NORTHERN IRELAND youth FORUM

CONTENTS:

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

2. AUGUST BONFIRES: SOME BACKGROUND
2.1 THE EVOLUTION OF AUGUST BONFIRES
2.2 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS
2.3 RIGHTS
2.4 TRADITIONS
2.5 THE MEDIA, COMMEMORATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

3. YOUNG PEOPLE AND AUGUST BONFIRES
3.1 AIM OF THE PROJECT
3.2 METHODOLOGY

4. YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK
4.1 DESCRIBING THE BONFIRE TRADITION AND EXPERIENCE
4.2 THE BONFIRE
4.3 CULTURE, IDENTITY AND TRADITION
4.4 THE 'OTHER' COMMUNITY
4.5 THE FUTURE OF BONFIRES

5. CONCLUSIONS

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

EXPLORING YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF AUGUST BONFIRES

NIYF | AUGUST 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

Twenty One years after the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement, a number of challenges still remain within our society. The 1998 Agreement heralded in a new sense of hope, and over the past 21 years, there have been many moments of unprecedented progress. There have been remarkable political decisions taken, new relationships forged and many 'historic' encounters made.

There are so many good milestones to talk about since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement was signed. New political institutions, within the islands of Britain and Ireland, were developed to give representation to all, build new relationships and forge a better future. Prisoners were released, weapons were decommissioned and a commitment to exclusively peaceful means was pledged. After Sinn Féin endorsed the new policing structures, they and the Democratic Unionist Party entered government to share power in 2007, with Dr. Ian Paisley becoming First Minister and Martin McGuinness becoming the Deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Executive. This then paved the way for the historic meeting between Dr. Paisley and the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, at Farmleigh House in Dublin, after which they both visited the Battle of the Boyne site in Drogheda. We then had Peter Robinson becoming First Minister with Martin McGuinness, thereafter followed by Arlene Foster.

Queen Elizabeth made a state visit to Ireland in 2011 and laid a wreath at the Garden of Remembrance in Dublin. The President of Ireland, Mary McAleese laid a wreath at Islandbridge War Memorial Gardens. A year later, Martin McGuinness met the Queen and shook her hand. The Irish President, Michael D. Higgins made a reciprocal state visit to the United Kingdom in 2014.

Genuine efforts were made to reach out to the other and actions were taken to seek to engage with the culture and traditions of those who were seen as coming from a different background.

In the midst of all of these historic events, we still had sporadic bombings, shootings and punishment attacks. We had the flags protests, bonfire stand-offs, Camp Twadelle and sit-down protests. We had and continue to have challenges in relation to the place of

the Irish Language, a perceived sense of cultural loss by some, and the place of our LGBTQ communities. We have the ongoing RHI inquiry and Brexit has polarised public opinion and politics. In January 2017, our political institutions collapsed and have been in limbo ever since.

The publication in October 2018, of the Good Relations Indicators by the Executive Office at Stormont were a wake-up call that sectarianism, racism, and homophobia are still all too prevalent within our society. There is still a long way to go in building a society in which we can all live well together, with respect for each other. While the iconic, symbolic and historic moments of the last 21 years will always remain, they have not been enough to sustain positive political relationships and to change hearts and minds as much as our society needed. A closed Stormont is symbolic of the reality that we haven't yet learned how to truly live well with each other.

Within this context, aspects of cultural identity and commemoration continue to cause tension and division within and between our communities. In our society, this becomes more challenging due to the relationship between politics and identity, where identity is expressed through cultural and commemorative events. In this context, any perceived attack on expressions of identity towards some, or a perceived denial of aspects of identity by others, can damage political relations and push communities apart. Despite politics having worked relatively well for a significant period, over the last 21 years, these competing identity issues have created challenges for our society and have served to prevent us forging a way to build positive relationships within and between our communities. What is clear, 21 years after the Agreement, is that identity issues are important.

Within these cultural and commemorative spaces, thousands of young people are actively involved in expressing their identity.

In recent years, challenging issues around August bonfires have been played out in political, agency, community and social media arenas and many young people have been caught up in this. In the run up to the 8th and 15th August, the media is dominated by stories relating to bonfires and the commentary around this is usually framed through an adults perspective. Rarely do we hear the voices of young people, thousands of whom are directly involved in these issues. This short report is an attempt to explore the issue of August bonfires from a young people's perspective, while seeking to locate these experiences within a wider context. Therefore this report will tell the story of those young people for whom the 8th and 15th of August are important dates in the calendar. Many people mark the anniversary of internment in different ways, but for some, bonfires are an important act of commemoration. This report also seeks to provide some constructive recommendations on how these experiences can be developed and enhanced for the benefit of young people and wider society.

