



**IRISH**

**SPORTING & SOCIAL CLUB**

**OF VANCOUVER**

**CLUB DEVELOPMENT**

**PLAN**

**2014 - 2016**

Monday, 24 November 2014



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ISSC is at a pivotal point in its life. Celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year has given each of us a snapshot as to how great we already are, and the magnificent potential that is there, if we are simply brave and committed enough to reach out and grasp that nettle.

It is from our memberships participation in the growth process that we will be able to reach our potential and give the gift of these incredible sports, *that we all too often take for granted*, to a newer, wider, more diverse audience than we have done so to date.

I, personally, would like to thank all those surveyed for their candour and honesty in responding to the survey questions.

I would also like to thank **Cillian Finn** and **Andrea Brennan** for their patience in the process, and for sharing their ideas after reviewing the Survey results.

I look forward to working with a strong Club Development Committee, in 2015, to take this Club Development Plan, in its outline format, and give it a structured Action Plan that can be worked through the coming years.

Author,  
**Ronan Deane**

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**Vancouver ISSC**  
Club Development Officer  
24-Nov-2014



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## CLUB DETAILS

### PURPOSE OF THE CLUB (MISSION STATEMENT)

**THE ISSC IS COMMITTED TO ENCOURAGING ALL TO PLAY AND ENJOY THE GAELIC GAMES NO MATTER THEIR ABILITY, IN AN ATMOSPHERE THAT PROMOTES FUN, FRIENDSHIP AND PERSONAL GROWTH.**

The ISSC was formed in 1974 with the aim of bringing the local Irish community together socially and to promote the games of Gaelic Football, Hurling and Camogie.

Today, the GAA club is a blend of Irish immigrants, second generation Irish descendants, Canadians and other nationalities.

The club runs a number of successful teams including the Vancouver Harps and Vancouver Celts Men's and Ladies Gaelic Football Teams and the JP Ryan's Hurling and Camogie teams. The club also runs a growing Youth Program.

The ISSC continues to promote and support Irish cultural and sporting events in Greater Vancouver, and are always welcoming new members.

### CLUB STRUCTURE

The club structure is based on the GAA model, however has streamlined, and indeed renamed, some of the key positions to reflect BC regulations around Clubs/ Societies, and to provide clarity of responsibility for those taking on these key functions.

#### ROLES

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

##### President/ Chairperson

**2014 -Jonathan Kavanagh**

- Give Direction and Leadership
- Ensure everyone is Represented and treated fairly
- Chair meetings and encourage Debate
- Ensure everyone is completing their Roles and Responsibilities.
- Ensure Objectives are met

##### Vice-President/ Chairperson

**2014 - Elan Park**

- The above responsibilities in the absence of the Chair
- Compliance Officer. WCB and CCB by-laws for example.
- Head a disciplinary Committee
- Book Fields
- Coordinate 3-year Plan Committee (2014-2016)



**ROLES**

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Secretary (Correspondence)**

**2014 - Jim Fogarty**

- With external bodies such as WCB, CCB, Van Parks Board etc.
- With internal members regarding all aspects of club operations, Functions, Games.
- All issues relating to the club as a whole.
- Working with PRO regarding Social Media and Website, making sure it is updated.

**Secretary (Recording)**

**2014 - Jim Fogarty**

- Organise venues, dates and times of meetings
- Record minutes of meeting.
- Set and communicate agenda of meetings.

**Treasurer**

**2014 - Greg Deacon**

- Bookkeeping and logging of club finances.
- Provide a Financial Report to AGM
- Act as head Registrar for the collection of membership fees.
- Registering players with WCB, CCB and NACB for competitions.

**Social Representative**

**2014 - Merriah Cummings**

- Organising of Social Functions such as Table Quiz, Race Night, Awards Night etc.
- Working with player reps with regards to volunteers and tasks to be done
- Working with PRO for the promotion of such events
- Liaising with partners such as sponsors and venues.

**Public Relations Officer**

**2014 - Rosie Slevin**

- Communicating with non-members and members of the club.
- Promoting the Club via Social Media, Website, Celtic Connection.
- Emailing external members and organisations regarding upcoming events.
- Working with the Secretary regarding Social Media and Website, making sure it is updated.

