

W I N T E R S O L S T I C E
V E T R A R S Ó L S T Ö Ð U R 2 0 2 0

the
INLNA Newsletter



Fréttabréf



For these things, give thanks at nightfall
The day gone / Ice crossed, ale drunk

Havamal (tr. W.H. Auden and P.B. Taylor)

INLNA Newsletter is published four times a year!

**Submission
Deadlines**

- The 20th of...
- ✓ March
 - ✓ June
 - ✓ August
 - ✓ November

Next Edition

April 1, 2021

**Send stories &
inquiries to:**

Bettyjane Wylie

bettyjanewylie@gmail.com



President's Message

Stefan Jonasson

The approach of the Yuletide was when I felt most Icelandic as I was growing up. That may seem odd, given the other occasions during the course of the year when we're aware of our heritage, such as June 17th and the Icelandic festivals in August, but there's something about the approaching holiday season that brings out the rich cultural diversity of

Canadians and Americans – Western Icelanders included. I think it's mostly food related, as we await the delicacies we associate with our heritage, but there are other ways that Icelandic identity manifests itself, such as my childhood belief (encouraged by my father) that Santa visited Icelanders' homes earlier than our neighbours', a curious fusion of Icelandic pride and North American Christmas customs.

Our kitchen was "Holiday Central" as our mother prepared the traditional Christmas foodstuffs, which included the Icelandic specialties rúllupylsa and vínarterta. Their different but familiar aromas filled the house as our mother prepared these delicacies both for our own consumption and as gifts for family, friends, and neighbours. When our family first moved onto the street where I grew up, which was something of a British Canadian enclave, the rumour went around that "foreigners" had bought the house. Given her skill at cooking delicious Icelandic foods, I suspect that some of our neighbours never realized that my mother wasn't actually Icelandic. Surnames and cuisine have a way of shaping our identity in the minds of others.

But there's much more to being Icelandic at this time of year than tasty foods. Ours wasn't an especially religious household, so while I attended Sunday school and participated in the pageants held each year on the Sunday before Christmas, other religious traditions were mostly ignored. Christmas Eve was family time, so church attendance that evening wasn't part of our routine, and while I recall receiving an Advent calendar or two from neighbours, I don't recall the contents lasting throughout the entire Advent season. Whether consciously or not, our father did offer a passing nod to the liturgical calendar: he always put up the Christmas tree on Saint Þorlákur's Day, the customary day of preparation in Iceland, and he took it down on Þrettándinn (what we call Twelfth Night in English, but Icelanders call Thirteenth Night because they count from Christmas Eve).

I never heard about the *jólasveinar* as a child and, while they have been part of Icelandic folklore since the 13th century, the Yuletide Lads as we know them today are largely a 20th-century phenomenon, offering an antidote to creeping Anglo-American influences on seasonal celebrations. As an adult, I've grown fond of them and their antics.

In our family, New Year's Day was as big a deal as Christmas, although it belonged more to the adults while Christmas focused more on the children. Both days, however, were marked by feasting and gathering, while the season overall brought out a spirit of gratitude and charity, camaraderie and wonder. As a difficult year draws to a close, and "the most wonderful time of the year" beckons us, may we cherish the Yuletides we have known, find a sense of peace in our quiet celebrations this year, and trust that the New Year will bring us new hope, new life, and new possibilities.



Icelandic Roots 7th Anniversary

Sunna Furstenau

Here at Icelandic Roots, we are marking our 7th anniversary, and despite many worries and strife in the world this year, we have some great reasons to celebrate.

We celebrate our volunteer team that continues to grow stronger every day. Our volunteers live around the world, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Iceland, and the United States. Their talents and backgrounds are varied, including genealogists, historians, writers, cartographers, IT experts, social media strategists, photographers, and more. Many of them began as members, working on their own family histories, adding information into their family trees in the database, before deciding to become volunteers and give back to the community.

We are grateful to each of them for their dedication and passion to grow our organization. You can learn more about our team on our website: <https://www.icelandicroots.com/our-team>

We celebrate our achievements in preserving, promoting and educating everyone about Icelandic heritage and culture. Over the past 7 years, we have donated more than \$102,500 to Icelandic cultural and heritage organizations, as well as scholarships to Snorri participants and students enrolled in Icelandic language programs.

In 2020, despite many events and programs being forced to cancel due to Covid-19, **we donated \$12,500 to Icelandic heritage organizations in Canada, the United States, and Iceland.**

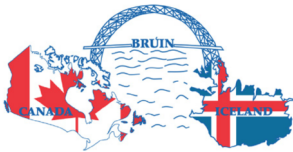
For the wider community, we continue to feature interesting articles and interviews on our blog and share cultural information on our social media pages, and to host entertaining community events, like the “Footprints 4 Fun” fitness challenge. We’re also excited to announce that in the new year we will be launching the Icelandic Roots Podcast, which will be available on most podcast apps. Do subscribe to our blog for future announcements.