2. AUGUST BONFIRES: SOME BACKGROUND

All over the world and throughout history, fire has been an important factor in society. It used for warmth and light, for social activity, and in many faiths, is a symbol of religious and spiritual ritual and a means of celebrating and remembering. Fire is an important aspect of different cultures throughout the world and bonfires are used to mark or commemorate historical events in many countries.

Bonfires have been used as a way of marking events within our communities and have been used to mark the Eleventh of July, the eve of the anniversary of the battle of the Boyne, or on the 8th of August to mark the eve of the introduction of internment. Bonfires have also been used to mark the 15th August to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption, Halloween on the 31st October or Guy Fawkes Night.

Within many Catholic, Nationalist and Republican areas throughout Ireland, bonfires were traditionally lit to mark the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, a Catholic holy day which falls on the 15th August. The tradition of bonfires on this feast day died out, but in the north, this tradition lasted until 1969.

That year, in the week running up to the Feast of the Assumption, there were disturbances throughout the country, with the Battle of the Bogside in Derry, and violence in Belfast resulting in eight deaths, hundreds of properties damaged and thousands of people being displaced from their homes. The celebrations around the Feast of the Assumption subsequently died and there were no bonfires in 1970 or 1971. In response to the trouble on the streets, the British and Stormont Governments introduced internment on the 9th of August 1971. It was a divisive and controversial policy; the internment without trial of thousands of people, mostly from within the Republican community.
When the first anniversary of internment came around on 9 August 1972, communities commemorated this anniversary on the eve of its introduction and bonfires were lit on the 8th August as an act of solidarity with those who were being interned. What had been a religious Feast Day was now transformed into a political tradition, and bonfires as a form of commemoration continued even after internment was phased out in 1975.

2.1 THE EVOLUTION OF AUGUST BONFIRES

In 1988, as a direct response to events within the community in West Belfast, community leaders decided to create a festival to portray a more positive side to what was good about the people and the community within that part of Belfast.
Féile an Phobail, the Festival of the People, was created. It involved parades, floats, bands, sporting groups and other organisations active within the community in a series of festival activities and community events. While the aim of Féile was not necessarily to replace internment bonfires, the outcome was that it gave the community another avenue to recall and remember Internment.
In latter years, Féile has become the alternative to bonfires within the community. The support for the practice of bonfires as a form of commemoration used to mark the introduction of internment has been eradicated in all but a small number of communities.

In 2018, there were no bonfires over August in Belfast. In Derry City, a festival approach has also enabled positive progress on the bonfire issue, however a small number of problematic bonfires persist.

Whereas within 11th July bonfires, lit on the eve of the 12th July, there is broad community support for bonfires, within the vast majority of Nationalist and Republican areas, there is little community support for bonfires as a commemoration exercise with regard to internment.

Within those small number of areas where there continues to be internment bonfires, there continues to be negative activity associated with these, including visible environmental, community safety and good relations issues.
Vocal public and political reaction to internment bonfires is mostly negative, with people more likely to register concern and complaints and the lack of community support for the bonfire.

2.2 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no specific laws against having a bonfire and there is even official government guidance on the burning of materials outdoors, which mainly relates to garden fires, or small camp fires. However, in 2015, the UK Department for Communities and Local Government issued guidance for communities celebrating events by using bonfires and fireworks:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/429179/Bonfires_and_Fireworks_-_VE_Day_update.pdf

August bonfires do give rise to complaints from members of the public, and concerns from statutory agencies. The media, too, carries many of these concerns and complaints which generally consist of issues around the height and location of some bonfires and the materials on them which could cause environmental problems, along with the burning of flags and emblems. In many areas, the bonfire is simply not wanted by residents. In a lot of the commentary around concerns and complaints regarding bonfires, young people tend to be deemed as being the cause of the problem. While there is, however, no specific law on bonfires per say, there is a range of legislation which has relevance to bonfires and activities around them, which would be useful for young people to be aware of.

For example, property/land owners, are responsible for what happens on their land and in many cases the main issue with bonfires arises in the materials that are used. When the materials that are gathered and burned on bonfires contravenes waste disposal and environmental/air pollution legislation, this provides challenges for land owners and agencies. The Northern Ireland Environmental Agency, or a local Council could technically prosecute the landowner, or those involved in placing materials at a bonfire, where there are waste disposal and environmental implications.

There are other issues around bonfire sites which also give rise to complaints. Some examples include trespassing on property, theft of materials to be burned, the potential for damage to property when bonfires are built close to buildings, or issues such as youths causing annoyance, under-age drinking or arson. While there is no specific legislation in respect of policing of bonfires, some of the complaints associated with bonfires are dealt with under anti-social legislation.

