

IS FEARR NÁ ÓR É SEO

CRÓID AN PHOBAIL AR SON CHOSAINTE MHIUINTIR LUINIGH

worth more than gold
community resistance to mining in the Sperrins



RÉAMHRÁ | Introduction

Is áit fhíorghalánta í Muintir Luinigh atá i gcroílar Chúige Uladh, ná ceantar sléibhe iargúlta ar theorainn Thír Eoghain agus Dhoire. Áit mhór dheireanach ina raibh saol na nGael faoi chosaint Chlann Uí Néill, tá a2n Gaelachas i gcuimhne fite fuaite idir teanga 'is talamh. Áit fhiain nádurtha í atá mar fhoirse d' Abhainn Riabhach agus Abhainn Choilleadh, ar bharr an Fheabhail, ag sólathair fíoruisce agus gnáthóige.

Ó 2009, tá an comhlacht Dalradian ag iarraidh mianach óir a bhunú, mianach a bheadh ar an cheann is mó san Eoraip, rud a bheadh in éadan thoil mhórchuid na bpobal áitiúil. Ba iad na rialtais ar an dá thaobh den teorainn a mheall an mhianadóireacht seo, rialtais atá faoi thionchar nualioibrálachais agus faoi smacht chaipiteal Meiriceánach. Is é mana na rialtas ná *'Ireland Is Open For Business.'*

Níl ann seo ach cuid bheag de scéal mór. I Muintir Luinigh, ar fud na hÉireann, agus timpeall an domhain, tá daoine ag seasamh an fhóid in eadán stoitheadh 'is scriosadh in ainm brabúis agus fórbairt gan stad. Tá léargas úrnua ag teacht amach atá nasctha go mór le hoidhreacht agus le pobal áitiúil, léargas a bhaineann le tairbhe na nglúnta atá le teacht inár ndiaidh. Is orainne atá an dualgas.



Here in the heart of Ulster lie the Sperrin mountains, a remote and breathtaking landscape in Tyrone and south Derry. The final stronghold for the Gaelic order, these mountains under the Ó Néill clan repelled English colonisation longer than anywhere else in Ireland. That memory lives on, intimately tied to the language and the landscape. A wild sanctuary, these mountains are at the headwaters of the Foyle River that flows to Derry, hosting habitat for rare and precious species, providing drinking water to thousands.

Starting in 2009, the multinational company Dalradian has tried to establish a toxic gold mine here – one that would be the largest of its kind in Europe – despite consistent opposition from the majority of the local communities. Governments in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, under the direction of neoliberalism and American capital, have worked to seduce foreign investment in extractive industries: their motto, 'Ireland Is Open For Business.'

Here are a few small glimpses of a much bigger story. Across the Sperrin mountains, across the island of Ireland, across the world, local communities are resisting mining and extractive industries. People are standing up to stop the destruction of their lands and their communities, imagining new ways of living on this earth – one not built on profit and endless growth, but a vision of humanity rooted in place, in connection. Honouring our past and looking to the wellbeing of the generations to come. It's up to us.

STOITHEADH NA hÉIREANN | The extraction of Ireland

Ireland is poised to be a hotspot for mining. Governments on both sides of the border are working to attract foreign investment. North and south, international corporations and capital are viewed as a vital component of the Irish economy, and extraction as a key industry. ‘Ireland Is Open For Business’ – whether using public funds in Northern Ireland to subsidise multinational companies, or providing a tax haven for the world’s wealthiest corporations in the Republic of Ireland. The hoarding of wealth in the hands of a few is prioritised over the wellbeing of the community as a whole. A generation of young people unable to find housing amidst real estate speculation. Rural towns strangled under Airbnb monopolies. Culture turned into a commodity for the tourism industry. The Irish language pushed ever farther to the margins. Ecosystems liquidated first by deforestation, now by industrial agri-business. Capitalism is bleeding this damp island dry.

The proposed Curraghinalt gold mine outside Greencastle, County Tyrone embodies just that. Operated by the Canadian company Dalradian Resources Inc., financed by American capital, supported by funds from the Northern Irish government, this mine would extract wealth for overseas shareholders while locals are exposed to all the risks and left to shoulder the costs. The Sperrin mountains contain one of the world’s most significant gold deposits as well as substantial amounts of silver, copper and other minerals. If it succeeds, this project would open the doors for a surge of mining projects in places like Conamara, Donegal, and Leitrim. Already a quarter of Ireland has been earmarked to private companies for mineral exploration through mine concessions. Across the Isle, more than half of these mineral claims target gold.

What few environmental regulations and labour laws exist in Ireland are under threat from trade deals and neoliberal deregulation. Industry and government are promoting mineral extraction as a basis for Ireland’s economy, and as playing a valuable role in addressing climate change, building data centres, and powering the AI future. Extraction in Ireland cannot be separated from its impacts. Prioritising the hoarding of wealth over the wellbeing of communities is at root of the interlinked ecological, economic and social crises of our day. The mining industry couldn’t be a more visceral embodiment of extractive capitalism. We cannot mine our way out of the climate crisis any more than we can bomb our way to peace. The long legacy of colonialism and injustice in Éire survives today in the continued plundering of her lands and peoples for overseas profits.

"Our Tyrone project will be one of the largest ever American foreign direct investments in Northern Ireland. In 2019, Orion Resource Partners – a large U.S. investor – acquired 80% of Dalradian. Orion has built on its initial investment in Northern Ireland by increasing its ownership of Dalradian to 97%, while also supporting advancement of the project, for a total investment of \$360 million to date. New York-based Orion joins a long list of other American investors here – Allstate, Aflac, Baker McKenzie, Citi, Deloitte, Liberty Mutual, Linamar, Magellan, Microsoft and Spirit AeroSystems – to name but a few.

The EU recently concluded its Critical Raw Materials Act which guarantees key mining projects a permitting process no longer than two years. The UK government's goal of accelerating domestic mineral production will only be achieved through large-scale investment by companies such as ours. The importance of critical minerals cannot be overstated; they are the backbone of our technological revolution.

The UK government published its Critical Minerals Strategy in 2025. A recent study by the World Bank titled "Minerals for Climate Action" found that demand for silver is expected to increase by more than 300% and copper by 200% by 2050. Our Curraghinalt project is globally acknowledged as one of the highest grade, undeveloped mineral deposits in the world."

– Dalradian Resources Inc.



HOW RARE EARTHS

POWER U.S. DEFENSE

F-35 FIGHTER JET



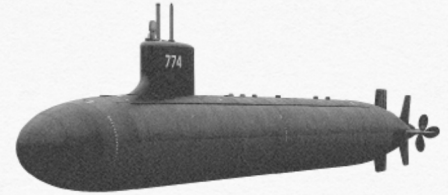
- Guided missiles
- Lasers used to determine targets
- Drive motors

ARLEIGH BURKE DDG-51 DESTROYER



- Advanced radar systems
- Missile guidance systems
- Propulsion
- Drive motors

VIRGINIA-CLASS SUBMARINE



- Tomahawk missiles
- Radar systems
- Drive Motors

4,600 KG

2,600 KG

RARE EARTHS USED (KG)

418 KG

KEY RARE EARTH ELEMENTS



Over **70%** of U.S. rare earth imports come from China

60 Nd NEODYMIUM	59 Pr PRASEODYMIUM	62 Sm SAMARIUM
66 Dy DYSPROSIUM	65 Tb TERBIUM	63 Eu EUROPIUM
39 Y YTTRIUM		

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66 Dy DYSPROSIUM	65 Tb TERBIUM	57 La LANTHANUM
64 Gd GADOLINIUM	39 Y YTTRIUM	

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ΜΙΑΝΡΑΪ ΞΕΙΒΗΕΑΝΝΑΧΑ | Critical minerals

An unprecedented mining boom is underway across the globe in a scramble for ‘critical minerals’ – the raw materials powering our technology. In the age of renewable energy and electric cars, demand for copper is expected to rise 500% in the next ten years. Demand for cobalt and lithium is predicted to rise 40-fold. Many of these minerals only can be sourced from specific locations around the earth, and the world superpowers view their supply chains as an issue of national security. Mining is being promoted as a matter of national importance.

These minerals are used to build wind turbines and solar panels, rechargeable batteries and transmission lines. These minerals are also used to build F-35 fighter jets and precision-guided missiles. These minerals are necessary for the construction of semiconductors and microchips, critical for the expansion of artificial intelligence and digital surveillance – and for the massive electrical demands of the data centres being built across Ireland. Around the world, geopolitical maneuvering increasingly reflects a focus on extracting and refining these minerals. Trump’s belligerence for the US annexation of Greenland shows the same climate-apocalypse profiteering as Canadian mining companies clamouring over opportunities provided by glacial retreat to mine areas previously buried by ice. Market access, trade deals, foreign interventions, resource wars... business as usual.

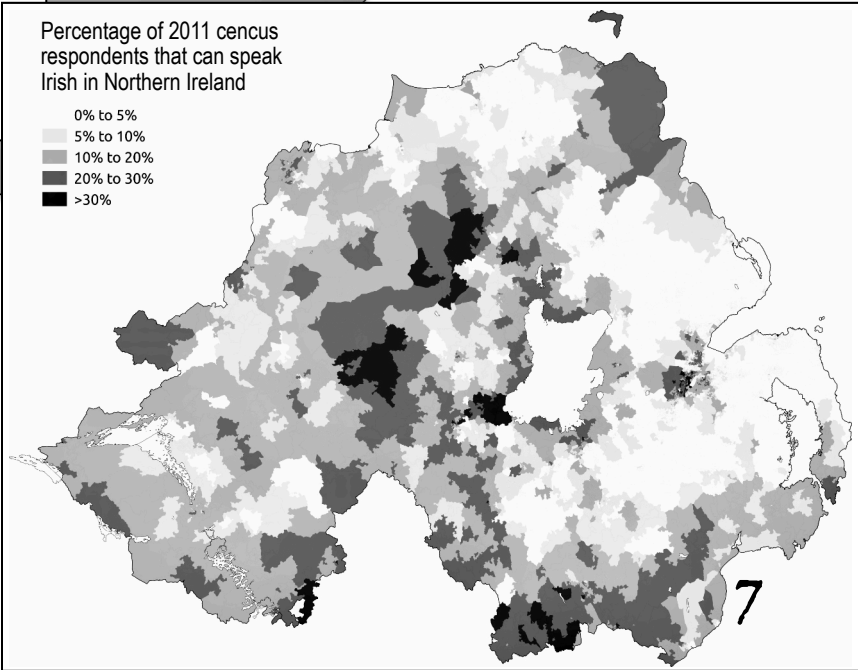
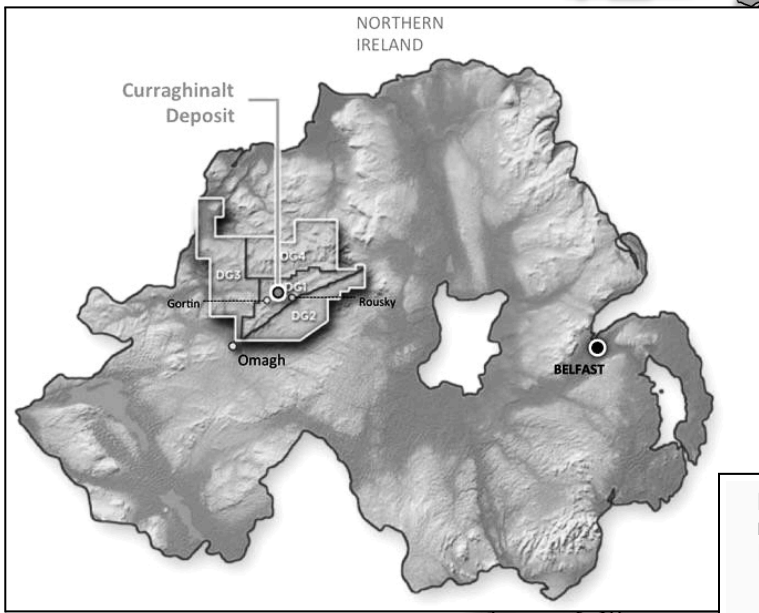
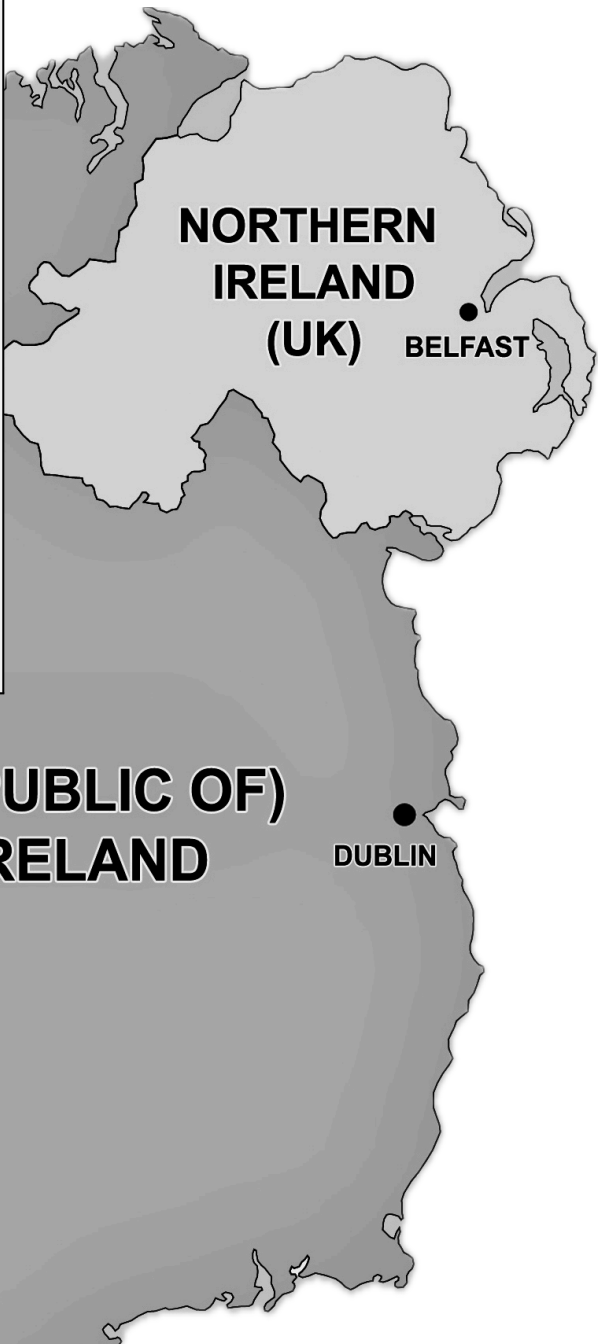
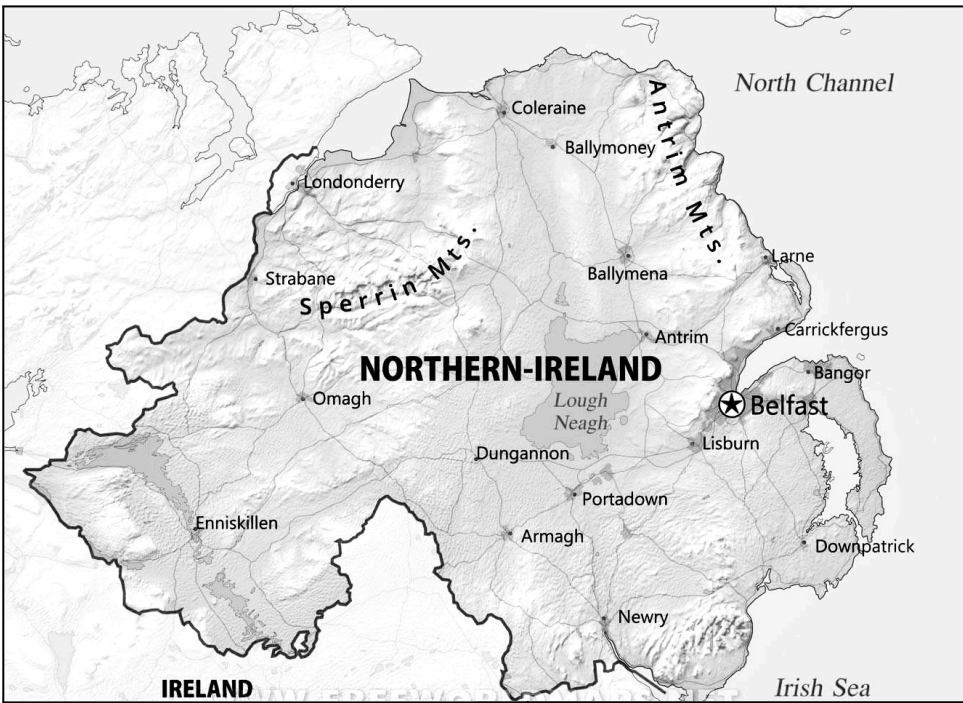
The mining industry uses the vocabulary of ‘clean energy’ and the ‘renewable revolution’ to portray themselves as a crucial part of building a better, healthier world. In reality, the impacts of mining are not so different from the fossil fuel industry: environmental devastation, multinational coercion against local governments, the displacement and unraveling of local communities, the erasure of cultural and ecological diversity. Evictions, disappearances, rapes, murders. Political corruption, police violence, poisoned water, privatisation, profit. Devastation.

The rapid expansion of mining has already done enormous harm to people and landscapes. The overconsumption of water from mine operations severely impacts ecosystems. Local people suffer cancers and illnesses from toxic mining dust. Workers are promised high paying jobs but are given disproportionate risks, chronic health issues, coercion and intimidation. Acid mine drainage and heavy metals seep into aquifers, poisoning drinking water and collapsing agriculture. As heavy industry replaces farming and small businesses, local economies become dependent on mining corporations to survive. Towns are inundated with unsustainable growth, overwhelmed local services, increased alcohol and drug use, sexual violence and crime. When the mining boom becomes a bust, communities face new instability and become increasingly vulnerable to other extractive industries.

Gold mining is riding on the coattails of this ‘critical mineral’ rhetoric. Projects such as Dalradian’s Curraghinalt gold mine claim to be an asset to the community. The evidence says otherwise. Gold mining is one of the world’s most destructive industries. Producing enough gold for a single wedding ring generates 20 tons of waste rock, full of heavy metals such as lead, mercury, and arsenic. And the necessity of gold mining? More than 90% of gold produced annually is used for jewelry, bars and coins – luxuries and finance speculation. Less than 8% of gold production is used for technological applications, a figure easily supplied by recycling gold already in circulation. Once the gold is gone and the companies have left, the toxins will remain and locals will be stuck with the long-term social costs. Massive bills for cleanup. Degraded landscapes and ways of life. Loss and resentment.

