

The remarks of the Consul General of Ireland, Fionnuala Quinlan for the Tír na nÓg Ribbon Cutting Ceremony held in the Back Bay Fens section /Muddy River Park of Boston's Emerald Necklace Park System on September 15, 2016.

"It is an honour and privilege to join you today for the opening of Tir na nOg in the Fens, part of the spectacular Emerald Necklace parks system.

Let me start by thanking the two artists whose vision and creativity made this possible.

Caoimhghin, Michael, both of your art works are deeply rooted in Irish mythology and folklore. With these works you are encouraging people to take some time for reflection and healing and in these turbulent days, that message is more important than ever.

Thank you for marking 1916 - a seminal moment on our path to independence - in this meaningful way.

I'd also like to thank the administration of Mayor Marty Walsh, who has always been a great friend to and advocate of Ireland.

Sincere thanks also to Boston Parks and Recreation, Kathleen Bitetti and the team at the Medicine Wheel and all of the many other people whose time and commitment made this possible.

Culture Ireland, Ireland's national agency charged with promoting culture overseas, supported this exhibition as part of our programme to mark the Centenary of the Easter Rising in 1916.

The Commemorations of 1916 have a special resonance here in the US.

Quite simply, the Easter Rising – which set Ireland on our path to independence - would not have been possible without the United States.

The example of the American Revolution inspired generations of Irish patriots.

Our story of a people yearning to emulate the example of 1776 and seeking self-determination resonated with Americans.

America provided safe harbour to those who were persecuted for their role in seeking Irish independence.

In all, five of the seven signatories to the Proclamation of Independence spent time in the US, which deeply influenced their thinking and their actions.

In recognition of this support, the US is the only foreign country specifically mentioned in the Proclamation, which reminded us that Ireland, in pursuit of her ideals, was 'supported by her exiled children in America'.

The Government of Ireland is very grateful for America's unwavering support in the

years leading up to 1916 and in the 100 years since;

We are grateful for America's steadfast support in our quest to secure a just and lasting peace on our island;

And we are thankful for the welcome America gave to Irish immigrants for centuries, for recognising their potential and for allowing them the opportunity to realise it;

Many thousands of Irish men and women left Ireland to journey in fear and in hope to the United States.

Here in Boston and the surrounding area, they built new lives and livelihoods.

They grew to love their new homeland and all the opportunities it offered.

But a part of their heart belonged to Ireland.

They kept the flame of Irish culture burning bright, ensuring that our music, art, dance and literature continue to be appreciated and celebrated in America.

And I am so glad to see that this work continues today.

Of course, Caoimhghin's work – South of Hybrasil – is in honour of the Irish diaspora.

Today, as we mark the opening of Tir na nOg in the Fens, it is timely to remember all that the Irish diaspora achieved and the legacy which they left to us.

So let me end by thanking all of you for gathering here today to mark the opening of this great exhibition.

I am sure it will attract much interest and attention over the coming weeks and months and prove to be a source of inspiration and healing for many.

Thank you."