While there is no laws designed specifically for bonfires, there are provisions within other existing laws which could be applied to deal with issues around them.

2.3 RIGHTS

Within this environment however, people have a range of rights when it comes to the commemoration of political and historical events. Within the workshops with the young people, while there was a sense that they had the right to engage in bonfires as a form of commemoration, there was little awareness of those rights that they can call on as citizens.

It is therefore worth stating the rights that young people do have in relation to engaging in commemorative activity. Such rights, located within the 1998 Agreement include:

- **The right of free political thought;**
- **The right to freedom and expression of religion;**
- **The right to pursue democratically national and political aspirations;**
- **The right to seek constitutional change by peaceful and legitimate means;**
- **The right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, disability, gender or ethnicity;**
- **The right to freedom from sectarian harassment;**

Therefore, young people can call on a range of rights when engaging in political or commemorative activity.

2.4 TRADITIONS

Many young people who are involved in August bonfires become involved in them, because they are seen as something of a tradition; 'it's what you do'. However, some of the young people were not aware of the history and background to August bonfires, and why they took place. Therefore, it is worth recalling that the tradition of bonfires in August relates back to a religious celebration, which was latterly adapted to mark the eve of the introduction of internment. The tradition of internment bonfires goes back to 1972. A tradition is defined as: "the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or the fact of being passed on in this way". Those involved in bonfires on either the 8th or 15th August could claim that they are carrying on a tradition within their neighbourhoods.

2.5 THE MEDIA, COMMEMORATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The media plays an important role in how cultural activity is projected to wider society. Many people who participated in the focus groups for this report perceived there to be a bias in media reporting of August bonfires. In particular, participants felt that individuals were being demonized for their involvement in bonfires.
The role of social media was also discussed by participants, specifically that it can be used to raise tensions in local communities. The role of social media, in promoting community tensions and acting as a platform for abusing people from a different cultural background, was also discussed by participants. Facebook and Twitter were highlighted as being used by groups and individuals to hurl sectarian abuse, particularly around times of commemorative or cultural activity.

3. YOUNG PEOPLE AND AUGUST BONFIRES

3.1 AIM OF THE PROJECT

The main aim of the project was to provide young people with an opportunity to present their views on bonfires; to explore their understanding about what they represent and symbolise; to consider their broader views on identity and culture, and reflect on how historical traditions could be commemorated in a society that is still very much divided.

This report captures the views of young people from the Nationalist/Republican tradition and provides them with a platform in which they can provide a distinct narrative around their local bonfires history and tradition.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

The Northern Ireland Youth Forum engaged with 18 females and 28 males aged 13 to 18 years of age. The five focus groups took place in local settings, namely Moyard/New Barnsley, New Lodge, Ballymena, Lenadoon and broader West Belfast. The workshops lasted approximately ninety minutes and were held between 20th of June and the 7th of August 2018. The sessions were structured around a series of themes to give participants the opportunity to discuss all aspects of the bonfire including:

- **The relationship between the bonfire tradition and the community;**
- **Ownership of the bonfire tradition;**
- **Culture, identity and tradition;**
- **The views of the 'other' community;**
- **The future of bonfires.**

Each session was conducted by a facilitator. Hand written notes were taken along with comments written on flip-chart paper. On certain occasions direct quotes from participants were recorded although no names were attributed.

