

NORÐURLJÓŚ
ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB OF EDMONTON



September 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear friends,

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones keeping healthy and safe. These continue to be strange times, and now more than ever we need to pull together and try to support one another as much as we can.

As some of you may know, Melanie has joined me back in Iceland for the time being, after a four month separation due to travel restrictions. It was tough to be separated and we are happy to have our family united once again. In the midst of so much uncertainty, it is clear that our networks of family and friends are crucial to remaining positive and resilient. We wish that it had been possible to say our farewells in person, but I believe there will be better times ahead to reconnect.

In the coming months, the ICCE board will be doing its best to adjust to the ever-evolving circumstances in Edmonton and will do its best to create opportunities for socializing and celebrating in new and different ways. With the club's Annual General Meeting coming up, there will be some constructive discussions on what kind of changes need to take place. We hope to see some new volunteers join the current team, and will look forward to finding ways in which our club can innovate and adapt.

Here in Iceland, we've had to return to a more cautious way of living since Covid cases have been on the rise again. Icelanders are determined however, (some might say to the point of being stubborn!) and we will persist in thinking positively.

My best wishes to you as we move into the Fall season - as always, let's keep in touch and stay involved. We are holding our monthly board meetings by Zoom and some of the essential business of the club continues, for example, the awarding of bursaries to students. We also plan

CONTENTS

President's Message – Page 1
Virtual Leifur Eiríksson celebration – Page 2
Mark Your Calendars! – Page 3
Movie Night Ideas – Page 4
Feature: Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Northern Family – Page 5
Feature: Another family Stefansson story – Page 6
The Fjallkona in 2020 – Page 7
Board contact information – Page 8

to hold both a Leifur Eiríksson gathering (Saturday, October 3rd) and the club's AGM in November, by Zoom. We will send out an email to all members or contact you by phone with further details on how to participate.

**Bestu kveðjur,
Jón Bjarni Baldursson**

Celebrate Leifur Eiríksson together virtually on Saturday, October 3rd!

We can't get together in person – but we can still celebrate together!



*Statue of Leifur Eiríksson outside
Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavík*

For many years, members of the Icelandic Canadian Club have enjoyed celebrating our heritage annually with a fall supper commemorating Leifur Eiríksson Day. Leifur Eiríksson was born in Iceland around 970 and is thought to be the first European to set foot in North America. While we can't get together to enjoy a meal this year, we can still get together – online. We are planning a Zoom get-together on Saturday, October 3rd at 3 p.m. All members will be contacted with information on how to participate, by email for those members with email, or by phone for those who do not use email. **It is possible to participate in a Zoom teleconference either by video online or by telephone.** The Leifur Eiríksson celebration will last between an hour and an hour and a half on October 3rd.

This Zoom meeting will be a chance for you to check in with the club's activities. We plan to have some updates from the bursary recipients on the programs they are in and to provide an opportunity for members to share their reminiscences and experiences of Iceland. We are excited that we will have a great entertainment event as well. The choir Raddbandafélag Reykjavíkur will sing the Canadian and Icelandic anthems, and a few songs.

This is a good opportunity to get some practice with the Zoom program as a club so that we can get together again virtually for other events, and in particular the Annual General Meeting. We are looking into providing a short training session for any of our members who would like this, and will contact members if this will take place. We feel that Zoom is a valuable technology that we will all benefit from understanding better so that we can stay connected. We have used Zoom on a number of occasions for board meetings and find that it is simple and straightforward to use, especially with a little upfront training.

An email will be sent out with further information and links. We look forward to seeing and hearing from our members once again!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Zoom Training Session TBA

Leifur Eiríksson Event

ONLINE Zoom event

Saturday, October 3rd, 2020
3 p.m.

Annual General Meeting

ONLINE Zoom Event

November Date TBA

ICCE Board meetings:

Second Tuesdays of most months
6:30 p.m.

Next meeting: September 8th

Meetings are open to all members. At this time, meetings are being held by Zoom videoconference. If you wish to attend please contact a board member for details (see last page of newsletter for board contact information).

MEMBERSHIPS

- Individual membership is \$15 per year.
- Couple / Family is \$30 per year. Children under age 18 are included with your family membership.

Pay via Paypal at:

<http://iccedm.org/category/membership/>

Or mail a cheque payable to "Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton" to:

Gloria Krenbrenk
#515, 10160 – 114 Street NW
Edmonton AB T5K 2L2

Any questions contact Gloria at
780-668-9166 or
gkrenbrenk@gmail.com.

Iceland COVID-19 and Travel Update

Travel restrictions were lifted on July 15th for Canadian passport holders. However, as of August 19th, visitors must choose either to submit to two screening tests for COVID-19, separated by five days' quarantine until the results of the second test are known, or else not to undergo border screening but instead spend 14 days in quarantine after arrival. Visitors are also asked to download the contract tracing app Rækning. Restrictions are in place. Further information is available at *covid.is*.



The Snorri Program

As with so many other events, the 2020 Snorri Program has been cancelled. However, those who have been accepted into the 2020 program will be offered the same opportunity to participate in 2021. The club's commitment to supporting the Snorri Program and local participants remains unchanged.



