



ALUMNI OF IRELAND NETWORK IN MEXICO



Ambassador Barbara Jones with students from Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Welcome to the August 2020 edition of the AINM e-Newsletter. I hope our community is keeping well as we continue to navigate the pandemic and begin to contemplate the ‘new normal’.

Many of the Embassy’s events and activities moved online over the past few months. As President of the Roundtable of International Cooperation for Gender Equality in Mexico, the Embassy hosted a number of successful online high-level meetings and events. In May, we organised a technical webinar on Women Peace and Security in collaboration with the Mexican Government and featuring experts from Canada, Chile and Ireland. The experts presented on their experiences in developing national action plans for implementing the United Nations Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

In collaboration with the Irish Mexican Chamber, the Embassy has participated in several webinars tackling topical issues including the impact of COVID-19 on business, the renewal of the EU – Mexico Global Agreement, and the road to recovery and the new normal. All of these events have received great feedback from participants and attendees and we look forward to another next series of IMC webinars beginning in September.

Another recent highlight for the Embassy took place in June when Ireland secured a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the period 2021 – 2022. This was a Government wide effort and Ireland is proud to have been chosen to uphold the values of the United Nations on its highest council. Moreover, this event has particular resonance for us in Mexico as Mexico also secured a seat, and our shared term will give us even more opportunities to strengthen and deepen our excellent relations.

Although the last few months have required significant adjustment to new ways of working, we are staying positive as we look ahead to an exciting programme of online events in the human rights and cultural spheres. Stay connected on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn where we’ll be posting event dates and further information.

Finally, I would again like to extend a message of solidarity with our community. We are hopeful that the situation will improve but in the meantime I wish you and your loved ones the very best, and hope we can all stay safe until we meet again.

Ambassador of Ireland in Mexico, Barbara Jones

Life of a Mexican Student in Ireland

Brenda Mondragón Toledo who is studying at University College Cork, has some tips for making sure you eat well while studying in Ireland!

Brenda is from Puebla City and moved to Cork in 2017. She studied a Masters in Sociology of Globalisation and Development at UCC for which she was awarded the Government of Ireland International Scholarship. Afterwards, she loved Ireland so much that she decided to stay and she is currently doing a PhD at UCC in the Sociology Department and the Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies Department.

Her Master's research was on the problematization of collective intellectual property of indigenous textiles in Guatemala and her current research is a comparative study between Mexico and Ireland in terms of gender violence, using textiles through Participatory Arts Research.



Brenda Enjoying a Sunny Day in East Cork



Brenda and Dónal at an Irish wedding

Can you find Mexican food in Ireland?

Yes! You can find Mexican restaurants in the main cities such as Cork and Dublin. Places like El Grito in Dublin or Café Mexicana in Cork are the Mexican community's favourite places. The taste in these places resembles our original tacos and more. Still, it also depends on your budget as they would not be considered cheap. But if you can, you should treat yourself once in a while. Thankfully, a growing trend in Ireland is fish tacos (Baja style). Irish fish is delicious and they have a wide variety (cod, monkfish, ray, hake, etc.); also Irish batter is fantastic! So you don't need to go to Mexican restaurants to find them. Although I would recommend the places to have lime instead of lemon, guacamole, pico de gallo or some spicy sauce. Apart from that, they are fair.

As Mexicans, food is a central part of our lives. We grew up surrounded by it, where pampering our mouth and belly was essential: botanas, antojitos, corn, food for cold or hot days, street food, etc. We simply love food. When foreigners come to our country, we want to know what they have eaten and what they think about it. Some people are amazed by our food, others not so much. Still, they are impressed by how important food is for us and how careful we are with ingredients, preparation and enjoyment.

All of this changes when we move to another country. We cannot find the ingredients or they taste different; people might not like our food; and then restaurants offer weird versions of Mexican dishes. It is also more expensive than we usually pay at home.

Improve your cooking and get creative!

If you are coming to Ireland (whether or not), I would recommend you learn how to cook your favourite food. Restaurants in Ireland are impressive, but they can be costly. You might be able to give yourself a treat once in a while but not so often. That's why you need to know how to prepare some dishes. You can find ingredients from all over the world, but not everything. Commercial brands might be available in some supermarkets, while others are available online. As you know, I am based in Cork and what I have noticed is the increasing multicultural feel to the city; thanks to that, you can find shops from different nationalities. You can find a wide range of shops, especially for Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Polish, Palestinian, or Brazilian food. Give yourself tours around those businesses because you will be impressed with the similarities we have with other food.