ÉIRE







SAY NO TO GOLD MINING

Bhuail me le Sinéad Ní Mhearnóg i Mí Dheireadh Fómhair 2025 ag an teach s'aici in aice leis na sléibhte. Gníomhaí pobail meanmnach atá inti, í ag obair go díograsach mar chuid den fheachtas Save Our Sperrins. Gaeilgeoir diongbháilte atá inti chomh maith agus neart rudaí ar bun aici chun an pobal a tharraingt le chéile agus an Ghaeilg' a chur chun cinn. Ba é mo chuspóir ná foghlaim faoi oidhreacht na háite agus tábhacht an talaimh seo atá faoi bhrú mianadóireacht óir. Comhrá iontach deas a bhí againne. Rinneadh aistriúchán go Béarla de ar mhaithe leis na foghlaimoírí, ach is fearr i bhfad an leagan seo as Gaeilge.



Ar mhiste leat cur síos a dhéanamh ar chúlra an cheantair seo? Stair na háite agus cén saghas pobail atá ann ins na sléibhte?

Sinéad Ní Mhearnóg: Bhuel rugadh agus tógadh mise in áit darb ainm An Caisleán Glas, sin an t-ainm ar an tsráidbhaile, agus tá muid ceangailte sna Speiríní. Téann tú síos an bóthar tá Goirtín ann. Téann tú thart, tá Droichead an Phlum, ach i nGaeilg is dócha gur Gleann Aichle a bheadh ann. Ansin síos go Baile na Sgríne agus thar na sléibhte isteach go Páirc. Na daoine sléibhe a bhí ceangailte is dócha go nádúrtha, go háirithe daoine a bhí a dhul don fheirmeoireacht.

Agus is stair fheirmeoireachta atá ann sa ceantar déarfainn. D'fhás mise aníos ag cloisteáil scéaltaí ó mo dhaidí faoin na daoine blianta blianta ó shin, go raibh siad ag fás turcaithe agus sicíní agus rudaí. Agus nuair a tháinig sé go ham na margaidh, shiúladh sé síos an bóthar leis na hainmhí ar fad. Sin an nós. Is áit i lar na sléibhte í, níor tháinig leictreachas go dtí b'fhéidir na seachtóidí. Go leor daoine, bhí siad ag maireachtaíl le tobar ar feadh tamall fada, bhí tobar ann agus bhíodh siad ag brath ar sin. Ní raibh aon duine eile ag teacht isteach chun stuif a thabhairt dóibh. Ní dóigh liom go raibh mórán de phríomhbhóithre ann go dtí na seascaidí fosta.

In áiteanna, níl mé ag rá achan uile áit, istigh ar chroílár na sléibhte, mhair an Ghaeilg ansin níos faide ná aon áit eile sna Sé Condae, dar leis na saineolaithe. Tá taifead ann de dhaoine mór le rá sa teangeolaíocht ag teacht sna troichidí chun na cainteoirí dúchais deireanacha a thaifeadadh. Chuir Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann Michael J. Murphy go Gleann Choll, chun taifead a dhéanamh ar an bhéaloideas, mar gheall go raibh sé comh iargúlta, bhí nósanna, bhí an cultúr, bhí na traidisiúin, bhí siad beo.

NO TO CYANIDE IN OUR WATER

I met with Sinéad Ní Mhearnóg in October 2025 at her house outside the Sperrin mountains in County Tyrone. An energetic activist, she works tirelessly with the Save Our Sperrins campaign, a local group fighting to protect their home from a toxic gold mine. She is also a dedicated Irish speaker, engaging communities and promoting the language. It was my aim that day to hear about the significance of the Sperrins and how they are under threat from gold mining. Our conversation was *as Gaeilge* and is here translated for a wider audience, though certain concepts translate poorly if at all to English.



Do you mind describing the background of this area? The local history and community life here in the Sperrin mountains?

Sinéad Ní Mhearnóg: Well I was born and raised in a village called An Caisleán Glas (Greencastle), that's the name of the town, here in the Sperrin mountains. You go down the road to the town Goirtín. Further down to Plumbridge, but I suppose it would be called Gleann Aichle in Irish. Then down to Baile na Sgríne and across the mountains into Páirc. We've all been connected naturally I suppose, as mountain people, especially the farmers.

We are a community rooted in farming, I'd say. I grew up listening to stories from my dad about the people years ago, they would be raising turkeys and chickens and livestock. And when it came time for the market, they used to walk into town with all their animals down the road. That was the practice. Here in the centre of the mountains, electricity didn't arrive until maybe the seventies. Many people still had water wells for a long while, they would have been relying on those wells to survive. No one else was coming in to look after them. I don't suppose many of the main roads arrived until the sixties either.

In places, not necessarily every place, but in the centre of the mountains, the Irish language survived longer than anywhere else in the Six Counties,¹ according to the experts. We have a recording made by famous linguists, who came in the thirties to record the last living native Irish speakers. The Irish Folklore Commission sent Michael J. Murphy to Glenhull to collect recordings on folklore, because that place was so remote that the folk practices and culture and traditions were still alive.

Mhair an Ghaeilg agus mhair na traidisiúin, an ceangal, an pobal, an tuiscint sin ar a bheith ag cuidiú le chéile. Ar bheirt fheirmeoir a bhí a chónaí cóngarach le chéile, ach chun obair fheirmeoireachta a dhéanamh, bhí dhá chapall de dhíth. Ní raibh dhá chapall ag aon duine acu, ach bhí capall amháin acu, agus tháinig siad le chéile agus roinn siad an capall agus bhí siad ábalta obair a dhéanamh. Sin an meitheal, an tuiscint sin ar a bheith mar phobal agus sílim gur tuiscint cineál bundúchasach é, as a bheith ag roinnt go bhfuilimid ar son achan duine.

Ag fás aníos, chuala mé scéaltaí ó mo thuismitheoirí, mo ghaolta thart orainn agus comharsain, agus iadsan a rá nuair a bhí siad beag bhí orthu a dhul cuidiú leis na comharsain. Sin an nós, bhí sin coiteanta. Mothaím go maireann [sé] sin go fóill. Sin an stair sa cheantar, is áit fheirmeoireachta í, i lár na sléibhte, iargúlta. Mothaím go raibh na daoine crua. Bhí orthu a bheith crua. Cé go raibh sé iargúlta agus deacair, sílim go raibh saol maith ag na daoine, mar bhí pobal ann, bhí an pobal láidir.

B'fhéidir a rá gur ceantar mór Gaelach atá ann.

Ceantar mór Gealach, 'sea. Bhuel, nuair a dheir muid 'Gaelach', ní hea gur Gaelach agus b'fhéidir Caitliceach an aon rud. An ceantar sin atá muid ag díriú air, tá neart daoine ó chúlra Eaglais na hÉireann. Ní ainmneacha dúchasacha iad, ach tá ainmneacha i mBéarla [ann] *Scotchtown and Irishtown*. Caithfidh gur tháinig daoine fríd an Phlandáil agus cuireadh [ansin] iad, ach caithfidh go raibh siadsan ruaigthe suas ar an tsiabh. Ní minic a mbíonn na Protastúnaigh ar an tsiabh le drochthalamh, caithfidh go raibh stair dá gcuid féin acu. Nuair a amharcann tú ar an daonáireamh ón 1911 agus 1901, tá Protastúnaigh ann le Gaeilg. Agus tá scéal sa bhéaloideas go háitiúil, go raibh duine curtha le Gaeilg, le bheith ag teagasc na paistí mar gur tháinig siadsan as Albain, agus bhí Gaedhlig na hAlban acu agus tá traidisiún Protastúnach agus Preispitéireach ansin.

Tá sé suimiúil, mar síleann daoine, "Óró is rud Gaelach é," ach braitheann sé ar do thuiscint ar Ghaelach. Bhí achan duine Gaelach mar [is] cultúr Gael í, ach b'fhéidir dá ndéarfá a leithéid [le] Protastúnach atá ina chónaí ansin anois, ó thraidisiún Gaelach, b'fhéidir go ndéarfadh siadsan, "Ní bhaineann sin liom," *but actually* bhain siad leis an chultúr Ghaelach. Sílim féin ní thuigeann na daoine, na Protastúnaigh atá ina gcónaí sna Speiríní, ní thuigeann siad an stair. Ní thuigeann siad go raibh an Ghaeilg beo, go raibh a muintir ag labhairt i nGaeilg. Coinníodh an teanga faoi cheilt uathu, mar ní raibh aon eolas ná aon oiliúint ar scoil faoin Ghaeilg agus faoin chúlra sin.

Mo sheanathair, ba Phrotastúnach é a dhaidí ach ba Chaitliceach í a mhamaí, agus shín a dhaidí an *Ulster Covenant*. Ba bhreá liom ceist a chur air, "An mothainn tú mar Éireannach? *Are you an Irish Unionist?*" Deireann sé ar an daonáireamh go raibh Gaeilge aige, agus ansin phós sé Caitliceach. Caithfidh go raibh pósadh eadar na creidimh measartha rialta, ach dúirt mo dhaidí an nós a bhí ann [ná] dá mba rud é gur Caitliceach í an mhamaí, thógfaí na paistí le Caitliceachas, dá mba rud é gur Protastúnach í an mhamaí, thógfaí iad le Protastúnachas. Is dóigh gur fhan na páistí lena máthair agus b'fhéidir go raibh a máthair níos cóngrai den stuif sin ar fad. Tá sé suimiúil ar fad, agus ní dóigh liom go bhfuil mórán tuisceana ag daoine air sin.

The Irish language survived and the traditions survived, the connections, the community, the understanding of how to rely on each other. Out of two farmers living next door to each other, to be able to do their farming work, they would each need two horses. But none of them had two horses, they only had their single horse. So they would come together and share the horses and so be able to do their work. That's the *meitheal*, pitching in to work together, that understanding how to be as a community. I think it's a sort of indigenous perspective, to share together for the sake of everybody.

Growing up, I heard stories from my parents, my relatives around us and our neighbors, them saying that when they were young, they had to go out and help their neighbors. That was the practice, it was common. I feel like that still survives. That's the history of this place, a farming community in the middle of the mountains, remote. I feel like the people were tough. They had to be tough. Although it was isolated and challenging, I think that people had a good life, because they had a strong community.

You could say that it is a largely Gaelic area then?

Largely Gaelic area, yeah. Well, when we say 'Gaelic', that's not to say Gaelic as in only Catholic.² This area we're describing, there's many people here from a Protestant background, the Church of Ireland. They aren't the native placenames, but there are two towns called Scotchtown and Irishtown. We know people would have come during Plantation and settled,³ but they must have been pushed up the mountains themselves. It's not often that Protestants are up on the mountain with bad land, so there must be a history of their own displacement here. When you look at the census from 1911 and 1901, there were Irish-speaking Protestants here. According to the local lore, it was an Irish speaker appointed to teach the children, because the settlers themselves came from Scotland and they had Scottish Gaelic in the Protestant and Presbyterian tradition.

It's interesting, because people think, "Oh, that's Gaelic," but it depends on your understanding of what Gaelic means. Everyone was Gaelic because it was a Gaelic culture, but perhaps if you said something like that to a Protestant living here now, maybe they would say, "That has nothing to do with me," even though they have their own links to Gaelic culture. I myself think people don't understand, the Protestants living in the Sperrins, they don't know the local history. That the Irish language was central to life here and that their own people would have spoken Irish. The language was kept hidden from them, and there wasn't any acknowledgement or education about Irish or that background at school.

My grandfather, his father was a Protestant but his mother was a Catholic, and his father signed the Ulster Covenant.⁴ I would love to ask him, "Do you feel like you're Irish? Are you an Irish Unionist?" He said on the census that he spoke Irish, and he married a Catholic. It must have been somewhat regular to have marriages between the faiths, but my dad said the habit of the time was that if the mother was Catholic, the children would be raised Catholic, and if the mother was Protestant, the children would be raised Protestant. I suppose the children stayed with their mother and that maybe she was more connected with all that. It's all very interesting, and I don't suppose many people have much understanding about all that.

An mothaíonn tusa go bhfuil scoilt ann eadar an dá phobal, nó an bhfuil cúrsaí níos casta ná sin?

In ár dteach nuair a bhí mise ag fás aníos, bhí mo mhamó ina cónaí linn, agus bhí achan uile duine ag teacht ar cuairt uirthi. Bhí nós ann *going on your céili*, is rud a dtáinig ó Ghaeilge agus ón chultúr Ghaelach sin, a bheith ag dul ar oíche airneáil i dteachín éigin. Bhí an nós sin ann agus bhí an nós sin go mór le mo mhamó. Thiocfadh daoine d' achan uile cineál cúlra chuig an teach s'againn. Sin an dóigh a bhfuil aithne agam ar na Protastúnaigh, mar ansin nuair a chuaigh mise ar bhunscoil is Caitliceacaigh amháin [a bhí ann], *whereas* nuair a chuaigh mo dhaidí agus mo uncailí agus aintíní ar scoil, bhí scoil imeasctha ann. Bhí achan uile duine sna Speiríní ag dul chuig scoileanna le chéile agus chuir siad aithne ar a chéile agus bhí caidreamh maith [acu]. Mothaím go bhfuil an dream sin i bhfad níos fearr ag tuiscint a chéile mar go raibh saol sóisialta acu. Agus tháinig na Trioblóidí 'is gach rud, agus ní raibh [sé] sin againn, *so* tá bearna ann. I mo scéal pearsanta, bhuail mise leis na daoine sin ar fad a tháinig isteach agus ní dhéarna mise aon difear, ní dhéanann siad aon difear domhsa.

Sílim, tá an tuiscint iomlán difriúil ó shaol na cathrach, ná mar atá sé faoin tuath. Mothaím an fhadhb atá anseo go ginearalta ná na polaiteoirí. Sílim na daoine [atá] ar an talamh, réiteoidh muid ar fad go maith, *ya know*. Mar a dúirt mé an rud sin faoin fheirmeoireacht, bíonn daoine ag cuidiú le chéile, bíonn siad ag tabhairt lámh cuidithe nuair atá stuif de dhíth ag am gnóthach. Oibríonn muid le chéile. Sin an saol go fóill, ach nuair a amharcann tú ar thaobh na bpolaiteoirí, tá na polaiteoirí ag déanamh ag rá go bhfuilimid iomlán difriúil óna chéile, *but actually* tá muid uilig ag obair le chéile, ag cuidiú le chéile.

Bheadh An Caisleán Glas aitheanta mar áit náisiúnach, bheadh Sinn Féin ag fáil an méid is mó de na votaí ansin, ach ansin nuair a théann tú i dtreo Goirtín, tá níos mó Protastúnaigh [ann]. Agus an nós a bhí ann ná gur na pairtí DUP, UUP, pé pairtí a bhí ann, ghlac siadsian lena muintir. Lucht Sinn Féin leis na Caitliceaigh, leis na náisiúnaithe. Ach tá scéaltaí cloiste agam, b'fhéidir gur chuaigh duine éigin chuig Sinn Féin agus níor chuidigh siad agus chuaigh siad chuig an UUP. Tá scéal suimiúil ann faoin Ghaeilge *actually*, faoi bhus a fháil chuig an mhéanscoil Ghaeilge ag an taobh eile den chonradh, agus ní mise a bhí i gcéist ach an scéal a dúradh ná níor chuidigh Sinn Féin ach chuidigh an UUP. Sílim go bhfuil na scéaltaí sin [ar] fud fad na háite, ach go ginearalta nuair a thagann sé chuig vóta istigh maidir leis an Ghaeilge, nó vóta maidir le rud atá bainte le taobh amháin nó taobh eile, sílim go mbaineann siad leis na rialacha ón phairtí agus *party whip* nó pé rud. Agus nach ndéanann siad maitheas agus go ndéanann siad liathróid pholaitiúil den teanga nó pé rud. Braitheann sé ar, cosúil le aon rud polaitíochta, go mbaineann siad leis an mhéid bhrú a chuireann tú agus an méid aithne atá agat orthu.

Dá gcuirfeá ceist ar dhuine éigin eile, gheobhaidh tú tuairim iomlán eile, mar braitheann sé ar cén nasc atá agat leis na polaiteoirí, cén tuiscint atá agat, cén taithí atá agat. Sílim go bhfuil na polaiteoirí, tá polaiteoirí maithe ann ar an dá thaobh a oibríonn ar son an phobal, *but* sílim an fhadhb, ná na polaiteoirí ag an bharr, tionchar an mheáin, agus na stuif seo faoin Ghaeilge, gach rud, tá siad ag iarraidh muid a scaradh óna chéile. Nuair a amharcann tú ar an phobal, ar na daoine atá mar bainte le *PUL community*, nó na daoine atá bainte leis an Chaitliceachas, naisiúnachas nó pé rud, tá i bhfad níos mó cosúlachtaí eadrainne, na cosmhuintir uilig. Ní chluineann tú an scéal go bhfuil muid ag réiteach go maith, cluineann tú an drochscéal. Sílim gur sin rud mór difriúil eadar an chathair agus an tuath, mar is comharsain muid.

Do you feel like there is a split between the two communities, or are things more mixed?

In our house as I was growing up, my grandmother lived with us, and everyone came to visit her. There was a practice ‘going on your *céilí*,’ something that came from Irish and Gaelic culture, going out for an evening’s entertainment in some different house. My grandmother liked that practice. People would come from every sort of background to our house. That’s how I am familiar with many of the Protestants because when I went to primary school there were only Catholics there, whereas when my dad and uncles and aunts went to school, they had a mixed school. Everyone in the Sperrins was going to school together and getting to know each other and becoming friends. I feel like that generation has a far better understanding of each other because they had a social life. But when the Troubles⁵ came, we didn’t have that mixing, so there’s a gap there. In my own personal life, I met with all those people who were coming in to visit and I never felt any difference, and they never acted any differently towards me.

I think the understanding is totally different from city life than it is out in the countryside. I feel the general problem here is the politicians. I think the people out on the land, we do be getting on just fine, ya know. Because I said that bit about the farming, how people do be helping each other, giving each other a helping hand when there’s work to be done at the busy times. We work together. That’s still our life here, but when you look at the politicians, the politicians are trying to say that we’re totally different from each other, but actually we’re all working together and helping each other.

An Caisleán Glas would be recognised as a nationalist area, Sinn Féin⁶ would be getting the largest number of votes there, but then when you go in the direction of *Goirtín*, there are more Protestants over there. The general habit would be that the Democratic Unionist Party, the Ulster Unionist Party,⁷ whatever party, they would stick with their own people. Same with Sinn Féin with the Catholics, with the nationalists. But I’ve heard stories, maybe someone went to Sinn Féin and they didn’t help, and so they went to the UUP for help. There’s an interesting story about the Irish language actually, about trying to get a bus to the Irish language secondary school on the other side of the county. I wasn’t part of this, but the story I was told was that Sinn Féin didn’t help but the UUP did. I think there’s stories like that all around, but generally when it comes time to vote for Irish language issues, or with something connected to one side or another, I think they are more concerned with the party rules and the party whip, or whatever. And that doesn’t do much good, them making a political game out of the language or whatever issue. It depends, like anything political, on the amount of pressure that you put on them and how well you know them.

