



# Connect

September 2020

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Connect newsletter welcomes your submissions!

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

[info@inlus.org](mailto:info@inlus.org)

Connect newsletter is published quarterly.

## INLUS Programming Features Ambassador Bergdís Ellertsdóttir

INLUS excitedly welcomed Iceland's Ambassador to the United States Bergdís Ellertsdóttir and Honorary Consul Katrín Sigurdardóttir for an informative and entertaining webinar. Honorary Consul Sigurdardóttir kicked off the webinar by explaining the role of Honorary Consuls in Iceland's foreign service across the U.S. She introduced us to Ambassador Ellertsdóttir, who told us about how she became interested in serving in the foreign service at a young age. Their conversation covered topics like what a typical day for an Ambassador is like to how the foreign service is assisting during the pandemic. Questions from the webinar audience were answered as well. If you missed the webinar, you can find a link to the video on the INLUS website <https://www.inlus.org/community/webinars/>



Ambassador Bergdís Ellertsdóttir



Honorary Consul Katrín Sigurdardóttir

INLUS continues to be committed to connecting people interested in Iceland to each other and to quality Icelandic cultural programming. The fall lineup of cultural and education offerings includes Icelandic language classes, an Author's Corner event, a webinar about food photography, and more is in the works! If you'd like to connect with INLUS for some informal chat online, Kaffi Tími meets every other Friday. Several INLUS member Icelandic organizations have come up with creative ways to stay connected, which you can read about in this newsletter. The INLUS website always has the latest updates and INLUS program offerings on the calendar.

Thanks to the work of our dedicated volunteers, the INLUS website was overhauled and relaunched to make it more mobile friendly. You can read more about volunteer Jon Wurtzler and the new website inside this edition. We have many dedicated volunteers who generously share their unique skills in a variety of ways. If you're interested in sharing your talents with INLUS for a one time project or something on a recurring basis, we'd love to hear from you at [info@inlus.org](mailto:info@inlus.org).

## INLUS YouTube Channel

Check out INLUS videos! Past webinars and other videos are all available for viewing on YouTube.

To stay informed about when new videos are posted, subscribe to the INLUS YouTube Channel at

[https://  
www.youtube.com/  
channel/  
UCbpAv-  
VA8GDDqdu7hcjMK5Gw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbpAv-VA8GDDqdu7hcjMK5Gw)

A few INLUS YouTube highlights:

- Ambassador Bergdís Ellertsdóttir Webinar
- August the Deuce Icelandic Celebration Heritage Program
- What is INLUS?
- Iceland Travel and Tourism Webinar

## President's Message: Technology Connects



INLUS President Dianne O'Konski

These last several months have reminded us how important relationships and connections are. Although nothing can replace in-person conversations, online applications have given us the next best thing. These have become important tools for us to stay connected to friends, family, and co-workers. The INLUS is a frequent Zoom user since our Board and Volunteers are located across the United States, Iceland, and Canada. There's really no other way to easily

and frequently meet. The ease of using the technology also allows us to bring discussion groups, interviews, and webinars to you. Easy to use technology will be critical to the upcoming Icelandic language class.

A benefit of Icelandic Organization membership in the INLUS is access to the INLUS Zoom line. We have supported several clubs and organizations with their local meetings. In addition, we were privileged to supply the Zoom connection for the Heritage Program at the Deuce of August Icelandic Celebration in Mountain, ND.

We have many members who are the only INLUS members in their state and INLUS provides a connection to their heritage or a way to explore their passion for Iceland. We are honored that we can play that role. Our Social Media team ensures that the INLUS maintains a prominent presence on across several platforms. Our Facebook site has nearly 5100 followers!

I'd like to hear your ideas for staying connected! Please drop your thoughts into a note to [dianne@inlus.org](mailto:dianne@inlus.org)!

