



Connect

Celebrating 1 Year!

June/Júní 2020

Iceland Independence Day June 17

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Connect newsletter welcomes your submissions!

Send your news, ideas, photos, and articles to:

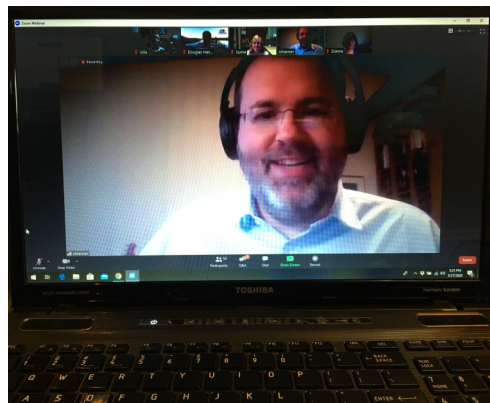
info@inlus.org

Connect newsletter is published quarterly.

Staying Connected During a Time of Distancing

Since the time of the last INLUS newsletter's publication our world has changed due to COVID-19. INLUS has remained committed to connecting members to each other and all things Icelandic.

INLUS adjusted programming to allow for meaningful connection during a time of distancing. We were thrilled to welcome Jóhannes Þór Skúlason, Managing Director of the Icelandic Travel Industry Association (SAF) for a webinar about the latest developments in Iceland's tourism industry. We've hosted online Kaffi Tími for members on Tuesdays and Fridays. A group of Icelandic film and TV enthusiasts have been watching movies and TV series and discussing them on a biweekly basis. INLUS has also helped member organizations connect online. We also have other online webinars in the works including a discussion with Iceland's Ambassador to the United States, Bergdís Ellertsdóttir.



Webinar featuring Jóhannes Þór Skúlason

Our commitment to awarding scholarships and grants has not changed. Before the pandemic hit, we provided sponsorship funds for the Nordic Lights Film Festival featured on page 4. We were also in the middle of the scholarship application process for the Snorri program when the announcement was made that the Snorri program will not occur in summer 2020.

Before social distancing protocols were implemented was the old Norse month of Þorri. Check out highlights from Þorablót celebrations held all over the United States in this issue. Since that time several large events and festivals have had to cancel, postpone, or adjust plans. Inside this issue is a list of events that have been altered due to COVID-19. Because things are still rapidly evolving, check the status of your favorite event if it is not mentioned in this issue.

We have many dedicated volunteers who generously share their unique skills in a variety of ways. Starting with this newsletter, we will profile these passionate people in each issue. In this edition you will be introduced to social media volunteer Justin Gailey on page 5. If you're interested in sharing your talents with INLUS or if you have any feedback, we'd love to hear from you at info@inlus.org.

Virtual Events

- Oregon Midsummer Festival
<https://www.nordicnorthwest.org/midsummer-festival>
- Islendingadagurinn
<https://www.icelandicfestival.com/>

Events Canceled

Here is a list of events that have been cancelled in 2020, or things to look forward to in 2021!

- INLNA Convention, Gimli, MB
- Snorri, Snorri West, and Snorri Deaf Programs
- Norsk Høstfest, Minot, ND
- Nordic Midsummerfest, Burnsville, MN

Message from the President: One Year Anniversary



June 17 is Iceland's Independence Day—and the one-year anniversary of the official launch of INLUS. Thanks to you, we now have members in 35 states and the District of Columbia.

We have 11 member Icelandic clubs and organizations scattered all over the United States, including our newest member organizations: Icelandic Association of Chicago,

Icelandic Association of Northern California, and Icelandic Association of Washington, DC. We look forward to working with you and learning from you.

The INLUS will continue to offer programs of value at the national level. We hosted an interview with Jóhannes Þor Skúlason, Director of the Icelandic Tourism Association, featuring discussion about the status of tourism in Iceland and plans for opening the borders. In the works is a discussion with Bergdís Ellertsdóttir, Ambassador of Iceland to the US.

Of course, we are always looking for volunteers who want to showcase their talents, whether it is once a week or for a special project once a year. Everyone can play a role in helping the INLUS grow!

Please feel free to drop me a line at Dianne@INLUS.org or give me a call at (952) 857-9128 with your thoughts and ideas. 2020 will be a great year for INLUS because of you!

Thank you.

Dianne O'Konski

President, INLUS

2020 Snorri Programs Update

The Snorri, Snorri West, and Snorri Deaf programs have all been cancelled in 2020 due to complications from COVID-19. There were four young adults from the United States who were selected to participate in the Snorri program: Jacqueline Grimson, Jessica Drake, Mikayla Ness, and Anna Georgsdóttir. INLUS had begun the scholarship application process with the selectees when the announcement was made to cancel the programs for 2020. It is hoped that this year's selectees will eventually travel to Iceland and forge meaningful connections.

The final decision about the 2020 Snorri Plus program is still pending. Kathryn Rothman has been selected to participate in the Snorri Plus program.



