

Cristina Kinsella



Cristina Kinsella feels a strong connection to her Irish heritage. She is a fourth generation immigrant, but is constantly reminded of her Irish heritage and has enjoyed learning about her Irish roots. She identifies as an American, but feels her Irish heritage is important.

When Cristina was ten years old her distant cousins came from Ireland to the states and they all took a road trip together. Cristina became close with these cousins and they stayed in contact. When Cristina studied abroad for her master's degree, she decided to go to Ireland. She attended the National University of Ireland Galway. She received her Master of International Human Rights Law. When she was studying abroad she spent a lot of time with her cousins and continued learning about her Irish heritage.

Cristina also heard about her Irish heritage from her grandfather. He was very passionate about his roots and even gained dual citizenship in the United States and Ireland. She remembers growing up listening to her grandfather tell her stories and things about her Irish heritage.

Cristina's family came to the United States after the potato famine in 1901. Cristina's great-great grandfather left Ireland before her great-great grandmother. Next her great-great grandmother sent their daughter over to the United States to be with her father in Illinois. Her great-great grandmother finally traveled to the United States by herself and was reunited with her family in Illinois. Her great-great grandfather worked for the railroad when he first arrived in the United States. She thinks that they were looking for better opportunities and a more stable place to live. The United States offered better financial opportunities.

In Ireland everyone learns both Irish and English, but most people now do not speak Irish fluently because it isn't widely spoken. Cristina did note that in a town called Gaeltacht they speak Irish widely and English is the second language. Cristina's family doesn't speak Irish, but when she lived in Ireland, she lived in a large community called Connemara. The kids there grow up speaking Irish and English is their second language.

Cristina is very proud of her Irish heritage and told me that most Irish people are also very prideful. The younger generations are starting to identify with their Irish heritage a lot more and Cristina said she is definitely seeing a revival of pride for being Irish.

One of the biggest differences between the United States and Ireland that Cristina pointed out is the sense of community. Ireland has a very different sense of national pride because it's a newer sense of national pride. There were a lot of struggles in Ireland through the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The country has started to turn around and Cristina said she is seeing a reclaiming of their heritage.

Cristina is extremely proud of where she comes from and says she will always feel a strong connection to her Irish heritage. She is glad her grandfather shared their heritage because if it weren't for him, Cristina wouldn't have a strong connection with her roots.