If you put the question on someone else, you would get a different opinion, because it depends on what connection you have with the politicians, your worldview, your experience. I think that the politicians, there are good politicians on both sides that work on behalf of the community, but I think the issue is the politicians at the top, the influence of the media, all the controversy about the Irish language, they’re trying to divide us. When you look at the community, at the people from the Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist community, or at the people from a Catholic-Nationalist-Republican background, there are far more similarities between us, the regular working class people. You don’t hear the stories that we do be getting on with each other just fine, you hear just the bad stories. I think that’s a big difference between the city and the country, because here we are neighbors.

Má amharcaimid arís ar shaibhreas na háite- Ar mhiste leat aird a tharraingt dúinn ar na sean-nósanna agus scéaltaí a bhí ann ins an cheantar? An bhfuil meon Gaelach go fóill le sonrú ar mheon an phobail sa lá atá inniu ann?

Nuair atá an Ghaeilge agat, tá tú ag amharc fríd lionsa difriúil ná ag amharc fríd an Béarla. Ins an teanga Béarla, níl na foclaí i gcónaí ag léiriú na hainmneacha ar an áit. Déarfadh siad faoi Éire i gcoiteana, an tír ina hiomlán, go bhfuil sí ‘*the most named place, or the most minutely named*’ mar atá ainm ann ar gach píosa beag talaimh, i gcomparáid le aon áit eile sa domhan. Ar An Chaisleán Ghlas, tá na bailte fearainn ann, agus ansin tá na hainmneacha ar na páirceanna. Agus mar gheall gur mhair an Ghaeilge, thuig na daoine caidé an ciall a bhí leis na bailte fearainn. Ach má théann tú fiche míle síos an bóthar, b’fhéidir nar thuig na daoine. An chiall atá leis an fhocal, tuigeann tú an fáth go raibh an ainm curtha.

Obviously ní raibh teilifís ann ar feadh blianta blianta fada, ní raibh raidió ná aon rud, *so* shuigh daoine thart ag éisteacht leis na scéaltaí. Bhí an traidisiún labhartha beo. Na scéaltaí a mhair, mhair siad fríd na blianta, céadta nó na mílte blianta. Bhí siad ábalta go fóill na scéaltaí sin a roinnt. *So then*, nuair a bhog siad go Béarla, *obviously* cailleann tú cuid de na scéalaíocht, déarfainn gur tháinig cuid fríd, *but* caithfidh go maireann níos mó i gcomparáid le háit a chaill an Ghaeilge trí chéad bliain ó shin. Mothaím go bhfuil sin ann mar tá daoine iontach ceangailte go fóill, ag úsáid an baile fearainn, *ya know*.

Tá rud éigin ann darb ainm leasainm, ar dhaoine, Pat Mac Culadh, ach cuirtear Pat John Anthony air. Tá leasainm ann agus bainte leis, tá tú ceangailte arís leis na daoine a chuaigh romhat. Níl tú *just* ag smaoineamh ar an fhoirm mar tusa John McCullagh, tá tú ag cluinstit an t-ainm sin, tá tú ag smaoineamh i gcónaí siar. Sílim arís gur sin an rud a bhain le bundúchasaigh, nuair a amharcann tú faoi, abair Meiriceá, nó Meiriceá Theas, tá siad ag caint [faoi] ‘*the ancestors*’, na sinsir. Ní dóigh liom go labhair muid faoin sin ins an chultúr iarthair, ach tá sin iontach mór nuair a amharcann tú ar na bundúchasaigh ins an Aistrial, tá siad go mór ag labhairt faoin sin. Sílim go bhfuilimid cineal náiriste anseo le coilíneachas agus gach rud gan a bheith ag smaoineamh sin. Sílim fiú an rud simplí sin, an leasainm a úsáid, tá tú ceangailte le do mhuintir, le do shinsir. Agus b’fhéidir nach bhfuil tú ag smaoineamh faoi go gníomhach, ach caithfidh go bhfuil tú ag aithint é sin ar bhealach éigin. Tuigeann aon duine a mbuaileann tú leis, gur tusa bainte leis an chlann sin agus leis an stair sin.

Agus tú ag fás aníos leis an mheon sin, an dtéann sé sin i bhfeidhm ar an dearcadh atá agat ar an timpeallacht?

Sin é. Déarfadh siad, ó Westminster, duirt siad faoin cheantar s’againne, chuir siad “*you wild barbarous mountains of Muintir Luinigh*.” Duirt siad sin ins na 1800s in Westminster. Nuair a thógadh siad na plandálaíthe anseo, níor tháinig siad ins an cheantar s’againn, mar bhí sé comh fiáin, bhí sé comh amuigh, ní raibh na bóithre maith, ní raibh siad abálta teacht.

Looking again at the cultural richness of this area, would you mind describing the storytelling and traditions that would have been common here? Is that understanding, the Gaelic perspective, still noticeable in the community?

When you speak Irish, you look through a different lens than moving through the world as an English speaker. In the English language, the words rarely give you insight into the place. It's said about *Éire* in general that we are 'the most named place, or most minutely named', because there are names on each small little piece of land, compared to any other place in the world. In *An Caisleán Glas*, the names of the townlands are there, and then there are the names of the fields, and because the Irish language stayed in the community for so long, the community still understood the meaning of the old names. But if you went twenty miles down the road, it's likely that people wouldn't understand. With the meaning of the words, you can appreciate the reasoning why places were given the names they have.

Obviously there wasn't television or radio or any entertainment for years, so they sat around listening to the old stories and folktales. The oral tradition was still alive. The stories that were passed down survived hundreds or thousands of years. They could still remember those old stories. So then, when they shifted to speaking English, obviously a number of the stories were lost, but I would say that a number of the stories survived still. But it must have been that more stories survived here than in places where Irish stopped being spoken three hundred years ago. I feel like the locals are still very connected to the land just by using the old place names, you know.

There's something called a nickname, somebody named Pat McCullagh, but they are called Pat John Anthony.⁸ The name you are given connects you to the people who went before you. You're not just thinking about the version that 'you are John McCullagh,' but you're hearing those names and are always thinking backwards in time. Again, I think that's something connected with indigeneity, because when you look at say America, South America, they are always talking about the ancestors. I don't suppose we speak about that much in western culture, but it's incredibly important with the Indigenous people in Australia. I think we have a sort of shame about that here, colonialism telling us not to be thinking like that. Even that simple thing, the nicknames, you're connected with your people, your ancestors. Maybe you're not actively thinking about it, but in some way it affects our perceptions. With nicknames, anyone can understand who you are connected with, with that family, and with that history.

And growing up with that perspective, does it influence your view on the environment?

That's it. They used to say, over in Westminster, they called this area the "wild barbarous mountains" of *Muintir Luinigh*.⁹ They said that in the 1800s in Westminster. When the planters were brought in, they didn't come into our area because it was so wild, it was so removed, the roads weren't good, they weren't able to come here.

An rud sin faoin ‘*wild barborous mountains of Muintir Luinigh*’, sin an dearcadh a bhí ag daoine ag amharc isteach. Ach ag amharc ó thaobh an bhéaloideais agus an teanga de, sílim féin gur oibrigh sé mar cinéal *incubator*. Mar gheall go raibh sé iargúlta, mar gheall go raibh na sléibhte ag coinneáil iad istigh, bhí siad ag coinneáil an Béarla amuigh. Ní raibh na príomhbhóithre ag teacht fríd An Chaisleán Ghlas, agus deireann siad gur fhás an Béarla leis na príomhbhóithre. Aon uair a tháinig traicin, aon uair a tháinig príomhbhóthar maith, *obviously* tháinig daoine nua, tháinig daoine isteach, tháinig Béarla isteach. *Whereas*, ní raibh sin ann. Bhí sin crua ar na daoine, ach choinnigh sé an Ghaeilg beo. Agus tá scéaltaí cloiste agam, faoi fiú Béarla sa cheantar, deireann mo dhaidí ‘besom’ agus foclaí eile ann. Deirtear gur dtáinig sin, *Shakespearean English*, mar gheall nár labhair na daoine áitiúil, na cosmhuintir, an Béarla. Fuair siad an Béarla ó na tithe móra, ó na daoine saibhre. Mar sin de, an Béarla a bhí acu, bhí siad den cinéal difriúil ón Bhéarla a bhí ag na cosmhuintir caoga míle síos an bóthar.

An rud sin ar fad, an dearcadh, tá sé múnlaíthe ag an teanga agus na nascanna ansin. A bheith ag cuidiú a chéile, tá an nósmaireacht ann, tá tú ceangailte leis na bailte fearainn, le do chomarsain. Craic agus comhrá agus scéalaíocht, agus sin in achan baile fearainn. Tá tú iontach ceangailte le do chomharsain. Is dóigh, tá [sé] sin difriúil anois, tá daoine níos mó sna tithe, ach go fóill tá muid airdeallach ar na bailte fearainne, agus tá tú airdeallach ar do chomharsain.

Ar mheath an Ghaeilge thar ghlúinte, nó ar briseadh an traidisiún béil sin go tobann?

Bhí sí go fóill beo agus measartha lárnach, bheadh [sí] ag mórchuid den phobail ag tús an 1900s. Ag an am sin, bhí daoine b’fhéidir dátheangach. An rud a bhí ann, bheadh Gaeilg b’fhéidir ag an mamó agus an daideo, bheadh Gaeilg agus Béarla b’fhéidir ag an chéad ghlúin de phaistí, agus ansin an t-athrú a tháinig.... Rugadh mo mhamó thart fá 1912. Seo scéal coiteanta. Óna a cuimhne, bhí sise ina cónaí i dteach – sin tús na 1900s – in a teach, bhí a mamó, bhí Gaeilg amháin aici. A daidí agus a mamaí, bhí Gaeilg ag an bheirt acu, agus bhí Béarla ag an bheirt acu. Agus ansin ag na páistí, ní raibh aon Ghaeilg [acu]. Agus dúradh leis an mhamó gan a bheith ag labhairt leis na páistí, ní raibh siad ag iarraidh go mbeadh Gaeilg ag na páistí. Sin briseadh cheangal caidrimh. Agus sílim, *like, just* rud nádúrtha le do mháthair, sheanmháthair, a bheith abálta [ag caint leis na páistí].

I m’ obair, bímse ag plé le daoine atá ag iarraidh Gaeilge labhartha [a bheith ag] a bpáistí, tá an chuid is mó [acu] is daoine cosúil liomsa a d’fhoghlaim an Ghaeilg. Bhí muid ag plé inné, in amanna, mothaíonn sé aisteach dúinn a bheith ag labhairt teanga nár tógadh muid, a bheith ag iarraidh *nursery rhymes* a dhéanamh nár chleachtaigh muid riamh, b’fhéidir nach raibh a fhios againn go dtí go raibh páistí againn. Bhí orainn á bhfoghlaim. Tagann sé go mínádúrtha dúinn. Bímse i gcónaí ag rá, “Bhí sé iontach mínádúrtha domh ag mo chéad pháiste, ar mo dara páiste bhí sé nádúrtha mar bhí an nós déanta, ach thóg sé blianta an nós sin a dhéanamh.” *So* mothaím trua nuair a smaoiním ar na daoine sin, ar an sheanmháthair sin agus babaí beag sa teach agus í ag mothú nach raibh cead aici Gaeilg a labhairt nó na suantraihte i nGaeilg a dhéanamh léi, nó bheith ag rá, ag úsáid foclaí léi, a thacadh go nádúrtha léi. Ins an teach sin, is as an Ghaeltacht i nDún na nGall máthair mo sheanmháthar, fiú dí, bhí sise ag dul in éadan a dúchas féin a bheith ag labhairt i mBéarla. D’amharc mise ar an daonáireamh, tharla [sé] sin in go leor leor tithe.

That thing about the ‘wild barbarous mountains of *Muintir Luinigh*’, that was the perspective of people looking in from the outside. But considering it from the side of folklore and language, I think it worked as a bit of an incubator. Because it was so remote, because the mountains were keeping people in, they were also keeping English out. The main roads weren’t passing through *An Caisleán Glas*, and they said that English grew with the main roads. Any time that a train came, a good main road was built, obviously that brought new people in, and brought English in. Whereas, that wasn’t the case in the Sperrins. It was hard on people, but it kept the Irish alive. And I’ve heard stories, even about the English in this area, my dad uses ‘besom’ instead of ‘broom’ and other words like that. It’s said that this Shakespearean English came about because the local people didn’t speak English. They learned English from the big houses, the rich people. Because of that, the English that the locals had was a different version even than the English spoken by the villagers fifty miles down the road.

So with all that, your perspective, your world view, it’s shaped through the language and all of those connections around you. How you would be helping each other, that customary respect, you’re connected with the placenames, with your neighbors, sharing craic and conversations and storytelling. And that in every village. You are incredibly connected with your community. I suppose it’s different nowadays, people are more tucked away in their houses, but you’re still attentive to the significance of the local townlands and attentive to your neighbors.

Was there a specific time that the intergenerational link of spoken Irish was broken?

Irish was still alive and fairly central, and the majority of the community would have spoken it at the beginning of the 1900s. At that time, people were probably bilingual. The thing is, the grandmother and grandfather would have spoken Irish, the next generation would have likely spoken Irish and English, and then the change that happened... My grandmother was born around 1912. This is a common story. From her memory, she was living in a house – this is at the start of the 1900s – in her house, her grandmother only spoke Irish. Her mother and her father, they both spoke Irish, and they both spoke English. And then with the children, they didn’t speak any Irish. And the grandmother was told not to be speaking to the children, because the parents were trying to keep the children from learning Irish. That’s the breaking of relationships. I think it’s natural for your mother and grandmother to be able to talk to their children.

In my work, I am often discussing with people who are trying to raise their children with Irish, the majority of whom are people similar to me who would have learned Irish themselves as adults. We were discussing yesterday how, at times, it feels strange to us to be speaking in a language other than the one we were raised in, trying to say nursery rhymes that we never practised before, maybe that we didn’t even know until we had children. We had to learn them. It comes unnaturally to us. I am always saying, “It was incredibly unnatural for me with my first child, but with my second child it felt natural because I had established the practice, though it took years to do.” So I feel pity when I think of those people, that grandmother with a small baby in the house and she felt like she didn’t have permission to speak Irish with the child or to be saying lullabies to them, or to be saying the words of support that would have naturally come to her. In that house, my mother’s grandmother was from Donegal, so even for her she was going against her own upbringing by speaking in English. Looking at the census, that happened in many many houses.

Na daoine a mhair níos faide leis an Ghaeilg, na daoine cosúil le Seán Ó Cearbhallain amuigh i nGleann Aichle. Bhí seisean beo isteach sna caogaidí, ach dúirt seisean gur bhog seisean— bhí na teaghlaigh iontach mór ag an am sin, b'fhéidir ochtar, deichniúr páistí ag daoine, *so* bhí tú cinéal *shipped out* chuig d' aintín nó uncail nó seanmháthair in amanna b'fhéidir nuair a tháinig páistí beaga agus b'fhéidir go raibh cuidiú de dhíth ag na daoine. Dúirt Seán Ó Caireallain go raibh seisean ina chónaí lena mhamó. Sin an fáth go raibh Gaeilg an-mhaith go fóill aige, mar bhí sé sa teach agus *obviously* bhí siadsan ag labhairt leis, mar sin an nós teanga a bhí acu. Na daoine a raibh an Ghaeilge beo níos faide acu, is daoine b'fhéidir nar phós siad, b'fhéidir cúpla deartháir agus deirfiúr ina gcónaí le chéile agus nar phós aon duine acu agus *just* lean siad leis an Ghaeilg. Nó bhí siad ina gcónaí le seanaintín nó uncail. *But* taobh istigh de ghlúin, *really, yeah* glúin, ón tús na fichiú haoise, labhraíodh an Ghaeilg ins sa cheantar sin, ach taobh istigh glúin, dhá ghlúin, bhí siad bogtha go hiomlán i dtreo an Bhéarla.

Ag an am sin, bunaíodh Conradh na Gaeilge, thart fá deireadh 1880s nó thart air sin nuair a [bhí an] GAA bunaithe. Bhí siad ag déanamh iarrachta an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. Chuir siad scoil samhraidh ar bun ar An Chaiseán Ghlas, agus chuir siad na scoileanna samhraidh seo ar bun ins na háiteanna ina raibh an Ghaeilg beo go fóill. Léigh mé rud éigin fá trí chéad daoine ag dul chuig ranganna Gaeilge ag an am sin. Bhí pictiúirí ann de Casement ag teacht, Mac Néill, Pádraig Pearse, na ceangaltaí sin. Bhí an náisiúnachas go mórmhór i mbéal an phobail ag an am. Agus bhí Protastúnaigh mar Alice Milligan ag smaoineamh ins an treo sin. Tháinig sise amach ón Ómaigh, duine den cinéal uaisleaicme Protastúnach a bhí ann. Tháinig sise amach ag an am sin ag bailiú scéaltaí, amhráin. Mar thuig sise, “Seo rud iontach tábhachtach,” – bhí Gaeilg aici – “seo rud iontach tábhachtach, caithfidh muid á chaomhnú.” Bhuail sí le teaghlaigh Clann Uí Threasaigh agus bhailigh sí amhráin ón clann sin. An leagan a bhí ag Clann Uí Threasaigh de ‘Óró ‘Sé Do Bheatha Abhaile’, is amhrán Seacóibéiteach a bhí ann, sular athraíodh é chun náisiúnachas a spreagadh.

Rinne daoine a ndícheall le go mairfeadh an Ghaeltacht ach bhí an brú ag teacht ón Bhéarla, agus ansin a bhí 1916 *so* cuireadh deireadh leis an scoil samhraidh ansin. Tá sé suimiúil, na daoine is mó náisiúnaí agus bróduil as an chultúr ins An Chaiseán Ghlas, tá siad gaolta le cuid de na daoine seo. Na daoine a bhí gníomhach ag chur na Gaeilge chun cinn, ag iarraidh á samhail, tá a fuil ag teacht fríd na daoine go fóill mórtosach agus bróduil agus ag iarraidh á céiliuradh.

Ach ansin 1916 agus ansin tháinig, tá a fhios agat, achan rud ar Éirí Amach na Cásca, agus ansin tháinig an scoilt sa tír. ‘*They set up an Orange state for an Orange people*’, agus níor dtearnadh aon rud ansin chun cuidiú leis an Ghaeilg. Sílim dá mba rud é go raibh muid go fóill ins na fiche sé condae agus an rialtas ó dheas, níl a fhios agam an ndéanfadh sé mórán maitheais ach an oiread, mar nuair a amharcann tú ar an Ghaeltacht, neamhaird, tá sé scriosta ag rialtas na hÉireann. Níl a fhios agam an mbeadh mórán difir ann, ach an difear a bheadh ann, sílim ná go mbeadh b'fhéidir Gaeilg ins na bunscoilte. Mothaím go raibh deireadh iomlán, an stát nua, ní raibh caint ar an Ghaeltacht, is dócha gur fágadh aon ceantar iargúlta ar bith, aon ceantar iargúlta ina raibh Caitliceacaigh agus náisiúnaithe, gur fágadh iad mar bhí achan rud ag dul chun *far side of the Bann* nó pé rud, an scéal sin ar fad.