And most importantly, we celebrate our many members around the world. Without your support and involvement, none of this would be possible. In our gratitude, we continue to add more offerings to members-only such as the monthly “Samtal Hour”, conversation get-togethers on Zoom, exclusive educational webinars, and database tutorials. We’ve also introduced some new database features such as the “My Cousins” function, interactive maps, the Fjallkona collection, detailed passenger lists, and lots of uploaded media items. We currently have over 22,000 pieces of database media including photos, obituaries, newspaper clippings, headstones, and more. In January we will also be launching the new Icelandic Roots Writers’ Society, a network for our members to connect with each other, share advice, and ask questions. More details will be announced in the new year.

From the entire volunteer team, we thank our supporters, friends, and family. To learn more and to watch our 7-year Celebration Video, Visit our website: <https://www.icelandicroots.com>

News from our Members

In the absence of face-to-face physical meetings, we plan to round up news from the clubs, chapters, associations and even from our huldufolk (four maverick members who don't live close enough to belong to a club, chapter or association) who are welcome in our midst. We want to know what's going on with everyone in these parlous times and to share any ideas you may have to find ways to cement our relationships.



From Heather Schreiner of the Selkirk Bruin Chapter

We usually put a newsletter together for our annual Sumardagurinn Fyrsti but with the COVID-19 cancellations, we didn't think of doing one for our INL website link.

Thank-you for the motivating us to do this.



The Icelandic Canadian Frón held an informal and fun gathering, a *samkoma*, at Assiniboine Park on Sunday, September 20, 2020, to welcome the new Icelandic Consul General to Winnipeg. Before arriving here, Guðmundur Arni Stefansson was most recently Icelandic Ambassador to New Delhi, India, to the U.S from 2011 to 2015, and Sweden before than. "It was great to meet him," said Ellen Goodman, "on a super windy fall day."



From Bob Baker, President of the Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club of Calgary

Unfortunately the COVID pandemic is the *Grinch That Stole Christmas!* (No Christmas Party)

But the Annual General Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 31 at the Scan Centre, pending approval of the Scan Centre Board. The potluck supper will be served by members of the Executive to a limited participation of 50 people.

The vinarterta bee will not take place this year and the Scan Centre Bazaar has also been cancelled.

We'll keep trying.

More News from our Members



From Peter Norman, Treasurer of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto

Our first online auction took a lot of organizing and a number of hard-working volunteers, but we managed to raise about \$2000.

Saga Connections #1: Kinmount, An Experiment in Settlement (By Gwen Morgan)

Story-telling is deeply embedded in Icelandic culture. We can imagine families huddled around the hearth on a cold winter evening enraptured by the escapades of Thor and Loki. The Icelandic people also told stories of everyday courage and hope, weaving them into a rich cultural tapestry of poetry, literature, art and music. Every generation added to this tapestry. Our Icelandic ancestors brought this rich cultural heritage to this wild land, and over the years have added colourful threads, unique and emblematic, of being Icelandic-Canadians. These are our 'saga connections'.

The ICCT has decided to host a series of seminars for us to learn about and celebrate our Icelandic-Canadian heritage.

We have two directions: one is to have seminar presentation from writers, artists and other professionals on topics of interest and the other is to collect and share our personal family memories. We all have stories to share.

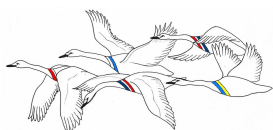
Our first Zoom event will be on **December 3, 2020 @ 7:30-9:00 pm** and will feature the saga of the first Icelanders who came to settle in Ontario in 1874. The **Kinmount: An Experiment in Settlement** involved hardship, tragedy and endurance. It's a thought-provoking story and a great place to launch our Saga Connections seminars – with the beginning of our Icelandic Canadian roots.

Tribute to Margret Benedictsson (1866-1956)

Sonja Lundström was asked by Gerald Brown, a former teacher at Winnipeg School Division to present a tribute to Margret Benedictsson (1866-1956), journalist, social activist and suffragette, to a group of retired people at Lions Place on October 14th. Benedictsson was inducted into the Citizen Hall of Fame this year.



Margret Benedictsson
<https://youtu.be/oVVPOAXrhx4>



The Viking Times

The Viking Times is a free publication for members of the Scandinavian Cultural Centre (746 Erin Street, Winnipeg MB R3G 2W4) News covers reports from Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish and Icelandic sources.

New Iceland Heritage Museum

Dr. Ryan Eyford, President



The New Iceland Heritage Museum has had to adapt quickly to the new circumstances. In March all museum events and programming were cancelled, and the museum was closed to the public. In May we reopened with new COVID-19 safety protocols in place. We remain open and ready to welcome you back, safely.

