

speakers who, prior to the 1960s, were raised in a Breton-speaking environment, learned French at school at a later stage, and have gone on speaking Breton usually only in informal situations (paleo-speakers) and, on the other hand, speakers who belong to younger generations, have learned Breton at school, but do not necessarily live in a Breton-speaking environment (neo-speakers).

(3) Yann Desbordes added one chapter—just as short as the others—relative to the main rules of Breton pronunciation. In keeping with the rest of the book, it is normative. But the norm it depicts is based on competent observation of modern Breton. (translated by the author from the French: “Yann Desbordes a ajouté un chapitre—toujours succinct—sur les principales règles de la prononciation du Breton: comme le reste de l’ouvrage, il est normatif. Mais d’une normativité basée sur l’observation compétente du breton Moderne.”)

## Ethnicity of Irish Language Learners in Canada

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*The ethnicity of students studying Irish as an optional credit-course in a Canadian high school between 1997 and 2004 is discussed. No positive correlation is found between Irish ethnicity and enrollment in the course. Instead, statistics tend to reflect the ethnic mix of the community at large. This finding may have implications for marketing Irish, and perhaps other Celtic languages, to students of high school age in North America.*

### Introduction

Irish was taught as a credit course for ordinary, day-time, high school students at Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute (KCVI) in Kingston, Ontario, Canada in the years 2000, 2002 and 2004. The number of students during these years was, respectively: 15, 18, and 22. The Irish course was part of a full-semester Celtic Studies Program, which involved four separate courses: Celtic Literature, Celtic History, Celtic Music, and Irish. Students from high schools across the school district, both Public (Limestone District School Board) and Catholic (Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board), were eligible to enroll in the program, and were bussed free of charge to KCVI. The ethnic distribution of the students taking the course is of interest, since this is the first time to our knowledge that Irish has been offered as a credit course at an Ontario high school.

## Ethnicity

In 2002 and 2004 optional surveys of ethnic background were distributed to students. More than 80% responded in both years. The survey asked students to list the surnames of their four grandparents and to indicate their ethnicity. In 2000, no survey was distributed and so results are based solely upon the surnames of students.

In Table 1, the distribution of student ethnicities is listed, based upon the ethnicity of students' fathers. While this approach is obviously sexist, it is consistent with the most common tracer of ethnicity—one's surname. In cases for which it was necessary to base ethnicity entirely upon surnames, Irish ethnicity was authenticated with reference to MacLysaght (1991). Where MacLysaght indicates that a name is numerous in locations other than Ireland, a value of ½ was assigned to both "Irish" and the other ethnicity.

Table 1, and also Table 2 below, give Canadian census results by ethnic origin as a baseline with which to compare student ethnicity. These figures may only be considered as rough estimates due to the manner in which Canadian census returns are recorded. Respondents are permitted, for instance, to give multiple responses, and these responses are not "normalized" to give a final count consistent with the total Canadian population. Further, respondents are permitted to list themselves as "Canadian" which has the effect of concealing their ancestral origins. In the case of Irish origins, this second point is likely to lead to significant underestimates. Irish people were the second largest ethnic group in Canada at the time of Confederation (c. 1867), the French being first (O'Driscoll and Reynolds 1988), and it is the descendents of these earlier settlers who are most likely to list themselves as simply "Canadian". The "normalized" percentage of Irish-Canadians may be between 13 and 18% of the total population. The percentage in Kingston would be considerably higher than the national average, as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Ethnicity	Canadian Census <sup>1</sup> %	Kingston Census <sup>2</sup> %	2000 %	2002 %	2004 %
English	22	30	13	21	23
French	18	11	17	11	9
Scottish	14	19	23	12	23
<b>Irish</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
British <sup>3</sup>	—	0.9	20	11	23
German	9.1	7.0	0	12	4
Italian	3.9	1.8	7	6	0
Aboriginal	3.6	1.9	0	0	4
Ukrainian	3.3	1.2	0	0	0
Chinese	3.0	0.8	0	6	0
Dutch	3.0	4.4	0	6	4
Norwegian	1.1	—	7	6	0
Welsh	1.1	1.5	0	6	3

**Table 1. Ethnicity of Students Studying Irish at KCVI, 2002–2004**

Based upon Ethnicity/Surname of Father

1. Statistics Canada, 1996 Canadian Census, Ethnic Origins, <http://www.statcan.ca/english/census96/feb17/e01can.htm>
2. Profile of Census Tracts in Kingston, Oshawa, and Peterborough, Part B. Statistics Canada. 1996.
3. Surnames have been classified as "British" if they are widespread in England, Scotland or Wales, but not Ireland.

Table 2 lists the survey statistics for 2002 and 2004 based upon the ethnicity of all four grandparents. Each grandparent has been

Ethnicity	Canadian Census <sup>1</sup> %	Kingston Census <sup>2</sup> %	2002 %	2004 %
English	22	30	16	20
French	18	11	11	8
Scottish	14	19	28	24
<b>Irish</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>
British <sup>3</sup>	-	0.9	12	10
German	9.1	7.0	6	6
Italian	3.9	1.8	2	0
Aboriginal	3.6	1.9	5	2
Ukrainian	3.3	1.2	0	4
Chinese	3.0	0.8	4	0
Dutch	3.0	4.4	2	6
Norwegian	1.1	-	2	0
Welsh	1.1	1.5	3	5

**Table 2. Ethnicity of Students Studying Irish at KCVI , 2002 and 2004**  
Based upon Ethnicity of all Four Grandparents

1. Statistics Canada, 1996 Canadian Census, Ethnic Origins, <http://www.statcan.ca/english/census96/feb17/eo1can.htm>
2. Profile of Census Tracts in Kingston, Oshawa, and Peterborough, Part B. Statistics Canada. 1996.
3. Surnames have been classified as "British" if they are widespread in England, Scotland or Wales, but not Ireland.

counted equally in the analysis.

The data in Tables 1 and 2 are in general agreement with each other, and both suggest that student ethnicity largely reflects the

ethnic mix of the local Kingston community. It should be recognized that the current study is based upon fairly small numbers (55 students), however the total number of eligible students was considerably higher (~6,300). English ethnicity is somewhat under-represented among the student population (16% in 2002 and 20% in 2004 in Table 2, as compared to community percentage of 30%), however this shortfall may be accounted for by the inclusion of the "British" category. Scottish ethnicity is somewhat over-represented (28% in 2002 and 24% in 2004 in Table 2, as compared to the community percentage of 19%). Irish ethnicity is under-represented (9% in 2002 and 15% in 2005 in Table 2, as compared to the community percentage of 20%).

The under-representation of Irish ethnicity in the student population is perhaps surprising. Among adult learners of Irish in North America, Irish ancestry is very much the rule (Harp of Tara, *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*, 2006; *Daltaí na Gaeilge*, 2006; Stenson, 2002). The recognition of "ancestral identity" which would appear to play a significant part in drawing adult learners to the Irish language, does not seem to be similarly established among the teenage population of high school students.

It is curious to note that in the current data set Scottish ancestry appears to be correlated with enrolment while Irish ancestry does not. This occurs despite the fact that the language component of the Celtic Studies Program was Irish and not Scots Gaelic. No option to study Scots Gaelic exists in any of the local schools. One may conjecture that students of Scottish ancestry were attracted to the other courses of the Program (Celtic Literature, History and Music), and not necessarily to the language course. This would not explain however, why students of Irish ancestry were not equally attracted to the other courses of the program.

As a final point, it is interesting to note that students of diverse backgrounds (e.g. Aboriginal, German, Chinese) appear as likely to enroll in an Irish language course as their peers of Irish ancestry. This phenomenon deserves consideration in any plan to

extend the teaching of Irish, or other Celtic languages, more widely among high schools in North America.

## Conclusions

The ethnic origins of high school students studying Irish in Ontario has been examined among a sample of 55 students enrolled in credit courses between 2000 and 2004. The statistics suggest that students of diverse ethnic origins are interested in learning Irish, and that Irish ancestry among high school students does not play a significant part in choosing to enroll.

## Bibliography

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# A Comparative Review of Irish Dictionaries

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*A Comparative Review of Irish Dictionaries looks at a variety of Irish-English and English-Irish dictionaries currently available, and details some of their strengths and weaknesses, to facilitate a prospective user's evaluation as to which would befit him or her. Pocket dictionaries, as well as larger desktop varieties are examined. Sample entries are given for each, and evaluated for content.*

There are more Irish dictionaries available nowadays than ever before. Each of these resources offers a wide variety of features that one must consider when choosing which will be most suitable for the user. I applied the following criteria to narrow down choices and gather just the right resources for my needs. The approach will hopefully be of use to others as well.

Initially, there are some questions that will help refine the scope. What will the dictionary be used for? Is the user a traveler who is on vacation in Ireland, and wants to be able to say a few phrases? Will the resource be used for work in Irish lineage by someone interested in understanding the words encountered as *Gaeilge* in a genealogical quest? Will it be used by a teacher or student of the language—one who is just beginning, or ready to move to the next level after having studied the language for a while? Or someone who writes professionally in Irish? On another note, how important is the manner in which the dictionary is presented typographically, and is price a point that needs to be factored in? Depending on the answers, a variety of dictionaries with fairly different attributes may best suit the situation.