



# Connect

Celebrating 2 Years!

June/Júní 2021

## Iceland National Day June 17

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## Webinars Highlight Spectrum of Icelandic Topics

Heritage, scholarship opportunities, contemporary issues, and Icelandic horses have all taken center stage for engaging 2021 INLUS webinars. INLUS volunteers and special guests educated and entertained webinar audiences, and special guests answered questions from audience members.

Jonathan Wood's passion for being an advocate was what propelled him to a law career and graduate studies in polar law in Akureyri, Iceland. In a March 21 webinar about contemporary issues in Iceland, INLUS Volunteer Jeannie Fox Entenza interviewed Wood to find out about how a practicing lawyer from the warm state of Georgia transitioned to snowy northern Iceland. They covered everything from Wood's experiences learning the Icelandic language, to graduate studies at universities in Iceland, to climate change and human rights. His thesis research is about the consent process of the resource extraction industry in Greenland, an area that has been changing as he has been writing his thesis. Wood's advocacy now centers on policies that affect the indigenous people of Greenland and the environment, and he hopes to continue being an advocate in the arctic as long as he's able.

What is the best way to preserve and care for shared heritage? The INLUS webinar April 14 featured Katelin Parsons, Project Manager of the Fragile Heritage Project at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies in Reykjavík. She described how Iceland, Canada, and United States have shared heritage and how the Fragile Heritage Project is building an infrastructure to digitize and share documents and manuscripts written in the Icelandic language. Parsons talked about why naming the institute that houses the project after Árni Magnússon was so appropriate. The first Icelander to become a university professor, he preserved original medieval manuscripts of all sizes and conditions, piece by piece, by traveling around Iceland to collect them. His collection of Iceland's history, genealogy, and sagas is still being used 300 years later for research and discovery. Parsons and her team have used Árni Magnússon as a role model and are preserving papers and scraps in all sizes and conditions. They take digital photos of documents and make multiple copies. She explained that digital photography helps to preserve the original documents from too much handling, and also is a tool that can enhance images. She and her team are actively adding documents written in Icelandic found in the United States and Canada to the collection with an end goal of a virtual version of Árni Magnússon's collection that can be accessed anywhere. Parsons was excited to report that the database and website are under construction and coming soon.

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## Kaffi Tími

Kaffi Tími is a casual coffee hour hosted on ZOOM to provide an opportunity to connect with others who enjoy all things Icelandic!

It's open to all and meets every other Friday afternoon.

To see when the next Kaffi Tími is scheduled, check out the INLUS Events Calendar at

<https://inlus.org/community/events-calendar/>

## President's Message: June 17th—A Day to Celebrate!

### Happy National Day, Iceland!

In 1944, the Republic of Iceland was established and the ties to Denmark were broken on June 17th. Known as Iceland's National Day, it is celebrated with parades, music, and festivities around the country. While you may think of this as Iceland's Independence Day, that day actually occurs on December 1st when, in 1918, Denmark recognized Iceland as a fully sovereign state within its realm.



INLUS President Dianne O'Konski

### Happy Jon Sigurdsson Day, Manitoba!

June 17th is the birthdate of Jon Sigurdsson who fought for Iceland's independence from Denmark in the 1800's. Iceland's National Day honors his work. Our friends in Manitoba, Canada, celebrate June 17th by laying a wreath at the foot of the Jon Sigurdsson statue on the government grounds in Winnipeg.

### Happy Birthday, INLUS!!

June 17, 2021 also marks the INLUS' second birthday! So much has happened in the last two years and we are so thankful to you for your support. You can also help us by joining our volunteer team – perhaps you would like to create a social media post, add a recipe to our website content, organize a webinar, or bring a new cultural program to life. There are a variety of ways—big and small—you can support the organization.

Wherever you are June 17, celebrate and enjoy the day!

*Dianne O'Konski, President INLUS*



## Icelandic Roots Fitness Challenge

Join the Icelandic Roots Fitness Challenge!

All are welcome to participate June 12–August 7.

\$20 USD / person

You can form a team or join as an individual to Complete the Ring Road or the Golden Circle Route.

All proceeds will be spent on philanthropy.

Icelandic Roots is a 501c3 nonprofit.

See more at [www.IcelandicRoots.com](http://www.IcelandicRoots.com)

# Chef Brent Skarðaborg:

## Connecting Through Food

Like the Vikings generations ago, Chef Brent Skarðaborg has traveled extensively although his quest has been centered on conquering culinary techniques. In his earlier years he gained global perspective as he and his family moved to different locations due to military service. A graduate of a Japanese culinary school, he spent time working and training in Japan. He's now focusing his creative energies on perfecting old Nordic recipes like mead, sviðsulta, and hrutspungar.

How did a global traveler get the spark to craft old Nordic recipes? Right after his daughter was born in 2009, Skarðaborg found out from his father that their family name has been transliterated. Research of his family genealogy revealed a family lineage with deep Nordic roots in Iceland, Norway, and England. He stated, **"I firmly believe that the best way for anyone to tangibly appreciate any culture—theirs or someone else's—is through food."** The more rustic, natural, and locally sourced the better." Once he had found out his family's lineage, he said, "I wanted to know who 'we' are and were. Food was a really great way to express that in daily life."