Fewer visitors have come through the museum's doors this year. Admissions, tours, room rentals, and gift shop sales are all down. Our fall fundraising dinner has also been cancelled, leaving an \$8000 hole in the museum's budget.

Gift Giving

Your gift can help see the museum through this challenging time.

Just click "**Donate to the New Iceland Heritage Museum**" on the NIHM website <https://nihm.ca>

You can also call 204-642-4001 or send a cheque to:
NIHM 108-94 First Avenue, Gimli, MB, R0C 1B1

Until March 31, 2021, for every \$2 given to the museum's **endowment fund**, the Province of Manitoba will stretch the gift with an additional \$1.



To direct your gift to the fund, write "Endowment Fund" in the memo line on your cheque, or click on "**Donate to the NIHM Endowment Fund**" on our website <https://nihm.ca> to make a convenient, secure online donation.



Meet Pála Hallgrímsdóttir

Snorri Programs Project Manager in Iceland

Introduction

My name is Pála Hallgrímsdóttir and I am the new Project Manager for the Snorri Programs. I have always been fascinated by our shared history, by the strength of the connections between Iceland and people of Icelandic descent in North America, and I truly believe that the Snorri Programs are an essential part of nourishing these strong bonds.

When I started in February this year, I was very excited for my first year on the job. Of course, like so many people around the world experienced this past spring, my job took a U-turn, and we had to cancel all our programs for this year. No one knows what next summer will bring, but in the hopes that international travel will be safe and less restricted by then, we are moving ahead with advertising our once-in-a-lifetime Snorri Program adventures. Please rest assured that we will be monitoring the global situation carefully.



Snorri Website

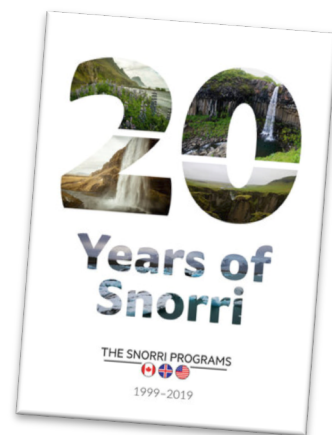
I also want to mention that our website www.snorri.is has undergone a significant makeover these past months. Besides updating and streamlining the existing content, we've added new features like a detailed FAQ about each program, and perhaps best of all, our application process is now online! Updates are ongoing, but please take a look, and don't hesitate to contact me if you have any feedback.

On behalf of the Snorri Foundation, I look forward to hearing from you, and I appreciate you taking the time to help us advertise our wonderful Snorri Programs.

Sincerely,
Pála

Pála Hallgrímsdóttir

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The Words of the High One

Bettyjane Wylie

Does everyone know about *Hávamál*?

Hávamál, (Old Norse: “Sayings of the High One [Odin]”) a **heterogeneous** collection of 164 stanzas of **aphorisms**, homely wisdom, **counsels**, and magic charms that are ascribed to the Norse god **Odin**. The work contains at least five separate fragments not originally discovered together and **constitutes** a portion of the *Poetic Edda*. Most of the poems are believed to have been composed in Norway in the 9th and 10th centuries (Britannica).

I have a great translation by W.H. Auden and P.B. Taylor in their large collection of Norse Poems. It's lovely, with the “sprung rhythm” or syncopated poetry as Auden called it and managed to reproduce it, and with lots of alliteration and metaphors. The content itself is, as described above, a collection of aphorisms and advice. I thought of it with the new year coming up at a time in our history when it's difficult to predict anything but when we need all the counsel we can get.

I've re-read it a few times and made a list of some of the most useful, appropriate advice for our time (including a warning about over-indulgence on New Year's Eve).

*Best is the banquet one looks back on
after, / And remembers all that happened.*

*A glib tongue that goes on chattering / Sings to
is own harm.*

*He starts to stink who outstays his
welcome / In a hall that is not his own.*

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) and the poet Horace (65 B.C.- B. C. said much the same thing. (Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days.)

*If you know a friend you can fully trust, / Go
often to their house. / Grass and brambles
grow quickly / Upon the untravelled track.*

You see? Nothing we didn't already know. We just have to pay attention.

Again.

I wish you all a happy, healthy, safe New Year.

Bettyjane Wylie

Stay Connected with the INLNA

Write to us: #103-94 1st Ave. Gimli MB, Canada, R0C 1B1

Email us: inl@mymts.net

Visit our website: www.inlofna.org



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CORRECTION

In the last issue we included an editorial by Lorna Tergesen, editor of The Icelandic Connection magazine, concluding with an appeal to subscribers and contributors to help keep it going. The address given was incorrect. Here is the correct one:

The Icelandic Connection
Box 1156
Gimli, Manitoba R0C1B0