4. YOUNG PEOPLE SPEAK

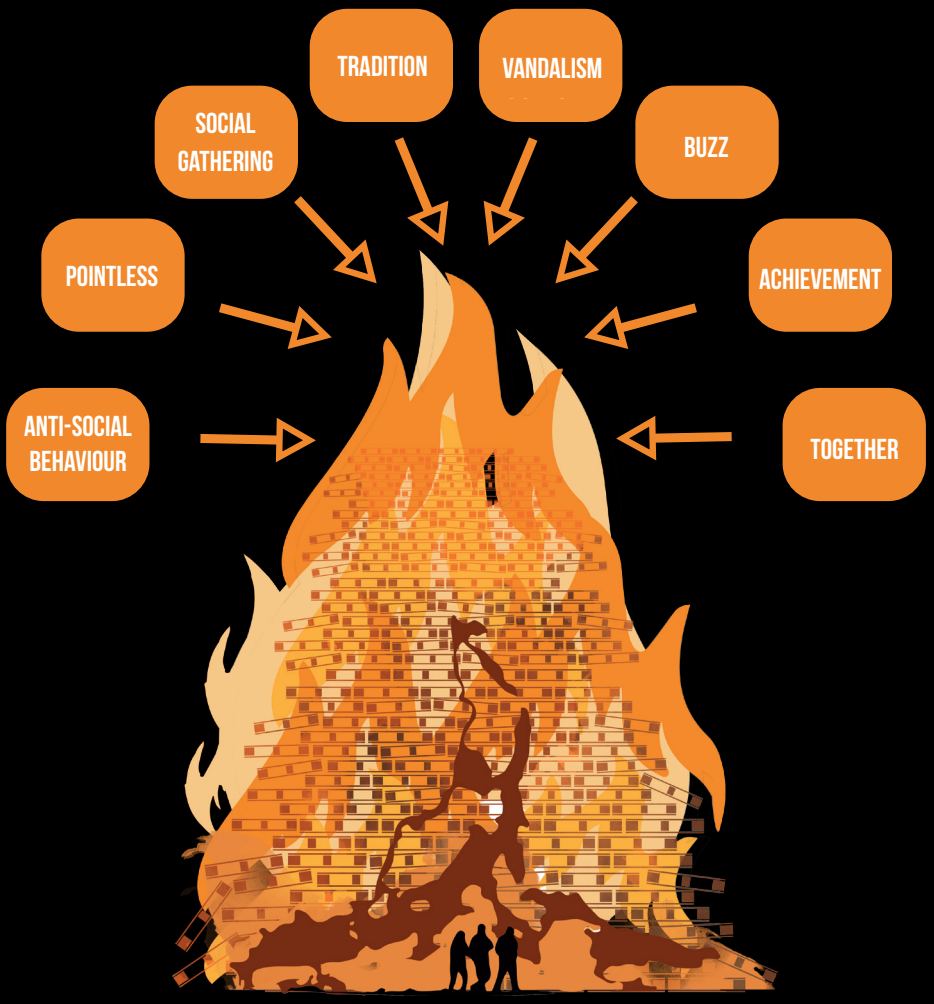
The following section draws together the main findings to emerge from the focus groups under a series of themes. Where appropriate quotes have been used to illustrate the broader views of the participants.

4.1 DESCRIBING THE BONFIRE TRADITION AND EXPERIENCE

Initially the young people were asked to think about the words they would use to describe the bonfire tradition from their own perspective. It was interesting to note that not all of the young people had either experience of building a bonfire, or witnessing a bonfire being burnt in their community. Furthermore, a large number of young people noted that 'their' bonfire had not been built in the last two/three years. Figure one, provides an overview of the main words repeatedly used by participant across the five focus groups:

There was a sense from a large number of the young people that the bonfire had negative connotations within their

FIGURE ONE:
WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE THE 'BONFIRE'



communities and that it was an event that did not have full community support. Furthermore, many did not associate is as a tradition.

THE POSITIVE STORY

For a number of participants, the bonfire was an opportunity to socialise and bring people together from within their community. However, it was interesting to note that the activities associated with the bonfire (collecting material, construction, and lighting) primarily involved one section of the community, young people i.e. 10-22 years of age. The participants suggested that the bonfire was:

- **A place to have fun**
- **An opportunity for the community to come together**
- **Something that had no harm in it**
- **A community event that made you feel proud**

THE WIDER COMMUNITY VERSUS YOUNGER PEOPLE

It was very evident from the discussions that the 'bonfire' was very much viewed as belonging to the young people, and not necessarily an event that garnered widespread community support. On several occasions, participants stated that:

- **The Community don't want it (the bonfire)…young people want it and it is them that are responsible for it taking place**
- **In my community the "Ra" don't let it happen…we don't have one, and you can't even be seen to start collecting**

There was also frustration with local elected representatives for not doing enough to support young people throughout the year, and then during August start publically demonising them because of the bonfire. A small number of participants also talked about the perceived differences between their attempts at having

a bonfire and what takes place in Unionist communities during July. There was a sense that 11th July bonfires had the support of the entire community:

- **Protestants are allowed bonfires and get supplied with their wood… while Catholic's are not allowed a bonfire and have to collect their own… that tells you what the rest of the community think**

- **Young people feel excited around the build up to the bonfire meanwhile the rest of the community feels anxious**

