

'Sense of community crosses borders'

SO FAR AWAY continued
from front page

beaches. I now live in the Midlands area of the country, where there are many canals and river waterways throughout. It has its own beauty as well, but is much flatter."

Frost, who is Molalla and Chinook, is descended from her great-grandmother, Esther LaBonte. She grew up in Oregon City, overlooking Willamette Falls.

"I graduated from high school there and went into the fire service at 18," she says. "I became an advanced paramedic, working both ground and air critical care ambulance, rising to battalion chief of EMS."

She originally traveled to Ireland to study, taking a course in traditional Irish music.

"I had not planned on staying, but it just worked out that way," she says. "I have family and strong ties here now as I've been here for many years."

When the economic crash of the late 2000s hit Ireland, she returned to school and earned a bachelor's degree in analytical and forensic science and then a master's in pharmaceutical science.

Although she has been in Ireland for more than 20 years, Frost remembers living in the United States and recognizes the many differences between Irish and American lifestyles.

On a very elemental cultural level, she misses Pacific Northwest salmon. "The salmon here doesn't taste as strong to me. It has a softer taste. It is also rare to get wild salmon here anymore. I miss the variety of foods as well. It was many years before you could find a burrito within 250 kilometers of here! Potatoes. I've never eaten so many potatoes in my life."

Politically, she says she likes the voting system because it is much fairer and she feels like her vote actually counts.



Tribal member Maya Frost and her son, Liam O Gallachoir, met with Tribal Lands Manager Jan Michael Looking Wolf Reibach in 2012 when he performed in Northern Ireland. Reibach gifted Liam a flute and christened him with a Native American name, "Little Wolf."



Contributed photos

Tribal member Maya Frost and her son, Liam, live in Athlone in central Ireland in County Westmeath. The city has a population of approximately 22,000 people.



Map created by Samuel Briggs III

Educationally, she likes, for Liam's sake, that education is more accessible and affordable than in the United States.

"But there are less opportunities for scholarships," Frost says. "It is also a very different system here. You are expected to know what you want to do for the rest of your life career-wise at 16 or 17 years old."

She says Liam is a "fabulous" drummer and Irish dancer, but he also wants to obtain a psychology degree "in case the rock star thing doesn't work out."

What do Irish people think when they find out that she is American, as well as Native American?

"There is a real empathy here for America, together with a sadness over the current government, bigotry and racism that gets so much air time," she says. "There is a great love for America and strong connection as there are so many Irish who leave to go to America and stay."

"As a Native American, the first thing I noticed in Ireland was how amazingly well received I was here. There are not many Native Americans in the country, so I am rare. I feel that here I have been allowed by society to show my Native pride more than I ever was in the states. Our own indigenous are not appreciated in their own country. I think



Srah Castle in Tullamore, County Offaly, was constructed in 1588 by John Briscoe, an Elizabethan officer from Cumberland. It was built as a four-story Tower House stretching 65 feet in height. The ruins of an adjoining 17th century residence stand on the northwest corner of the castle.

that's sad."

Although she has had to fight the strict Irish school rules so that Liam can wear his hair traditionally long, Frost says that when people find out the reason they have more respect for her son.

"There is a story that I often hear.

When the Irish were suffering in the famine times, the Choctaw heard of their plight and gathered funds and sent over \$170 (worth tens of thousands today) in aid to the Irish people. This is not been forgotten. There is a special respect for all Native Americans here because of this. A monument to the Choctaw Nation was erected in Cork in commemoration."

Frost says receiving *Smoke Signals* and keeping in contact with family and friends via social media are how she stays connected to her Tribe. "I really do enjoy reading it every time it comes in the post," she says about the Tribal newspaper.

For now, Frost plans on remaining in Ireland. She recently secured a post-doctoral research position in polymer engineering that will keep her rooted in Ireland while Liam completes his education. She is using her experience in health care, material and pharmaceutical science to develop "greener" novel systems for medical health care packaging.

"Life takes us on such amazing journeys and, as I have found, we never know where it will take us next," she says.

She says that immigrating to live in another country has been an "eye-opening" experience.

"It is exciting and wonderful in learning about other people, cultures and mostly about one's own self. There have been times when it was especially difficult ... when you want to be home to be with family. Thankfully, the Internet has been key in staying in touch with family and friends at home."

When Tribal Lands Manager Jan Michael Looking Wolf Reibach visited Northern Ireland in 2012, Frost and her son met him. Reibach, who has won several Native American Music Awards for his Native flute playing, gave Liam a flute and drum and also performed an impromptu Native naming ceremony for him, christening him "Little Wolf."

"It has been interesting living abroad and teaching my son about our traditions and living respectful of our heritage," Frost says. "Everyone in the Tribe that we have met over the years has been incredibly generous and helpful. The sense of community crosses over the borders and has been lovely."

She also sees parallels between the Irish effort to preserve its traditional Gaelic language and Native American attempts to preserve Tribal languages.

"Language is so incredibly important to each culture's identity," she says. "It is very difficult to see the English language take over here so completely. Teaching and promoting indigenous languages keeps a primal part of us, a part of history and traditions that cannot be translated into any other language with the same exactness. Guard our language and traditions as there are very few generations between us before language and traditions irreparably fade and disappear." ■