



NORÐURLJÓS

Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton

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 Vice President: vacant
 Secretary: Pat Dunn
 Treasurer: Kaitlyn Anderson
 Past President: Erla Anderson

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President's Report - Allison Boychuk



Greetings friends! I hope everyone has been enjoying our relatively warm winter weather. We are getting ready for our Icelandic midwinter festival, otherwise known as Thorrablot or Þorablót, named for the month of Thorri (Þorri) from the historic Icelandic calendar (corresponding to mid January to mid February), and *blót*, literally meaning sacrifice.

This year's event will be held on Saturday, March 9th 2024 at the Norwood Legion. Please note that we are no longer hosting events at the Dutch Canadian Centre as the building is up for sale. Please see our event calendar for further details and how to purchase tickets for Þorablót.

Some of the evening highlights will include a tasty dinner, silent auction, great company and keynote address from Dr. Natalie M. Van Deusen, Director of Undergraduate Programs, Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Alberta. Natalie and her family recently spent a year living in Iceland so will share her experiences and insights from an academic point of view.

Did you know the club is offering free Icelandic language lessons? Check the newsletter for this and other ways to get in touch with our heritage. In closing, I encourage everyone to attend our events, visit and celebrate our Icelandic heritage and volunteer a few hours. Many hands make light work!

Our last get-together was Litlu Jól, December 2, 2023 which included a visit from Santa, and social time with tasty desserts. It's time to get together again! Hope to see you all on March 9th at Þorablót!

Sæl og blessuð! - Allison Boychuk

Mark Your Calendars!

Þorrablót

March 9, 2024
Norwood Legion
11150 - 82 St, Edmonton

ICCE 2024 Casino

May 28 and 29th, 2024
Pure Casino Yellowhead
12464 - 153 St.

*See in newsletter for
sign-up information*

Board Meetings

7:30 p.m. on the second
Tuesday of each month
No meetings: July,
August, December

2024 Board meetings

January 9th
February 13th
March 12th
April 9th

Meetings are open to
members and held by
Zoom videoconference.

To attend, email
info@iccedm.org and we
will send you an
invitation.

* Call Gloria to attend by
phone. *

Þorrablót

Saturday, March 9th

Norwood Legion
11150 - 82 St Edmonton

Activities:

5 p.m.: Cash bar

6 p.m. Welcome and introductions

The Toast to Þorri

**Greetings from the Honorary
Consul**

6:30 p.m. Buffet dinner.

Silent Auction

Presentations:

KEYNOTE: Natalie Van Deusen, A Year in Iceland

2023 Snorri Program: 2023 Snorris

TICKETS: <https://iccedm.org/events/>

OR

Contact us at info@iccedm.org and we will
contact you for payment.

Prices: \$60/adult 18+

Student 13-24 \$45

Youth 5-12 \$15

Child 0-4 \$5.

Volunteer Opportunities with ICCE

Our club is small but we can be very proud of the work we do and services we provide. We are entirely a volunteer organization and everything the club does, is done by volunteers. Do you have some time you can give the club? See the following page for some opportunities where your hands can help make a big difference.

ICCE CASINO: Volunteers needed

We are given casino slots about every two years. This is the club's main fundraising event and provides us the essential funding we need for funding the Snorri and bursary programs and cultural activities.

We need a minimum of 25 and up to 40 volunteers to get involved in our casino nights. These are Tuesday, May 28 and Wednesday, May 29, 2024 at Pure Casino Yellowhead, 12464 153 Street NW, Edmonton, AB.

Please volunteer and help us raise funds for our programs. Thank you!

Volunteer Signup <https://signup.com/go/yAHmWkD>. There is also a sign-up link on the club's Facebook page, or email info@iccedm.org for more information.



Board Positions

Two positions are vacant on the board. These are: Social Activities Chair and Social Media Chair. The Social Activities Chair takes the lead on the club's four annual member get-togethers. Other board members assist as well. The Social Media Chair caretakes the club's Facebook page and website, working with other board members for the content and to promote the club and its activities. Training is provided where necessary.

If you have some time you can give the club, or you would like to know more, please get in touch. Maybe these activities interest you? Get in touch! For the writers, artists, and poets among you, contributions for the newsletter, Facebook and website are very appreciated! Please send any suggestions to the club at info@iccedm.org.

