**6th Class Interview with Senator Eileen Flynn**

**1.**                **What’s your earliest memory?**

* I was 4 years old and I experienced discrimination in the local shop but at the time I didn’t have a concept of what discrimination was, I just knew how it made me feel and that has stayed with me.

**2.**                **What was your life like growing up as a child in primary school? Was it different to school now?**

* It was definitely a very positive experience. The expectations around possessions weren’t what it is today. You didn’t have to have Nike trainers, or expensive clothes to ‘fit in’.

**3.**                **What’s the most important part of your culture that you’d like to share?**

The close connection to your family and community and the storytelling that is a big part of that.

**4.**                **Have you ever felt discriminated against for being a traveller? (if yes could you give an example)**

Many a time. One example was when a member of the Garda called my family ‘a pack of scummy knackers’ outside our own front door.

**5.**                **What would be your advice to any young travellers who are struggling through life at the moment?**

Value yourself in the world and see your own equal worth; you are as good as anyone else around you. Don’t ever give up on your holes and dreams.

**6.**                **We have been learning about support, and that it only takes one person to love and care for you to succeed in life. Is there a person who was your champion, that really believed in you?**

My Mother for her strength and courage and bravery and her resilience towards the world.

**7.        What does a Senator do? And how do you become a senator?**

The main function of the Seanad is to debate legislation proposed by the Government. The Seanad can amend a Bill that has been passed by the Dáil and delay, but not stop, it becoming law. Senators can also introduce their own Bills, which are debated in the Seanad and, if passed, are then debated in the Dáil. Although the Government has no constitutional responsibility to Seanad Éireann, a Minister or Minister of State attends the Seanad when it is dealing with Bills or debating Government policy.

The Seanad is comprised of 60 members.  Eleven members are nominated by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), university graduates elect 6 members, and 43 are elected from panels of candidates representing specific vocational interests. Every citizen of Ireland over 21 years of age who is not disqualified by the Constitution or by law is eligible to be elected to the Seanad.  Persons undergoing a prison sentence in excess of six months and persons of unsound mind are disqualified for election. Certain occupations are incompatible with membership of the Seanad, for example, members of the judiciary, senior officials of the institutions of the European Union, civil servants, whole time members of the Defence Forces and Gardaí (police).

**8.        If you weren’t a senator what would you be doing?**

I have always been an activist for equality and have worked for the National Traveller Women’s Forum so I would absolutely still be doing those things and also, of course, being a Mammy to my amazing daughter Billie.

**9.        What did you study in college?**

I was one of the first people in my family, along with my twin sister, to attend University and graduated with an Honours Degree in community Work from NUI Maynooth.

**10.     What’s your favourite part of being a traveller?**

Being part of a unique culture with a rich history.