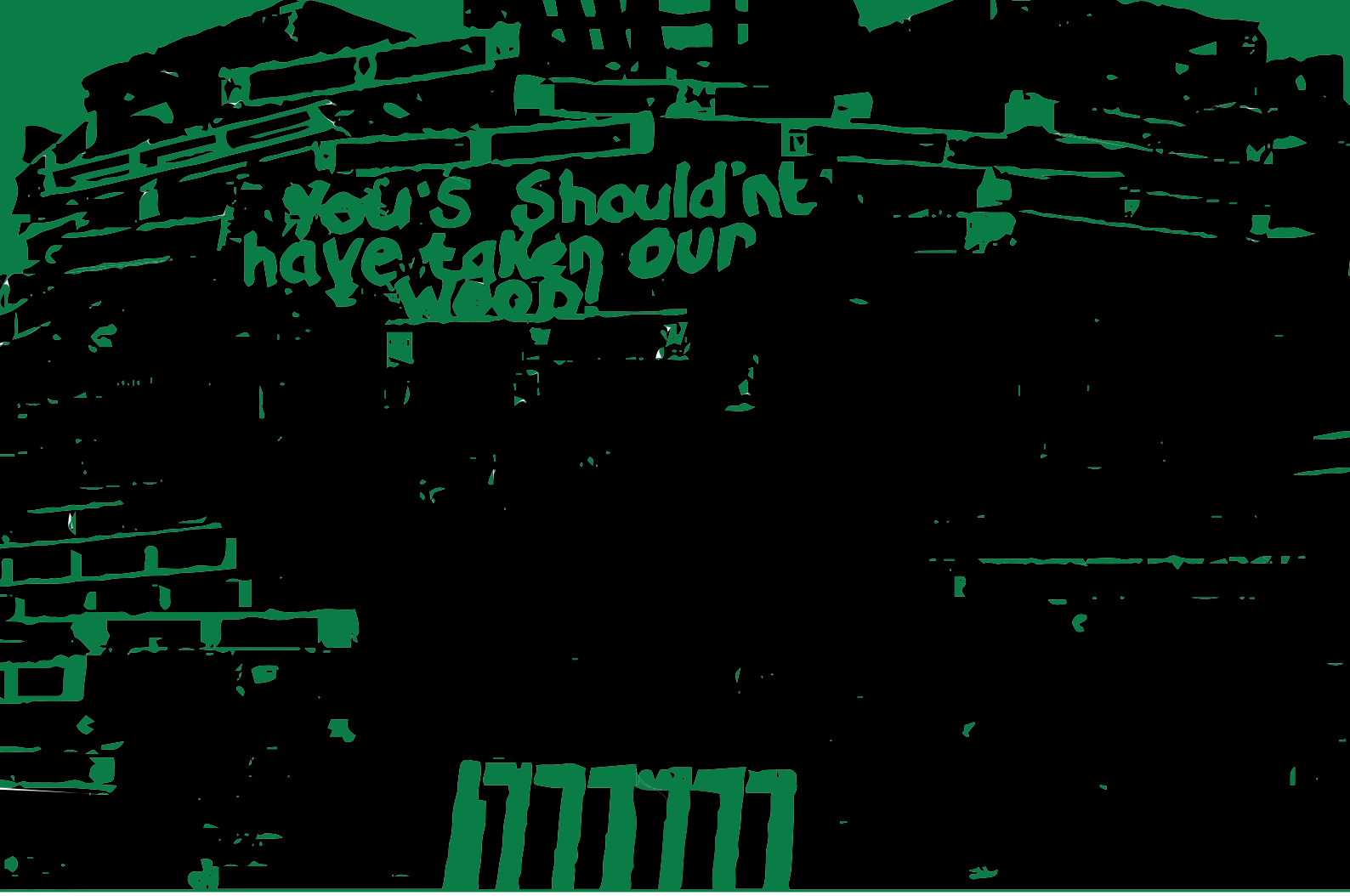
Furthermore, several participants felt that there was no such thing as a 'bonfire tradition'; instead young people used the bonfire as an opportunity to antagonise the rest of the community:

- **Sometimes there's rioting and you would see car's set alight**

- **No-one our age knows the meaning behind bonfires…it's a chance to piss the older one's off, cause we know they don't like it**

SUMMARY

The discussions revealed that there was no consensus around how young people viewed the bonfire in their communities. In fact, it was clear that there was limited evidence of a 'bonfire tradition' in the same way that it exists in Unionist and Loyalist communities. A significant number of young people used negative terms and words to describe the bonfire. They associated it with anti-social behaviour and community disapproval. However, others were keen to stress the historical significance of bonfires and indicated that they were an expression of their identity and an opportunity to engage in 'fun' activities. It was also important to note the sense from participants that the bonfire never enjoyed the full support of the entire community.



4.2 THE BONFIRE

Following the initial discussions, the participants then explored the meanings attached to the bonfire, and whether they felt it was a positive or negative event within their communities. It is important to note that several young people had not witnessed a bonfire in their community for a number of years, while members of their community had prevented others in constructing a bonfire. A large number had experience of building and lighting bonfires in their immediate area.