Snorri West

Many are familiar with the Snorri Program, which ICCE supports with grants to enable people to join the formal Snorri tours to Iceland, discovering their roots and family histories. The other side of Snorri is the West program, where Icelandic youth come to North America to meet their relatives and explore the history of the Western Icelanders. Snorri West is four weeks for Icelanders ages 20 - 30. In 2024 they will travel to Alberta, Saskatchewan and Utah, tentatively June 13 through July 11, 2024. Participants will also visit Alberta and potentially Edmonton. **In order for Edmonton to participate, we are looking for a coordinator or for hosts** for their 1-3 day Edmonton area visit. Please contact us if you are interested.

Kaffi Rabb: Learn Icelandic!

Are you interested in learning Icelandic? Armann and Erla from our club are offering a free conversational Icelandic Kaffi Rabb /



Coffee Chat. This is a great opportunity both for new learners and those who have learned some Icelandic. Classes have begun but if you are interested in joining, email iccekaffirabb@gmail.com. Learners must be a member of the club.

The Kaffi Rabb website is at <https://sites.google.com/view/icce-kaffi-rabb>.

Resource materials can be found at this spot. Classes run twice a month on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays, from 2:00 - 3 p.m. over Zoom.

Icelandic Roots Samkoma Membership

Many ICCE members are also members of the Icelandic Roots organization. Icelandic Roots has an astonishingly rich website and a busy and varied outreach program, opening many doors to discovering our Icelandic connections and heritage. But did you know that Icelandic Roots has two membership levels?

All-access membership unlocks a database of genealogical links and family history, an awe-inspiring resource for anyone wishing to find out more about their ancestors and relatives in Iceland. But the organization also offers the *Samkoma Community membership* for a smaller membership cost for anyone wishing to explore Iceland's rich cultural legacy, but who does not wish for access to the genealogical database. The Samkoma membership gives exclusive member access to the many excellent webinars, book club discussions and other events offered by Icelandic Roots. This is a great idea for someone who is not interested in genealogy or who does not have Icelandic ancestors, but is interested in learning about its fascinating history, literature, and culture.

If you haven't checked it out, it is well worth looking at the Icelandic Roots website for their many outreach projects and events. These include a feature-rich website; podcasts; webinars; YouTube channel; social media presence; a book club; and newsletter. Many events are member-only but the website offers a public newsletter and other benefits even for non-members.

Icelandic Roots is a non-profit, non-political, charitable organization with a mission to educate, preserve, and promote Icelandic Heritage; to strengthen the links between Icelanders and those of Icelandic descent in North America; to broaden access to historical documents and records for Icelandic genealogy and history; and to inspire pride in Icelandic heritage, traditions, language, literature, and culture.

"Samkoma: a meeting, gathering, assembly"

In Memoriam



We are sad to advise of the passing of club members Wade Johnson and Brian Crozier. Brian was an active and valued volunteer who earned a lifetime membership for his contributions to many club events and activities over many years.

Wade provided an inspiring interview for the club newsletter, telling us about his writing career and the genealogical research that he used in his many books, in February 2020.

The Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton expresses our sincere condolences to the families of Wade and Brian.

The club has a Keeping in Touch Chair who reaches out to offer our sympathies for illness or family losses. Please don't hesitate to let us know if you or any club member are in this situation and we can reach out.

Mountain Avenas, *Dryas octopetala* — the national flower of Iceland.

Photo, Creative Commons W. Bulach

Fréttir: Iceland in the News

Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and the evacuation of Grindavík

In early October the Reykjanes peninsula in southwestern Iceland began experiencing an earthquake swarm near the town of Grindavík. By November 10th, following over 22,000 earthquakes and a destructive 5.2 quake, a state of emergency was declared and Grindavík was evacuated. 4,000 people had to leave their homes, amounting to about 1% of the entire population of Iceland. Residents have been able to return to gather belongings and animals, but the risk is currently considered too great for people to continue to live there. An evacuation of this scale has not been seen since the eruption in Heimaey in 1973; sadly, some residents of Grindavík had moved there after the eruption in Heimaey.