Brenda's Mum and Brother Visit Ireland

In general, ingredients in Ireland are of outstanding quality. You will be delighted by the quality of their beef, fish, pork, mussels, potatoes and dairy products. They also import products from around the world such as avocados, tomatoes, oranges, mangoes, kiwis, etc. You will not run out of those ingredients, do not worry. So, if you can mix your cooking abilities with the spectacular ingredients, you will not miss Mexican food!

Finally, but most importantly, you also have to let go. If you have decided to move to another country, keep loving your food but learn to appreciate other cultures through their flavours. Learn different dishes and other ways of eating! Try new flavours and give yourself the chance to value the local cuisine and others from all over the world. Nothing enriches more your soul and love for food than meeting other cultures, other flavours and new dishes. But don't forget to show off to others what Mexican food is, how tasty it can be and why we miss it so much.



Brenda and friends at Master's graduation at University College Cork



Brenda learning to Surf on the Wild Atlantic Way

Article originally written for:

"Abnormal" Attention for Irish University, Trinity College Dublin

The Irish University and tourist attraction, Trinity College Dublin, is most commonly known for its picturesque architecture, the Book of Kells, and city-centre location. However, this month Trinity has been receiving attention for different reasons. The hit series 'Normal People' is an adaptation of the 2018 novel by Irish Author, Sally Rooney. The series follows the complex relationship between Marianne Sheridan and Connell Waldron as they navigate adulthood from their final days in secondary school in Sligo to their University years in Trinity.



Marianne Sheridan in Front Square, Trinity College Dublin

The 12-episode series was predominantly filmed in Dublin and Sligo and the Dublin locations include many of Trinity's most recognisable spots. The college's iconic Parliament Square or 'Front Square', is the backdrop for the protagonists' undergraduate years. The Berkley Library, often frequented by Connell in the series, is another location students will immediately recognise. The scenes shot on campus and the surrounding city centre show off Dublin's charm, earning Irish Director Lenny Abrahamson high praise internationally. 'Outstanding Directing for a Limited Series' was one of four Emmy Award nominations for Normal People Director (and Trinity alumni) Lenny Abrahamson alongside a nominations for Paul Mescal for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Limited Series, Sally Rooney and Alice Birch for Outstanding Writing for a Limited Series and Louise Kiely for Outstanding Casting for a Limited Series. The success of the series. may have had an interesting effect on Irish University applications. The Irish Times reported in July that students have made more than 40,000 applications to study courses at Trinity through the Central Applications Office system - an 11 per cent increase on last year!



View of the Chapel during filming in Front Square, Trinity College Dublin

University of Limerick Celebrates Historic Appointment of First Female President of an Irish University

Professor Kerstin Mey, current Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Engagement at the University of Limerick, will replace outgoing president Dr Des Fitzgerald. Professor Mey will serve as the Interim President of UL until the appointment of a new president through an open international recruitment process, which is expected to take up to 18 months once commenced.



Professor Kerstin Mey, University of Limerick

Photograph: Sean Curtin

Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris TD, remarked on the historic appointment and said: *“I am particularly pleased to welcome Professor Mey as the first female president of a university in Ireland. Her prolific academic record, renowned research and established leadership both in Ireland and internationally will be of immense benefit to the university and I wish all in the university well in this new and exciting phase...These are challenging times for our higher education sector as we work collaboratively to best support the reopening of the institutions, and on the longer term planning for the delivery of higher education in a Covid world.”*

The Irish Times’ Education Editor Carl O’Brien reported praising UL for the announcement in July: *“UL has one of the best records in the higher education sector for gender equality among its senior leadership. There are five female members out of eleven on the university’s executive committee. It also has a female Chancellor, while two of UL’s three vice presidents and three of UL’s five deans are women.”* Ms Harney, Chancellor of UL said *“It is fitting that UL now has the first female president given our consistent leading position on gender equality in higher education in Ireland”*.

Good News for the EU – Mexico Relationship: the Renewal of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement

In April of this year, as these challenging times began to unfold, good news came in the conclusion of negotiations for the renewal of the EU – Mexico Global Agreement. The renewed agreement, verbally agreed on 28 April, will bring many opportunities for both parties. There will be significantly reduced barriers to trade, and simpler customs procedures which will further benefit both EU and Mexican industry. The agreement also lays down progressive rules on sustainable development, committing the EU and Mexico to implement their obligations under the Paris Agreement. It will also be the first EU trade agreement to tackle corruption in the private and public sectors. The conclusion of negotiations was welcomed by both sides. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marcelo Ebrard said *“Mexico welcomes the conclusion of trade negotiations with the European Union and the new stage of mutual closeness and prosperity that it will bring”*. In an interview with El Financiero, Minister for the Economy, Graciela Márquez Colín, agreed with Ebrard stating that *“with the agreement, the country will diversify its foreign trade, which will favour the national economy”*. Commissioner for Trade of the European Commission, Phil Hogan, applauded both sides stating that *“reaching an agreement in the current times shows that both parties share the values of a rules-based trading system that offer certainty and against any protectionist current”*. The renewed agreement is a step forward for the EU – Mexico trade relationship and will bring many opportunities for both sides in a time of economic uncertainty.