IT REPRESENTS WHO WE ARE

A number of participants talked about the issue of internment and the need to remember events from the past alongside current issues around the holding of Republican men in prison:

- **We are doing it for Tony Taylor as he is being interned**

- **It gives us a sense of purpose and lets everyone know that we have not forgotten what happened all those years ago**

- **There are others from Lurgan that come to our bonfire and stand with us against internment**

For these young people the bonfire was an opportunity to associate themselves with their historical views of Republicanism and maintain the view that they were 'doing something' that would have standing in the community.

DRINK, DRUGS AND VIOLENCE

A number of young people indicated that the bonfire was simply an excuse for local youths from the surrounding area to come into the neighbourhood and party, and engage in rioting with the PSNI:

- **The bonfire attracts crime, violence and drugs**

- **Some kids just want to get a fight going with the police. They know they will be around and once the drink kicks in, that's when they start on them**

- **At the start of August there is a lot of tension in the community, especially involving local councillors and the police**

It was put to the young people that maybe the wider community didn't want the bonfire because of the association with negative behaviours and they simply noted that:

- **The community can't do anything about it once it has been built**

- **The majority would say no but you should see the amount of people there that night…one's who said they didn't want anything to do with it**

CONSTRUCTION

In those areas that had bonfires the participants suggested that young people aged 9-18 years of age (mainly boys) were largely responsible for gathering materials and building the bonfires:

- **Its all about the young people in the community…see kids as young as nine collecting wood**

- **Boys and some girls collect for the bonfire – if we have one**

- **We hang out at the site, maybe three nights before it is lit…we have flick sticks, hammers and BB guns just in case people come and try and take away the wood**

It was interesting to note that the young people felt those responsible for July bonfires had more of an opportunity to gather and store material earlier and were less vulnerable than themselves in terms of people trying to steal their wood. They suggested that this was because there was more community support for July bonfires compared to those in August. What was striking was the comments relating to weapons being available for the purposes of protecting the bonfire materials.

REACTION TO LOYALISM

A small discussion took place around whether the young people felt their participation in August events was simply a response to what took place in July. There were mixed views with several contending that their community was entitled to a bonfire because young people from the Unionist and Loyalist areas had a chance to collect and construct bonfires in July. However, others were slightly embarrassed with the idea that Nationalist and Republican's should essentially replicate how the 'other' community celebrated a historical event:

- **Prods look forward to the 11th night whilst Catholics look forward to the 8th August**

- **It's clearly not as good as the twelfth as it gets a full programme… internment does not get much publicity unless there is violence**

- **Ours is like a small barbeque compared to the ones in July we shouldn't be comparing events, ours is an embarrassment.**

NO BONFIRES

It was also interesting to note what young people, who do not have bonfires in their communities, had to say. There was no real anger or frustration, just an acceptance that it was no longer appropriate and that the bonfire did not have the support of the local community:

- **People told us that it wasn't happening and then we got forty planet love tickets**

- **Paramilitaries put an end to it**

- **Local people kept lifting material and we had nowhere safe to store it so eventually it became pointless**

- **We commemorate it with a fun-day instead**

SUMMARY

There was no overwhelming consensus from the young people that the bonfire was either a positive community asset or an acceptable method of marking Internment. It was obvious from the discussions that bonfires were an emotive topic in the community and in the past had led to public disorder, violence and disruption. However, a large number of young people maintained that the bonfires were linked to their views of Republicanism and therefore should have prominence in terms of remembering internment.