The people who kept speaking Irish the longest, people like Seán Ó Cearbhallain out in *Gleann Aichle*. He was living into the 1950s, and he said that he moved – the families were large at that time, maybe eight, ten children, so you were kind of shipped out to your aunts and uncles or grandparents at times, maybe when a new baby was born and the family needed help. Seán Ó Cearbhallain said he was living with his grandmother. That’s the reason that he still had very good Irish, because they were living together and speaking together, just that being the habit. The people who spoke Irish the longest, were people who maybe never married, maybe brothers and sisters living together and none of them had married, and so they just kept on speaking Irish. Or they were living with a great-aunt or uncle. But within a generation, really, yeah, a generation, from the beginning of the twentieth century, Irish used to be spoken in this area, but within a generation, two generations, they all moved to speaking English.

At that time, *Conradh na Gaeilge* was founded around the end of the 1880s, around when the GAA was founded.¹⁰ They were taking a stand to save the areas where Irish was still spoken. They started a summer school in *An Chaiseán Glas*, and they were doing summer schools in the places where Irish was still spoken. I read something about three hundred people going to Irish classes at that time. There were pictures of Roger Casement visiting, Eoin Mac Néill, Padraig Pearse,¹¹ all those connections. Irish nationalism was on the rise at that time. And there was a Protestant by the name of Alice Milligan working in that direction too. She came from Omagh, kind of an upper-class Protestant, but she came out collecting stories and songs. Because she understood, “This is something very important” – she spoke Irish – “this is something very important and we have to preserve it.” She visited with the Ó Treasaigh family and collected songs. The Ó Treasaigh’s had a version of ‘*Óró ‘Sé Do Bheatha Abhaile*,’ a Jacobite song that then was adapted by Pearse to inspire Irish nationalism.

People made their best effort to keep the Gaeltacht alive, but English was coming in on all sides, and then there was the 1916 Rising¹² which put an end to that school. It’s interesting, the people who are most involved with Irish nationalism and cultural pride in *An Chaiseán Glas* nowadays, they’re related to many of those visionaries who worked to promote the Irish language. That blood still runs through the activists of today, proud of their Gaelic culture and working to uplift it.

But then with 1916 and you know, everything that came with the Easter Rising, and then came the partition. ‘They set up an Orange State for an Orange People,’ and nothing was done to help with Irish.¹³ I think that if we were still in the 26 counties with the southern government, I don’t know if it would have done much good at all, because when you look at the Gaeltacht there, they’ve been ignored and left to decay by the Irish government. I don’t know if there would have been much of a difference here, except maybe that they would have taught Irish in the primary schools. I feel like there was a complete end with the new state, because there was no talk about the Irish-speaking communities, no talk about anywhere that was rural or with a Catholic or nationalist community, just they were left out because all the attention was going to the industrial areas.

Déarfainn go raibh sé [An Ghaeilg] ag an dé deiridh ag an stát sin. Fuair an cainteoir dhúchais dheireanach bás, Johnny Bán Mac Giolla Uidhir, i 1972. Ní sin comh fada siar. Tá daoine go fóill beo a bhfuil cuimhne acu ar na seandaoine ag labhairt i nGaeilg. Bhí fear ann, An Moinsineoir Breandán Ó Doibhlin, léachtor mór le rá ón ceantar s’againn, ó Rúscaigh. Bhí cuimhne aige ar na daoine deireanacha a labhair Gaeilg, agus bhí tionchar mór acu air. Is daoine mór é a bhí ar son an Gaelachas, dearcadh an traidisiúin, ar an chultúr. Bhí sé ag rá, “Tá rud éigin níos dúchasaí [ann], ba chóir dúinn a bheith ag céiliuradh sin.” Is léir go raibh tionchar na ndaoine sin ag go leor daoine, ach mothaím brónach nach bhfuil cuimhne ag an phobal anois, *really*, ar an stuif sin ar fad. Sílim, ba chóir go mbeadh níos mó teagmháil le daoine ar sin.

An dóigh leat gur spreag gluaiseacht na Gaeilge an feachtas atá agaibh in éadan Dalraidan?

Yeah, go hiomlán. Tá sé suimiúil go bhfuil Gaeilg ag Cormac agus Fidelma. Tá Gaeilg an-an-mhaith acu. Agus ansin tá daoine ann ar an fheachtas gur Protastúnaigh iad, nach bhfuil aon tuiscint acu, ach tá mise ina dhiaidh cuid stuif a mhinigh, cuid oráidí a bhíonn iarrtar orm go minic, dán a léamh faoin na Speiríní. Inár bhfeachtas, aon imeacht, iarrtar orm [an dán] sin a léamh, mar aithneann an feachtas go bhfuil nasc ann, go bhfuil muid ag cosaint rud atá níos doimhne ná díreach an talamh a fheicimid. Tá na sinsir ann, agus cé iad na sinsir ná na daoine a labhairt i nGaeilg agus á cothaigh agus á coinnigh.

Bhí an Ghaeilg ar na póstaicir. Cinéal gur tharla sé go nádúrtha, ní hea gur shuigh muid síos agus gur dhúirt muid, “Tá an Ghaeilg a dhul a bheith mar croílár nó mar chuid lárnach den ár bhfeachtas,” ach tharla sé. Bhí daoine oscailte dó, agus bhí daoine iontach sásta nuair a chonaic siad [é].

Agus ansin, bhí méain na Gaeilge comh comh tacúil. Caithfidh mé a rá, go leor éagraíochtaí Gaeilge ag déanamh físeán – Mólsceál, Meon Eile, bhí cláracha a bheith le cur amach ar TG4. *Obviously* [tá] Gaeilg agamsa, bhí sin maith, bhí siad ábalta nascú linn, agus bhí muid ábalta cuidiú leis na cláracha. Ach chuir [sé] sin go leor deiseanna dúinn an scéal a chur amach fosta. Nuair a chuaigh mise go Toronto chun *PDAC [Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada] conference*, nuair a rinne muid cinéal agóide ann, bhí sé tábhachtach domhsa Gaeilg a labhairt ar an lá sin, mar is a bhí ‘*Ireland Open For Business*’ an *conference* ar an lá sin. Rinne muid agóid, agus bhí Seán Kyne ann, *minister for infrastructure* nó pé rud ag an am, agus bhí Gaeilg aige, *so* labhair muid Gaeilg leis. Agus ansin, bhí suim ag Raidió na Gaeltachta sa scéal, agus ó shin, bhí siad i gcónaí iontach tacúil linn le aon rud a dhul ar aghaidh. Ar thaobh fiú bolscaireachta agus poiblíochta, bhí siad lárnach dúinn agus bhí siad cuidiúil.

Ach, mhothaigh sé nádúrtha, mothaigh sé i gceart. *Just* bhí sé sa chroí againn ionainn, agus léigh mé ó shin rud a scríobh Mairtín Ó Cadhain, an píosa mór a rinne sé faoi athghabháil na hÉireann, gur labhair sé faoi an tábhacht ar an Ghaeilg a bheith i lár an aonaigh, an Ghaeilg a bheith mar chuid d’aon fheachtas. Mothaím gur sin, pléimid faoin mhianadóireacht, ach pléimid é ar bhealach gur coilíneachas é. Is coilíneachas é ar an bhealach go bhfuil siad ag iarraidh ag teacht isteach, brabús a dhéanamh as rud, an brabús a thógail amach ar shiúl ó na daoine atá in aice leis. Sílim nuair a amharcann tú ar aon rud a bhaineann le coilíneachas, tá muid ag iarraidh an tír seo a chosaint agus tá an Ghaeilg comh fite fuaite agus tábhachtach leis an talamh.

I would say that Irish was on its last legs at that point. The last native speaker, Johnny Bán Mac Giolla Uidhir, died in 1972. That's not so long ago. There are people who still remember the old folks speaking in Irish. There was a man, Monsignor Breandán Ó Doibhlin, who was a famous lecturer from our area, from *Rúscaigh*. He remembered the last Irish speakers, and they had a big impression on him. He worked hard on behalf of the Gaelic tradition, the Gaelic worldview, the culture. He used to say, "There's something deeper here, something native; we ought to be celebrating that." It's clear that there was a big influence from that generation on many people, but I feel saddened that we don't remember all that as a community any more. I think people ought to have more connections with that heritage.

Do you think that the Irish language movement energised the campaign against Dalraidan?

Yeah, completely. It's interesting that Cormac and Fidelma speak Irish, they have very good Irish. And then, there are people in the campaign who are Protestants and don't have the same understanding, but I'm often translating and explaining for them, being asked to speak in Irish, to recite poetry. In our campaign, at every event, I get asked to read this local poem in Irish, because people in the campaign recognise that there is a link there, that we are protecting something more than just the land we see. Our ancestors are there, and who are our ancestors but the people who spoke Irish, who nourished and sustained and protected the language and the culture.

The Irish language is on all our posters. It happened naturally, not like we all sat down and decided, "Irish will be the heart of our campaign or something we will be promoting," it just happened on its own. People were open to that, and people were very satisfied to see the language on our posters.

And then, Irish language media has been so, so supportive. I have to say, many Irish language organisations have been making videos – Mólscéal, Meon Eile, different programs being produced by TG4. Obviously I speak Irish, which has been helpful for being able to make those connections, and then we were able to help provide content for those programs. But it's also provided many opportunities for us to spread the story as well. When I went to Toronto for the PDAC conference,¹⁴ and we did a protest there, it was important for me to speak Irish that day, because the conference theme that day was 'Ireland Is Open For Business.' We held a protest, and Seán Kyne, the Irish minister for infrastructure or whatever, was there. He is able to speak Irish, and so we addressed him in Irish. And after that, Raidió na Gaeltachta was interested in running the story, and from then on they have been incredibly supportive of us with anything we have going on. Even just with publicity and raising awareness, they have been a central part of our campaign and very helpful.

But all of that just felt natural, felt right. It was just in our hearts and in us. Since then, I read a piece by Mairtín Ó Cadhain,¹⁵ where he talks about the reclamation of Ireland for the common people. He speaks about the importance of having the Irish language at the centre of everything we do, part of any campaign or organising. I feel that way, we're talking about mining, but we're talking about it in a way where we recognise it as colonialism. It's colonialism in the way that they're trying to come into a community, extract resources and extract profit, take that money away and leave the local people out. When you look at anything that stems from colonialism, we are trying to protect this land, and the Irish language is inseparably entwined with the land.

Tógann sé ardú croí dom é sin a chluinstin. Tá sé sin chomh tábhachtach. An bhfuil aisling agat do thodhchaí na háite seo, cúrsaí díchoilínithe, an chéad ghliúin eile, an teanga, ag dul ar aghaidh i dtreo eile?

Bhuel, is dócha An Caisleán Glas féin, tá muid ina dhiaidh á fhóbairt. [Is é] croílár an phobail ná an cumann peile atá againn. Sin an áit ina bhfuil an club óige, sin an áit ina bhfuil stuif de na daoine fásta, sin an áit a mbíonn ranganna, spórt, áit ina bhfuil na háiseanna is fearr atá againne sa phobal. Tá fóbairt nua a dhéanamh, tá foirgneamh mór nua a thógail, agus an t-ainm atá air ná Croí. Croí an phobail, croí an Chaisleáin Ghlais, sílim go mbeidh Croí mar ainm ar an halla.

Bhí cruinniu againn ansin faoi cén íomhá atá muid ag iarraidh go bhfaigheadh daoine nuair a thagann siad chuig An Caisleán Glas. Nuair a shiúlann siad isteach na doirse sin, caidé atá muid ag iarraidh go bhfeicfidh siad? Bhí muid ina dhiaidh ag caint faoin stair, na bailte fearainn, an t-eolas ar an bhéaloideas saibhre atá againn, ag tabhairt aitheantais de na rudaí a bhí dearmaid déanta acu ar feadh céad bliain, agus a rá anois, “*No actually*, seo muid, seo ár stair.” Ach ní amháin go bhfuil sé ár stair, ag iarraidh na daoine óga a tharraingt isteach agus an stair sin a thabhairt, stair beo dóibhsan. Go bhfuil an Ghaeilg mar chuid d’ a saol. Nuair a thagann siad go club óige Ghaeilge againne le cúpla bliain anuas, déanaimid iarracht a chinntiú go dtuigeann achan páiste a ainm i nGaeilg, an bhaile fearainn as a dtáinig siad. Go dtuigeann siad an stair, go bhfuil siad ar eolas [go bhfuil] cloch oghaim againn, go leor stúif nach bhfuil taifeadta nó aitheanta.

Tá go leor deiseanna chun na traidisiúin atá againne a cheiliúradh agus a úsáid. Tá rud ag tarlú anois ar Oíche Shamhna, le tine chnamha, agus sin an chéad uair a raibh aon rud mar sin ann. Déanann muid rud éigin thart ar Imbolg, ar Lá Fhéile Bhríde, gach bliain de ghnáth. Arís, an pobal ag teacht le chéile, saor in aisce, ag suí síos agus ag déanamh na croiseanna le chéile, deis a thabhairt do dhaoine bualadh le chéile. Ba bhreá liom na féilte págánacha sin a cheiliúradh. Daoine a thógail ar ais ar an nádúrtha.

Sílim má thugaimid na huirlisí den na daoine óga agus d’ achan duine atá ina mamó, seanmháthair agus seanathair, má thugaimid na huirlisí ar fad dóibh le tuiscint ar ár stair, roinnfidh siadsan é lena bpaistí, lena ngarphaistí. Na páistí a fhásann aníos le eolas ar cé hiad, cad as a dtáinig siad, cé hiad na daoine as a tháinig siad, an áit. Beidh an tuiscint sin acu agus beidh siad bróduil agus mórtasach faoi, chan cosúil le céad bhliain ó shin nuair a bhí daoine a rá, “Óró, níl muid ag iarraidh Gaeilge a labhairt.”

Bhí Muintir Loinigh ina masla dá déarfadh daoine— Aon uair a bhí Muintir Loinigh ann, bhí siad ag caint ar, *like*, an dóigh a labhraíonn daoine faoi na daoine in *Appalachia*, *like they were all backwards*, an cinéal meoin sin, sin an tuiscint a bhí ag daoine taobh amuigh de Mhuintir Loinigh, taobh amuigh den Chaisleán Ghlas, Creagán, Gleann Aichle, Goirtín. Shíl siad go raibh na daoine sin aisteach, “*The mountain people, they’re weird, they’re backward, they’re slow.*” Mar is dócha gur tháinig siad isteach [agus] b’fhéidir go raibh Gaeilg acu, b’fhéidir nach raibh Béarla rómhaith acu, b’fhéidir go raibh canuint iontach láidir acu. Mar bhí siad ag labhairt ins an darna theanga, so bhí an meon sin ann.

It raises my spirits to hear that. It's very important. Do you have a vision for the future of this place, what it means to decolonise, to reclaim the language, supporting the next generation to go in the other direction?

Well I suppose in *An Caisleán Glas* itself, we're trying to build it up. The heart of the community is our Gaelic football club. That's the place where we have the youth club, where we have programs for adults, where classes are held, sports, the nicest place we have in the community. There is some new development underway, a big new space getting built, which will be named *Croí*. It's the heart of the community, it's the heart of *An Caisleán Glas*, so it's fitting that the new hall will be named *Croí*.

We had a meeting there about what kind of image we want people to see when they come into *An Caisleán Glas*. When they walk in those doors, what are we trying to present them with? We were talking about the local history, the villages and townlands, the rich folklore and oral history we have, bringing recognition back to the things that have been forgotten for a hundred years and saying, "No actually, *this* is who we are, *this* is our history." But not only is it about the past, but also about bringing in the next generation, pulling in the young people and sharing the living culture with them. That the Irish language can be a living part of their lives. When they come to the youth club that we've been running for a few years now, we make an effort to ensure every child knows their name in Irish, knows the Irish name of their village. That they understand their history, the heritage we have here that isn't written down or widely recognised.

There's many opportunities to celebrate and promote our traditions. We have events now at *Oíche Shamhna*, with a big bonfire, and this is the first time we've done anything like that. We do something around *Imbolg* every year typically. Again, it's to bring the community together, for free, to sit down together and make Bridget's crosses and come together and talk. I would love to have celebrations for all of the pagan festivals, to bring people back to the natural world around them.

I think that if we give the tools to the young people, to all the grandmothers and grandfathers, if we give them all the tools they need to understand their own history, they will share them with their children, their grandchildren. Those children will get to grow up understanding who they are, where they came from, who their people were, the place around them. They would have that understanding, that pride, that sense of love, so different from a hundred years ago when people were ashamed of their language, "Oh, we need to stop speaking Irish."

Muintir Luinigh [the people of the Sperrins] was used as an insult. Any time someone referenced *Muintir Luinigh*, they were spoken about the way people speak about communities in Appalachia, like they were all backwards, that sort of thing. That was the perspective people had on the outside looking into the Sperrings, into *An Caisleán Glas*, *Creagán*, *Gleann Aichle*, *Goirtín*. They thought those communities were strange, "The mountain people, they're weird, they're backward, they're slow." But I suppose when those outsiders came in, the locals spoke in Irish and they couldn't understand them. They had a strong accent, they couldn't communicate across the language barrier. They would have been speaking in a second language, and so that sort of stereotype developed.

Ba bhreá liomsa anois, sílim go bhfuil sé ann cheana féin, tá muintir An Chaisleáin Ghlais go bróduil as cé hiad, as cén áit a dtáinig siad. Nuair a amharcann tú ar na háiseanna atá againn, is pobal fíorbheag muid, ceantar daonra fíorbheag, ach tá áiseanna dochreidte againn. Nuair a amharcann tú ar an áit sin, páirc pheile, tá cumann peile againn, tá cumann camógaíochta, cumann liathróid lamha, *like we punch above our weight* cinéal. Sílim féin gur dtagann sin as an bhród agus as an tuiscint ar cé muid.

Caithfidh go bhfuil nasc éigin ann eadar an stuif sin ar fad, agus eadar a bheith bróduil ionat féin agus muiníneach ionat féin, agus sílim féin gur muintir an Chaisleáin Ghlais muiníneach iontu féin ar bhealach iontach *subtle*. Ach an grá a tháinig as An Chaisleán Ghlas, tuigimuid cé muid, tá muid bróduil as sin, agus is leor sin. Ach tá sé suimiúil nuair a amharcann tú ón taobh amuigh, tá rud éigin ansin. Sílim go bhfuil ceangal leis an dúchas sin ag teacht fríd.

Nach bhfuil sa mhianadóireacht ach cuid bheag den scéal. An dtig leat a insint dom fán fheactas in aghaidh Dalradian?