**Club Development Officer**

**2014 - Ronan Deane**

- Youth Development
- Field Development
- Financial Development i.e. Sponsorship
- Coordinate 3-year Plan Committee (2014-2016)



## OTHER KEY POSITIONS:

**Player Representatives:** One for each sport that the ISSC supports:

- Gaelic Football – Sean Donelan
- Ladies Gaelic Football – Caitlin Harper
- Hurling – Robert Dunphy
- Camogie – Elmarie Cronin

**Team Management:** One (or More) for each sport that the ISSC supports:

- Gaelic Football – Fred Gannon
- Ladies Gaelic Football – Michael O’Shea
- Hurling – William Donnelan
- Camogie – Elmarie Cronin

**Special Event Planning:** When an important unique event is planned member pull together to make it a success, for example

- GAA-La Sub-Committee

## ACTIVITIES

The key activities that the ISSC engages in can be categorized in 3 distinct areas, as follows:

- Sports
- Social Events
- Community Engagement

### Sports:

Gaelic Games are the Sports that the ISSC engages in.

### Adult Sports

The club focuses its efforts each year in providing opportunities for the majority of the membership to train, improve their skills and play competitively in one of our four key core adult sport offerings.

The following Gaelic Sports (Teams) are played by ISSC Club members:

- Men’s Gaelic Football (Vancouver Harps/ Celts)
- Ladies Gaelic Football (Vancouver Harps/ Celts)
- Hurling (Men’s) (Vancouver JP Ryans)
- Camogie (Ladies) (Vancouver JP Ryans)



The club supports teams in each of these sports by:

- facilitating practices (field and coaching),
- management of squads and teams,
- coordinating in-house leagues and tournaments, and
- entering & competing in Divisional and National Championships
- subsidizing accommodations at out of town tournaments

The competitive matches that the club competes in are 2 formal tournaments each year:

- Western Canada Championships (Divisional)
  - *August Long Week-end*
  - *Versus Calgary Chieftains, Edmonton Wolfe Tones, Fort McMurray Shamrocks, Red Deer/ Lethbridge, Regina Gaels*
- North American County Board Championships (National, by invite)
  - *Labour Day Long Week-end (US)*

Informal tournaments that the club competes in each year are as follows:

- Spring Sevens League
- In-house Summer Leagues
- Seattle Tournament
- Vancouver Tournament
- Australia Day Match (Aussie Rules)
- St. Patricks Day Match (vrs Local Aussie Rules Teams)

### **Social Events:**

The club serves as a meeting point for new immigrants to the Lower Mainland of BC, ex-pats and an increasing number of locals who have taken to the Gaelic Games. Social events are organised to foster a strong community atmosphere in the club.

The key social events in the Calendar are:

- ISSC Registration and Social Night (April/ May)
- Home Tournament Social Night (July)
- ISSC Annual Race Night Fund Raiser (August)
- ISSC Annual Awards Night (October)
- ISSC Kids Christmas Party (December)



Other Social events in the Calendar are:

- ISSC Annual Table Quiz (February)
- St. Patricks Week-end (March)
- ISSC Halloween Party (October)
- ISSC 12 Pubs Night (December)

### **Community Engagement:**

The club is eager to showcase our sports to a broader community in the Lower Mainland and we encourage our members to volunteer and attend events that we believe promote our identity.

The key Community events we have attend in recent years have been:

- Australia Day Celebrations (January)
- St Patricks Day Parade – Celtic Fest (March)
- Move for Health – Richmond (April)
- Highland Games – Victoria (May)
- Highland Games – Coquitlam (July)
- Celtic Connection – Golf Tournament (September)
- Schools Presentations – Surrey, NVan (All Year Round)

The Club has supported several charities over the years including:

- Covenant House Vancouver (Carol-Singing)
- Irish Benevolent Fund of Canada (Silent Auction)
- Tony Griffin Foundation (2007)

### **FACILITIES & ASSETS**

The ISSC has no formal assets in terms of land or buildings. It does however have necessary playing equipment.

Recently, the club has made efforts to purchase sports equipment to ensure that its sports needs are met.



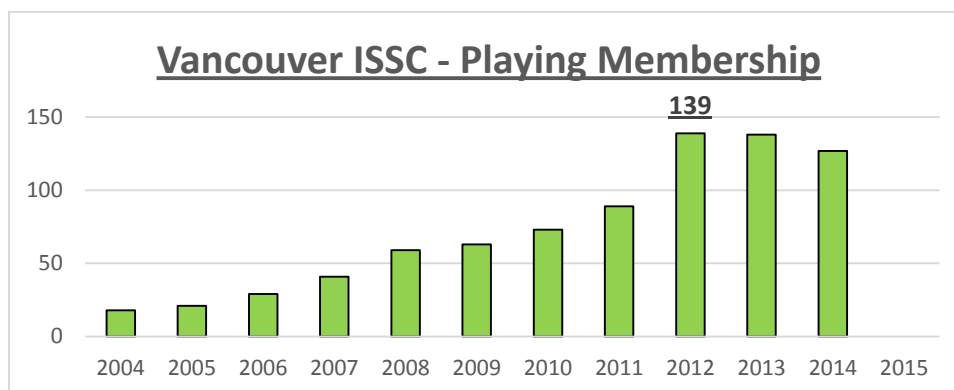


These are the types of items that the ISSC has stored by various members:

1. Mens & Ladies Gaelic Footballs
2. Hurleys, Helmets, & Sliotars
3. Goal Posts (PVC, Self Erecting)
4. Nets (for Gaelic Posts)
5. Various Training Equipment (cones, bibs, ladders)
6. Youth Program (Multi Color T-Shirts, bags, shorts, socks)

## MEMBERSHIP

The ISSC membership is significantly increasing due to the immigration activity trends that have seen Canada, and Vancouver, within Canada, become enormously attractive as a point of entry for Irish young people who leave Ireland.



## FINANCIAL STATUS

The Irish Sporting & Social Club is a non-profit organization that raises money to pay for the offerings it facilitates for its membership.

The clubs main income each year stems from, the following:

- Membership Dues
- Key Sponsorship Partners
- Fundraising Events

The clubs main costs each year are, as follows:

- Fields and Bookings
- Away Tournament Accommodations
- Club Development Activities
- Equipment



## CURRENT SITUATION

The Irish Sporting and Social Club of Vancouver is a central hub for Gaelic Games in the province of British Columbia in Western Canada. It is one of the founding member clubs of the Western Canada Division and has been ever present at Western Canada tournaments since they began in 2004.

In 2010, the club was invited to attend the North American County Board championships, and our Hurlers, the Joseph P Ryan's, won the Junior A title. In the 2011, and ever since, the club has been invited and competed in Men's & Ladies Football and Hurling, winning various titles along the way. 2014 was the clubs best year by far at North Americans, in Boston, with the ISSC teams winning the Junior Hurling and Men's Intermediate Football titles, and runner's-up in the Ladies Intermediate Football championship.

This year the club celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and did so in some style. In March, the Club was honoured by the local CelticFest organization and was Grand Marshall of the Vancouver St. Patricks Day Parade. On October 18<sup>th</sup> the Club held an extravagant event, the GAA-La, at the UBC Golf Course pavilion in Vancouver. This event was attended by the Ambassador for Ireland to Canada, Ambassador Ray Bassett, and the President of the Canadian County Board of the GAA.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The main achievements of the ISSC over the last 10 years are as follows:

- Western Canada Champions
  - Ladies' Football (7 times): 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014
  - Men's Football (6 times): 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012
- NACB Champions
  - Men's Football, Intermediate: 2011, 2014
  - Hurling, Junior A: 2010, 2014
  - Ladies' Football, Junior A: 2013

## ISSUES STILL CURRENT

Main opportunities for improvement are, as follows, based on our recent Survey results.

- More, regular competitive games for the playing group
- More engagement of the local Canadian (untried) pool of players
- More engagement with past members, and the large local irish community



## SURVEY RESULTS – SUMMER 2014

This summer the club, through SurveyMonkey, asked the membership to examine their own perceptions of the club and to provide their input into the areas of strength and opportunities to improve.

### STRENGTHS

The following were the key strengths identified by the membership:

1. The Gaelic Games themselves
2. The Community Feel
3. People
4. Communication
5. The Social Aspect

Here is a sample of the comments made to these items:

“it’s a wonderful game and I love playing it”

**“The Games themselves make the club.”**

“Not just about GAA, its about a community of ex-pats.”

*“Everyone acts like a tight-knit community.”*

“Its where I met all my now friends in Vancouver.”



## OPPORTUNITIES

The following were the key opportunities for growth identified by the membership:

1. Canadian Involvement
2. Competition locally
3. Expansion – more clubs in the Greater Vancouver area
4. Expansion – more members
5. Connection – to/ with the community

Here is a sample of the comments made to these items:

“there is very little Canadian involvement or interest in the club”

**“Canadians are few and far between at the club.”**

“More meaningful competition locally will increase interest and boost numbers.”

*“The long term sustainability and financial security of the club is dependent on attracting members from outside the Irish community.”*



## ASPIRATIONS

The following were the key aspirations of members identified in the survey:

1. A “Home” Field or Clubhouse
2. Better Competitions
3. More Clubs to Compete against
4. More Teams within the Club
5. More Members – playing the games

Here is a sample of the comments made to these items:

“A home field with GAA goals would be great.”

**“It would be great if we had a field to call  
our own.”**

“More teams will create rivalries which will in turn create  
competition and a greater standard of football.”

