

A U T U M N - H A U S T 2 0 2 0

the  
**INLNA Newsletter**



Frettabref



Photo Credit Cheric K – (Canon)

## The Aurora Borealis in Iceland

From October through March, Iceland is a hotspot for northern lights sights, due to the length of darkness, long nights and less water vapor in the atmosphere.

INLNA Newsletter is published four times a year!

Submission  
Deadlines

- The 20<sup>th</sup> of...
- ✓ March
  - ✓ June
  - ✓ August
  - ✓ November

Next Edition

December 1,  
2020

Send stories &  
inquires to:

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## Poetry

Sumar eldsnogg framhja fer,  
braðum komið hrimkalt haust,  
Einn er að koma, þá annar fer,  
og ekkert varir endalaust.

The summer quickly passes by,  
Soon we'll have chilly autumn,  
People come and people go,  
Nothing lasts forever."

Kristján Jónsson Fjallaskáld

Translated by:  
Matthias Ægisson



## President's Message

**Stefan Jonasson**



Autumn wasn't a common theme for Icelandic poets before Vestur-Íslendingar began eulogizing the season after their arrival in North America. There were exceptions, of course, but the Icelandic word for autumn – haust – is noticeably sparse in poetry and prose. It's not that the season was absent from Icelanders' consciousness, and there were haustþings (autumn assemblies) and haustblóts (autumn feasts), but traditional Icelandic reckoning divided the year into two seasons summer and winter.

In our ancestral homeland, the time of year that we associate so closely with harvest and the changing colours of the trees was more associated with the annual roundup of sheep (réttir), an activity that dominated life in rural Iceland. Even as the country became urbanized during the 20th century, city and town dwellers returned to the countryside for réttir and its associated work and festivities.



This autumn feels like something of a human réttir to me – less a homecoming than it is a roundup. After several months of doing things differently because of the pandemic – cancelled events, meeting online, social distancing – we have been like Iceland's sheep, wandering far and wide on our own, gathering in small groups, and grazing where we could find sustenance. Now we're being rounded up as our clubs and chapters explore new ways of being together, slowly and cautiously reopening meeting places while continuing to offer programs online.

The danger of the pandemic hasn't passed and many people are anxious as activities resume, especially parents with children returning to school, so it's natural that some of us may feel as vulnerable as sheep at the roundup this autumn. As we continue to find new ways of doing things and cautiously interact with one another, let's try to be gentle, understanding, and flexible. This autumn will be a season of learning and adaptation for all of us as we nurture our common heritage and celebrate our culture together.



## News from the Clubs and Chapters

There's never been a year like this. We are all having trouble surviving with cancellations of our major seasonal events so important for continuing contacts and friendships but also as fund-raising sources. Our member organizations report similar news.

Vatnabyggd cancelled their Thorrablót and they planned their first Zoomed AGM. The chair, Cindy Goodman, handles the newsletter, too. Washington, DC. did not send out a newsletter, just messages by email as warranted. Pat Dunn is the news editor of the Edmonton Club, no news yet, and The Icelandic Club of Western Manitoba is doing group mail.

There's more to report from the Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club of Calgary: They cancelled their Spring Dinner but they enjoyed a late summer picnic: *LEIC FAMILY PICNIC (from the newsletter)*

*Thank you to everyone who braved the heat on a plus 33 sunny August day to attend our first event since January, the Family Picnic at Glenmore Park. About 40 brave souls attended the event and fortunately we had a shady area to set up our lawn chairs. Since we are still not allowed to "share food" the club provided bottled water, juice boxes, snack foods for everyone including chips and snack bars. Several attending packed a picnic lunch to enjoy in the park.*

The club has also created a Group Services Network with assistance (shopping, transportation, visits) available on request.



Now for some shameless self-promotion from the ICCT (Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto):

### **ONLINE AUCTION** by Peter Norman (ICCT)

You may recall way back in pre-pandemic times, we used to gather once a year at Þorablót to raise a glass, catch up with old friends and feats. We also spent generously at the auction, which is the ICCT's main fundraiser for the youth grants and scholarship program. This year Þorablót is not happening (in person) but the auction is; and we're doing in ONLINE!

This is also a very special auction. Our dedicated auction team and many wonderful donors have assembled a fantastic selection of items – tickets, books, knitwear, Icelandic food delicacies, music, housewares, mementos and more!