Dalridian, is mór agus beag é is dócha. Tá daoine ag leanstan ar aghaidh lena saol, ach tá sé ann agus tá sé mar namhaide againn ag smaoineamh caidé a shocras.

Tá siad ag iarraidh mianach mór, monarcha mhór phróiseála a thógail, ar thaobh an tsléibhe. An áit ina bhfuil siad ann, ná An Cnocán Buí, *'The Little Yellow Hill' ironically*. An raibh a fhios ag daoine go raibh ór ann? Níl a fhios agam. Sin an áit a bhfuil siad ag iarraidh á thógail, agus tá sé níos lú ná míle méadar ón pháirc pheile agus an stuif sin. Sin an áit a dtéann ár bpáistí chun an club óige, chun traenáil peile, camógaíochta, liathróid lamha. Sin an áit a mbíonn muid ann den scéimeanna samhraidh. Beidh muid amuigh san aer úr. Agus ansin tá sin níos lú ná míle méadar ón bhunscoil, ón naiscoil. *So* is rud mór é do dhaoine a bheith ag smaoineamh sa dóigh sin. Tá daoine atá ina gcónaí béal dorais leis, is athrú mór meilteach a bheadh ann dóibhsan.

Baineann leis an tsláinte, na ceimiceáin san aer, na ceimiceáin ar fad a thioctas as an dramhaíl charraige atá fágtha i ndiaidh an dóigh a bheadh siad á phróiseáil, caithfidh sé a dhul áit éigin. Cuirfidh siad é ar thaobh an tsléibhe [é]. Tá siad ag dul sliabh nua a thógail ar thaobh an tsléibhe a bheas seacht *story* deag in ard. Agus ní thig linn a bheith muiníneach go bhfanfaidh sé. Bhí sciorradh talaimh cúpla bliain ó shin nuair a bhí droch drochbháisteach ann, agus bhí daoine ag rá, *"Is 1 in a 100 year slide é."* Ach tá an timpeallach agus tá athrú aeraide ann, agus tá an aimsir ag athrú i gcónaí. Tá an aimsir i bhfad níos difriúla anois ná mar a bhí sé fiche bliain ó shin, i mo chuimhne féin. Is cuimhin liom mo dhaidí, bíonn seisean a rá go bhfuil sé ar míre an difriúil atá ann. Agus is fear é a bhí amuigh ar na sléibhte, *so* tá sé níos ceangailte leis an aimsir ná mar atá mise fiú. Athrú dochreidte a bhí ann ar thaobh na báistí.

Caidé a tharlofas má tá [sé] sin ag dul síos isteach ins na haibhneacha? Na haibhneacha sin, téann siad síos i dtreo An Bhaile Nua, áit a bhfaigheann go leor de na daoine thart anseo an t-uisce. Sílim tá daoine amuigh ansin [ag rá] *"Níl bhaineann seo linn sin ar An Chaisleán Ghlas,"* ach is scéal mór é seo, nuair a amharcann muid ar Loch nEachach, seo rud i bhfad níos mó ná díreach rud beag áitiúil ins na Speiríní. Is rud a bheas tionchar ar ár fhéin ar fad.

Now I would love to – and I think it’s already happening – to see the community of *An Caisleán Glas* proud of who they are and who they came from. And when you look at what we’ve built up here, we’re a small community, we have a small population, but we have incredible resources and achievements. With our football pitch, we have a Gaelic football club, a camogie club, a handball club, like we punch above our weight, sort of. I think even that comes from our pride and understanding of who we are.

There must be some sort of link between all that, and being proud and self-confident in who you are, and I think that the community of *An Caisleán Glas* is self-confident, but in a quiet, subtle way. But the love on display here in *An Caisleán Glas*, we know who we are, we’re proud about that, and that’s enough. But sometimes you need a broader perspective to see the connection, how our heritage comes through into daily life.

It seems like mining is just a small piece of the story here. Can you describe the campaign against Dalradian?

Dalradian, it’s a small thing and it’s a big thing I suppose. People are getting on with their lives, but the threat is still here and we all think about what might happen down the line.

They’re attempting to develop a large mine and an industrial processing plant on the side of the mountain. The name of that area is *An Cnocán Buí*, or ‘The Little Yellow Hill’ ironically enough. Like, had people known there was gold there? I’m not sure. But that’s the place they’re attempting to develop the mine and the processing plant, and it’s all less than a kilometre from the football pitch and community centre. It’s less than a kilometre from where we send our children to the youth club, to football training, to camogie, to handball, the place where we have our summer camps. We will be outside breathing in that air full of toxic dust. It’s less than a kilometre from the primary school, from the nursery school. So this proposed mine would be a huge issue if it ever was developed and people are paying attention. All the people living next door, it would have a huge impact to them.

Regarding public health, the chemicals in the air, all the chemicals that will come out of waste rock leftover after the processing, they must go somewhere. They want to put the tailings pile on the side of the mountain. They’re going to build a new mountain on the side of the mountain that would be seventeen stories tall. And we can’t be confident that the tailings pile would stay there. We had a landslide a few years ago during a heavy heavy rainstorm, and people said, “This is a 1-in-a-100 year storm.” But the environment and the climate has changed, and climate change is getting worse.¹⁶ The weather is far different than even twenty years ago, in my own memory. And I remember my father saying, he spoke about how crazy the difference was. He is a man who spent his life out on the mountain, so he is much more connected with the weather than me. But there has been an unbelievable change in the rainfall.

So what would happen if the tailings pile slid down into the rivers? Those rivers, they go in the direction of Newtownstewart, that’s where the drinking water comes for many people around here.¹⁷ People might say “We’re not affected by the issues in *An Caisleán Glas*,” but it’s a huge issue. When you look at the Lough Neagh environmental disaster,¹⁸ we see that the impact spreads out far more than just some little local thing. It would have an impact on all of us.

Má leanann siad orthu, má éiríonn siad an cead pleanála chun an *process plant* a dhéanamh— An rud a dúirt siad, nuair a bhí an *cyanide* ann, “*The cyanide is needed to make it profitable, it won’t be basically economically viable gan an cyanide. Now they’re saying they can*, is féidir le á dhéanamh gan an *cyanide*. Tá a fhios againn ar fad, aon chomhlacht mar seo, mar éiríonn leo á chur isteach, bheidh siad a rá, “*We have to recuperate our profits that we have projected, blah blah blah.*” Beidh siad ag iarraidh níos mó *processing* a dhéanamh. Ní bheidh siad ag déanamh *processing* ar stuif ón Chaisleán Ghlas amháin. Beidh mianaigh beaga bídeacha nach raibh *economically viable*, anois *economically viable*, bíonn mianaigh beaga ag oscailt i bhfad níos minice. Beidh an stuif sin a thabhairt chuig An Caisleán Glas, beidh níos mó trácht ann, beidh níos mó dochar. Agus beidh siad ag rá, “*Oh well we’re going to take in cyanide now or whatever, cuz we wanna get this all done.*” So sin an rud, *it’s not just an* rud atá os ár gcomhair, *it’s caidé a thagfas ina dhiaidh*. Léiríonn an t-eolas ó fud fad an domhain nach rud maith é an mhianadóireacht ar chor ar bith, don timpeallach ar aon bhealach.

Agus an bhfuil rialtas na Sé Chontae ina dhiaidh tacaíocht a thabhairt den chomhlacht sin?

Bhuel is iadsan a mheall iad. Arís, is suimiúil mar labhair muid faoi, ‘*Ireland is the most named place*’, *it’s also the most mapped place in the world*, maidir le *geology*, mar bhí an Tellus Project ann. Tá léarscála déanta ar achan uile píosa talaimh ar fud na hÉireann. Agus chuaigh an dream *Geological Survey of Ireland*, chuaigh siad chuig, is dócha in aice leis an *Investment Fund for Ireland* agus an rud de tuaisceart na hÉireann, chuaigh siad ag iarraidh infheistíochta a mhealladh go hÉirinn agus chuig tuaisceart na hÉireann. Mheall siad Dalradian, tugadh níos mó ná [trí chéad] míle punt dóibh le teacht. Agus sin a fáth gur tháinig siadsan, deir dóibh féin. Fuair siad airgead ón stát, is Arlene Foster a bhí mar aire ag an am.

Agus an rud sin a bhí ag PDAC an t-am sin ‘*Ireland Is Open For Business*’, agus an lá ar fad bhí siad ag rá, “Tar anseo, is tír sábháilte muid, tá muid ag cur fáilte romhaibh, tá an Tellus Project déanta, tuigean muid go díreach caidé atá faoin talamh, níl sibh ag dul taiscéalaíochta gan aon eolas.” Mar is dócha in áiteanna eile tá siad ag dul sa seans, b’fhéidir. “Tá a fhios againn go bhfuil sin ann, agus oibreoidh muid libh chun na deiseanna is fearr a thabhairt daoibh.”

An mór an difear eadar an dá rialtas ó thaobh an dearcadh atá acu ar chúrsaí fórbairtha agus eacnamaíochta?

Ag an lá sin, is rud den dá thaobh den oileán a bhí ann. Is beagán eadar an dearcadh [s’acu]. An t-aon rud anois, is dócha, mar gheall go raibh *Brexit* ann eadar an dá linn, tá níos lú cosaint anois ó thuaidh. Déarfainn mar gheall nach bhfuil muidinne go hoifigiúil san Aontas Eorpach ó thaobh na dlíthe agus na cosaint Eorpach. Ach tá a fhios againn nach stopann aibhneacha ag an teorainn. Tá an t-ádh linn ar bhealach go bhfuil na *transboundary issues* againn mar beidh cosaint níos mó is dócha againn, tá súil agam.

Tá siad ar fad ar an dearcadh chéanna. Is síormíre, mar atá muid ag amharc ar *carbon* rialacha agus ag iarraidh an rud sin a chosaint, tá rialacha timpeallachta ann. Ach ansin, nuair a amharcaím ar aon rud againne le rialú agus aon doicmead stát, *it’s like*, “*Oh yeah*, tá an chosaint fíorthábhachtach, tá an timpeallacht fíorthábhachtach, ach i gcásanna éagsúla, má bhaineann an buntáiste eacnamúil níos mó ná cás [timpeallachta]...” cinéal tógann sin *trump card*. Sin brónach.

If they continue on, if they succeed in getting planning permission to build the processing plant... The thing that they said is, when the proposal included using cyanide as part of the chemical processing, that “The cyanide is needed to make it profitable,” it won’t be basically economically viable without the cyanide. Now they’re saying they can process the gold without the cyanide, but we all know, any company like that, if they succeed getting a foot in the door, next thing they’ll be saying, “We have to recuperate the profits we projected, blah blah blah.” They will try to do more processing, more production. And it won’t just be the ore from *An Caisleán Glas*, but from all sorts of small mines that previously weren’t economically viable, and now would be economically viable. Small mines like that would be opening far more often, and all those toxic chemicals brought to *An Caisleán Glas*, more traffic, more harm to the community. And then they’ll say, “Oh well we’re going to take in cyanide now or whatever, cuz we want to get this all done.” So that’s the issue, it’s not only what is directly proposed, but what comes afterwards. The doors would open to further and further damage. And all the evidence from around the world shows that mining does extreme damage, to human health, to the environment, to community wellbeing.

Is the government of the Six Counties going out and supporting this company?

Well, it was them who persuaded the company to come. Again, we spoke about ‘Ireland is the most named place’, it’s also the most mapped place in the world, regarding the geology, because of the Tellus Project.¹⁹ Maps were made of all of Ireland. And then that group Geological Survey Ireland, they went with the Investment Fund for Ireland and its equivalent for the north of Ireland, they all went looking to draw investment into Ireland and the north. They convinced Dalradian, giving them more than £300,000 to come here.²⁰ And that’s the reason they came, and they said so themselves. They got money from the state, from Arlene Foster who was minister at the time.

And that whole situation at the PDAC conference, ‘Ireland Is Open For Business,’ the whole day they were saying, “Come here, we’re a safe country, we’ll welcome you, we did the Tellus Project and we understand exactly what minerals are here, you won’t have to do any exploratory work.” Because I suppose in places the companies take a risk not knowing exactly what’s there. But the government is saying, “We know those minerals are here, and we will work with you to offer the best opportunities.”

Is there a big difference on the two sides of the border between the perspectives of the two governments?

On that day, both sides of the island were there. There’s not much difference between them. The only thing now, I suppose, on account of Brexit, we have fewer protections in the north now. On account of us not being an official part of the European Union, we lost European laws and environmental protections. But we know that the rivers don’t stop at the borders. And so we’re lucky, in a way, that we have transboundary issues because that will provide more protections, I hope.

But they all have the same perspective. It’s always crazy, because we look at rules and regulations about carbon and those protections, the environmental rules. But then when I look at any of the regulations and state documents we have, it’s like, “Oh yeah, the protections are truly important, the environment is truly important, but in certain cases, where the economic benefits outweigh the impacts on the [environment]...” that’s sort of the trump card. That’s sad.

Ar a laghad, mothaím go bhfuil an feactas le SOS agus na dreamanna atá i ndiaidh teacht le chéile fríd an Gathering, fríd CAIM [*Communities Against the Injustices of Mining*] an dream sin eadar na grúpaí ar fad in Éirinn atá ag dul i ngleic leis an mhianadóireacht, sílim go bhfuil feachtas maith ina ndiaidh a thosach agus go bhfuil an comhoibriú sin ag cuidiú le brú a chur ar an rialtas. Mar, sílim gur mhothaigh ach an duine go raibh muid ag troid inár bpota beag féin, agus gur raibh muid ag troid dar dúinn féin. Ach nuair a tháinig daoine le chéile, ba léir go raibh siad ábalta a bheith níos laidre.

Agus an bhfuair sibh tacaíocht agus cuidiú ó thíortha eile agus ó ghrúpaí idirnáisiúnta?

Fuair muid neart tacaíochta. Nuair a chuaigh muidne chuig an PDAC fiú, bhí dream ann. Tá go leor de na comhlachtaí mianadóireachta, is ó Ceanada iad, atá ar míre domh agus ag tír nach bhfuil rómhaith ar thaobh na bundúchasaigh ach an oiread. Nuair a amharcann tú ar na mianaigh atá ann, tá siad ar thalamh bundúchasach, agus tá siad ina ndiaidh go leor dochar a dhéanamh ansin.

Caithfidh mé a rá, an dream sin, [*Mining Injustice Solidarity Network*], déanann siadsan agóid gach bliain ag PDAC, is é an rud is mó ar domhan ina thagann na comhlachtaí seo le chéile. Is rud ollmhór é, ní raibh clú againn caidé a bhfuil muid ag dul a dhéanamh. Ach, chuidigh siadsan linn. Bhí siadsan nasctha le go leor dreamanna [atá] i Meiricea Theas. Chuidigh *Friends of the Earth* go mór linn, agus bhí an-nasc acu le daoine ón Peru. Agus ag cuid den chéad imeachtaí a bhí againn ná tháinig bean, Lynda Sullivan le *Friends of the Earth*, tháinig sise ar dtús agus bhí sise ag insint scéal dúinn faoi troid i bPeru, an taithí s'aici i bPeru agus na deacrachtaí ar míre atá siadsan ag dul suas an éadain agus ag troideanna, na daoine a bhí maraithe. Bhí muid ag foghlaim faoi Bherta Cáceres agus an stuif sin ar fad.

Chuaigh dream amach ó Thuisceart Eireann chuig An Amasóin i Mí Feabhra [2025]. Chuaigh mo dheirfiúir Caoimhe agus bhí siad ag iarraidh ban óige, mar tá an Munduruku ins An Amasóin, tá an feactas sin iomlán tiomanta ag na mná, agus ag mná óga. Bhí bean ann, bhí sise ag caint faoi an nasc le teanga agus talamh agus aththógail an rud sin agus díchoilíniú. Rud atá ag Glor na Móna go mór ar a son. Agus ansin bhí Caoimhe ann ó thaobh *Save Our Sperrins*.

Bhí na Munduruku ag troid in éadan na mianadóireachta mídhleathaí. Bhí sé dochreidte, ag teacht síos An Amasóin ar an bhád, agus bhí sí ag taispeaint dóibh, “Seo na mianadóirí ag teacht,” agus na mianadóirí ag teacht ar na báid. Bhí siad ag tógail na *containers* móra lán le uisce glan leo le go mbeidh siadsan ábalta é a ól i rith an lae, ní raibh siadsan sásta an t-uisce áitiúil a ól. Ach bhí siad ag rá le daoine a bhí ina gcónaí [go háitiúil], “Tá an t-uisce go breá, tá an t-uisce iomlán sábháilte, fuair muid tástáil déanta as agus is iomlán sábháilte é,” ach ní ólfadh siadsan é. Ag an am sin, bhí na Munduruku ag cur stop, ag déanamh pléisce ins an bhóthar, ag stopadh na mianadóirí mídhleathacha as teacht isteach sa choill. Tá sé mídhleathach ach ba chuma leis na péas, leis na sráidbhailte, mar bhí siad ag déanamh airgid as na mianadóirí. Tá sé dochreidte an méid is mó a fhoglaimeáinn tú.

An dlúthphártaíocht atá faighte againn ón domhan, agus atá muid ag tógail ar ais, sílim go bhfuil sé thar a bheith luachmhar, agus tugann sé leargas dúinn ar cén fáth nach bhfuil sé maith go leor dúinn a rá, fiú má stopfar air ar An Chaisléan Ghlas, nach féidir linn a rá, “Thig linn mianach a dhéanamh, *but* tóg an *processing plant* áit éigin eile.” *Because*, níl sin maith go leor.

I feel at least that the Save Our Sperrins campaign and the groups who have been coming together during the Gathering, during CAIM [Communities Against the Injustices of Mining], that whole coalition between the different groups in Ireland fighting against mining, I think that a strong campaign is building and that this cooperation is helping to pressure the government. Because we all felt that we were fighting in our own little pots, and we were only fighting for our own protection. But when people came together, it was clear that we could be far stronger together.

And have you received international solidarity and support from different countries and organisations?

We have received much support. When we went to PDAC even, there was a group there. Many of the mining companies are from Canada, which is crazy to me as a country which doesn't treat Indigenous people too well at all. When you look at the mines there, they're on Indigenous land and they're causing lots of harm.

I have to say, that group, Mining Injustice Solidarity Network, they hold a protest every year at the PDAC conference, which is the largest networking event in the world for mining companies. It's a huge event, and we had no idea what we were going to do, but they helped us. And they're connected with many different groups in South America. Friends Of The Earth helped us enormously, and they are very connected with communities in Peru. And at one of the first events that we held, a woman came, Lynda Sullivan from Friends Of The Earth, she came and was telling us stories about the fights against mining in Peru. She was sharing her experience there and the unbelievable difficulties they had standing up against the companies and the struggle, the people who were murdered. We learned about Berta Cáceres²¹ and all that context.

A group from the north of Ireland went out to the Amazon in February 2025. My sister Caoimhe went, because they were looking for younger women to join, because the Munduruku in the Amazon have a campaign that is totally driven by the women, and young women. One of the women spoke about the link between the language and the land, what it looks like to rebuild that connection and decolonise. The same vision that Glór na Móna²² is working towards. And they were joined by Caoimhe from Save Our Sperrins.

The Munduruku were fighting against illegal mining. It was incredible, travelling down the Amazon in a boat, showing them, "Here are the miners coming in," and all the miners coming in on the boats. They were bringing these big containers filled with clean water with them to drink during the day, they weren't willing to drink the local water. They told the locals, "The water here is fine, the water is totally safe, we took water samples and it's absolutely fine," but they wouldn't drink it. At that time, the Munduruku were fighting to stop the mining, blowing up roads, stopping the illegal miners from coming into the forest. It was illegal mining but the police didn't care, the town councils didn't care, because they were all making money off the mines. The more you learn, the harder it is to believe.

The amount of solidarity we've gotten from around the world, and that we're building in return, I think it's extremely valuable. It gives us clarity and perspective on why, even if we stop it in *An Caisleán Glas*, why we can't just say, "You can do the mining, but take the processing plant somewhere else."

Bhí siad ag rá, ní dhéanfaidh siad an t-ór a phróiseáil le *cyanide* in Éirinn, tabhairfaidh siad é go Ceanada. Má tá siad ag dul á thabhairt go Ceanada, [beidh sé] sin fadhb do dhuine éigin eile, níl sin maith go leor. Níl muid ag iarraidh go dtarlóidh é seo aon áit. Tá muid ag caint faoin domhan. Tá muid ar fad ar an domhan céanna, ní domhan difriúil í Ceanada, beidh tionchar ann fós.

Sílim go bhfuil na nascanna agus an dlúthphártaíocht sin fiorthábhachtach, le go bhfuil muid ag tacú le chéile. Agus ag fáil nirt, mar bíonn tú lagmhisneach, bíonn tú tréigthe, níl suim agat, “*God*, tá sé a dhul ar aghaidh rófhada, níl mé ag iarraidh...” Bhí na daoine, abair na Munduruku, ag rá, “Seo ár saol, níl sé chun stopadh. Stopaigh muid duine amháin, stopaigh muid comhlacht amháin, ach tiocfaidh duine éigin eile.” Tá siadsan i ndairíre ag cosaint a slí maireachtála iomlán. Mar muna bhfuil siad ábalta a bheith beo sa cheantar sin, beidh deireadh leis an *way of life*.

Agus b’fhéidir ag pilleadh ar an pointe sin, dá dtiocfadh an tionscal seo isteach go sléibhte na Speiríní, caidé an dochar a bheadh ann, dar leat?

Bhuel dá dtiocfadh siad, sílim go mbeadh difear déantar ar an phobal go leanúnach. Is cuimhin liom nuair a chuir muid ceist [orthu], geallann siad go leor poist. “An féidir leat geallúint gur daoine áitiúla a bhfaigheadh na poist dúinn?” “Is é Tuaisceart na hÉireann áitiúil.” Ní daoine áitiúla a bheas ann, agus nuair a thógann tú go leor daoine nua isteach i gceantar comh beag leis An Chaisléan Ghlas, beidh tionchar air. Agus níl mé ag rá, “*Oh we don’t want strangers, we don’t want outsiders.*” Tá neart daoine a fás isteach sa cheantar, ach is é an *influx* mór é [an fhadhb].

Tá fadhb mhór i gCeanada leis an tionsclaíocht. ‘*Man camps*’ a thugtar orthu, agus an oiread sin d’ ionsuithe gnéis atá tharlaíonn mar gheall orthu, tá sé sin uáfasach.

Yeah, sin rud ar míre. Tá daoine ag teacht isteach ‘is amach an t-am ar fad, ach dá dtiocfadh go leor daoine isteach ag aon am amháin, d’athródh sé an *fabric* den phobal. Mar nuair atá tú ceangailte leis an áit, tá tú sásta páirt a thógail ins an obair dheonach, tá tú sásta rudaí a dhéanamh don phobal, tá tú sásta d’ am a thabhairt. *Whereas* muna bhfuil tú cuidigh leis an cheantar, b’fhéidir go mbeidh tú ag déanamh airgid, agus tá sin rogha, beidh airgead maith leis na postanna... An mbeidh níos lú deiseanna do dhaoine áitiúla cónaí sna tithe atá ann? An mbeidh daoine nua ag teacht isteach ag ceannacht tí, ag ceannacht talaimh, nach mbeidh deis ag daoine áitiúla ag déanamh a saol ann? Is ceist theoriciúil í ag an stad seo, *but* sin na rudaí atá muid i ndiaidh a fheiceáil a tharlaíonn. Agus *then* an rud atá tusa ina dhiaidh a rá, is fir an chuid is mó a thagann, agus tá an taighde ag léiriú, an rud atá sé ag rá, beidh dochar déanta ó thaobh na mná de. Is muid a bheas thíos leis. Agus sin léirithe fud fad an domhain.

Agus ó thaobh an phobail i gcoitinne, an scoilt b’fhéidir [a bheadh] níos mó, mar beidh ar dhaoine cinéal a bheith ag teacht amach níos soiléire cén thaobh ar a bhfuil siad. Agus déanann [sé] sin dochar. Mothaím, tá sé deacair go leor faoi láthair leis an phobal agus na grúpaí pobail agus tá muid ag seachaid b’fhéidir, a bheith ag plé leis, mar tugann sé teannas isteach sa choras, gach rud. *So* beidh fadhbanna ansin, mar bheadh siadsan b’fhéidir ag ofráil airgid dúinn ag stáideanna, agus bíonn daoine eile ag rá, “Níl muid ag iarraidh an t-airgead ina thógaint, tá muid ag iarraidh a bheith neamhspleách.”

Because that's not acceptable. If they brought it to Canada, that would just be a problem for a different community, and that's not acceptable. We don't want to see this harm done in any place. We have a global perspective. We're all on the same earth, it's not a different world over there in Canada, and that same impact would happen.

I think those connections and that solidarity is truly important, that we support each other. And that we build each other up, strengthen each other, because often you feel exhausted, you feel abandoned, you don't have energy, "God, this is dragging out too long, I can't go on..." But there are people like the Munduruku saying, "This is our life, it's not going to stop. We will stop one company, but another company will come after." They are very serious about protecting their way of life completely. Because if they can't survive in that area, that will be the end of their way of life.

And so perhaps returning on that point, if this project were to come into the Sperrins, what do you think the impacts would be?

Well if they did come, I think there would be an immediate and ongoing impact on the community. I remember asking them when they promised us jobs, "Can you guarantee to us that local people will be the ones receiving the jobs?" And they said, "All of Northern Ireland is local." So it wouldn't be locals employed here, and when an influx of new people come into an area as small as *An Caisleán Glas*, it has an impact. I'm not saying, "Oh we don't want strangers, we don't want outsiders." Plenty of people have joined the community, but it's the influx that is the problem.

That's a big problem in Canada with industry. They build 'man camps' to house the workers, mostly men, and the amount of sexual violence that results from the man camps, it's terrible.

Yeah, that's the difficulty. People come and go all the time, but if there were to be a big inundation all at once, it would change the fabric of the community, because when you are connected with the place, you are happy to take part in volunteer work, happy to contribute to the community wellbeing, happy to invest your time in the place. Whereas, if you aren't giving back to the area, maybe you're just here to earn money, that's fine, there would be good money with the jobs.... But will there be less opportunities for the locals to find housing? Will workers with new high paid jobs be coming in and buying houses, buying land, pushing the locals out? It's a theoretical question at this stage, but that's what we've seen happen in other areas. And then, of course, it's mostly men who come in with industry, and the research all shows that violence against women increases as a result. We will be the ones impacted. We see it everywhere around the world.

And in regards to the general community, the split between those who support and those who oppose the project would grow bigger, as people are pressured to take sides. That does harm.²³ We have plenty of difficulties already in the community and between different groups, and we're trying to discuss this with them, because this tension builds up across the system, all the different pressures on people. So there would be problems, as they would be offering money to us at different stages, and there are people saying, "We aren't trying to take their money, we want to stay independent."

Tharla rud mór ag an teach pheile, in ionad peile i Muineachán. Bhí mianadóireacht ag dul ar aghaidh taobh amuigh de Charraig Mhachaire Rois, agus bhí *sinkholes* ann, agus tháinig na *sinkholes* istigh ag an pháirc pheile, agus bhí orthu á dhruidim go hiomlán. Bhí na bóithre thart air fiú, bhí na príomhbhóithre druidte, mar bhí siad buartha go raibh na *sinkholes* ag dul teacht in áiteanna eile. *Literally abandoned, like* bhí an ionad peile iomlán tréigthe. Dá mbeadh oiread sin a dhéanamh sin ar An Chaisléan Ghlas, níl a fhios agam cén áit a thógfadh siad an leibheal *infrastructure* atá againn. An mbeadh sé níos airde ar an tsliabh, an mbeadh sé ar an talamh níos measa? Agus, ní bheadh an t-airgead céanna ann leis an stuif sin a dhéanamh. Tá an *infrastructure* sin tógtha thar daichead bliain, níos mó ag an stad seo, agus obair dheonach fríd an stuif sin ar fad. Caidé a tharlódh leis sin? *You know*, tá [an] méid sin ceisteanna, dá dtarlódh aon rud mar sin. Bheadh sin iontach deacair do dhaoine.

Obviously tá go leor ‘*what if’s*’ againn, agus sin an fhadhb. *Whereas*, muna dtarlódh sé, tá a fhios agam caidé gur féidir linn [a dhéanamh]. Agus ar bhealach amháin, tá mé buíoch den rud atá tarlaithe mar sílim go bhfuil súil na ndaoine oscailte níos mó chuig na rudaí a bhfuil muid a dhul a chailleadh, agus chuig an luach atá againn. Sílim go bhfuil daoine níos sásta anois b’fhéidir a bheith ag obair le chéile, amharc ar stuif oidhreacht a bhaineann le saibhreas an cheantair, agus tá daoine ag iarraidh airde a thabhairt air. In áit is ag rá, “*Oh yeah*, déan duine éigin eile é,” sílim go bhfuil daoine anois ag rá, “*Bhuel actually* ba chóir dúinn an deis seo a thapú agus seo a dhéanamh.” Agus b’fhéidir nach raibh muid ag labhairt faoi go leor den stuif seo roimhe.

Tá muid inár gcónaí in áit darbh ainm AONB - *Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty*. Is rud atá aitheanta ag an rialtas [ach] ní raibh aon pleann ann don cheantar riamh. Cuireann sé frustrachas ar go leor daoine, mar bhí pleann ann don *Mournes*, don AONB eile, ach ní raibh riamh aon rud déanta don *Sperrins*. Tá daoine ann atá iontach soiniciúil agus déarfainn gur cinéal *sacrificial ground* muid. Is cinéal dearmaid a rinneadh air.

Agus an measann tú go bhfuil sin fíor? Is léir gur ceantar iargúlta a bhí ann fadó, agus anois an neamart céanna á dhéanamh ag an rialtas.

Má théann tú iomlán siar, má amharcann tú nuair a bhí coilíneachas ag dul ar aghaidh, thosaigh an Béarla ag teacht isteach, An Pháil ansin i ndeisceart na tíre, tháinig sé suas, ach ní go dtí i ndiaidh Cath Chionn tSáile agus Imeacht na nIarlaí. Ach an áit is laidre ná Tír Eoghain agus Tír Chonaill agus na háiteanna sin. Is é Aodh Ó Néill agus na daoine sin a bhí ag cosaint an Gaelachais agus an ceantair sin. Nuair a amharcann tú ar Thír Eoghain ann anois, níl aon Tír Eoghain *council* [ann].

Tagann na trí chomhairle ceantair le chéile i lár na Speiríní. Tá Gleann Aichle mar chuid den Doire ‘is Strath Bán, tá Baile na Sgríne mar chuid de Lár Uladh, tá An Caisléan Glas mar chuid den Ómaigh agus Fear Manach. *So* tá daoine ann a dheireann, “*Bhuel*, sin suimiúil.” An raibh pleann ann, ná an raibh meon coilíneachais? “*Caithfidh muid na Gaeil sin a choinneáil amach as an chumhacht*, mar is iadsan a choinneáil an chumhacht do na Gaeil comh fada sin. *Caithfidh muid coinneáil na daoine*, na *movers and shakers* ó Thír Eoghain a choinneáil ar shiúil.”

A big incident occurred at the football club in County Monaghan. The mining had been going on outside of Carrickmacross,²⁴ and then sinkholes started forming, and the sinkholes opened up underneath the football pitch, and they had to close the area completely. Even the roads were closed, the main routes, because they were worried more sinkholes would be opening up in other areas. The whole place was literally abandoned, the football club and all that completely deserted. If something like that occurred over here in *An Caisleán Glas*, I don't know where we would be able to rebuild our community, all of the infrastructure that we have. Would it be up higher on the side of the mountain, up in the bog? And we wouldn't have the amount of money that we spent building up our community. That infrastructure was built over the span of forty years, longer even, with volunteer work through and through. What would happen to all that, to us? You know, the number of questions that you have, if there were to be any sort of incident like that. It can be incredibly hard on the people.

Obviously we have plenty of 'what if's' and that's also the problem. Whereas, if the project is stopped, I can think of the possibilities before us. And in some way, I'm grateful for everything that has happened so far, because I think it has opened peoples' eyes to what we stand to lose, to the wealth this place has. I believe that people are more willing now to come and work together, support each other, to consider the heritage connected to this place, and try to protect that. Where people once said, "Oh yeah, leave that to someone else to do," now they're saying "Well actually we ought to take this opportunity and make it happen." And I suppose we weren't speaking about much of all this previously.

We live in a place termed an AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. That is an official recognition by the government, although there was never any plan put together for this area. It frustrated plenty of people, because plans were put together for the Mourne mountains, for the other AONB areas, but nothing was ever done on behalf of the Sperrins AONB. People feel cynical, people would say that we're a sacrificial ground. That we've been forgotten about.

Do you think that's true? It's clear that this area was remote and disregarded long ago, and now the government is continuing on with the same neglect.

If you go way back, if you look at the time that colonisation was underway in Ireland, the English language started to push in, the Peal was established in the south of the country, the English colonists were moving inwards, but it wasn't completed until after the Battle of Kinsale and the Flight of the Earls.²⁵ But the place that was strongest was Tyrone and Donegal and those places, with Hugh Ó Néill and those chieftains protecting the Gaelic way of life and this region. Now when you look at Tyrone nowadays, there's no Tyrone county council.

Three different council areas come together in the middle of the Sperrin mountains. *Gleann Aichle* is part of the Derry and Strabane council, *Baile na Sgríne* is part of Mid-Ulster council, and *An Caisleán Glas* is part of the Omagh and Fermanagh council. So you hear people saying, "Hm, isn't that interesting?" Was there a plan there, or is it the old colonial perspective still? "We have to keep those Gaels out of power, because they were the ones who protected the Gaelic order the longest. We have to keep the movers and shakers from Tyrone out of the way."

Mar tá Tír Eoghain iontach láidir. An rud atá mé ag rá faoi An Chaisléan Ghlas, sílim go mbaineann sé le Tír Eoghain go hiomlán, mar bhí na Gael ann, bhí Clann Uí Néill ann láidir, an traidisiún Gaelachais. Nuair a bhí an Gael ann, bhí na teaghlaigh líonta, bhí na bardaí ann, bhí an béaloideas sin ina chleachtadh, an stuif sin ar fad. Gach seans go dtagann an meon sin fríd. Tá Tír Eoghain iontach láidir ar go leor bealaigh, tá muintir Thír Eoghain iontach bróduil.

Mar gheall an AONB agus an pleann, ní raibh aon rud ag tarlú i gcónaí, bhí sé *just* fágtha. Anois, den chéad uair i ndiaidh deich mbliana de chruinnithe, tá an pleann feidhme gníomhach i gcuig bhliana le foilsiú an bhliain seo chugainn. Seo an chéad uair. Tá me dóchasach. Ní shílim go bhfuil Dalradian a dhul isteach. Níl muid in ann sin a ligeant a tharlú. Tá mé dóchasach ar bís. Tá an pleann seo ag teacht. Beidh sé an cinéal ag teacht ón rialtas, ón chinéal leibhéal ó bharr anuas. Ach tá pobal ag teacht anois, tá ár bhfoirgneamh nua a dhul a bheith ann. Go pearsanta, tá an-suim agam an foirgneamh sin a úsáid chun níos mó ranganna Gaeilge a chur ar siúl, níos mó deiseanna a thabhairt do dhaoine ag foghlaim faoina stair, a n-oidhreacht.

Mar Ghael agus mar Ghaeilgeoir, tá mise ábalta mo lámh a leagan ar stuif á dtuiscint. Sílim go bhfuil dualgas orm, mothaím gur seo mo *vocation*, cinéal an stuif seo a thabhairt agus a chur amach, chan ar bhealach acadúil, ach ar bhealach a thuigfidh siadsan.

Ba bhreá liomsa [béaloideas] a bhailiú ó na daoine inár gceantar agus é a bheith taifeadta do na glúinte atá le teacht. Ba bhreá liom *curriculum* den chinéal éigin a chur le chéile agus a fhóbaire le daoine gur féidir leis na scoileanna an stuif seo a thógáil agus a thaigisc istigh sna scoileanna ins na Speiríní. Agus é a bheith ceangailte lena áit. Má tá ceann ag dul ar An Chaisléan Ghlas, beidh sé de réir An Chaisléain Ghlais, má tá sé ag tarlú i nGoirtín, beidh sé de réir Goirtín. Seo mo spriocanna saoil. Ba bhreá liom stuif a dhéanamh, taighde ar an stuif sin a bhaineann leis na Protastúnaigh agus An Ghaeilg agus An Ghaidhlig, an stuif sin a bhaineann leis an traidisiún cheoil.

Smaoiním atá intinn faoi an fhéile, an scoil samhraidh sin a bhíodh ann a athbhunú, agus [go] mbaineann [sé] leis na hamhráin agus gach rud. Stuif a thabhairt amach do na daoine óga, na daoine fásta a thabhairt isteach. An céiliúradh sin ar fad a dhéanamh, agus deis a thabhairt d' achan uile duine teacht agus blaiseadh a bhaint. Spiorad an phobail a thógáil. Sílim an rud is tábhachtaí atá de dhíth do gach rud ná deis a thabhairt do dhaoine a bheith *to be in community*, deis a thabhairt do dhaoine teacht le chéile. Cinéal ar nós na meithle, *just* deis a bheith le chéile, ag sóisialú, gan aon chostas airgid. Sílim go bhfuil an domhan iomlán gafa, “Caithfidh ár gcostas a bheith ar achan uile rud.” Sílim nach bhfuil sin de dhíth. Níl de dhíth ach muid suí síos agus cúpan tae agus caint ‘is craic. Cosuil leis an rud le Lá Fhéile Bhríd, go suímid thart agus go ndéanaimid na crosanna. Tá muid ag caint ag comhrá. Tá deis ag daoine fáil amach caidé atá a dhul ar aghaidh sa saol. Tá an saol comh gnóthach, sílim nuair a thógann tú daoine ar ais, dá dtógfá deis dóibh suí thart, bíodh siad ag foghlaim cúpla focal Gaeilge, ag déanamh ciorcal comhrá, ag foghlaim ‘Óró ‘Sé Do Bheatha Abhaile’, píosa beaga mar sin.