For your viewing pleasure!

The days are growing shorter and the lengthening evenings turn our thoughts to – movies! Why not relax with a feature that takes you to Iceland? Here are a few suggestions for free Icelandic-themed productions available for your viewing now.

The Journey West: Sails, Rails, Rivers, and Trails, was offered this summer as part of Íslendingadagurinn. This documentary by Cathy Josefson from the East Iceland Emigration Center describes the modes of transportation necessary for Icelanders during their emigration to America. It can be viewed anytime at:
<https://vimeo.com/442165132>.

Stefansson's Lost Children: Icelandic Inuit

This half hour documentary tells the story of the explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson and his Inuvialuit family in the Western Arctic. It is the video referred to by Gloria Krenbrenk in her feature article in this newsletter issue. You can watch it at:

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/416696267>

Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga

Sometimes we just need something to take our minds off all the troubles of the world. This VERY lightweight Hollywood movie features some superb Icelandic scenery and pokes fun at a few clichés. And for North Americans it is a glimpse into the high-pressure glitzy madness of the Eurovision Song Contest. Definitely on the silly side but it is kind and warmhearted, and features some gorgeous scenes set in Husavík. Available on Netflix.

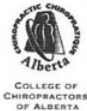
Fans of TRAPPED/ÓFÆRÐ: Newsflash!

Season 3 has just started filming! No word on when it will be released as yet.

Bursary Program and Scholarship Opportunity

The deadline has now passed for the Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton's bursary program. We will announce the recipients shortly and introduce some of them at our virtual Leifur Eiríksson get-together on October 3rd.

Please note: **The Canadian-Iceland Foundation has a scholarship program.** The deadline for this program is **September 30th**. Check canadaicelandfoundation.ca for details.



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Coping with COVID Restrictions: Can we help?

This is a challenging time for many of us. Please be assured that, as a club, we are here for one another. If you would like to receive a call, to chat, to have someone check in on you or just to say hello, please contact us. If you know another member we encourage you to reach out to them.

Or, contact a board member either by phone (see contact list page 8) or send an email to info@iccedm.org and we will respond. Please include your phone contact information in any email.

Feature Article: Vilhjalmur Stefansson's Northern Family
Contributed by Gloria Krenbrenk

WERE YOU THERE?

Did you see the video posted on the ICCE Facebook page about the northern family of Arctic explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson? The link is also given in this newsletter's *Movie Night* section. It brought back wonderful memories for me. My mother's sister married Vilhjalmur (Villi) Josephson, nephew of the explorer, so my family was always keenly interested. Although Stefansson's northern family was a well kept secret in the academic community, the Icelandic Canadian community knew of Stefansson's son and some of his grandchildren visited my uncle's family in Victoria BC.

Instigated by Walter Sopher, ICCE hosted a Stefansson event for Leif Eiriksson Days in 2007. The Icelandic anthropologist, Gisli Pálsson, had recently released an English translation of his book "Travelling Passions – The Hidden Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson". Gisli was a keynote speaker at the Saturday evening dinner, along with Georgina Stefansson from Inuvik, the explorer's granddaughter. It was a two day event, with informal talks in the Nordic Room on Sunday afternoon.

My cousins are second cousins to the Stefansson grandchildren. My Uncle Villi's sister, Malla Jeroski, was a good friend of my parents and lived in Wynyard SK at the time. The opportunity was too good to miss – the Stefansson relatives must meet. I conspired to have Malla and my cousin Donyne Gray from Vancouver Island attend the event. They stayed at my home in St. Albert and I hosted a bison supper for the relatives and Gisli Pálsson on Sunday evening. It was a wonderful weekend. I am



Georgina Stefansson, Gisli Pálsson, Malla Jeroski, and Gunnar Thorvaldson.

thankful for Walter Sopher's audacious ability to accomplish anything he dreamed up. Walter always said, "nothing is impossible, it just takes longer".

I met Rosie Albert, Georgina's older sister, a few years later when she visited Edmonton to purchase supplies for her Inuit crafts. She and Georgina both attended the INL Convention at West Edmonton Mall in 2011 where Rosie displayed her unique crafts and I purchased a treasured 14 inch handmade doll. Unfortunately Rosie broke her hip that weekend and ended up in the Misericordia Hospital. I visited her some years later in the Royal Alexandra Hospital following a stroke; she passed away some months later.

Rosie had worked as a translator and teacher in the Inuvialuktun language and was well known in the north. As far as I am aware, all the Stefansson grandchildren have now passed away, Georgina in 2015. Their father Alex Stefansson, the explorer's only child, died in 1966 age 56. After leaving the Arctic in 1918, Vilhjalmur Stefansson never spoke of or acknowledged his son, except to send signed first editions of his books. However, everyone in the north knew very well who

Alex was and his children suffered for their white ancestry. They never met their famous grandfather.

For anyone interested in the north or solving mysteries, "Travelling Passions – The Hidden Life of Vilhjalmur Stefansson" is an interesting read.