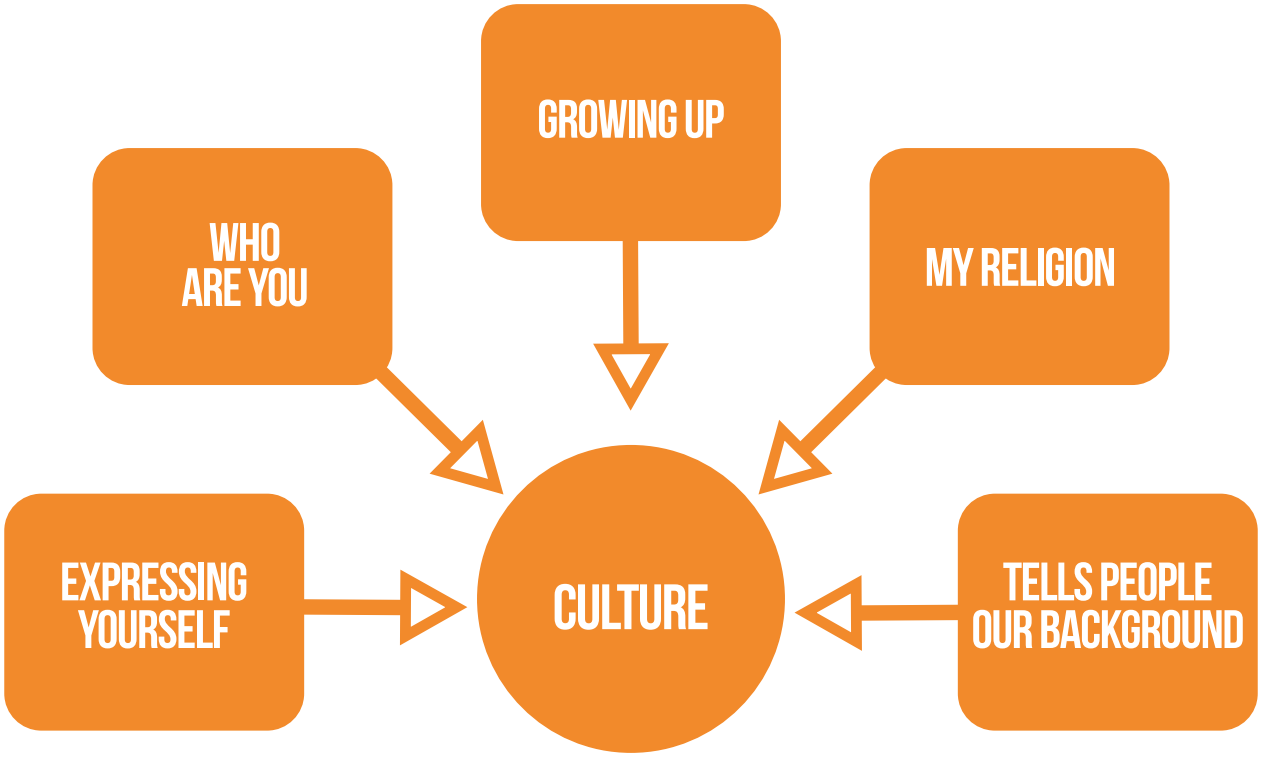


FIGURE TWO: DESCRIBING WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM CULTURE

4.3 CULTURE, IDENTITY AND TRADITION

As the discussions progressed the young people were asked to consider what the terms 'culture and identity' meant to them. There was a general consensus that 'identity' was relatively straightforward and was used to represent who they are as individuals and a community. However, there was less agreement when asked to consider the term 'culture' with many struggling to articulate what it meant:

It was acknowledged that it was a term frequently used but one which was difficult to define. It was interesting to note that it was always seen as single identity i.e. it was used to describe 'my Nationalist/Republican culture, and their Unionist/Loyalist culture'. Further discussions revealed that:

- **Culture is all about what you believe in and who you are**
- **St. Patrick's day has more culture than the 8th August night does**
- **Shows our past and what we have fought for and shows the struggle of our country**

Overall the young people struggled with the concepts of culture and identity and lacked the skills or awareness to articulate how (if at all) the bonfire was associated with either of these concepts.

INTERNMENT

The young people were pressed on their knowledge and understanding of internment. Overall the participants were unclear around the dates and events associated with that period in history:

- **We know absolutely nothing about internment but anything we hear comes from the older ones in the community**

- **You hear people talk about Tony Taylor and the Brits won't let him out**

They knew that it was unique to their community and that historically bonfires were a common feature in August across multiple Republican communities in the past. Furthermore, most of them understood that Féile an Phobail was a response to the bonfires and was a method of acknowledging internment through a different 'festival' approach.

SUMMARY

The young people used words such as 'culture' and 'identity' to describe their relationship with August bonfires, but were unable to attach any further meaning to the words. Furthermore, it was challenging for many of them to articulate what a Republican/Nationalist culture and identity was and how it could be expressed, merely noting that it was different to a Unionist/Loyalist culture.

4.4 THE 'OTHER' COMMUNITY

As the focus group discussions drew to a conclusion the young people were asked to consider what the 'other' community thought about August bonfires. It was interesting in that participants felt that the media had a significant influence on how 'others' viewed the events.