Because Tyrone is still incredibly strong. All that I've been saying about *An Caisleán Glas*, I think it applies to Tyrone at large, because this is where the Gael was strongest, the Ó Néill clan was incredibly powerful, the Gaelic tradition lived on. In the time of the Gaelic order, the families were filled with kinship, the bardic poets were practising, the folklore was in circulation, all of that. And there's every chance that worldview has survived through the years. Tyrone is still a powerful place, and the people of Tyrone are incredibly proud.

Regarding the AONB and the plan, there was never any progress made, it was just left out. Now, for the first time after ten years of meetings, a five-year plan of action has come together and will be published next year. This is the first time there's been a plan for this area. I'm hopeful. I don't think Dalradian will come in. We can't allow that to happen. I'm hopeful and I'm excited for this plan to come together, it's kind of coming from the government, from a top-down level. But also people are coming together, we're investing in our community, we're building a new community centre. Personally, I'm really looking forward to using that new building to host more Irish language classes, to give more opportunities for people to come together, for people to connect with their heritage and culture.

As a Gael and as an Irish speaker, I'm able to lend a hand interpreting for people to understand their history. I feel it's my responsibility, my vocation, to help share that heritage. Not in an academic way, but in a way people can grasp and engage with.

I myself would love to go out and collect folklore, collect stories from the people in our area and record them for the next generation to hear. I would love to put a sort of curriculum together and develop it to share with the schools, so they can teach about their local place in the schools in the Sperrins. To be connected with their specific place. For a school over in *An Caisleán Glas*, the curriculum would be rooted in *An Caisleán Glas*. If they're over in *Goirtín*, it will be according to *Goirtín*. Those are my goals in life. I would love to do more research on all the connections between the Protestant tradition and the Irish language and Scottish Gaelic, on connections with the music tradition.

I'm intending to re-establish that festival, that summer school that used to be here, and filling it with the local songs and everything. Provide activities for young people and adults to participate. Restart that whole celebration, and give every single person the opportunity to come together and get a taste of Gaelic life. To raise the spirits of the community. I think the thing most important, and most lacking in everything, is the opportunity for people just to be in community, an opportunity for people to come together. Along the lines of the *meitheal*, just to be together, socialising, connecting, totally free and open. The whole world is so obsessed, "We have to make money on this." There's no need for that. The only thing we need is to sit down, have a cuppa tea and a bit of craic. Like we do around St. Bridget's Day, spend time sitting around and weaving our Bridget's crosses. We talk, we chat, we get to know each other, we hear about what's going on in the community, in our lives. Life is so busy, we need to bring people back together. If you give them the chance to sit around, learn a wee bit of Irish, have a chat, learn a verse or two from '*Oró Sé Do Bheatha Abhaile*,' just small things like that.

Sílim go bhfuil deiseanna millteanacha ann, agus sílim go bhfuil an t-am ann anois leis na Speiríns rud a dhéanamh. Go mbeadh i gceann caoga bliain, beidh daoine ag rá “*God*, féach ar an mhéid amhráin Ghaeilge atá ag an phobal, an méid foclaí Gaeilge atá acu.” Tuigimid ar fad cén fáth an *Ogham Stone* ann, tuigimid ar fad caidé a ciallaíonn Dún Ruadh. *Like*, d’fhás mise anuas agus ní raibh aon chló agam go raibh Dún Ruadh ann. Ba bhreá liom aon duine atá ina gcónaí ann, nuair atá siad ag dul thart, tuigeann siad – sin Taobh Bhán, sin An Cnocán Buí. Go dtuigeann siad go bhfuil tuiscint eile acu ar an cheantar. Tá sé i ndán dúinn.

B’fhéidir gur saghas beannachta é an feachtas agus an bhagairt seo, nó go léiríonn sé chomh luachmhar is atá an áit seo.

Go díreach.



There are tremendous opportunities here, and I can feel that now is the time for the Sperrins, for us to do something. So that in fifty years' time, people will say, "God, look at the wealth of song, of language, of culture that the community here has." So that we all would know what the Ogham Stone represents, so that we would comprehend the significance behind *Dún Ruadh*. Like, I myself grew up without a clue that *Dún Ruaidh* even existed. I would love to see the people living here going about with a deep understanding of this place around us – here's *Taobh Bhán*, there's *An Cnocán Búí*. That they would be able to look at this place with a deeper recognition. It is fated for us.

Maybe this is a sort of blessing, the stance you've had to take to protect your home, because it shows how special this place is.

Go díreach.



NÓTAÍ | Notes

1. The Six Counties / the north of Ireland / 'Northern Ireland' / Ulster (erroneously) – terms that refer to the partition of Ireland and the continued British occupation of the northeastern six counties of Armagh, Down, Antrim, Tyrone, Fermanagh, and Derry. The Republic of Ireland / the south of Ireland / Twenty-Six Counties / the Free State refers to the portion of Ireland that gained independence from Britain. I use 'Northern Ireland' to refer to the political state in the north, and 'the north of Ireland' or 'the six counties' to refer to the people and land.
2. 'Catholic' is often used as shorthand for 'native Irish' or 'Gaelic', in contrast to Protestants and Presbyterians who would have settled in Ireland as part of the English / British colonial project. Racialisation in Ireland was done along religious lines, rather than by skin color as in the US, but for similar ends– to mark a displaced underclass and justify their subjugation and theft of their lands, and to incorporate a segment of the population into identifying with the colonial system and work for its upkeep. However the binary assumption of Gaelic-Catholic-Nationalist- Republican versus Settler-Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist is not always accurate. Theobald Wolfe Tone, a Protestant revolutionary, inspired the armed uprising against British rule during the 1798 Rising. Wolfe Tone explicitly sought to connect working-class Protestants with Catholics to fight together for an Irish Republic built on equality. Irish Republicanism is a result of the radical history of Protestants and Presbyterians in Ireland.
3. The Plantation of Ulster was the organised British colonisation of Ireland's northern province of Ulster. Beginning in 1606, wealthy landowners established private plantations, with state-sponsored plantation beginning in 1609. This land had been confiscated from the native Gaelic chiefs, after the breaking of the Gaelic world at the 1601 defeat of the Battle of Kinsale and the evacuation of the Gaelic chieftains in the 1607 Flight of the Earls. Plantation was seen as a means of controlling and 'civilising' Ulster. The province, remote and strongly Gaelic, had been the region most resistant to English rule. Through Plantation, King James intended to sever the ties of the Gaelic clans of Ulster with those from the Scottish Highlands, which were seen as a strategic threat to England, and to relocate outlaw raiders from the English-Scottish borderlands as planters who could suppress the native Irish. The settlers were required to be English-speaking Protestants, with most coming from the Scottish Lowlands and Northern England, which led to the formation of a distinct Ulster Protestant community. Many of the native Irish were displaced to overcrowded, poor land in the mountains and bogs of the western coast: "To Hell or to Connacht" as Oliver Cromwell famously said.
4. The Ulster Covenant was an oath signed in 1912 by Unionists in the north of Ireland, loyal to the British Empire. Nearly half a million Unionists pledged to resist Ireland's bid for self-determination, by force if necessary. Out of this oath emerged the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), a unionist paramilitary that used armed force and terrorism to maintain British colonial rule in the north of Ireland.
5. From the late 1960s, Catholic communities living in the apartheid state of Northern Ireland, inspired by global civil rights movements, organised for better housing and employment, voting rights, and civil liberties. Met by police violence and Unionist terror, the movement grew into a prolonged armed struggle of Irish nationalists against the colonial apparatus of Northern Ireland and Britain, known as 'The Troubles'. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and splinter organisations fought against police forces, British soldiers, and Unionist paramilitaries such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defense Association (UDA). The 1998 Good Friday Agreement peace deal was signed to address issues of governance, policing, and discrimination, while maintaining British control in Northern Ireland.
6. Sinn Féin (*as Gaeilge*: 'Us Ourselves') is a political party aligned towards Irish Republican Nationalism and democratic socialism, in both the Six Counties and the Twenty-Six Counties. Sinn Féin was instrumental in the 1919 War of Independence and rose to prominence again as the political wing of the Irish Republican Army during the Troubles. While a minority party in the southern government, Sinn Féin has been part of government in Northern Ireland since the end of the Troubles. Many republicans and leftists are deeply critical of how Sinn Féin abandoned their political platform and constituents after coming into power.
7. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) is a right-wing populist loyalist political party in Northern Ireland, with links to terrorist paramilitaries. The party sees itself as defending British and Protestant values from Irish Republicanism. They are strongly supportive of Israel, and opposed to LGBT rights, abortion access, and Irish language rights. The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) share similar political beliefs.

8. In Irish-speaking communities, people are commonly referred to by the names of their parents and grandparents, rather than by their surname. In a village where there might be four or five named Patrick McCullagh, you would identify Pat John Anthony after his father John and his grandfather Anthony.
9. *Muintir Luinigh* refers both to the land and the people of the Ó Luinigh clan, who occupied parts of Tyrone for centuries. The Sperrins were known as the Munterloney mountains before being renamed by colonists. For more about the cultural wealth of *Muintir Luinigh* and the Sperrin mountains, see ‘Sgéalta Mhuintir Luinigh / Munterloney Folktales: Irish Tradition from County Tyrone’ collected by Eamonn Ó Tuathal in the 1920s.
10. At the beginning of the 20th century amidst rising national consciousness, the Gaelic Revival was a moment of artistic flourishing, cultural reclamation and political organising. *Conradh na Gaeilge* was founded in 1893 to promote Irish as a spoken language across the island. While not an explicitly political organisation, many of its members had ties to labor organising, the republican movement, and anti-colonial and feminist politics. The Gaelic Athletic Association was formed in 1884 to promote Gaelic culture and sport as a unique national identity.
11. Roger Casement, Eoin Mac Néill, Padraig Pearse were prominent leaders in the Irish revival and the fight for independence, along with Constance Markiewicz, James Larkin, James Connolly, and many others. Casement and Pearse were signatories of the 1916 Irish Proclamation, declaring the independence of the Irish nation and the equal rights and protections for all in the new Irish state.
12. The 1916 Easter Rising was an armed uprising for Irish independence from British rule. The revolt was crushed and many of the leaders executed. Although it was called a failure at the time, the Easter Rising sparked republican sentiments across the country, eventually leading to the 1919-1921 War of Independence.
13. The 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiated for an end of the War of Independence on the controversial terms that Ireland would be partitioned into the six counties of Northern Ireland, remaining under British control. The remaining 26 counties formed the Irish ‘Free State’ that would be a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth and the Irish parliament required to swear an oath of allegiance to the British crown. This unpopular treaty divided the Republican movement, sparking the 1922-23 Irish Civil War. Anti-treaty Republicans, many of them committed socialists and internationalists, fought the pro-treaty Free State forces, who received funding and arms from the British government and support from the Catholic Church. The Free State ultimately won over the irregular anti-treaty IRA. Under this treaty, the gerrymandered border of Northern Ireland was drawn to guarantee a Protestant/Unionist majority. British state power was reflected in Unionist Protestant control over the affairs of Northern Ireland. Unionist Protestantism commemorates William of Orange through institutions such as the Orange Order, a conservative, Ulster loyalist order which celebrates Protestant privilege. As the motto of the Protestant Ascendancy, ‘An Orange State for an Orange People’ envisioned an ethno-state built on the guaranteed supremacy of the Protestant majority over the native Catholic minority held under apartheid conditions. This political situation as codified in the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty set the stage for the Troubles as Catholics and nationalists in the north had no access to civil rights or political representation.
14. The annual Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) has annual attendance exceeding 25,000 delegates. PDAC has been an important platform for promoting Ireland as an attractive destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) in mineral exploration and mining, with ‘Team Ireland’ present at the convention for 30 years. Ireland and Canada’s mining industries have strong links dating back to the opening of the Tynagh Mine in Galway in 1968 by taoiseach Jack Lynch and Canadian venture capital. The ‘Ireland Open for Business’ Presentation featured developers of advanced gold projects, new entrants to zinc exploration, geoscience service expertise and a policy update from Ireland’s Minister for Natural Resources, Sean Kyne TD Fine Gael.
15. Mairtín Ó Cadhain was an Irish language activist and socialist republican who agitated for language rights. Born in 1906 in the Conamara Gaeltacht, Ó Cadhain excoriated the ongoing neglect of Irish-language communities by the Free State government, which left few options for Gaeltacht communities but emigration. He promoted *Athghabháil na hÉireann*, the Reclamation of Ireland, as a vision for both decolonisation and re-Gaelicisation.
16. In their 2025 report for the Sperrins AONB, Geology Survey of Northern Ireland identified that climate change in the Sperrin mountains will increase the potential for landslides, peat slides and rock falls due to higher rainfall.
17. Dalradian is drilling just a few hundred meters from the Glencordial reservoir, which supplies drinking water for 21,000 people in Omagh.
18. The largest lake in Ireland and Britain, Lough Neagh is home to one of the largest environmental crises of our time. State efforts to boost agriculture production led to increased fertiliser use and nutrient runoff in the watersheds feeding Lough Neagh, resulting in massive toxic algae blooms in the lake that supplies drinking water to 40% of Northern Ireland. As easy fix solutions have failed to halt the ever-increasing water toxicity, we see the difficulties of addressing problems arising from the interplay of political decision making, social systems built on private property and profit, the complexity of ecological feedback loops, and our social relationship with the landscape.

19. The Tellus Project was a survey to gather geological data and identify mineral resources across Ireland. This project is seen as a key part of Ireland's strategy to develop extractive industries and create a more attractive atmosphere for foreign investment. After the completion of the Tellus Project, mining concessions skyrocketed. 25% of the land in Northern Ireland is already listed for mineral exploration, and that figure could rise as high as 70%. According to Dalradian, "A turning point for exploration in Northern Ireland came with the Tellus Survey, promoted by government in the early 2000s. The geophysical and geochemical data it generated was instrumental in attracting new investment and was a key factor in Dalradian's decision to acquire the Curraghinalt project in 2009."
20. Invest NI, the regional business development agency of Northern Ireland, gave £326,000 of public funds to Dalradian in 2014. Invest NI has also provided public funding to international companies such as Caterpillar, RLC(UK) and Moyola Precision Engineering, who manufacture parts for F-35 fighter jets, weapons and bulldozers used by the Israeli army against Palestinian civilians.
21. Berta Cáceres was a prominent environmental activist, indigenous leader, and co-founder of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras. She led a grassroots campaign that successfully pressured the world's largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam which threatened local communities and biodiversity. She was assassinated in 2016 after years of death threats. A former soldier of the Honduran military admitted that Cáceres' name was on their hitlist for months prior to her assassination. Berta's murderers were trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, USA, at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). Founded in 2001, WHINSEC has been linked to thousands of murders and human rights violations in Latin America in service of international corporations and industrial infrastructure projects.
22. Glór na Móna is an Irish language organisation in West Belfast that works to empower youth, promote Irish culture, develop local community power, and build solidarity with decolonial struggles. In 2025 young activists from Glór na Móna raised £10,000 and travelled to the Amazon in support of Indigenous communities who are resisting environmental exploitation carried out in the interests of capitalist and colonial powers, particularly those of the US, Britain, and the European Union.
23. Mining companies have well-honed strategies to push their projects onto communities. Companies try to bolster their interests: buying public opinion; hiring ambassadors through low ranking but highly visible jobs; sponsoring local events and non-profits; promising economic development; bringing their talking points into schools, events and fundraisers; dismissing concerns by using 'expert' testimony. On the other side, companies systematically work to sow division, intimidate activists, fund local police to harass and criminalise resistance, and have used violence to force their projects through.
24. In Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, sinkholes destroyed the local GAA pitch and clubhouse in September 2018, almost 30 years after operations ceased on an underground gypsum mine in 1989. Families were forced to relocate and local roads were closed. Despite this, the 26-county planning board gave permission in 2025 for operations to resume via open-pit mining. Local residents complained how the area had transformed from "a beautiful natural, rural environment to what can only be described at this point in time as an industrial wasteland," and how the company intentionally bought off portions of the local community to sow divisions and undermine resistance.
25. In an effort to resist English colonialism, Gaelic clans waged the Nine Years' War against the English crown from 1593-1603. After their defeat at the Battle of Kinsale, many of the Gaelic chieftains evacuated Ireland in 1607, an episode known as the Flight of the Earls, which marked the end of the Gaelic world and the beginning of the decline of the Irish language. The path walked by those Gaelic chieftains during the Flight of the Earls passes through the Sperrin mountains above *An Caisleán Glas* directly on the site of the proposed Dalradian gold mine.



SONRAÍ AN FHEACHTÁIS | Details of the campaign

For centuries, people have made a living in the Sperrins as sheep and cattle farmers, grazing and cutting turf – an economy based on local resources and sustainable land use. In the 1960s and ‘70s as the south of Ireland joined the EU and became reliant on foreign investment, the Troubles hindered extractive industry in the north. Security concerns about the storage of explosives stopped the development of the Curraghinalt mine in the 1980s. The mine proposal reemerged after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, in a ‘peace’ transition built on capitalist development.

Since 2009, Dalradian Resources Inc. has been working to develop the Curraghinalt gold mine, with a 20-25 year lifespan and estimated worth of £3B. According to Dalradian themselves, the biggest beneficiaries of this mine would be their corporate shareholders and the Crown Estate. Dalradian received £326,000 of public funds from Invest NI and reduced tax rates, yet little of the employment would actually benefit communities in the Sperrin mountains. Many specialised jobs rely on global industry workers, and other roles are increasingly automated.

Over years of meetings and hearings, people have expressed serious concerns about the mine. Over 50,000 objections were filed against the project. Locals have been campaigning against the mine for over a decade, coming together to form Save Our Sperrins in 2015 and holding an encampment at the proposed mine site since February 2018, by the name of the Greencastle Peoples’ Office (GPO). In 2021 a network of frontline groups joined together to form Communities Against the Injustice of Mining (CAIM). Organisers are doing research and outreach, attending meetings, taking direct action, building community power, and sowing the seeds of solidarity.