The earthquakes were followed by three eruptions between December 2023 and February 2024. Damage caused by both earthquakes and lava flow has been significant. Rifts and sinkholes opened up in Grindavík. In the most recent eruption, lava flowed to the edge of town and destroyed houses. Lava has also destroyed critical infrastructure. Tragically, a man fell into a crevasse he had been working to fill on January 10th. Despite an extensive search he was not found.

The latest eruption destroyed a pipeline that supplies 30,000 people on Reykjanes Peninsula with hot water for heating. A massive earthworks was built to divert lava from essential infrastructure. The Blue Lagoon, one of Iceland's most important (and lucrative) tourist attractions, was closed off and on through the disruptions, but is open at the time of writing this.

The 2023 earthquakes came nearly four years after volcanic activity began at Geldingardalur. It is believed that the Reykjanes Peninsula is beginning a new volcanic cycle after 800 years of inactivity and that further volcanic activity is to be expected in the area, possibly continuing for many years.



Photo from Icelandic Meteorological Office.

With the future of the town of Grindavík unclear, Iceland has been mobilizing to assist its displaced residents. Housing assistance and subsidies are in place, and banks are offering discounted loans to help in rebuilding. An 0.008% additional property tax, levied on the fire insurance value of properties, will fund the construction of lava barriers on the Reykjanes peninsula and safeguard local infrastructure from potential volcanic eruptions. This tax will be in place for three years. — *article based on Wikipedia, 2023-24 Sundhnúkar Eruptions*

The Iceland Meteorological Office and Iceland Almannavarnir (Department of Civil Protection and Emergency Management) maintain comprehensive websites with information on natural hazards and safety. Their websites vedur.is and almannarvarnir.is have information in English as well as Icelandic.

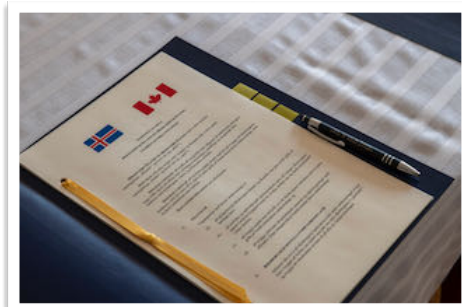
Youth Mobility Agreement between Iceland and Canada

On August 4, 2023, Canada and Iceland announced the signing of a new Youth Mobility Arrangement between Canada and Iceland.

Under this arrangement, Canadian and Icelandic youth aged 18 to 30 can work and travel in each other's country for up to 12 months, with the possibility of repeating the experience for another 12 months. The governments of Canada and Iceland anticipate implementing the new arrangement in 2024. The agreement will allow up to 120 youth from each side to work and travel in each other's country. The program is being coordinated through International Experience Canada.

Canada has signed youth mobility agreements or arrangements with 38 countries and foreign territories. More than 240,000 Canadians have participated in the Program since 2008.

If you would like to find out more or even apply, the Icelandic embassy in Ottawa is hosting a webinar on Thursday, February 29th at 9:30-10:30 MST to introduce the agreement. The webinar will open with an overview of the agreement by Icelandic and Canadian officials.

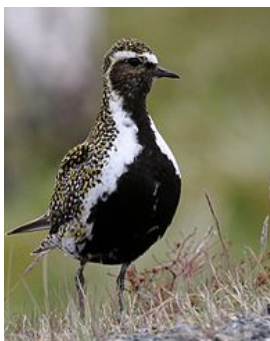


They will speak to its objectives while focusing on who can apply and how. Speakers will then share information on relevant job opportunities and share personal insights into what it is like to travel and work in both countries. It will close with a Q&A session with the audience. For more details, 1) check Eventbrite for the talk called Youth Mobility Opportunities in Iceland and Canada, or 2) find the link on the Embassy of Iceland in Canada Facebook page and also on the

ICCE Facebook page, or 3) email the club at info@iccedm.org and we will send you the link. The event is free.



Signing: Marie-France Lalonde, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Honourable Áslaug Arna Sigurbjörnsdóttir,



Sumardagurinn fyrsti - First Day of Summer

Iceland recognizes only two seasons: summer and winter and the year is divided equally between the two. Summer arrives on the first Thursday after April 18th and is a public holiday. It is often heralded by the migratory European Golden Plover (heiðlóa or lóa), whose arrival will hit the newspapers. This year *Sumardagurinn fyrsti* will occur on April 25th.

