

CASE STUDY



CAOIMHE NIC CÚ ULADH



Is mise Caoimhe nic cú Uladh agus is oibrí óige mé do chuid Glór na Móna.

My journey as part of the Irish language community started at a very young age when I joined Naíscoil Bhreandáin the Irish language nursery school situated in the Gaeltacht quarter of the shaws road . I come from a family of ten siblings who are all taught through the medium of Irish. Growing up both my parents did not speak a single word of Irish but made the decision to send their kids to be educated through the medium of Irish. My education has all been taught to me through the medium of Irish through nursery school primary school in BPF and secondary school where I attended Colaiste Feirste the only Irish medium secondary school in the North. as a student I always felt while at school that I had a sense of identity and reason to be there but for me that stopped once I left the school gates.

I knew I was different from my friends who didn't speak Irish but I couldn't quite pinpoint what was so different about us other than using a different language, we all had the same struggles, we all did the same subjects and we all learned the same things but mine was just a wee bit better because I was taught in Irish. I grew up with Friends telling me they wish they could speak Irish or that's cool you speak another language, but it never felt different to me it was always just normal.

I LATER FOUND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF MY OWN IDENTITY, OF MY OWN CULTURE

I knew I wanted to continue to use my language in a social aspect outside of school this is when I discovered glór na mona at first I used Glór na móna as a social hub to see my friends and to socialise outside of school.

I later found deeper understanding of my own identity of my own culture and the culture of my peers I found a love for youth work and knew I wanted to be an advocate and an activist to provide more support for not only the Irish language sector but for the young people that come after me so they too would find their identity and even experience a journey similar to my own.

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I started as a volunteer in the youth club with no expectations other than to see friends and the Socialise little did I know that I was only starting the amazing journey that I find myself on today.

As I have said I started as a volunteer one night a week and the Glór an Ghleanna which was based in tullymore at the time, as a volunteer and young person, I was given many personal development opportunities and leadership

opportunities along the way. I took part in various leadership programme, personal development programs and various focus groups one of which was with Gail and Eliz for the study for the Model of Irish Medium youth work.

I have developed majorly on a professional level as I have been put through various OCNS and endless training which help to develop me as a youth practitioner. I was given endless support and encouragement to continue my professional development, the staff of Glór na Móna helped me to enroll and prep for the Certificate in Youth and community studies.

The certificate gave me a better insight and understanding into youth work as a whole. I am currently in my 2nd year of the degree in youth and community studies and aim to become professionally qualified as I have chosen this as my lifelong career as I aim to be one of the few qualified Irish medium practitioners in the youth work field, I aim to promote this career path to the generations of gaeilgóirí to come as we can see the growth in the Irish medium sector.

I have made many lifelong friends and have many role models throughout the organisation who continue to support and guide me throughout my whole journey.

BEING ABLE TO USE MY LANGUAGE IN A SOCIAL ASPECT WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

I have worked in various roles throughout the years and have gained a variety of experience as part of the Irish language sector. I had 9hrs contract as part of the extended provision where we set up a drop in at the weekend and done outreach throughout the upper Springfield, I have went from a youth worker on a generic setting to taking on the role as leader in charge in cumann óige Uí dhochartaigh, the only irish medium youth club in North Belfast.

This role is significant to me as I can the see firsthand the amazing work that is being put in, in the irish sector. cumann óige Uí dhochartaigh like our other youth clubs has come on leaps and bounds in the years from being based in a wee porta cabin on the antrim road that opened 1 night a wee to having a shared space in cumann mhic reachtain with over 70 young people a night coming through our doors and opened 3 nights a week.

As much as I can see the progress, we have made I am also fully aware that this work wouldn't happen if we didn't have our amazing volunteers that's help us to keep the doors of the youth club open because without them we couldn't afford to.

The role I am currently in has definitely gave me amazing opportunities as an individual but it also allows me to see the struggles and disadvantages the Irish language sector faces daily, i have experienced first hand just some pf the amazing opportunities that come with being part of the irish medium sector as a young person, having a space to feel heard , appreciated and confident, having a sense of ownership over the space I shared with me peers and also being able to use my language in a social aspect without judgement.

Also as an adult im finding continuous opportunities like education, training and employment through my own language in a home grown sector that helped me to get to where I am.

Again I know these opportunities would not be made possible to me if it wasn't for the unseen work that goes on by the workers in the irish medium sector as I know for its not as easy to get your hand on resources in irish as funding just doesn't stretch to do this and the workers translate it themselves, or our trips and residentials all to places that never seem to offer irish along with the languages they offer and our young people must revert to English in these places to speak with there staff or other people in there.

Our young people in the sector fight daily for the rights that they are intitled, for the right to use their language without discrimination, for the right to socialise with there friends in a place they have a sense of ownership over and for the right to have the opportunities that young people are intitled too, their rights being delayed are their being denied in reality.



In the Irish medium sector we can see the differences that are being made positive and negative, were starting to move from porta cabins and basements to being a user group in other buildings or like Glór na Móna using what should be a community hub as a youth club, throughout the sector as a

whole have do not any purpose built youth building as our own and although we are grateful for other building allowing us to use that space we have nowhere to have ownership of as we are only a user group.

I would like to end this on a more positive note and say that over the years I am grateful for the opportunities I have received and I hope that we can future proof the Irish medium sector to allow the hundreds of young people that were working with weekly to have the same opportunities and more.