Activists have been targeted by near-constant surveillance, intimidation, infiltration, criminalisation, and death threats, but they remain undeterred. The resistance is growing. Connections have been made with struggles around the world, including visits from the Zapatistas and Lakota water protectors and exchanges with Indigenous communities in Peru and the Amazon. On the horizon, a public inquiry is set for April-June 2026 hosted by the NI Planning Appeals Commission, focusing on transboundary issues and final comments for the project. After this inquiry, a recommendation will be sent to the NI Dept of Infrastructure whether or not to approve the permit for mining to commence. This project is not a done deal yet, and community resistance is paying off through delays, increased scrutiny, and economic impacts.

AMLÍNE | Timeline

2004-2008	Tellus Project conducted by Geological Survey Northern Ireland to identify mineral resources
2009	Dalradian Resources Inc. acquires the Curraghinalt project
June 2015	Save Our Sperrins formed
2017	Dalradian submits a 10,000 page planning application to Dept of Infrastructure
Feb 2018	Greencastle Peoples’ Office established to occupy the proposed mine site
March 2018	PDAC conference in Toronto and protest at the ‘Ireland Is Open For Business’ display
2019	Dalradian drops cyanide processing from their proposal due to public outcry
Feb 2021	CAIM formed as a network of frontline land defense groups to protect Ireland from mining
Feb 2025	Public inquiry held into the planning process – inquiry collapses due to Northern Ireland’s failure to follow environmental laws and planning procedure for transboundary issues

FRITHBHÉARTÁÍOCHT DHÚCHASACH | Indigenous resistance

As extraction intensifies around the world, Indigenous lands and ways of life are under increasing threat. In places like Patagonia and the Amazon, Indonesia and the Philippines, mining companies perpetuate systematic abuses of human rights, violence against women, environmental destruction, surveillance, harassment, and criminalisation. These abuses disproportionately impact native communities, undermining the well-being of the land, of culture, and of spiritual connections.

The mining industry is dominated by Canadian companies – as much as 75% of the world’s mining companies are headquartered in Canada, companies that are frequently criticised for imposing neocolonial land grabs and violent repression to advance their projects. These companies have a long record of trying to force projects through without consent, even in Canada. But Indigenous resistance has amplified, protecting their territories and ways of life against a new era of mining.

In so-called British Columbia, Canada, in the dense forests and rugged mountains of the west coast, the T̓silhqot̓’in Nation have stewarded their traditional lands since time immemorial. During the settlement of British Columbia, the T̓silhqot̓’in never signed a treaty or surrendered control of their land. In clear legal terms, the Canadian state has no right to govern over T̓silhqot̓’in territory or give approval for industrial development. Despite this, Taseko Mines Ltd. has attempted to force a gold and copper mine into T̓silhqot̓’in territory for decades without consent.

In 2008, Taseko Mines proposed draining *Te̓ztan Biny* (‘Fish Lake’) and using the empty lakebed to store 700 million tons of mine waste, including arsenic, mercury, and other toxins. *Te̓ztan Biny* is an area of profound spiritual importance to the T̓silhqot̓’in. High in the mountains, this lake is home to clean water and invaluable wildlife habitat, to cultural heritage and intergenerational memory.

In 2010, the province of British Columbia approved the mine, while the Canadian federal government rejected it due to “adverse environmental effects” on water quality, fish habitat, land and resource use, and cultural heritage. Taseko Mines submitted a new mine proposal in 2011 and mounted legal challenges against the Canadian government. Two judicial reviews failed to reverse the federal decision, but the corporation pushed on for the \$1.5B mine to be developed.

“The T̓silhqot̓’in Nation will not stand by as Taseko Mines Ltd. moves forward.... Drilling and exploration work at Te̓ztan Biny stands to destroy centuries of sacred and protected sites that are integral to the preservation of T̓silhqot̓’in culture. We are disappointed that the courts did not see through the smokescreen, this decision isn’t about Prosperity Mine being a good project; it’s about continuing to line the pockets of the shareholders of Taseko Mines.”

– Nits’il?in Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chairman

The T̓silhqot̓in Nation continued to fight for their sovereignty. In 2014 the Canadian Supreme Court recognised aboriginal title to more than 1,700 sq km of land to the T̓silhqot̓in First Nation. This unanimous decision was the first time any First Nation proved title to their lands through Canadian courts, recognising the T̓silhqot̓in Nation's undeniable right to consent over industrial activities on their territory. In 2015, the T̓silhqot̓in Nation declared a protected area surrounding *Te̓́tan Biny*. 300,000ha of land is protected in the tribal park *Nexwagwez̓an*. In the T̓silhqot̓in language, *Nexwagwez̓an* means 'it is there for us' and the park is managed for ecological protection, cultural revitalisation and sustainable livelihoods – embodying T̓silhqot̓in values to live in right relationship with the land.

In spite of this, the province of British Columbia supported Taseko Mines, granting them a five-year permit extension in 2015. Despite objections from both the T̓silhqot̓in government and Canada, British Columbia approved an exploration permit in 2017, while the local community was under evacuation from severe wildfires. This permit allowed Taseko Mines to build a man camp, bring in workers, excavate and build roads, and do seismic work in the pristine forests around *Te̓́tan Biny*.

This threat to *Te̓́tan Biny* was unacceptable for the T̓silhqot̓in, and they set up a blockade in 2019 to prevent mining equipment or contractors from accessing the lake, forcing Taseko Mines to back down. Community resistance, political pressure, and courageous direct action saved *Te̓́tan Biny*.

In June 2025, the T̓silhqot̓in Nation signed an agreement with British Columbia and Taseko Mines to prevent mineral exploration at *Te̓́tan Biny*. Any future development by other operators will require the free, prior and informed consent of the T̓silhqot̓in Nation, in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Protecting biodiversity and respecting Indigenous sovereignty go hand in hand. Around the world, the system eroding native ways of life is the same system filling our rivers with heavy metals and our bodies with toxins. When Indigenous nations stand up to protect their rights, they are protecting a liveable planet for people all around the world. When the T̓silhqot̓in defend their own sovereign territory, they are defending cultural diversity all around the world, making space for other systems to root and grow and flourish. When we fight, we can win.

“It is unacceptable that our community has to endure this injustice and the continued trauma of colonization. To transition from conflict, our communities have provided an alternative in the [Nexwagwez̓an] Tribal Park. We no longer want to live with the threat of government and external industries deciding how our land should be managed.”

– Nits'il?in Chief Russell Myers Ross, Vice-Chair

Ireland is at a crucial point with our contradiction between being a country colonised by Britain, and our increasing willingness to take part in the European war machine. Another contradiction arises between the Irish people’s deep identification with the Palestinian people and the Irish state’s complicity in the genocide in Gaza.

US tech companies in Ireland work closely with the Zionist state to carry out their colonisation of Palestine. Project Nimbus is a billion dollar project in which Amazon and Google provide computing infrastructure for what has been called Israel’s ‘AI-powered genocide and Apartheid.’ Both companies have data centres in Ireland which support these services.

Ireland’s economic dependence on tech companies makes the 26-counties’ government subservient to the US, and complicit in the worst atrocities being carried out by these imperialist powers today. The government’s reluctance in taking meaningful action is the result of an economic dependency built on increasingly more militarised foreign direct investment (FDI), largely from US corporations, that use Irish FDI policy to extend their neocolonial profiteering.

Central to our analysis is that the current imperialist struggle is fought in ways that are not just military, but also economic, ecological, and ideological. The mining boom in Ireland is presented as a source of so called ‘critical minerals’ for the so called ‘green transition.’ However, in reality Ireland’s land is vital to fuel the war economy and feed US and EU imperial interests.

The development of these extractivist projects in Ireland should be seen as deeply entwined with the ongoing experience of colonisation on the island. Extraction is particularly connected to the power of a comprador class – the political and economic class who act as agents for multinational corporations in Ireland, a formation that has its roots in the specific colonial experience of Ireland, and continues within the contemporary neoliberal economic regime.

“If you remove the English Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts will be in vain. England will still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.”

– James Connolly

1897

The use of data centres as tools for genocide, the mining for materials for ongoing militarisation, the attempts to make Ireland dependent on US fracked gas – the role of this island’s political and economic elites in tying us further into contemporary imperialism is clear. We oppose these projects because of how destructive they are of the land, but also because of how they are tools of the world’s most oppressive regimes, and are in deep contradiction with the anticolonial solidarity that is so powerful within Irish society.

We see the role of social movements as challenging the projects of military, economic and ecological imperialism across the island. This requires movements to see the interconnections between the varied issues with which we are concerned and focus on tackling the driving forces of capitalism and imperialism. Such a connection roots struggles against extractivism within the long tradition of anti-imperialist resistance across the island of Ireland.

The harms of capitalism and imperialism have to be countered and healed with slow and steady community building, mutual aid, and solidarity. It is essential to rebuild a communal life which rejects capitalist principles and offers a real alternative within our current context. We have to find ways to work together, to find unity in the diversity of our tactics, and organise structures to sustain ourselves and our communities during this struggle for life and against death.

This alternative must come from a connection to the deep traditions of resistance and collective life that run through our own society. An example of this is the ongoing grassroots struggle against the erasure of the Irish language by the states on both sides of the border, *mar a deirtear is tír gan teanga, tír gan anam* (“a country without a language is a country without a soul”).

We are currently working towards a protest camp in the summer of 2026. This camp will focus on areas of US imperialist activity in Ireland, in relation to the use of Shannon airport as a US military base, the construction of LNG terminals for receiving US fracked gas, and the continued expansion of data centres across the island. To join us in this work please send an email to slieile@protonmail.com.

“We declare in the words of the Irish Republican Proclamation the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and the right to unfettered control of Irish destinies to be indefeasible. We declare that the Nation’s sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions, the Nation’s soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the Nation, and we reaffirm that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare.”

– *Democratic Programme of the First Dáil*

21 January 1919

ΔΤΗΓΗΑΒΗΑΙΛ ΝΑ ΗΑΙΤΕ | Reclaiming place

Tá an scéal seo chomh sean leis na clocha. There are many stories reflected in this struggle—
the dispassionate dispossession of people from place by the pounding drum of development;
the devouring hunger of greed, deaf to the destruction under its feet;
the mania of modernity, the consumptive cancer of colonialism;
and the resistance that blossoms in its wake.

those pushed further and further to the margins;
agus na seoda nach bhfuil sofheicthe seachas ón imeall.

*Is fánach an ait a bhfaighfeá gliomach anois i lár na sléibhte
ach murar n-éistfeá le fuaim na habhna ní bhfaighfeá breac*

We are faced with questions of development, growth, progress— What does progress mean? For whom? Is it progress to poison the land beneath our feet? When will enough be enough? Will we allow the liquidation of the last of our treasures for the cold sheen of gold and guns and AI astroturf?

Where is our attention today? With the old folks? With the land? With the songs sung by birds on the wind or rain on the hillside? The warnings told with increasing urgency by undrinkable water, by the silence that replaced the call of the corncrake, by the accumulation of heavy metals in our blood?

*“Dhíolfadh siad an tír ar son airgid,” mar a dúirt Padaí Láidir
‘is nach amhlaidh an chúis s’againne anois*

The Sperrins are not empty land to be sacrificed at the altar of profit. These mountains are a home to peatlands, rivers, farms and families. These mountains are a home to intergenerational memory. Holy wells, mass rocks, standing stones, fairy forts. A place that remembers a time before colonialism. The old world is dying, the new world is struggling to be born – but what world are we birthing?

A just transition cannot simply replace petroleum with ‘green’ extraction. We must fundamentally shift this colonial system. We must imagine and enact a world built not on extraction and exclusion, but rather on reciprocity, responsibility, respect. Reciprocity with the lands and waters that sustain us. Responsibilities to our ancestors and the generations to come. Respect for ourselves as part of the web of life, our languages and stories just as integral to the ecosystem as bird song and mycelium.

We stand in solidarity with local communities resisting extractivism. We uplift the autonomy, self-determination, and territorial sovereignty of Indigenous peoples everywhere. We affirm the right of all communities to protect and care for their lands according to their own values and knowledge systems.

NÍ NEART SO CUR LE CHÉILE



Organisations:

- Save Our Sperrins
<https://dontmineus.com/>
- Yes to Life No to Mining
<https://yestolifenotomining.org/>
- Communities Against the Injustices of Mining
<https://caimnetwork.org/>
- Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland
<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/northern-ireland>
- Slí Eile & Climate Camp Ireland
<https://climatecampireland.ie/>
- Mining Injustice Solidarity Network
<https://mininginjustice.org/>
- Mining Watch Canada
<https://www.miningwatch.ca/>

Further Resources:

- Save Our Sperrins Podcast (<https://dontmineus.com/>)
- “Our existence is our resistance: mining and resistance on the island of Ireland” – Yes to Life, No to Mining Network
- “99th Day: A Warning About Technology” – Gerry McGovern
- “From the Bog to the Cloud: Dependency and Eco-Modernity in Ireland” – Patrick Bresnihan and Patrick Brodie
- “Ireland, Colonialism and the Unfinished Revolution: Anois Ar Theacht An tSamhraidh” – Robbie McVeigh and Bill Rolston
- *Oidhreacht Mhuintir Luinigh*: “Padaí Láidir Mac Culadh agus Gaeltacht Thír Eoghain” – Padraig Ó Baoighill
- “Sgéalta Mhuintir Luinigh / Munterloney Folktales: Irish Tradition from County Tyrone” – Eamonn Ó Tuathal

Buíochas | Gratuities

Ba mhór an pléisiúr dom an saothar seo a chur le chéile leis na daoine is deise as achan chearn. Ní thioctadh liom é seo dhéanamh murach an cuidiú ‘is an chomhairle a bhfuair mé uathu. Mo sheacht mbeannacht le Sinéad Ní Mhearnóg, Lynda Sullivan, Cormac McAleer, Fidelma O’Kane, Jinny, lucht Shlí Eile agus na feachtais ar fad. Gaiscíocht atá deantaí agaibh, bail ó Dhia ar an obair. Buíochas do chruinneas teanga a bhfuair mé ó Fhionntán ag Cumann Chluain Árd, Ferdia ag Áras Mhic Reachtain, Cormac ag Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich, agus ó Phadaí. Bhí sé do mo ghríosaigh an mhéid ábhair réabhlóideach ag lucht Ghlór na Móna, Meitheal Uí Chadhain, Cairde, CATU, Pobal Seachas Brabús, agus pobal na Gaeilge Bhéal Feirste i gcoitinne – tá barraiocht daoine ann le rá, nár lagaí Dia sibh. Tá mé i bhfiacha do Chonchúr, Cassidy, Molly, Naomi, Caoimhe, Emma, Paul and Cat for your advice, creativity, support, ardú croí and for being generally sound folks. International support came from Corey, Sabiá, AJ, Mary, Liz, Ariel and the 1000 voices project, agus na daoine uaisle le Gaeilg’ a’ Chroí. Is ormsa amháin atá an locht as achan meanchóg. Má tá ceist ar bith agat, cur teachtaireacht chugam ag PilibODuibhir ag riseup.net. Is é i ndíl cuimhne ar na cainteoirí dúchais a choinnigh a n-oidhreacht beo atá an leabhairín seo. Go ndéana Dia a mhaith orthu go léir.

Aitheantas Grianghraf | Credits

Tá na foclaí ar an dá chlúdach le Huartan agus le Peadar Mac Culadh.

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Clúdach istigh *Inside cover: Cloch oghaim Achadh Scriobach.* Photo: Radharc Images.

Lch 3 Pg 3: Coneyglen, *Gleann Choll* Glennhull. Photo: Michael J. Murphy, 1962.

Lch 16-17 Pg 16-17: Michael J. Murphy, 1950. Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, B075.32.00010.

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Lch 36-37 Pg 36-37: Climate Camp Ireland.

Lch 42-43 Pg 42-43: *Top*: Chilko Lake, Tsilhqot’in territory, Photo: Louis Bockner / The Narwhal.

Bottom: Težtan Biny, Photo: Tsilhqot’in National Government.

Lch 44-45 Pg 44-45: *Gleann Láirc* Glenlark. Photo: Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 1951.

Lch 47 Pg 47: *Meitheal Ghleann Choll* Glennhull meitheal. Photo: Michael J. Murphy, c. 1950.

GLEANNAILLE

le Peadar na nEochrach

‘Measc sléibhte glas aoibhinn an Speirín
Tá Gleannaille go suaimhneach ina luí,
Os a chionn tá’n tSabhaill go aedach
Mar bhainrion ar cathaoir ‘na suí,
‘San sin tá na srutháin ag síneadh
Chomh soilseach le criostail ‘san ghréin
Ag scabadh a bhfuaim chois an ghleanna
Chomh ceolmhar le binn guth an éin.

Nuair léidheann sneachta ar mínligh san earrach
A’s an gaith teacht ó thuaidh mar is gnách,
Ag críonadh gach bachlóg a’s duilean
Bíonn Gleannaille i bhfasgadh faoi bhlaith,
Bíonn an smol a’s an londubh go luathgháireach
Ag seinm ‘measc na gcaobh a’s na gcrainn.
A’s uain go uaibhireach ag léimnigh ar
Mhullach gach ardán a’s bean

Muna mbeifeá ach seachtain san ghleann sin
Chan fhágfá gan brón ar do chroí,
Tá na buachaillí carthanach caoiúil
Chomh céillí ‘s chomh críona le saoi,
Tá na cailíní deas dathúil dóighiúil
Níl a samhail i gcuma ná snó
Le súile mar dhealramh na gréine
‘S a nún-fholt ar úrdhath na ngnó

Is acu tá’n Ghaeilge go blasta
A’s feadaim go deimhin ag rá,
Nach gcluintear ach teanga ár sinsir
De labhairt in san Ghleann sin gach lá
A glean gléghlas aoibhinn álainn,
Bíodh do chleann sona, sásta agus fíor,
A’s rath ar a gcuid ‘s ar a gcairde
Go moch, go mall, as go síor

DORN SAN AER

le Huartan

Is muidinne na Gaeil,

Is iad ár sinsear na Fianna,

A bheas beo go buan,

Nár umhlaigh riamh roimh Ghall.

I measc na nGael, seasann muid ar son daoine bundúchasacha ar fud fad an domhain,

Ar ghoideadh, a dteangatha, a dtíortha agus a slí bheatha, in ainm choilíneachais

Ní dhuine aonair é an namhaid, is córas é,

A scarann agus a chuireann faoi chois muid,

‘Sé chúis leis an cinedhíothú sa Phalaistín

‘Sé ainm an chórais sin ná An Chaipitleachas.

Don lucht rachmais,

Tá teachtaireacht againn daoibh:

Sinne Éire Páganach

Agus in ainneoin bhur seacht ndícheall,

Tá muid go fóill anseo.

Iompraíonn muid linn díoltas ár sinsir

Agus táimid ag teacht i bhur gcoinne.

We are defending not only a landscape but a way of life

rooted in care, community, and justice.

We stand in solidarity with Indigenous and frontline communities resisting extractivism worldwide.

The era of plunder must end.



Severed Branches Press