

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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Peace and Reconciliation Group

- Registered charity established in 1976.
- Mission: *"To promote the development of community understanding and co-operation through the delivery of community relations and community development programmes."*



Presentation Overview

- Northern Ireland: Historical and political context
- Current educational system and barriers to change
- Peace and Reconciliation Group exemplar: "9000 Years on an Island"
- Proposals for the future



Northern Ireland: Historical & Political Context

Partition in 1921 shifted the power dynamics in Northern Ireland

Protestant/British Perspective:

- Stay in union to maintain power structure

Catholic/Irish Perspective:

- Self determination
- End discrimination against Catholics



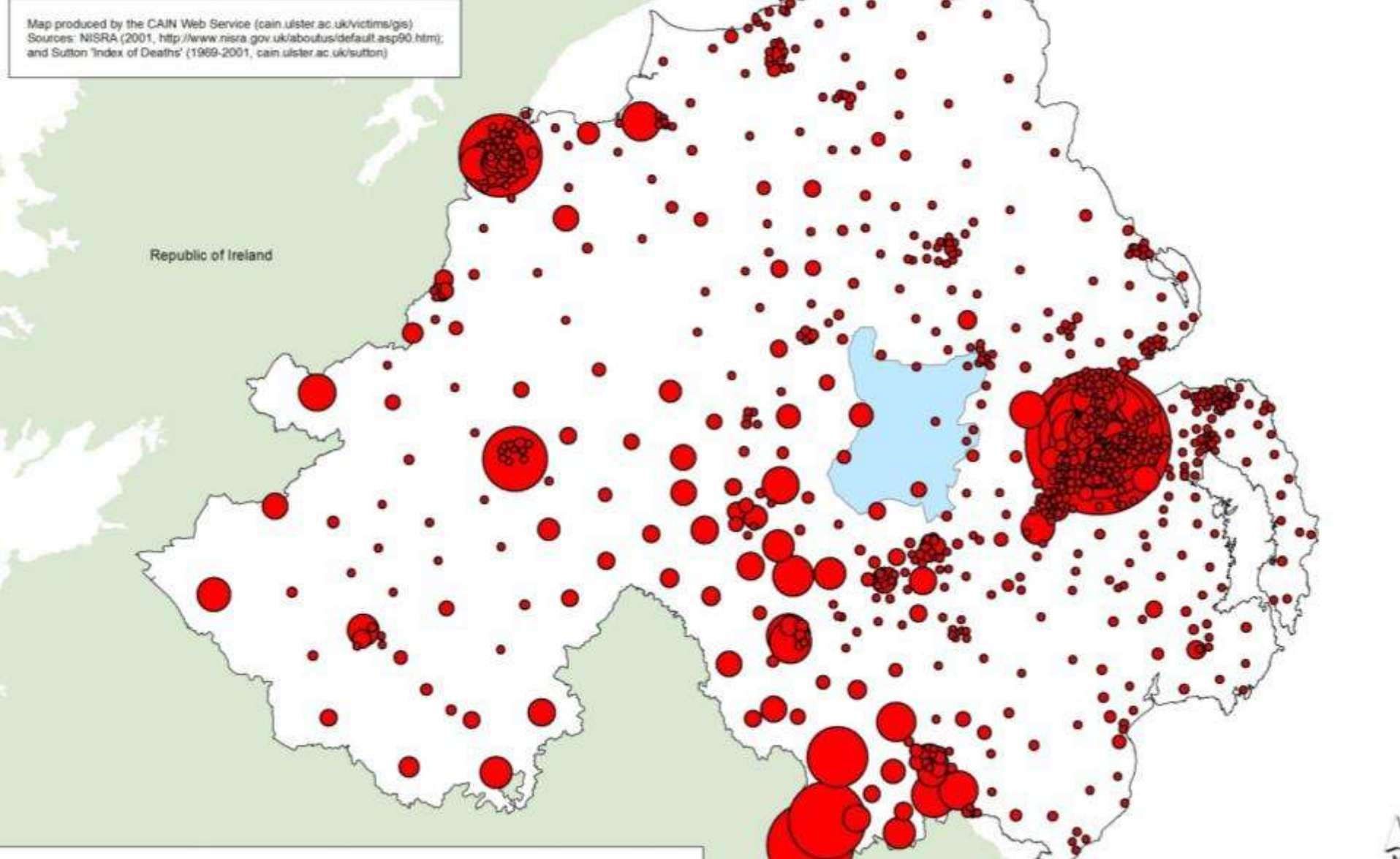
Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom



“The Troubles” (roughly 1960s - 1990s)