*“More teams to play (against) instead of  
our own teams.”*



## RESULTS

The following were the key measurable results identified by the membership, to track our progress in these key areas:

1. Competitions/ Events (year on year)
2. Participation – New Members
3. Financials - Sponsorship
4. Number of Matches available (per team)
5. Participation – Retention
6. Participation – Diversity

Here is a sample of the comments made to these items:

“Competitions are what keep people coming back for more.”

**“Successful competitive events will encourage more participation, membership and member retention.”**

“It will be easier to keep people interested with a regular flow of games.”

*“Important to get new members, retain and develop them.”*



## ANALYSIS OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A small team of club members, from various positions/ roles in the club, looked the survey results and contemplated the next steps and strategies for the club.

Here were the keys items identified that need to be addressed in the next stage of the Club Develop Planning process.

### 1. COMPETITIVE LOCAL LEAGUE/ MATCH STRUCTURE

Far and away the most talked about item in the Survey was the need expressed by members for more playing opportunities and indeed meaningful competition in Vancouver. While the 'carrot' of North Americans, particularly, and Western Canadians, to a lesser extent, were important, the majority of members who responded to the surveyed expressed a desire to see more formal competition in Vancouver.

One very big component of creating a Structure to facilitate meaningful competition in Vancouver is a fundamental part of the ISSC set-up. Currently, this is one club (one formal GAA club) in the Canadian context, and while in-house leagues are great starting points, the possibility of, and development of a support structure to allow new club formation locally is a fundamental component of creating a stronger competitive spirit in Vancouver, and environs.

One comment in the survey was that the ISSC should have a competition similar to the Alberta Cup.

#### **NEXT STEP**

- *Create a task force within the club to examine ways that the club can splinter in a sustainable manner, that is supported by the Western Canada Board, the Canadian County Board and the GAA.*
- *Continue with the development of the formal structured in-house leagues for ladies and Mens football, and hurling and Camogie.*
- *Mandate the Team Management to make these Leagues a priority (even ahead of NACB and Western Canada).*
- *Set-up a Games Planning Committee, to support the structure of a game-day format that accommodates the Men's & Ladies versions of the Sports, in tandem. Develop unity amongst the different member groups.*



## **2. MEMBERSHIP – INCREASE NON-IRISH PARTICIPATION**

The ISSC is a healthy enough organization and it has a very appealing “product” that consists of exciting games (unique and attractive to any sporty types) and a fun social side.

While, the club remains a hub for new Irish immigrants to Canada, and must continue to be so, the club does little in the way of attracting and retaining Canadians or other nationalities that get involved. Much of this is due to a focus on short-term gains (for example, winning this years championship) and lack of focus on longer terms goals (for example, facilitating new to the sport members, who live here, and are not simply “passing through”.)

The GAA is passionate about increasing the playing base, and these sports are incredibly sellable, it is simply a matter of positioning ourselves to SELL our Product.

### **NEXT STEP**

- *Create a task force within the club to examine ways that the club can promote to outside potential members, and to develop steps to ensure that new players are given a fair go when they do show up and ensure that they want to keep coming out.*
- *Mandate that each team spend at least one day promoting their “product” outside of the traditional base.*
- *Reward the Team Management that makes the best effort in finding new players.*

## **3. MEMBERSHIP – GENERAL RETENTION**

One common point raised during the survey was that retention of members is an area that the club can improve on.

The club can point to many instances where time and effort is placed on players who come and stay for a short time. While it has in the past been a far more transient membership (players coming for one to two seasons), in the last 2 or 3 years, we have seen much better retention of members and the survey did indicate that of those surveyed the majority were members more than 2 years.

### **NEXT STEP**

- *Create a measurement structure, through registration, that allows the club to track retention more clearly.*
- *Determine what the average years of membership per club member is, and determine a goal to increase this.*
- *Determine what are the key factors in retention of members.*





## CONCLUSIONS

Club Development at the ISSC must focus on many things in the future in order to make the maximum of a very strong potential that this successful club already has demonstrated it can realise.

A new Club Development Committee in 2015 can take this document, and put formal actionable tasks and use measurable recording strategies to ensure we can build on the opportunities identified.

Those key focuses identified herein are:

1. COMPETITIVE LOCAL LEAGUE/ MATCH STRUCTURE
2. MEMBERSHIP – INCREASE NON-IRISH PARTICIPATION
3. MEMBERSHIP – GENERAL RETENTION

It is from our memberships participation in the growth process that we will be able to reach our potential and give the gift of these incredible sports, that we all too often take for granted, to a newer, wider, more diverse audience than we have done so to date.

