 6 cups of powdered sugar, check the consistency. If the dough is not moldable in your hands and can't be rolled into a ball, continue to add sugar until it is firm.
3. Stir in vanilla extract.
4. 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
5. Refrigerate for at least 30-60 minutes (if you chill longer, it may become too firm and brittle and will just need to sit at room temperature for 10-15 minutes until it is pliable). Once chilled, divide dough into two pieces and place one piece on a clean surface that you've generously dusted with powdered sugar. Dust the surface of the dough with additional sugar and use a rolling pin to roll dough out into a rectangle about ¼" thick (about 8x12"). If your dough is too sticky or falling apart, you may need to add more sugar, re-shape it into a ball, and start over.
6. Once dough has been rolled into a rectangle, spread evenly with peanut butter, leaving a small amount of space peanut butter-free around the perimeter of the dough.
7. Creamy peanut butter
8. Starting with the longer side of your rectangle, gently but tightly roll into a log.
9. Use a harp knife to cut into slices about ¼-½" thick.
10. Repeat steps 5-8 with remaining half of dough.
11. Serve and enjoy. Store leftover candy in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Source: <https://sugarspunrun.com/potato-candy/>

### Sources of potato information

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<https://www.ighm.org/collection.html>  
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### Canadian Trivia Answers

1. Trivia Pursuit
2. 24 Sussex Dr
3. Molson Canadian
4. Celine Dion
5. (2023 data) Hockey Rinks
6. Alberta and Saskatchewan
7. Coffee with 2 creams & 2 sugars
8. Runners
9. soda
10. Caesar or Bloody Ceaser



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## FIRESIDE CHAT

H.E. John Concannon, Ambassador of Ireland to Canada, held a fireside chat with Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe at the Official Irish Residence. It was an intriguing conversation about the deep-rooted link between Canada and Ireland. The discussion focused on the Irish's involvement in defining Ottawa and the surrounding area during the last 200 years as well as future involvement.

The Ottawa Bicentennial and the upcoming Canada-Ireland 180 partnership were briefly discussed. The guests were treated to lovely Irish music and dance.



## THANK YOU

A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed articles and/or pictures to our monthly newsletter.

I would like to welcome our new writers and editor and wish them great success.

Mary Catharine Carroll

Marie Donnelly

Mary Garry

Barbara Ann Vocisano

*Lorraine O'Reilly*

## NEWSLETTER QUIZ

1. What is *An Gorta Mór*?
2. What former Ottawa soccer/football team was well represented at Hurley's pub in Montreal during the friendly football game between Ireland and Canada?
3. What did the average Irish adult eat before the famine?
4. Who is Alastair Johnston?
5. What village's history is intertwined with that of Fitzroy Harbour?
6. Where in Ireland are Prime Minister Carney's relatives?
7. What is the name of the illicit beverage made from potatoes?
8. What does *Grianstad an tSamhraidh* refer to in Irish?

## NEWSLETTER QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Translated, it means the Great Hunger, referencing the Irish famine. 2. The Ottawa Gaels. 3. About 65 potatoes a day. 4. Alastair Johnston is a 27-year-old professional soccer player who plays for the Canada men's national team. 5. Fitzroy Harbour's history is tightly linked to Quyon, a village directly across the Ottawa River in Quebec. 6. County Mayo. 7. Poitín. 8. *Grianstad an tSamhraidh* refers to the summer solstice and means sunstop.





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## Celtic Knot

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## Leprechauns of the Festival Sponsorship

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