



## **Book Review**

### ***North American Gaels: Speech, Story, and Song in the Diaspora***

Natasha SUMNER and Aidan DOYLE (Eds), Kingston & Montreal:  
McGill-Queens University Press, 2020, 511 pp.

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A fascinating, if often overlooked consequence of mass migration from Ireland and the Scottish Highlands to North America from the late-seventeenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, is the enduring legacy of Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers across the continent. For the first time, this substantial and impressive volume foregrounds the long-lasting impact of Gaels in Canadian and American communities from the earliest days of British imperial expansion to the present. This publication traces the various activities and achievements of Irish and Scottish Gaels in different North American contexts over sixteen chapters. Each chapter is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Kenneth Nilsen, the late Sister Saint Veronica Chair of Gaelic Studies at St Francis Xavier University, and a tireless scholar-advocate for the Gaelic languages in Canada and the US. This engaging and accessible volume is a fitting tribute to Prof. Nilsen, with whom each of the contributors worked or studied in Celtic scholarship and Gaelic language teaching.

Sumner and Doyle's introductory chapter sets out the overarching structure of the book, and discusses the following 16 contributions, situating each in relation to Prof. Nilsen's career. Sumner's chapter contribution provides a detailed biography of the man to whose memory the book is dedicated. Nilsen collected substantial quantities of recorded speech from L1 Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers in New York, New England and the Canadian Maritimes, and his dedication to preserving the remnants of Gaelic languages in North America was unflinching and energetic. Fruits of these labours are increasingly visible in different respects: in 2006 the Office of Gaelic Affairs was established within the Nova