NEGATIVE BEHAVIOURS

A number of participants suggested that the August bonfires were characterised by young people engaging in anti-social behaviour and riots with the PSNI. Therefore the 'other' community would have to view them negatively. Phrases and words put forward included:

- **Disgraceful**
- **Bad for the environment…think of the pollution**
- **Agitating between local communities and the PSNI**
- **Kids running riot and out of control**

THE MEDIA

There was agreement that the media reported the August bonfires in a negative way that appeared to demonise local young people (although it was noted by some that the media only reported what they witnessed):

- **The media report it all in such a bad way…they call us all scumbags so it's bound to represent our community in a very negative way**

The stories are all about kids torturing local elderly residents and that's just not true…you should see how many from the area come out for the lighting

SUMMARY

Generally, the young people were not overly interested in how the 'other' community viewed August bonfires, as there was a sense that their minds were already made up. The majority also felt that the media did not explore the views of local young people or provide them with an opportunity to challenge existing stereotypes that surround the people responsible for collecting material and constructing the bonfire.

4.5 THE FUTURE

Finally the young people were asked to think about the future and whether or not bonfires should have a place in community commemorations of internment. Generally, there was an acceptance that in moving forward it will become more difficult to have a bonfire for two reasons:

A LACK OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The increased stigma around bonfires, in which they are associated with anti-social behaviour, drugs, alcohol and violence.
There were some young people that wanted to continue with the tradition and indicated that they would try and build one next year, but they lacked conviction when they talked, and it was more out of hope than anything else.

PARADES, FESTIVALS AND CARNIVALS

The discussions focused on alternatives to bonfires and there was a consensus that community festivals provided an opportunity to bring people together and ensure historical events were acknowledged:

- **Festivals are much better…less vandalism and better organised and the whole community can participate**

- **It should be like a big rave…a celebratory event that brings everyone together**

- **It was also suggested that young people should be involved in the decision-making processes around the celebratory events:**

It is important that young people have a chance to be involved in something that is replacing the bonfire

According to a number of young people 'successful interventions would be those that were not enforced but developed alongside young people'.

SUMMARY

It was recognised that the future would involve less bonfires and more festivals and community led events. However, there were a small number of young people that maintained it was their part of their culture to have a bonfire and would continue to express it through the building of bonfires.

5. CONCLUSION

The focus groups with young people provided an insight into both their experiences and perspectives of local bonfires. For many, this was the first opportunity they had to explore these issues in both a constructive and safe environment, and have their opinions recorded. Overall, there were four common themes that best described the relationship between the young people and the bonfire tradition (figure 3).

There was not a consensus among the young people in terms of how they viewed and experienced the bonfires, with it depending very much on their age and where they lived. However, it was obvious that there was more support for a future without bonfires, based primarily on the view that there lacked the community will and support for them.

BEING A REPUBLICAN AND REMEMBERING THE PAST

ANTI AUTHORITY AND ANTI SINN FEIN

DRINK, ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND FIGHTS WITH THE POLICE

NOT WANTED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMUNITY

FIGURE 3:
MEANINGS ATTACHED TO THE AUGUST BONFIRES

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

There appears to be several actions that have the potential to address some of the issues raised and ensure that the voices of young people result in further analysis and critique of the historical and future relationship with bonfires in Republican communities:

- There is a need to support young people consider the words and meanings that can be attached to concepts such as commemoration, culture and identity, in order to enable them to be able to articulate their strongly held beliefs to others. On several occasions young people resorted to using terms and phrases more associated with the conflict and our past to explain what their culture was. There is clearly an absence of new words and phrases more in tune with a post-conflict environment. Therefore, there is a need to support young people to explore these ideas and how they articulate their sense of identity and culture.

- There is a need to develop history and education resources to support the exploration of events such as internment in a constructive way, as a means of equipping young people to develop their approach to commemoration.

- The young people acknowledged that bonfires were becoming less popular and garnering minimal community support. There was a realisation that alternatives had to be found, with support for festivals and community events. However, young people were keen to participate in any development or decision-making processes around these types of events. Therefore, it may be appropriate to host a series of workshops for young people to support their attempts to establish alternatives to the bonfires.

- In line with the potential to move away from bonfires as a form of commemoration of internment, young people should be equipped with the skills to organise and develop alternative local events. This could include training in event management, funding applications and festival organisation.

- Young people should be trained and equipped to positively engage with the media around local issues. Organisations like the Northern Ireland Youth Forum could act as a medium through which relationships with the media can be developed.

- There may be an opportunity to bring young people from various community backgrounds together to consider how historical traditions could be commemorated, celebrated and developed in a society that is still grappling with issues of division and sectarianism

Northern Ireland Youth Forum
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Norlin Airlan Younglins Collogue
68 Berry Street
Belfast BT1 1FJ
www.niyf.org
http://www.facebook.com/NIYouthForum
http://www.youtube.com/user/NIYF1979
https://twitter.com/NIYF
Registered Charity: XR36973
NI Charity number: NIC102677