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| <p>Institution: University of Ulster</p> |
| <p>Unit of Assessment: 28A Modern Languages and Linguistics: Celtic Studies</p> |
| <p>Title of case study: The Irish Language in an Urban Environment</p> |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study demonstrates the social, economic and cultural impact of research carried out by members of the Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute into the history of the Irish language in Belfast in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.</p> <p>This research has revealed the extent of Irish language activity in Belfast in the 19th century, focussing on the one hand on Gaelic revivalism and antiquarianism and on the other on the history of an Irish-speaking community who migrated to this urban area from Omeath, Co. Louth. Our research into the Irish language in an urbanised and industrialised setting has been adopted and utilised by the Irish speaking community in Belfast, by Irish language organisations, by the media and by the tourist industry.</p> <p>This case study demonstrates how our research has impacted on the wider community, in particular by tracing its dissemination in the key areas of broadcasting, cultural heritage and tourism initiatives. As an indication of the reach and significance of this impact, it is shown <i>inter alia</i> that a television documentary describing the findings of our research achieved very significant viewing figures (over 100,000 on its first showing); a permanent exhibition illustrating the history of native Irish speakers in Belfast has become a major tourist attraction in an economically disadvantaged area of Belfast; a cross-community cultural heritage project on this urban gaeltacht was funded by Belfast City Council and a specially commissioned drama was produced by Aisling Ghéar Theatre. Furthermore, a transportable exhibition on the Irish language in Belfast formed part of the centenary celebrations of Belfast City Hall and went on tour to the United States as part of an investment drive by the West Belfast Economic Forum.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research on the history of the Irish language in an urban setting carried out by Irish and Celtic Studies researchers de Brún and Hughes can be divided into two areas of focus:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The history of Gaelic revivalism and antiquarianism in 19th century Belfast which centres on the life and work of the Presbyterian industrialist, Robert Shipboy MacAdam (1808-1895). (2) The history of the community of Irish-speakers from the Omeath Gaeltacht who settled in Belfast from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. <p>The body of work by de Brún and Hughes on the history of the Irish language has yielded exciting new insights into the historical context for the Gaelic revival in Belfast prior to the 1880s. In so doing, this research has thrown light on the Presbyterian contribution to the Irish language and afforded a greater understanding of a critical revivalist movement which has tended to be overshadowed by that of the period between the 1880s and 1920s. Hughes' highly-acclaimed monograph (1998) which was listed in the top three British and Irish folklore books in its year of publication, brought to the attention of the public the work of one of Belfast's most distinguished citizens and most successful industrialists, in particular his work in collecting Irish-language manuscripts, Irish-language folklore, Irish songs and proverbs. Hughes' research (1998 and 2006; see references below) also demonstrates the importance of the Irish language in trade and communication in this period of great demographic and cultural transformation and provides new insights into the work of nineteenth-century Irish language and literary societies operating in Belfast and throughout Ulster.</p> <p>De Brún's work on the history of the Irish-speaking community known as the 'Fadgies' (see references below) has unearthed a historical profile of one of the communities which contributed to the transformation of Belfast during its most extensive period of demographic expansion. Through examination and synthesis of census material and memoir, this historical profile</p> |

produced detailed biographical and geographical information revealing a sustained pattern of chain migration and cultural transference. His work on this community has also provided key insights into the intersection of revivalism and native tradition at a critical period for the history of the Irish language. In addition, de Brún's detailed examination and contextualization of a series of contemporary poems (by Aodh Mac Domhnaill, 1802-67) on the Great Famine (see de Brún 2011) is of particular significance given the paucity of contemporary Gaelic compositions dealing with the catastrophic events of 1845-50. These poems have been shown by de Brún to be an essential, if previously ignored, source for the history of the massive social transformation undergone by Belfast in the nineteenth century through industrialization. Mac Domhnaill's story and his poetic testimony on the events of the Great Famine were dramatized for de Brún's TV documentary (2010). De Brún's (2006b; 2012) research on the impact of urbanization and industrialization on the Irish language were a key focus for the temporary exhibition (de Brún and Phoenix) for *Foras na Gaeilge* in 2006 and the permanent exhibition (de Brún and Hughes) for Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich in 2011.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

As evidence for the quality of the underpinning research, it can be pointed out that de Brún and Hughes were entered in our Celtic Studies submission for the 2008 RAE when 100% of our output was graded as internationally recognised and 75% was deemed world-leading or internationally excellent.

It should also be noted that Hughes' monograph (1998) was listed in the top three British and Irish folklore books for 1998 at a ceremony held in University College London. Moreover, de Brún's 2011 article won *New Hibernia Review's* 'Roger McHugh Award' for the outstanding article of that year.

Hughes, A.J., (1998) *Robert Shipboy MacAdam: His Life and Gaelic Proverb Collection* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies).

Hughes, A.J., (2006) 'Robert MacAdam and the nineteenth-century Irish language revival' in *Belfast and the Irish Language*. Four Courts Press, 43-64. ISBN 1-85182-939-3

de Brún, Fionntán, ed. (2006a) *Belfast and the Irish Language*. Four Courts Press. ISBN 1-85182-939-3

de Brún, Fionntán (2006b) 'The Fadgies: 'an Irish-speaking colony' in nineteenth-century Belfast'. In: *Belfast and the Irish Language*. Four Courts Press, 101.-113. ISBN 1-85182-939-3

de Brún, Fionntán (2010) 'Ulsteria': the fortunes of the Irish language under Stormont 1921-72', Four Courts Press, pp. 202-222 ISBN 978-1-84682-189-9

de Brún, Fionntán (2011) 'Expressing the Nineteenth Century in Irish: the Poetry of Aodh Mac Domhnaill (1802-67)', *New Hibernia Review*, pp. 81-106.

de Brún, Fionntán (2012) 'Society in Ulster Seems Breaking Up' *An Tionsclú, An Imirce agus Pobal na Gaeilge sa naoú haois déag* in F.de Brún and S. Mac Mathúna *Teanga agus Litríocht na Gaeilge i gCúige Uladh sa Naoú hAois Déag*, Preas Shanway, Belfast, 2012, pp. 201. ISBN 978-0-9571006-6-4

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Recent years have seen a very significant revival of the Irish language in Belfast, including the development of a thriving Gaeltacht Quarter with major cultural, commercial and tourism benefits to the community. De Brún's exploration of the hidden history of an urban Gaeltacht in the 19th century has been adopted by the present-day community as confirmation of the continuity of the Irish language in industrialised Belfast and an important validation of and justification for the

modern revival. Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich, who are at the heart of the revival, have made a conscious decision to derive inspiration for a number of their projects from research carried out by de Brún: “The Fadgies are representative of precedence to what we are working to achieve in An Cheathrú Gaeltachta: an urbanised Gaeltacht area, where accessibility and exposure to the Irish language is commonplace. Dr de Brún’s pioneering research and steadfast assistance from the outset of this project has been more than invaluable; indeed, the project as it is would not exist without either” (letter from Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich).

The research of de Brún and Hughes has, furthermore, played a significant role in promoting awareness throughout Northern Irish society of its Irish language heritage and the importance played therein by protestants such as the industrialist Robert MacAdam. Belfast City Council’s Good Relations Unit has taken the 19th century community revealed and explored by de Brún as a central theme in its cross-community partnership embracing Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich, Windsor Women’s Centre and the 174 Trust; and our exhibition on the history of the Irish language in Belfast was launched by the DUP Deputy Lord Mayor Ruth Patterson. This increased awareness is reflected in highly significant cross-community advances such as the appointment by the East Belfast Mission of an Irish Language Development Officer (Linda Ervine, wife of former Progressive Unionist party leader Brian Ervine) and the establishment in East Belfast of flourishing classes in the language. These developments are featured in a BBC documentary for which de Brún was interviewed which will be broadcast in November 2013 (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01klc2f>).

Our research into the Irish language in an industrialised setting has led to the commissioning by publically-funded and semi-state bodies of other outputs in formats which facilitate wider public dissemination, in particular through television and temporary and permanent exhibitions. A detailed television documentary (*Scéal na Fadgies* by de Brún) was commissioned by TG4 and Northern Ireland Screen’s Irish Language Broadcast Fund. A permanent exhibition (by de Brún & Hughes, 2011) was commissioned by Cultúrlann MacAdam-Ó Fiaich and was funded by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. A temporary exhibition (de Brún & Phoenix) was commissioned by the cross-border Irish-language body, *Foras na Gaeilge* for Belfast City Hall’s centenary celebrations (see evidence base).

The most immediate indicator of the reach and significance of the underpinning research has been alluded to above - the commissioning by publically-funded or semi-state bodies of other outputs in formats which facilitate wider public dissemination. In each case, this has come about because the funding bodies have identified the potential of our research to inform public discourse in the broad area of cultural heritage and in some cases to deliver specific economic and social benefits, particularly in the area of cultural tourism.

