



# AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN **PUBLIC RELATIONS 2019**



# Best Issues-Led Campaign



Doreen Markwell, Commercial Director: Rue Point Media; Pat Montague, MPRII, Montague Communications and Emma Archbold, Project Manager, Persuasion Republic.

## Campaign

Irish Traveller Ethnicity Celebration event

## Description of Campaign

In March 2018, to coincide with the first anniversary of the State's acknowledgement of Traveller Ethnicity, the Traveller community came together to put on a celebratory event in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. It was the first event of its kind incorporating a wide range of cultural institutions, archives, heritage repositories and community enterprises.

**PERSUASION  
REPUBLIC**

## Public Relations Consultant

Persuasion Republic in association with Pat Montague



## Client

National Traveller Ethnicity Celebration c/c ITM

## Background to the Campaign

Travellers historically have experienced widespread discrimination and exclusion and their identity as a people became gradually eroded. Traveller history was not comprehensively recorded, however some of its music, crafts, customs and unique language have been collected by folklorists since the 1900s.

State acknowledgement of Ethnicity is seen by Travellers not as an endpoint but as a crucial start towards the positive promotion, protection and celebration of Traveller identity both within the Traveller community and externally to non-Travellers.

At the time of the making of the Ethnicity acknowledgement declaration in 2017, there was support both amongst some of the Traveller community and some stakeholders to hold an event to celebrate and reflect on the rich cultural Traveller heritage. However, political pressures at that time meant no event to mark this milestone could be organised.

The idea of holding a major celebration was sought by national and local Traveller organisations throughout Ireland, but they were conscious of a number of challenges including:

- Any major celebratory event on a large scale would require funding and there was no precedent for sourcing it.
- No precedent within the Traveller community for such a national celebration so there was no structure in place to organise it.
- The success of the event depended on resourcing to outsource the project to a third-party event management and communications agency.
- Uncertainty amongst some of the Traveller Community about the idea of celebrating Ethnicity Recognition as little progress was perceived to have been made in the year since.
- Unique collaborative and consensus building way in which Travellers work which takes time. This may be a challenge for agents but not always for Traveller groups as community development is built on consultation.
- Widespread ignorance amongst the non-Traveller community about Traveller culture and heritage – so designing a Traveller cultural event aimed at involving non-Travellers would be seen as very challenging.

However, despite these challenges, there were also some opportunities identified including support amongst:

- key national Traveller organisations
- key stakeholders such the Folklore Commission, the National Museum, the National Library, and the Department of Justice and Equality.

---

## Statement of Objectives

Once the idea of hosting a major unique and unprecedented celebratory event took hold, an initial outline event plan was drafted with key objectives. An all-day event, free-of-charge and open to the public (11am – 6.30pm), a first of its kind to showcase Traveller culture was planned.

The overall aim was to successfully deliver the first ever of this scale, national celebratory event of Traveller culture and heritage. An event that would be a real success for the Traveller community and other key audiences.

Specifically, the key objectives were to:

- Secure the essential supports needed to deliver a high quality event with national reach to a range of audiences including the non-Traveller community on the first anniversary of the acknowledgement of Traveller Ethnicity.
- Recruit at least 15 participants from within the Traveller community across three key disciplines of music, drama and craft.
- Recruit at least two of three national centres to participate (UCD Folklore Collection, the National Library of Ireland, the National Museum of Country Life).
- Attract attendance of at least 500 people from the Traveller community and 250 from the general public.
- Attract significant media and public attention in the lead in period and on the day and to create public awareness of the event generally.
- Keep within budget and deliver on schedule on the first anniversary.

---

## Programme Planning and Strategy

In order to organise the anniversary event, a number of key steps were taken.

### A Steering Group established

Five months prior to the event, a Steering Group came together comprised of representatives of nine national Traveller organisations. This group met every two weeks to oversee the direction and management of the project. Unlike formal steering groups with mandates and a formal hierarchical structure, this group was collaborative in nature with consensus decision making being the norm. This approach helped build trust and key relationships. The following nine Traveller organisations participated in the Steering Group:

- Irish Traveller Movement;
- National Traveller Women's Forum;



- Minceirs Whiden;
- Pavee Point;
- Involve;
- National Traveller Money Advice and Budgeting Service;
- Parish of the Travelling People;
- Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service;
- The Traveller Counselling Service.

### **Funds and Venue secured as a first priority**

As a first step, the Steering Group set about securing the necessary funds and venue for the event. They successfully negotiated a contract with the Department of Justice and Equality that secured the Royal Hospital Kilmainham as the venue. One of the key challenges that arose in organising the event was the snowfall at the beginning of March 2018 that resulted in closure of public buildings such as the RHK on the original event day and the rescheduling of the event to a later date in March. The strength of the relationship with the Department helped secure the venue at minimal additional cost.

### **Qualified Event Management and Communications Agency hired**

Once the funding was secured the next step was to contract in the support services of an event and communications agency, Persuasion Republic in association with Pat Montague. This agency developed a detailed event and communications plan which was designed to achieve all the key objectives. This led to renegotiations with the key funder for additional resources required to deliver a quality event. It was vital that the agency hired had experience in working in a collaborative manner with vulnerable and minority communities and Persuasion Republic and Pat Montague did. They had a successful track record of working with Traveller organisations, in Fatima Mansions, Dolphin House and St. Michael's Estate as well as other sensitive issues such as children's health in Temple Street Hospital and homelessness with Focus Ireland and Threshold.