## Oregon Midsummer Hosts “Our Icelandic Roots” Lecture

The Oregon Midsummer Festival hosted a lecture about “Our Icelandic Roots” on June 17 during the week long virtual festival. The festival is an annual program of Nordic Northwest in Portland, Oregon and features the cultures of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland. For more about Nordic Northwest, see <https://www.nordicnorthwest.org/>

INLUS Past President Sunna Furstenau began the hour long lecture by highlighting that it was Iceland's Independence Day. She spoke about the history of the independence movement in Iceland, Jón Sigurðsson's role in the fight for independence, and why his birthdate was chosen as the day to celebrate independence. The lecture continued with an explanation about the why there was mass emigration from Iceland and a timeline of the Icelandic settlements established in Brazil, the United States, and Canada. Furstenau also shared about the role Wisconsin immigrants had in celebrating the millennium and new constitution August 2, 1874.

Furstenau shared about the many ways that Icelandic culture is promoted, preserved, and celebrated in the United States and Canada today. She highlighted Icelandic clubs and organizations all over the world, including INLUS, INLNA, and INL. She finished the presentation by sharing about researching genealogy on Icelandic Roots and addressed questions from the audience. Find out more about Icelandic Roots at [https://  
www.icelandicroots.com/](https://www.icelandicroots.com/)

## Fall Icelandic Language Classes

INLUS is excited to host Icelandic language classes starting Wednesday, October 7, 2020. The 6-week interactive online course will be taught by instructors Stella Wax and Thomas Brennen. Classes will meet at 8 PM eastern/7 PM central/6 PM mountain/5 PM pacific. INLUS members can join the \$60 class by emailing David Johnson at [david@inlus.org](mailto:david@inlus.org). Class size will be limited to 20 students.

Our instructors are proud to share their knowledge of Icelandic pronunciation and grammar. Instructor Thomas Brennan is a Sophomore at UW-Madison. He is a pre-law student majoring in Political Science. Brennan is a member of the International Learning Community at Madison and lives in the Nordic House as the only person representing Iceland. He loves sports, trying new foods, and traveling. Instructor Stella Wax is Thomas' mother. She moved to the United States as a child from Iceland with her parents and sister. She works as a Global Operations Manager and spends her spare time building outdoor furniture. She loves animals and currently has four cats and one dog.



Icelandic Instructor Stella Wax



Icelandic Instructor Thomas Brennan

## INLUS Fall Cultural Programming

The INLUS has several interesting cultural programs planned for fall 2020, with more programs in the works.

An Author's Corner event is planned September 1. Author Solveig Eggerz will be speaking about her latest book, "Sigga of Reykjavik."

To make Icelandic cooking look stunning, INLUS member Rhonda Adkins will present a webinar about food photography on September 24.

Patrick J. Stevens, Curator of the Fiske Icelandic Collection at the Cornell University Library will present October 22 on the Icelandic collections at Cornell.

Kaffi Tími meets on the second and fourth Fridays of the month starting September 11. Kaffi Tími is a casual online meeting for conversation with others who enjoy all things Icelandic.

For all of the latest updates about INLUS cultural events, look at the INLUS events calendar at: <https://www.inlus.org/community/events-calendar/>

## INLUS

### Membership

Do you know someone who thinks all things Icelandic are cool?

*Encourage them to join INLUS!*

Encourage your friends and family to join! Give membership as a gift! To join, simply go to:

<https://www.inlus.org/about-us/membership/>

There are four types of membership:

- Individual \$25 annual
- Family \$50 annual
- Icelandic Organization \$100 annual
- Business (Iceland/Nordic related) \$100 annual

To learn more about our community, business, and Icelandic organization members, check out the community area of the INLUS website at:

<https://www.inlus.org/community/>

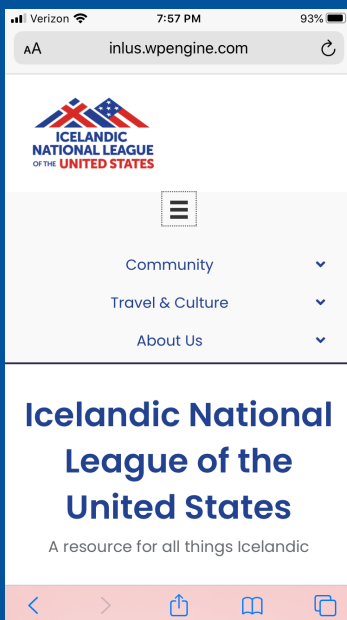
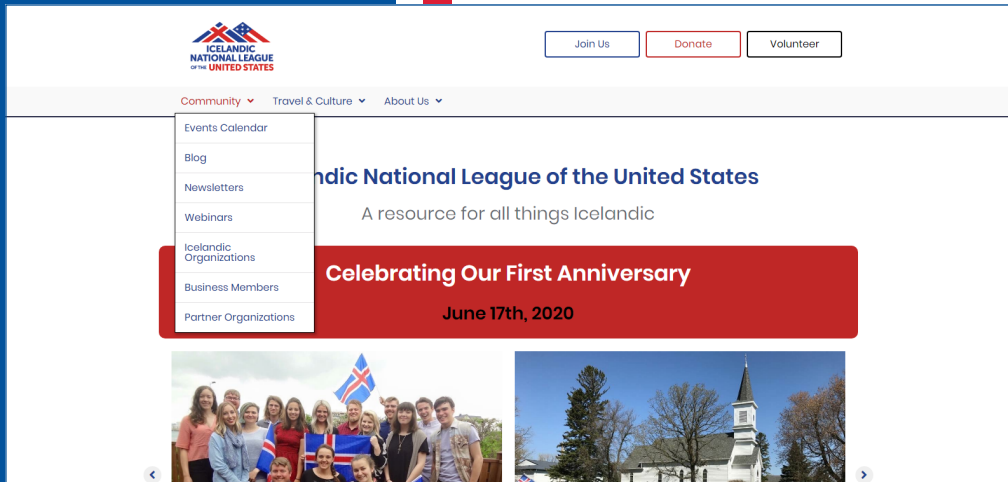


# INLUS Launches New Website

INLUS celebrated its one year anniversary with the launch of a brand new website. INLUS website Volunteer Jon Wurtzler and INLUS Vice President/Treasurer Doug Hanson tackled the task of a complete site migration.

According to Hanson, "Our members told us that the original platform was not optimized for mobile devices like smart phones and tablets." The

site was moved to a new platform called WordPress to allow for greater mobile integration, so people trying to access information on mobile devices, tablets, and phones will have an easier time navigating and finding information. In addition to being easier for those maintaining the site to update content, the new platform has more options and capabilities.



The new website is organized better, with improved pages for recipes, member businesses and Icelandic organizations. Wurtzler explained that the site utilizes what is known as a "site builder" that allows an editor to create a unified layout using different modules or parts. Other key new features on the site are the events calendar and interactive maps.

The website is important in helping INLUS prepare for the future. According to Hanson, "A key attribute of our mission is to connect Icelanders and those who love Iceland with one another. While social media and email are essential tools we use to communicate, a well designed and up-to-date website is critical as our virtual 'home' where members, friends and newcomers can always find us and connect. We see the INLUS website as a resource that can benefit all our members and the general public as well." The WordPress platform allows INLUS the freedom to change the website to fit any future needs. Wurtzler stated, "Honestly, the biggest aspect of the new site is giving the power to those running the show to make and create it how they want. One of the biggest struggles with most small sites, especially in nonprofits, is the dependency on a developer or shop to make changes for them when they need it. This allows for more hands-on work by those working on smaller budgets usually."

User feedback facilitated many design features, including the change of platform. It is hoped that members and friends will visit the website and send feedback on what they like and what could be improved. Hanson states, "All our work is done by volunteers so changes are not always immediate but we really want our website visitors to have a positive experience."

Volunteers invested their time and talents to make the website possible. Says Wurtzler, "I'm glad I was able to use what I've learned to give back to the Icelandic community. It feels good to get back to my roots from time to time." Hanson added, "I also really like the clean, uncluttered theme that Jon developed for us, building on Cole's original work. Working with great volunteers is the best part of projects like this."

# Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle

## June 17 Facebook Live Event

The Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle held a Facebook live event to celebrate Iceland's Independence Day on June 17. The event was packed with a variety of music performances by talented artists from the Seattle area. The approximately hour and half long event had close to 4000 views and can be viewed at [https://www.facebook.com/261741457186832/videos/317564865904512/?so=channel\\_tab&rv=all\\_videos\\_card](https://www.facebook.com/261741457186832/videos/317564865904512/?so=channel_tab&rv=all_videos_card)

Jon Palmason, who has organized many events for the club through the years, approached event organizers Haraldur Smari Gunnlaugsson and Erna Rós Kristinsdóttir with the idea for the June 17 event. The idea sprouted from an online "Happy@Home" event hosted in their living room during the stay at home order. Kristinsdóttir said of the Seattle area club members, "We are like one big family...missing meeting people." There was great cooperation among club members to put the June 17 event together.— Palmason and his daughter even sang a song. Kristinsdóttir thanked Club President Petur Gudmundsson and all of the members who contributed their talents.