So, please plan to log in and check out our first ever online auction. Bid often and bid generously!

The live auction was held from 7:00 am on Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup> through to 8:00 pm on Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>.

That was then, this is now...

That effort, which involved a lot of people and a lot of hard work and the technical expertise of Peter Norman, actually worked. Final figures aren't in yet, but we'll let you know the results.

Next, from the Icelandic Canadian Club of British Columbia, is coming an online Christmas Food Sale. Order online from October 1<sup>st</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Curbside pickup on November 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Scandinavian Centre, 6540 Thomas St. Burnaby, BC. ORDER NOW!





## Shared Values

By Lorna Tergesen, Editor of The Icelandic Canadian

Excerpt from her editorial in Vol.71, #1, 2019

What are the customs in our ethnocultural identity that we cherish and acknowledge? Of course, this is dependent on each individual... {it comes down to a sense of belonging and pride}—a small piece of one’s cultural understanding of ourselves.

So, what are your cultural interests that tie you to your Icelandic background? Is it by belonging to one of the Icelandic National League clubs or chapters? Do you subscribe to the Icelandic North American newspaper; Lögberg-Heimskrigla? Is it hosting guests from Iceland, preparing and eating Icelandic foods, attempting to learn the language or do you express your Icelandic ethnicity by proudly owning an Icelandic ethnic dress or perhaps a sweater? Do you attend a Þorablót in your area just to meet up with old friends and enjoy an evening with like-minded relatives who all seem to share the same quirky sense of humour? Maybe it’s the music, both old and new. ...Have you read recent works of fiction [including mysteries] or the old classics? ...are you keeping up with your fifth or sixth cousins where ever they are living? ‘Kin is kin”, regardless how many generations separate us.

But the question we ask ourselves is: will this interest and pride in our shared heritage remain and grow? Our small attempt to produce this journal that preserves our stories and enhances our interest and knowledge is under threat. We need more subscribers both for the printed magazine as well as the digital edition. Can we attract the younger generations to join as readers and contributors? Can you help?

Gifts and bequests support our ongoing work.

<http://canadaicelandfondation.com>



# Memories of Þorrablót?

I'm not the only member of an Icelandic chapter in Canada whose Icelandic parent married out of the bloodline. Born and bred in Canada (Winnipeg, of course), my mother was the first of her family to leave the genetic nest. Here in Toronto where I live now, I met other women like me in Icelandic classes whose mother didn't let her daughter learn Icelandic so they could continue to gossip with their siblings without a little nearby sponge soaking up the language.



And so it was with Þorrablót, the Icelandic mid-winterfestival named after Þorri, the month in the Icelandic calendar that falls somewhere between January and February. And blót means sacrifice. I never heard of it until I was an adult. I called it an Icelandic pig-out. The only sacrifice involved was trying not to eat too much. It started with us, the members of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto, more like a pot luck. I made my amma's Icelandic brown bread for it and others made the rullupylsa or the gravadlax. Always, always, there was vinarterta, the festive cake so popular with Western Icelanders, the Canadian name Iceland has bestowed on our ancestors and we who have left the fold.

Of course, as our numbers grew, we had to have the affair catered with English food for a crowd, like turkey and ham, but gradually we could afford to bring in hangikjöt, smoked lamb, literally hung meat, recalling the days when the meat was hung from the rafters above the fire in the kitchen. All this I learned, and more, as a grown-up discovering a treasure I had no knowledge of as a child. The "Icelandic table" remains popular mainly because of the vinarterta and pönnukökur.

Now, Icelandic pancakes I remember, because when I was a kid on summer vacation in Gimli, my amma's neighbour used to give them to me, rolled around brown sugar. On festive occasions, of course--like þorrablót--they are served with strawberry jam and whipped cream. That's a memory worth preserving!

# Stay Connected with the INLNA

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POSTSCRIPT This is a messy, late newsletter, for which I apologize. We all have harrowing times. Don't tell me yours and I won't tell you mine. Our newsletter will be changing as Covid19 is changing life as we know it. There are any number of ways to respond to it, but lying down isn't one of them. I will be keeping in close touch with our clubs and chapters and reporting on their successes as we leap out of this torpor into a more strongly bonded league of kinfolk.