Irish Alumnus, Rebecca Finnegan, talks to AINM about her time in Mexico

Where are you from and where did you study?

I am originally from Westmeath and moved to Galway to study for my undergraduate degree at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUIG. I then went on to do a Masters in International Relations at Dublin City University.



Rebecca enjoying the view in Chihuahua

It was an incredible experience to work alongside inspiring people and organisations, and to witness their endless determination and courage to continue in the face of ever-present risks and challenges.

I have some incredible memories from my year in Chihuahua. One of the highlights was traveling through the Sierra Tarahumara on the Chepe train and seeing some of the most breathtaking landscapes and views. It is a trip I would definitely recommend. Chihuahua has so many beautiful and otherworldly landscapes, it is also where I saw the most amazing skies and sunsets over the hills and the desert.

When did you decide to stay in Mexico?

Within my first few months in Mexico, I knew a year was not going to be enough. Following my time in Chihuahua, I moved to Mexico City, a little unsure of what was to come next but determined to give it a chance.

How did you end up in Mexico?

In January 2017, I moved to Mexico with the plan to stay one year. It was my first time in Mexico and I was both excited and nervous. I had volunteered with the Human Rights organisation Peace Brigades International in Ireland and had the opportunity to spend a year with its project in Chihuahua, Mexico. The office is based in Chihuahua and the team covers the northern border states of Chihuahua and neighbouring Coahuila where it accompanies local human rights organisations. These organisations work on human rights issues which include impunity and access to justice, migrant rights, and land, territory and environmental rights. During the year I was fortunate to have the chance to visit each of the organisations that we accompanied which involved travelling to the border city of Ciudad Juárez and the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua, and the cities of Torreón and Saltillo and the Zona Carbonífera in Coahuila.



Freedom of speech mural in Mexico City

A few years on and I love living in Mexico City, there is so much to do and explore and of course the food is incredible. The last five months have of course been very different due to the pandemic but I still feel very much at home here.

I am still working in human rights and since March 2019 I have been working with Article 19's Office for Mexico and Central America. The organisation works for the protection and promotion of freedom of expression and information globally and in the regional office through its protection and defence, right to information, digital rights and Central America programmes. The organisation works to promote and defend these rights so that people can express themselves, access information and enjoy freedom of the media. These rights are also central to the enjoyment of other rights and a pillar of democratic society. This work is incredibly important and relevant in Mexico, one of the most dangerous countries to be a journalist in the world and where many do not have access to important information of public interest. Since the creation of the Central America programme in 2018, we have been working on the situation for journalists and communicators in Guatemala, Honduras and Cuba.

Although much of our work has been affected by the pandemic and travel restrictions, promoting the freedom to speak and the freedom to know is as essential as ever and in many ways the current global situation has led to disproportionate restrictions of these rights as well as the spread of much disinformation about the pandemic. Therefore, we continue to advocate for indiscriminate access to information and respect for those who exercise their freedom of expression and information in Mexico, as well as at regional and global level.

How would you sum up your experience in Mexico?

As often seems to be the case, I moved to Mexico with the plan of staying just one year and three and a half years later I'm still here. I very quickly felt at home in Mexico and have loved the experience so far.

I'm really happy that I got to experience two very different parts of the country but I know I still have so much more to explore. The experience has been incredible, and at times challenging, and I have learnt so much on both a professional and personal level. I could never have imagined what awaited me before I left for Chihuahua and I am so happy and grateful that I've been able to spend the last few years here.



Take care, until we meet again!



Top Left: Ambassador's Meeting of the Roundtable for Gender Equality in Mexico

Middle Left: Embassy flag flying at half-mast in honour of the passing of John Hume

Middle Right: Irish- Mexican Chamber Webinar, the Road to Recovery and the New Normal,

Bottom: Ambassador Jones hosts the Women Peace and Security Webinar as part of Ireland's Presidency of the Roundtable for Gender Equality in Mexico



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