Stefansson relatives: Georgina Stefansson, Malla Jeroski, and Donyne Gray.

Another family Stefansson story

Contributed by Pat Dunn

I was inspired by Gloria's reminiscence to share my own family's long-ago connection to Vilhjalmur Stefansson, an example of the many connections within the Icelandic Canadian community. For part of Stefansson's Harvard attendance in 1904, he roomed with a young man named Thorvaldur Thorvaldson, called Valdi. Valdi was my great-great uncle and was studying mathematics and physics at Harvard. Tragically, while there he died from a ruptured appendix. Stefansson accompanied the body back to Arnes for burial, and wrote about the sad event in his autobiography, *Discovery*, saying that he had taken home for burial "one of the most promising young men I have ever known." Stefansson maintained a connection with the Thorvaldson family as, years later, a group photo of the Stefansson family taken on one of his visits to Arnes included my great-grandfather Sveinn Thorvaldson, Valdi's brother.

Another brother, Thorberger, also attended Harvard and later became head of the Faculty of Chemistry at the University of Saskatchewan. The chemistry building there was renamed the Thorvaldson Building after his death in recognition of his contributions to the university and his international reputation for the discovery of a way to improve the longevity of Portland cement.

Most interesting of all to family, the three brothers wrote each other frequently, supporting and encouraging each other's studies and work and reflecting on how they saw their lives unfolding in their new homeland of Canada. The family still retains copies of many of these letters, a fascinating glimpse into the thoughts and dreams of that first generation of Icelandic settlers in Canada.



The Stefansson family in Arnes. Vilhjalmur Stefansson at centre. Sveinn Thorvaldson at far right. Photo : Manitoba Historical Society

Do you have a family story you'd like to share with the Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton membership in the newsletter? We'd love to hear from you! Contact Pat at info@iccedm.org or give me a call at 587-338-0254.

The Fjallkona in 2020



1866 painting of the Fjallkona by German artist Johann Zwecker, to illustrate the book *Icelandic Legends* by Magnússon and Powell

Traditionally, Alberta's three Icelandic clubs (Leif Erickson in Calgary, Historic Markerville, and the Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton) take turns appointing a Fjallkona each year. Barb Sigurdsson, from Calgary, was crowned Fjallkona in 2019. With the unfortunate cancellation of most events in 2020, she will continue as Fjallkona until June 2021. The new Fjallkona will be from the Markerville club and will be crowned in June 2021.

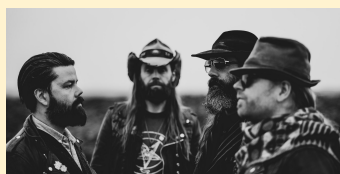
The Fjallkona – Lady of the Mountains – is the personification of Iceland, an image first expressed in a poem from the early 19th century and used popularly in the years following, to the present day. A famous painting was made to illustrate the Fjallkona in a book of folktales published in 1866 (left). The Fjallkona “has a crown of ice on her head, from which fires erupt. On her shoulder is the raven, Iceland's most characteristic bird, Óðinn's ancient friend and the favourite of poets, a great and knowledgeable carrier of news....”

Since Iceland gained its independence in 1944, a Fjallkona has been crowned each year for Icelandic National Day. Among we Vestur Íslendingur the first Fjallkona was crowned in 1924 in Winnipeg. In this ceremonial role, the Fjallkona is an ambassador for Icelandic culture and heritage in her region. --Historical information courtesy of Wikipedia

“Lady of the Mountains”, meet “Sun’s Staff”!

Your newsletter editor first saw the Fjallkona painting above on the cover of an Icelandic rock band’s album! Proof that cultural icons cross many boundaries, the Fjallkona graced the cover of the most recent album (#7) by the well-known group Sólstafir, *Endless Twilight of Codependent Love*. “Everybody knows the image of the Lady of the Mountains,” says singer/guitarist Aðalbjörn Tryggvason, co-founder of the quartet. “It’s like Marianne to the French and Minerva in Greek mythology ... When we saw this photo, we had to use it. It’s too beautiful.”

Sólstafir is one more example of the wild success enjoyed by so many musicians from this small country. It was one of two bands to represent Iceland’s flourishing music scene during the 2019 Taste of Iceland festival in North America. The band has close to 20 million views combined on their YouTube videos as well as Spotify (that’s 60 times the population of their home country). “Sólstafir” means the single ray of sunshine that shines through clouds – the “sun’s staff”. Check Youtube for links to the music of Sólstafir, described as rock giants whose music “embodies both the light and dark of Iceland “... like a shaft of sunlight shining through a cloud.



2019-2020 ICCE EXECUTIVE

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Casino	Liz Tanti		info@iccedm.org
Director at Large	Jodine Chase		info@iccedm.org
Auditors	Del Sveinsson Bev Arason-Gaudet		

DUTCH CANADIAN CENTRE
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PLEASE CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE
AT [HTTP://ICCEDM.ORG](http://iccedm.org) FOR MORE NEWS AND UPDATES AND FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK



Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton
