

My musical journey story starts with a proud Irish Grandfather, and the heritage he passed down to me. Music was also important in my life. I grew up with music and earned a BS in Music in 2000. I have always loved the sound of the uilleann pipes (Irish Bagpipes), and in 2003 I purchased a set and began self-teaching through video instruction from Na Píobairí Uilleann (the uilleann piper's club in Dublin, Ireland), and via online lessons.

The uilleann pipes, to me, go beyond just playing an instrument; it's a calling, a look into my own Irish heritage, and an experience of immense passion. Because of my feelings toward the instrument, I have strived to learn them correctly and in a traditional way. Irish traditional music is an aural tradition. My instruction has been by listening to recordings, watching video tutorials, and taking part in face to face and on-line lessons. I have also participated in Tionóls (uilleann pipe gatherings) in Seattle and St. Paul, Minnesota.

In December 2016, after making a career change, I moved to Sitka to start a job at the University of Alaska Southeast. My uilleann pipes have been with me the entire time, and I have been playing them daily, even recording a "tune of the week" for the person I house-sat for in my first six months of living here. Prior to moving to Alaska I had only played uilleann pipes in public a few times. Today I have performed at "open mic" events, Sitka "Grind" performances, and regularly play for residents at the Pioneer Home. I also helped form a traditional Irish Session at a local restaurant. I find audiences to be curious and enthusiastic about the pipes and the sound of the music but I find that I have reached a plateau in my playing and need help to reach the next level of performance.

I believe that to progress and become an advanced player I need to broaden my approach to piping. I have met other Irish musicians in my hometown of Sitka, and am learning more about the music as we share stories and experiences, but as I have reached out to Alaska Irish musicians, I find that I am the only active piper in Alaska. As part of the grant award I hope to network with other pipers and Alaska Irish musicians. All-Ireland champion Joey Abarta has agreed to help me with private lessons.

In regards to the uilleann pipes, in 2017 UNESCO recognized them as an important symbol of Ireland's heritage, and has added them to the organization's "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." I am the ambassador of uilleann piping in Alaska and want to represent them in the best way possible, while also demonstrating the great musical tradition of Alaska. I hope that, through this Rasmuson Foundation grant, that my journey can be advanced, allowing me to give back to the rich Irish piping tradition and to Alaska.