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International Famine Commemoration To Be Held in Phoenix November 1-3

***First time event to be held in western USA; Press event with Ireland's Minister of State for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform and Consul General;
Tour one-of-a-kind Irish Cultural Center in heart of Downtown Phoenix***

PHOENIX (October XX, 2019) – The 2019 International Famine Commemoration will be held in Phoenix, Arizona on November 3, 2019 at the Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Irish Library. The commemoration will be addressed by a representative from the Government of Ireland, Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan.

The International Famine Commemoration, supported by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Culture of Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Consulate General of Ireland in San Francisco, is an annual event which memorializes the Great Irish Famine which took place from 1845 to 1849. During this time, an estimated one million people on the island of Ireland died and another one and a half million emigrated, many to the United States of America.

The commemoration in Phoenix will recognize the enormous contribution of Irish people and those of Irish descent to Arizona and Western United States. Today, people of Irish ancestry comprise roughly 10 per cent of all residents in Phoenix.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the dedication of the *An Gorta Mór*, The Great Hunger Memorial, at the Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Library. This monument, designed by Phoenix artist Maureen McGuire, was the first structure built on the Irish Cultural Center site in 1999. The arch reflects a Celtic passageway, symbolizing entry from the old world to the new, from despair to hope, from oppression to freedom.

In advance of the official commemoration on Sunday morning members of the press are invited to meet Ireland's Minister of State for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform Patrick O'Donovan, Consul General of Ireland to Western U.S. Robert O'Driscoll, and Arizona's Irish Cultural and Learning Foundation President Leslie Thompson to learn more about the commemorations, the celebrations due to take place at the Irish Cultural Center and to take a tour the one-of-a-kind facility:

WHEN: November 2, 2019
3:30-4:15 PM

WHERE: Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Irish Library
1106 N Central Ave
Phoenix, AZ 85004

WHAT: Meet and greet with:

- Ireland's Minister of State for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform, Patrick O'Donovan
- Consul General of Ireland – Western United States, Robert O'Driscoll
- Irish Cultural & Learning Foundation President, Leslie Thompson

A tour of the Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Irish Library will follow interviews.

DETAILS ON THE INTERNATIONAL FAMINE COMMEMORATION:

November 3, 2019

9:00AM: Mass at St. Mary's Basilica

10:00AM: Doors Open

10:30AM: Multi-Faith Prayer Service/Blessing

11:00AM: Commemoration Ceremony

12:00PM: Meet and Greet

Due to high demand and limited seating, RSVPs will be required to attend the Commemoration Ceremony activities from 10:30AM – 1PM. [Register here.](#)

1:00PM – 5:00PM: Family-Friendly FREE public event at the Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Library

Members of the press are also welcome and encouraged to attend the International Famine Commemoration on November 3.

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About the International Famine Commemoration: The Great Irish Famine is considered a formative moment in the relationship between Ireland and the United States and many Irish Americans trace their families' journey to the U.S. during the Famine or the period immediately afterwards.

There have been ten international commemorations of the Great Irish Famine to date. This is the fifth time the commemoration has been held in the U.S. and Phoenix is the westernmost venue to date. Previously the International Famine Commemoration has been held in New York, Boston, New Orleans and Philadelphia.

This year's commemoration will honor the memory of those who left Ireland during the Famine itself, the subsequent years of emigration which saw many Famine Irish and their descendants make an enormous contribution in Western U.S., and the ongoing role of the Irish diaspora and Irish-Americans in Arizona and throughout the Western U.S.

About the Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Irish Library: The mission of the Irish Cultural Center is to celebrate and promote Irish and Celtic Heritage and its influence on and partnership with other cultures. The goal of the McClelland Library is to make accessible a comprehensive collection of materials on Ireland and the Irish diaspora on the role of Irish Americans in Arizona and the Western United States. The Irish Cultural Center and McClelland Library are divisions of the Irish Cultural & Learning Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, and are owned and maintained by the City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department. Learn more at www.azirish.org

Facts about Irish influence in Arizona:

- As early as the 1760's, Irish experiences can be traced to Arizona through figures such as Hugo O'Connor, a Dublin-born man and Colonel for the Spanish army known as "The Red Captain" who is considered by many as a founding father of Tucson.
- Arizona's first state seal was created by Richard Cunningham McCormick, whose ancestors hailed from Ulster, Ireland. He was appointed secretary of the Arizona Territory in 1863 and later became Governor of the Arizona Territory in 1866.
- Arizona's first soda fountain was installed by Irish-born George Martin in 1885 in Tucson
- Arizona has **six** Irish Sister City partnerships through the International Sister Cities Program started by President Eisenhower:
 - Chandler-Tullamore
 - Phoenix-Ennis
 - Tucson- Roscommon
 - Scottsdale-Killarney
 - Gilbert-Newtownabbey-Antrim
 - Tempe-Carlow
- The Irish Cultural Center in Phoenix is currently home to *The Irish in Latin America*, an exhibit put together by Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This exhibit opened in Mexico City in October of 2016 and showcases the history of Irish immigrants and their families across Latin America from 1611-1968.
- More than a million people in Arizona claim Irish ancestry