In addition to a wide variety of music, the June 17 event had a sing-along, an educational segment about pönnukökur, the official national anthem of Iceland, and the de facto anthem of Icelanders, "Ég er kominn heim." Kristinsdóttir stated, "Always a song we play when we get together." The song evokes joy, memories of the soccer team, and a deeper meaning during the pandemic. She mentioned, "Unfortunately, we're not coming home this year." Take a moment, dream of home, and check out the video of "Ég er kominn heim" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsNRC4Ua3r4>

## August the Deuce Recap

The Icelandic Communities Association in Mountain, North Dakota hosted the 121st Annual August the Deuce Icelandic Celebration July 31 through August 2, 2020. The celebration lineup included several online events in addition to in-person events that were held with social distancing measures in place. To see the full lineup, check out <http://thedeuce.org/> Travel restrictions due to the pandemic greatly reduced the number of celebration attendees compared to usual attendance.

In addition to the tradition of a parade down Mountain's main street, this year's celebration included several events focused on Icelandic heritage and history. Icelandic Roots hosted a virtual genealogy room Friday and Saturday to assist visitors with researching their Icelandic family connections. Cathy Josephson presented a Friday online education session, "The Journey West: Sails, Rails, Rivers, and Trails."

The Icelandic Communities Association's heritage program was broadcast online with the assistance of INLUS. The hour long program featured the history of the Icelandic settlements in northeast North Dakota. The program showcased each location of significance along with the story about why the location is important. The locations explored in the program are all places a person can visit today. The heritage program can be viewed on the INLUS YouTube channel at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh1u\\_dmkgPI&t=713s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh1u_dmkgPI&t=713s)



Jennifer Palmason Kaiton and  
Jon Palmason



(L-R) Haraldur Smari Gunnlaugsson,  
Erna Rós Kristinsdóttir, Johanna  
Karen Haraldsdóttir, Gudmundur  
Karel Haraldsson



Erna Geirsdóttir

*Hvað er svo glatt sem goðra vina fundur?*



*What is as joyful as a gathering of good friends?*

# INLUS Volunteer Spotlight:

## Jon Wurtzler

Jon Wurtzler of Burnsville, Minnesota is the INLUS website volunteer who helped update the previous version of the website to be a better user experience for those who have to post and manage content. His technical expertise helped get the website to a place where new functionality can be added fairly easily if required. He took a few minutes to respond to an email interview.

### **Tell me about how you are connected to Iceland.**

Growing up, my mother did a lot of work on our Icelandic Heritage. I helped her with a bit of it, mainly to help her get it into the various computer programs we had available. She was able to acquire a lot of information from family, friends, and other resources, so I believe she welcomed any help she could get, even from a distracted teen. Family wise, my mother is 100% Icelandic and I'm roughly 50%.

My real connection came however just before my 18th birthday when I got the privilege to fly to Iceland to put on the play that was done at the August the Deuce Festivities 100th anniversary. We were invited by the then President of Iceland, Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, to come out and do a small tour. It was an amazing experience.

About two years later, I went back through a program at the University of Minnesota. I spent 3 weeks learning the language and then another 3 in Iceland seeing the sights while practicing a little. I'm sadly not fluent or anything in it, but it was an amazing experience.

### **How did you get involved with INLUS?**

My mother is the one that got the ball rolling on that one actually. She knows a few people involved and heard that the site needed some help so passed my name on. From there, I worked on it as I was able to.

### **What's one fun fact about you?**

I have two daughters which I call my little Valkyries.

### **Anything else you'd like to add?**

My wife and I have been watching some travel shows as of late, specifically "Travel Man" and "Down to Earth." Each of them goes to Iceland in at least one episode and I have to tell you, that call to go back is a pretty strong one. I hope to take my wife there one day, see the sights that I remember fondly.



INLUS Volunteer Jon Wurtzler

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