Þorablót and the Unique Icelandic Cuisine

Þorablót is an Icelandic midwinter festival, named for the month of Þorri of the historical Icelandic calendar (January 20 – February 19, 2023).

The ancient month of Thorri is the time for Þorablót, or Þorri feast. Foods preserved in the traditional manner are consumed and most Icelanders attend at least one Þorablót feast, where there is much merriment and drink. The first known celebration is said to have been organized by students in Copenhagen in 1873 as an expression of Icelandic nationalism.

We are unfortunately not able here in Canada to truly replicate a traditional Þorablót, with its dishes such as svið (sheep's head); hákarl (rotten shark) and hrútspungar (ram's testicles cured in lactic acid), among others. For this year's Þorablót we have hired a caterer who, not surprisingly, isn't able to supply these dishes either and where public health regulations prevent us from bringing our own meat dishes for dinner. Nevertheless, we will get together and enjoy each other's company and a few other Icelandic traditions, including some Icelandic desserts.

Iceland's unique cuisine evolved from necessity, in a land on the very edge of habitable. Short growing seasons, severe winters, and lack of firewood all influenced the kind of food that could be grown and the ways in which it could be prepared or preserved. Scarce fuels meant there were no ovens to bake in, and no way to evaporate sea water for salt. The short growing season



Samuel Waller illustration, "My Dinner", from
Six Weeks in the Saddle, 1874

"Icelandic cuisine was for almost a thousand years a cuisine of wants—want of grain, want of fresh produce, want of salt, want of fuel, even want of cooking vessels and utensils. The people of Iceland had to pay a certain price for living somewhere north of life, but they adapted to their environment and managed to survive for a thousand years on what they had." —Nanna Rögnvaldardóttir, in Icelandic Food and Cookery

limited produce and grain to a few hardy vegetables and barley, and also required huge amounts of fodder to be grown in summer for wintering livestock. Icelanders developed their own methods of preserving meat, using fermented whey, a by-product of making the staple food item skyr. This method was known in other places but Icelanders made an art of it. At our Þorablót event we will pay homage to this heritage as we toast Þorri and our resourceful ancestors!

Skál!

BOOKS

BOOK CLUBS

The next INLNA Reads event will be Sunday, March 3, 2023 at 2 p.m. MST. The book will be *All the Horses of Iceland* by Sarah Tolmie. The book is a delve into the secret, imagined history of Iceland's unusual horses, brought to life by an expert storyteller.

Icelandic Roots' book club (members only) next book will be "Mother of Light" on March 7th, by Elin de Ruyte, the story of a young midwife in a remote Westfjörds community. Check the Icelandic Roots website for further details.

Book report: *Six Weeks in the Saddle*

'It was "Burnt Njál" that was at the bottom of it. I ... was wild to visit the scene of such a tremendous tragedy. The idea of the trip was on my mind for months before I could see my way towards its accomplishment.

Travelling, you see, is rather an expensive luxury for a young man whose sole income is represented by a paint-brush.'



"Hunting for quarters" drawing by Samuel Waller

So begins the book *Six Weeks in the Saddle: a Painter's Journal in Iceland*, published in 1874 and written by Samuel E. Waller, an English painter. Waller visited Iceland in 1872, purchasing three horses and hiring a guide for his trip.

I came across a reference to this book and wondered what it would say about travel and living conditions in Iceland at this time, the year before my great-grandfather, and many others, emigrated to Canada. I found it on an online used book site and it turned out to be an engaging read, illustrated with Waller's own drawings.

The hospitality and kindness they were shown by the Icelanders was extraordinary. Each night the small group knocked on a farmhouse, sometimes with a letter of introduction, and asked to stay. While Waller writes that he was always prepared to pay and offered to do so, the farmer would frequently "accept no compensation for the expense he may be put to for board, lodging, and pasture... they saw that I was alone, with no stores, but one man, and three horses and they treated me like a prince." Not all of the farms had much to share, so the travellers and their horses shared alike the poverty or prosperity of their hosts. The book is reminiscent of the journals of the renowned English artist and craftsman William Morris, who also travelled by horseback in Iceland, in 1871 and 1873. His *Icelandic Journals* likewise paint a clear-eyed picture of Iceland during the time when many of our forefathers were choosing to emigrate.

