## Cré na hÉireann—Croí na hÉireann A ritual of the earth to sustain the earth

## Cré na hÉireann

The *Cré na hÉireann* clay ritual has its origins in Tom Conaty's observation of a clay pot sculpture installation in his home county of Cavan. Tom (poet; Principal of Zion PPS) and Seamus Cashman (poet, former publisher) are developing the *Cré na hÉireann* concept into a powerful and foreseeing social and community dimension which is inclusive through sharing identity, community, and citizenship alongside the concepts of sustainability and groundedness.



The individual 'hand-printing' of clay, gathering it into one, and its pouring bring an immediacy and simplicity that enable it hold, for all involved, a strong presence and connection as individuals and also with the earth itself. This 'Ritual of the Earth for the Earth' becomes a shared experience created in a meaningful way.

While holding to its wider national vision, *Cré na hÉireann* has had its forward movement radiating into and out of community activities. Communities such as school, youth bodies, adult focussed forums, and others, have understood and

welcomed this Clay Ritual as an inclusive holistic mode of marking moments of significance. The national 'Flag Day' of 1916 provided one such opportunity. The Ritual has lead to the planting of a Yew tree in the gathered clay, binding all present to the memory and growth of this tree; and for instance, the marking of a location with a mound of the clay as space simply there, identified and visited as a place of reconciliation. On another occasion, the community gathered included the local school and people, and significantly Ambassadors of other nations, national representatives and city officials, all bringing their clay to join this unique participatory ritual action.

Cré na hÉireann aims ultimately to create an earth-mound at a significant location in Ireland, which will acknowledge every citizen and resident of the island, and too the wider Irish diaspora. Cré na hÉireann wishes to invite all to participate in a island wide ritual of handpressing clay from garden, field, potted plant, local park (made available by councils), etc. It is a gathering-in and a ritual pouring and mixing of clay; to move from individual and household to village or town, to county, and thence to a mound thus créated at a significant location (the Phoenix Park; or a central spot perhaps near Uisneach; or at a boundary.

This movement of clay from the individual to a create a national mound, is a civic ritual, and its values include a creative act rooted in simplicity; an inclusive story; unifying and binding; a celebratory form; an exalting of the elemental nature of clay; an active and on-going remembering, renewing and proclaiming. Cré na hÉireann is non-political, non-sectarian, not celebrity-lead. The Cré na hÉireann Mound will be a place to attest to our coming of age and to our going forward, with all our handprints creating and holding it.

The 'movement and the mound' is Cré na hÉireann. It is a holding space without which 'the centre cannot hold'. It creates the SPINE that unifies and invites all in. It is a marker on the landscape, a memory of whence we have come, and a departure point on our own Slíghe Mhór of discovery.

Tom Conaty & Seamus Cashman

For Cré na hÉireann

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