Icelandic Association of Utah



Icelandic Association of Utah



Jolene Halldorson, Icelandic Communities Association



Susan Sigurdson Powers, Icelandic Communities Association



Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle

Þorrablót Celebrations

Before social distancing measures began to be implemented in March, sold out Þorrablót celebrations were held all over the United States. The well-attended events were held by the following clubs and associations:

Icelandic Association of Utah (Spanish Fork, UT) February 15

Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle and National Nordic Museum February 22

Icelandic Communities Association (Mountain, ND) February 22

Icelandic Association of Washington, D.C. February 22

Icelandic Association of Chicago February 29

The Icelandic Association of Utah kicked off the month of celebration with some friendly trolls attending the feast. Hosted by Erna Rós Kristinsdóttir and Kristbjörg Jónasdóttir, "Glitter and Gold" was the theme of the celebration sponsored by the Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle and the National Nordic Museum. The Seattle headliners were a local Icelandic band Sour Balls, led by Halli Gunnlaugs, with special guest Eypór Ingi who flew in from Iceland and entertained with singing and impressions of Icelandic celebrities. There was no shortage of Þorrifood as Chef Jói Jacobs and friend Gunní Kristján came with sheepheads, legs of lamb, hangikjöt, slátur, harðfisk, and "can't do without" fermented shark washed down with lots of Brennivín. Hákarl and Brennivín were also on the menu at the Icelandic Communities Association celebration in Mountain, ND. In addition to music, poetry, and dance entertainment, the event included a live auction fundraiser. Four Heritage Sites Grants were awarded to Gardar Township Hall Project, Vidalin Church and Cemetery, Hallson Church at Icelandic State Park, and Borg Pioneer Memorial Home. The Icelandic Association of Washington, D.C. had a beautiful feast of Þorrifood crafted by chefs Kjartan and Jón, a raffle for gifts, and the high energy music of Prins Póló kept them dancing all night long. Icelandic Association of Chicago's feast was complete with the full accompaniment of traditional food and of course singing! Each event had many generous donors who donated time, money, food, talents, items, and travel to make the event a success.



Icelandic Association of Washington, D.C.



Icelandic Association of Washington, D.C.



Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle



Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle

Nordic Lights Film Festival Recap

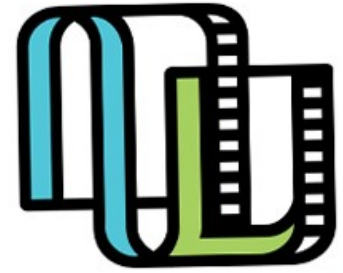
A program of the National Nordic Museum, the Nordic Lights Film Festival featured films from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Nordic Lights Film Festival Director Stina Cowan took a few minutes to answer some questions about the almost 1500 viewings of films. The festival took place February 28 to March 1, before the outbreak of COVID-19 forced social distancing measures to be implemented.

What was one standout highlight moment from the festival? The opening night is always extra fun. We showed the Icelandic film *The County/Héraðið* by director Grímur Hákonarson and afterwards invited the audience to a reception held at the hip space House Studios. People had a great time!

What aspects of the Icelandic films made them unique additions to the films shown at the festival? Following up on last year's great success with *Woman at War*, we were very happy to include such a strong Icelandic lineup this year. Our opening film, *The County* by Grímur Hákonarson, has similarities with *Woman at War*. In *The County* we also find a strong woman who stands up for what she believes in and who is ready and willing to fight against corruption and injustice – what's not to like! Another great Icelandic film we showed was *Agnes Joy*, by filmmaker Silja Hauksdóttir. This mother-daughter drama is about a mother and her 18-year-old daughter living in a small town. The mother is unhappy with both her job in the family company and with her marriage. Her daughter deals with the family dynamic by rebelling. Both are charmed when an actor comes to town to work on a film script. It was especially exciting to present this film as it was a brand new film. The third Icelandic film was by an American director, Sara Dosa. It was a documentary called *The Seer and the Unseen*. It is a magic realist documentary about invisible elves, financial collapse and the surprising power of belief, told through the story of an Icelandic woman – a real life Lorax who speaks on behalf of nature under threat. Through her story, *The Seer and the Unseen* explores the surprising power of belief and the invisible forces – be they elves or the market – that shape our visible worlds and transform our natural landscapes. This documentary won the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival.

What do you hope festival attendees gained by participating in the festival? Film is a unique way to experience other cultures and gain understanding of people and cultures different from our own. This is perhaps more important now than ever. But what makes the world of international film so exceptional I think is that it not only opens our eyes to worlds that are different from our own but at the same time very clearly demonstrates how much we have in common. Love, loss, coming-of-age, fear, laughter and suspense are all universal human experiences. My hope is always that attendees of the film festival will gain new knowledge and understanding for Nordic culture but at the same time see themselves in the themes these films explore.

Do you have any additional comments you'd like to share? The Nordic Lights Film Festival is now in its 11th year and interest has never been bigger. We are excited about our growth and look forward to our next festival which will take place in March 2021. We are also very grateful for the generous support from INLUS to NLFF, it really makes a difference.



Nordic Lights Film Festival



Photo by Håkan Axelsson



Photo by Eric Stavne



Photo by Håkan Axelsson



Photo by Eric Stavne

INLUS Volunteer Spotlight: Justin Gailey

Every Monday Issaquah, Washington resident Justin Gailey shares his passion for the Icelandic language by posting on the INLUS Facebook and Instagram accounts. As part of the INLUS social media team, he enjoys sharing the similarities between common language family members Icelandic and English.

Making family connections is one of the reasons Justin is so interested in Iceland. His grandmother's grandmother was born in the Westman Islands, and to explore this further Justin participated in the 2016 Snorri program. What Justin highlights as a particularly memorable Snorri experience was a big family gathering in Iceland shortly after Snorri graduation. Justin's mother and father joined in the gathering and Justin said that it was, "What the Snorri program is all about—making the connection."

Justin served as a Snorri Intern in 2019, and he has served on the board of the Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle. This year he is rising to another challenge of connecting with high school students by teaching high school physics and high school engineering courses. While it certainly has been an interesting year for a first year teacher, Justin has had other unique experiences. A fun fact he shared was that he lived in rural Mozambique for two years when he served in the Peace Corps.



Justin Gailey and hundur

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