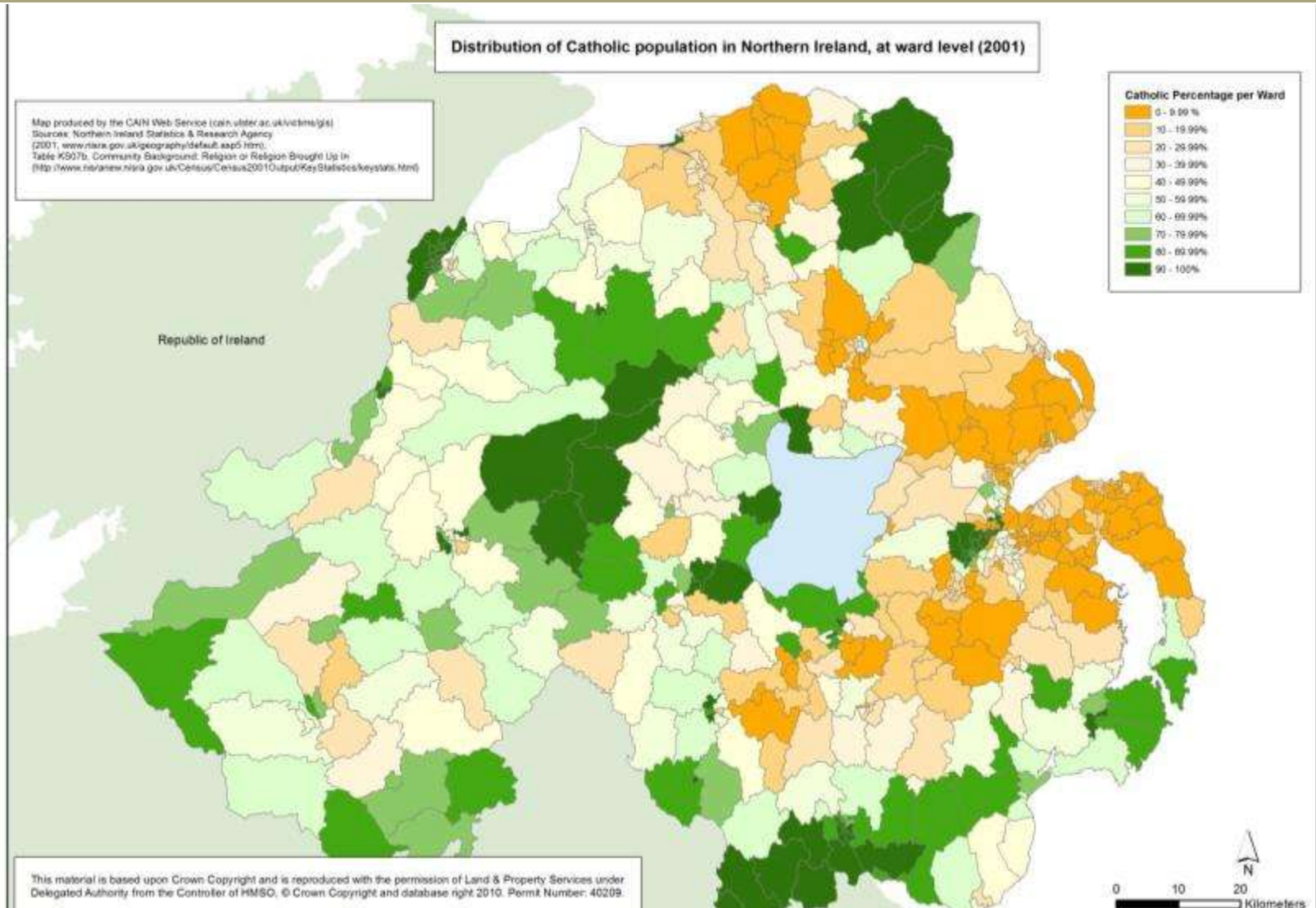


Map produced by the CAJN Web Service (cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims/gis)
Sources: NISRA (2001, <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/aboutus/default.asp90.htm>);
and Sutton 'Index of Deaths' (1969-2001, cain.ulster.ac.uk/sutton)