### **Traveller Community Support recruited**

A small sub-committee was established to set about recruiting the support of key Traveller participants and others. This led to every network of local Traveller organisations being contacted and asked to support the event. There were significant sensitivities which had to be managed by the event producers and there were extensive contacts between participants and the organisers. For each target Traveller participant the agency Event Manager had a key steering group member to help liaise and negotiate. After much negotiation and consultation a broad range of Traveller participants were secured.

### **Institutional stakeholder support recruited**

The goal was to recruit at least two of the four key institutional stakeholders. Each of the four major institutional stakeholders was approached by a Traveller community contact and requested to participate. The requirements for participation varied for each possible participant but, in the end, it was possible for the Event Manager to accommodate all five invitees.

### **Cultural support recruited**

Several key figures from the non-Traveller community were sought to participate in the event and again key Traveller steering group members were tasked with the job of securing involvement at no cost. Senator Frances Black, Norah Casey and Brenda Donohue agreed to participate.

### **A winning Communications Plan to attract all key audiences developed**

Pat Montague for Persuasion Republic and Jacinta Brack, Communications and Campaigns Coordinator with the Irish Traveller Movement for the Traveller Steering Group, led the development of a detailed communications plan designed to achieve the key communications goals for the project. Audiences were prioritised as Traveller participants, Traveller community, general public and media. A series of event messages were developed that were successfully promoted. These included:

- Consistent use of social media over a two-week period to drive engagement on the day's events – and its significance – within the Traveller community;
- Photo-launch, national, cultural and local media drive to encourage attendance at the event from both Travellers and non-Travellers;
- Maximisation of 'on-the-day' coverage in national and local media to reinforce the messages about the uniqueness of Traveller culture and ethnicity and the importance of the State's recognition to Travellers and the wider community.

## **A comprehensive event programme was devised and delivered**

Five separate parts of the RHK were used to accommodate the full programme of events including The Quadrant, the Johnson room, the Drawing Room, The Great Hall and the Baroque Chapel. The programme included:

- Musical performances – Senator Frances Black, Paddy Keenan, Thomas McCarthy and Selina O’Leary;
- Workshops/clinics on Traveller language, folklore and heritage, genealogy and music;
- Interactive features including audio collections from the national folklore, music and story archives as well as craft demonstrations;
- Look back at 10 years of Traveller Pride Awards;
- Performances of dramas written by Rosaleen McDonagh and Michael Collins;
- Films and documentaries;
- Photographic exhibition;
- Displays of different elements of Traveller culture such as Tinsmithing, Beady Pockets, rugs and quilts.

People attending the event were first welcomed in the Quadrant Courtyard by the living history project before moving into the Johnson Room for a formal welcome and information point then into the Great Hall which hosted 16 exhibition stands, 5 exhibitions and a children’s art project. There was then a choice to either visit the Baroque Chapel for live performances of drama and music plus talks and lectures or the drawing rooms for talks and workshops.

---

## **Measurement**

### **Objective 1**

Secure the essential supports needed to deliver a high quality event with national reach to a range of audiences including the non-Traveller community on the first anniversary of the State’s acknowledgement of Traveller Ethnicity.

#### ***Success was measured by:***

1. Successfully establishing a dedicated steering group, it working from inception to formal evaluation six weeks post the event.
2. Successfully securing the essential funding that provided enough support for Traveller participation.
3. Hiring a suitably qualified agency to support event management and communications.
4. Successfully renegotiating the budget from the key funder to deliver the quality event.
5. Successfully managing the postponement of the event by three weeks arising from the closure of the venue due to heavy snowfall.
6. The audience Exit Survey showed an extremely positive response to the event.

### **Objective 2**

Recruit at least 15 participants from within the Traveller community across three key disciplines of music, drama and craft.

#### ***Success was measured by:***

1. Altogether over 25 Traveller artists, crafts people and cultural groups participated on the day.

### **Objective 3**

Recruit at least three of the five targeted national cultural centres to participate.

#### ***Success was measured by:***

1. All five participated:
  - (a) UCD Folklore Collection
  - (b) The National Library of Ireland,
  - (c) National Museum – Museum of Country Life
  - (d) Hugh Lane Gallery
  - (e) Irish Film Institute

### **Objective 4**

Attract attendance of at least 500 people from the Traveller community and 100 from the general public.

#### ***Success was measured by:***

1. Over 800 from the Traveller Community attended the event including 100 school children.
2. Over 120 non-members of the Traveller community attended the event.

### **Objective 5**

Attract significant media and public attention in the lead in period and on the day and to create public awareness of the event generally.

#### ***Success was measured by:***

1. Major coverage on national radio and TV plus significant coverage on local radio.
2. Coverage in national press and other outlets.
3. Coverage on social media.
4. President attended for over two hours.

### **Objective 6**

Deliver within budget and keep to schedule.

#### ***Success was measured by:***

1. The event was delivered on budget and on schedule despite the postponement for three weeks due to heavy snowfall.





**KANTAR**

**rrd**

**RUEPOINT MEDIA**