The viewing figures for the TV documentary (de Brún, 2010) demonstrate that 100,000 viewers tuned in to the programme’s initial broadcast in May 2010 (see Sources to corroborate). Since the initial broadcast, the documentary has been rebroadcast by TG4 on several occasions and was made accessible to a global audience on the TG4 website. The broadcast has led to invitations by local councils and historical/cultural organisation to give public talks in Belfast, Newry and Omagh (see evidence base).

The print and digital interactive, permanent exhibition space for the newly extended and refurbished Cultúrlann MacAdam-Ó Fiaich was officially opened by Irish President Mary McAleese at a ceremony in September 2011. This event received considerable media coverage and helped to launch the exhibition as one of the key tourist, heritage and educational resources in an area of significant economic and social disadvantage (Falls Road, Belfast). The public use of visitor attractions is monitored by the NI Tourist Bureau and the recent Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency report demonstrates (p. 19) that 89,000 members of the public visited the Cultúrlann in 2011 and 101,000 in 2013 (see http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/tourism-statistics/visitor_attraction_survey-2.htm).

The temporary exhibition on the history of the Irish language in Belfast was used as part of the centenary celebrations of Belfast City Hall and went on display in the City Hall after its initial launch at a gala dinner by the DUP Deputy Lord Mayor. Subsequently, the exhibition was displayed in venues in the U.S. as part of an investment tour by the West Belfast Economic Forum and also by Newry and Mourne Council as part of Irish language week in March 2008. The exhibition has also been used by local schools and cultural groups at a wide variety of events (evidence base).

The model of progression from traditional academic output (scholarly books/articles) to impact through popular dissemination (broadcast/ exhibitions) can be equally identified in a number of publically-funded cultural heritage initiatives which have drawn directly on our underpinning research. These have included an audio tour by Fionntán de Brún of Belfast's Irish language heritage for the *Culture Northern Ireland* website, the creation of tourist signage giving the history of the Irish-speaking community in Bank St, and a historical booklet produced as part of Belfast City Council's Cultural Tourism Strategy, entitled 'The Giant's Tale' (see Sources to corroborate). Most recently, as noted above, Belfast City Council's Good Relations Unit has taken the Omeath Irish Language Community in Belfast as a central theme in its cross-community partnership project. A key aim of this project is to enhance mutual understanding across Belfast's sectarian divide.

The underpinning research by Hughes and de Brún has also led to the establishment of the ICSRI's highly successful annual 'Robert Shipboy MacAdam Memorial Lecture' and annual conference (*Éigse Loch Lao*) which are designed to disseminate the work of the Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute to the public. The initial proposal to commemorate the life and work of Robert Shipboy MacAdam (1808-1895) was made by the late Prof Breandán Ó Buachalla at the launch of *Belfast and the Irish Language* (de Brún, 2006a). *Éigse Loch Lao* is the product of a dynamic partnership with the influential Irish Language society, *Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain* (The McCracken Cultural Society), who jointly organise the conference along with the Irish and Celtic Studies Research Institute. The 2011 conference was officially opened by the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Niall Ó Donghaile, and was funded by *Foras na Gaeilge* and Belfast City Council, while the 2013 conference was attended by the current Lord Mayor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir. The themes of these conferences, *The Irish Language in Schools, North and South* (2011) and *Visual Media in the Irish Language* (2013) are indicative of our engagement with the public in these key areas. In addition, members of the ICSRI play a leading role in the McCracken Cultural Society and showcase our research on the Irish language in Belfast at the Society's summer school which attracts between 400 and 500 students annually.

Finally, our research into the history of the Irish language in an urban environment has led to numerous radio, television and newspaper features, some of which are internet accessible (see sources to corroborate).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Scéal na Fadgies (de Brún, 2010) viewing figures supplied by Dave Moore, TG4 Audience Research.

BBC feature on *Belfast and the Irish Language* (de Brún, 2006)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/irish/video_audio/player/433/english/

NvTv Interview on *Belfast and the Irish Language* (de Brún, 2006)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrFDkJHrviCulture NI Audio Tour>

<http://soundcloud.com/cultureni/gaelic-culture-essay-irish/>

Nuacht 24 Internet News Feature on annual conference (Éigse Loch Lao)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HovLH-wTNwU>

'The Giant's Tale: the History and Heritage of North Belfast'

<http://www.gotobelfast.com/pdf/The%20Giant's%20Tale%20Final1.pdf>

Belfast City Council Good Relations Project - Cultural Connections Programme

<https://www.facebook.com/ClarChonaiscChulturthaCulturalConnectionsProgramme?ref=hl>

<http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/index/media-centre/news-departments/news-dcal/news-dcal-200913-the-big-gg.htm>

http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/tourism-statistics/visitor_attraction_survey-2.htm