Concentrations of conflict fatalities between 1969 and 2001 in Northern Ireland

Segregation exists across societal sectors





Current Educational System & Barriers to Change

Four Main Categories of Schools

Controlled

- Managed by Education and Library Boards; generally Protestant

Maintained

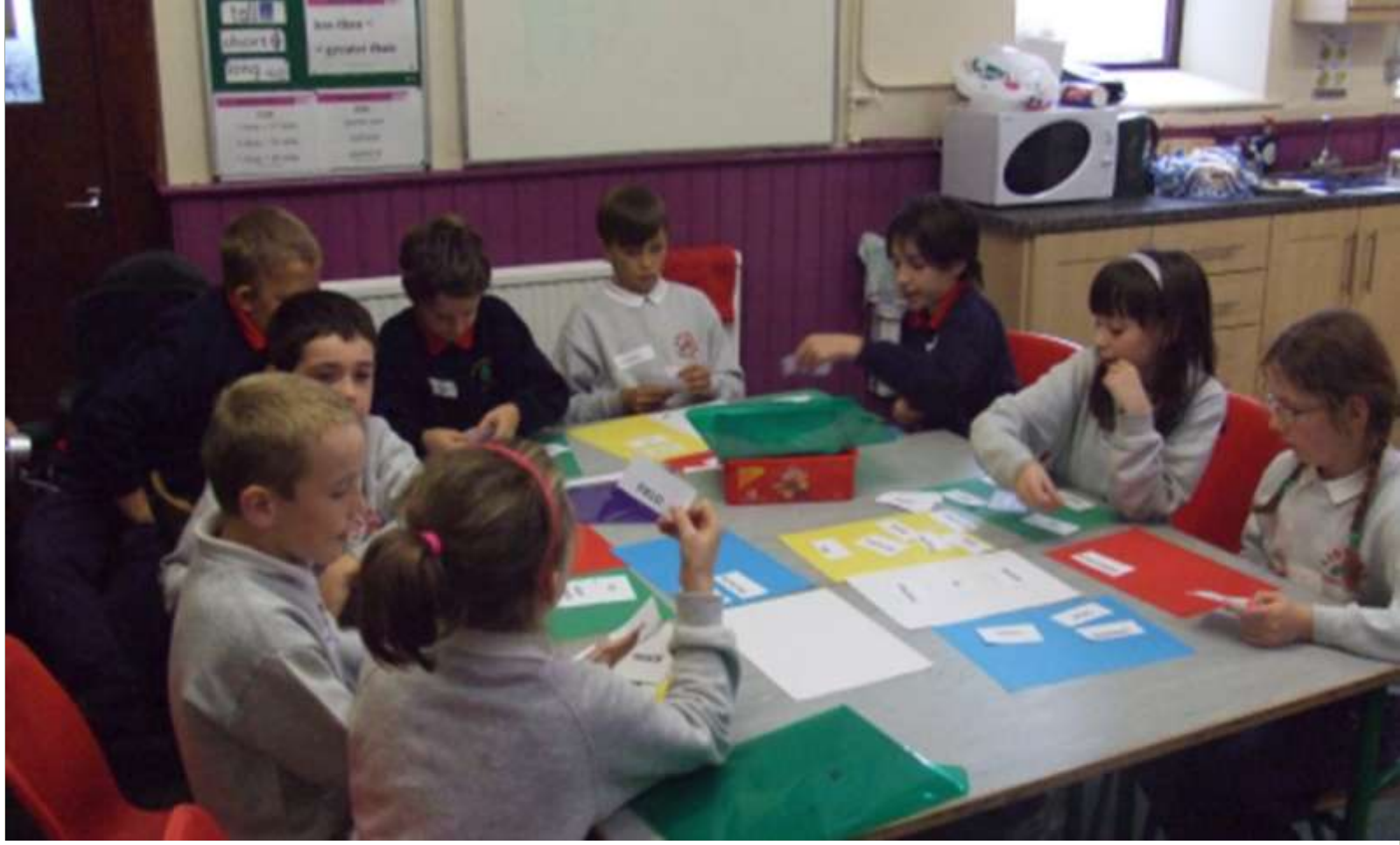
- Managed by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; Catholic

Voluntary

- Owned and managed by trustees; Generally segregated by religion

Integrated

- Managed by a Board of Governors; Religiously mixed



Integrated education promotes community cohesion

How does Northern Ireland define integrated education?

Equality

Faith &
Values

Parental
Involvement

Social
Responsibility

First Barrier to Change: Government based on power sharing

Cross-party support is necessary to pass legislation



Second Barrier to Change: Lack of support for educators

Teachers need help overcoming fears:

- Hidden political agendas
- Addressing sensitive issues
- “Getting it wrong”
- Backlash from parents

Third Barrier to Change: Inadequate teacher training



Exemplar Program:
"9,000 Years on an Island"

Program Objectives

- Address post conflict issues specific to the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
- Develop concept of a shared heritage and promote idea of a shared future
- Build relationships, challenge misconceptions and reduce fears

Program Characteristics

- Partnership between PRG and the Donegal Education Centre
- Funded by Special European Union Programmes Body Peace III
- Eight schools, partnered cross border and cross community
- Focused on "Famine & Emigration," "Plantation," and "Traditional Music and Dance"
- Active teacher participation

Program Challenges

- Composite classes in rural areas
- Substitute teacher costs
- Travel time
- Other budget/financial constraints

Strategies for Success

- Consultation with stakeholder institutions
- Energetic, talented facilitators
- Ongoing evaluation



Results

- 200 students and 10 teachers completed the one year partnership activities
- 1,000 packs distributed to schools, libraries, museums and youth workers
- Project identified as “Model of Excellence and Good Practice” by SEUPB

It's an important beginning





Proposals for the Future

Short Term Proposals

- Secure funding for long term projects
- Provide more training and support for teachers
- Update the curriculum

Long Term Proposals

- Integrate teacher training
- Integrate more of the education system
- Reform the governmental structures

Key Takeaways

- Addressing the impact from the violence has to be part of the solution
- It's critical to acknowledge the true problem: self confidence, not classroom disputes
- The creation of resource packs can make a program replicable

Questions?

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