Skarðaborg is not just perfecting the creation of old Nordic recipes, but he is also teaching and sharing his skills with others at Texas Nordic. For years of friendship and help with information, he thanks Angel Johnson-Nelson, Sunna Pam Furstenau and Jolene Halldorson. INLUS is currently working out the details for an upcoming webinar featuring Chef Brent Skarðaborg; stay tuned for details. In the meantime, here are a few more questions and answers from Chef Skarðaborg to whet the appetite!

### **What is your favorite Nordic food or drink to craft and why?**

My favorite food to craft is my versions of sviðsulta and hrutspungar. Followed closely by flatbrauð. They're very simple tried and true foods, that require you to use very little technique and ingredients to great craft. They force you to use whatever you have and whatever is left over to form a meal. I do experiment by using cod in the dehydrator for harðfiskur, and many folks make some version of graflax. I love it all.

My favorite drink to craft is mead (mjöður). While this was a more rare and festive drink for the wealthy, it puts us in touch with the Eddas and Sagas. Icelanders truly know their identity through these great priceless treasures of literature. Mead can connect us to that tangibly.

*(Continued Page 6)*



Chef Brent Skarðaborg



# Why We Celebrate June 17th

by Sunna Olafson Furstenau

Iceland's National Independence Day is June 17th. In 1944, the Republic of Iceland was formed. Jón Sigurðsson's birthday (17 Jun 1811 – 07 Dec 1879) was chosen as the National Day as he was a national hero for unwavering determination to pave the way for independence. This independence story is unique in various ways. The year of independence was not until 1944. Independence came 65 years after the death of Jón Sigurðsson yet his birthday was chosen as the National Independence Day.

The country was controlled and occupied by various and much larger countries with Denmark and Norway the most prominent (1262 – 1944). Icelanders preserved their unique traditions and rich culture while being one of the poorest and most isolated countries. Iceland was transformed during World War II from one of the poorest countries to one with wealth, low unemployment, new projects, and infrastructure, plus the end of the great depression in Iceland.

Iceland's independence was brought about by peaceful negotiations and legal means. British and Canadian troops began arriving in Iceland on May 10, 1940. Soon after, they were needed in other war areas. They requested the USA to come take care of protecting Iceland. President Roosevelt required a specific invitation from the Icelandic government, which was granted. President

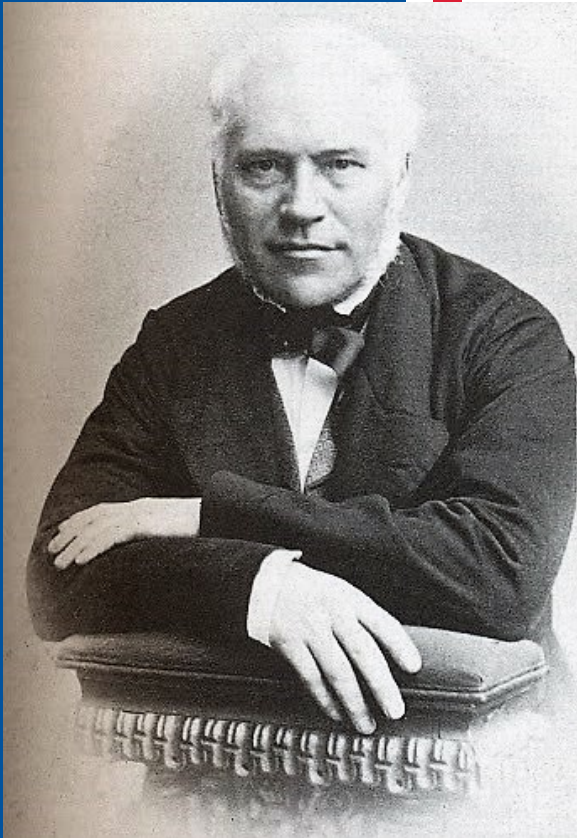
Franklin D. Roosevelt's message to the US Congress regarding the military occupation of Iceland can be read on this [LINK](#). Part of it states,

"The United States promise to recognize the absolute independence and sovereignty of Iceland ... and to not interfere with the Government of Iceland neither while their armed forces remain in this country nor afterwards."

The USA Military landed on September 15, 1941 and officially entered WWII December 8, 1941, one day after the attacks on Pearl Harbor. This war had a dramatic impact on Icelandic society. The Icelanders were, and still are, clearly divided about the war's effects on their homeland. Sometimes, it is referred to as "blessað stríðið" or "the Lovely War."

By a referendum held on 23 May 1944 a new constitution was adopted and Iceland became fully independent on 17 June 1944. On that very first day, the United States was the first country to recognize Iceland's independence.

**Happy National Day, Iceland!**  
**Gleðilega þjóðhátíð!**



Jón Sigurðsson

## Webinars *(Continued from Page 1)*

To give us an introduction to the trustworthy, sure-footed Icelandic horse, INLUS Volunteer Carrie Kozubal interviewed scholar, author, and fellow Icelandic horse owner Nancy Marie Brown for a May 6 webinar. Kozubal started the interview by stating Brown's book *A Good Horse Has No Color: Searching Iceland for the Perfect Horse* was inspirational in her own journey to find an Icelandic horse. Brown explained how deeply horses are woven into the history and culture of Iceland. Icelandic horses come in all colors and the breed goes back to ancient times. She provided the example that there is more medieval literature in Icelandic than any other language besides Latin, and horses are in all of it. Brown shared about how Icelandic horses are born in nature in the rocky, rugged terrain and are not introduced to a saddle until age 3 or 4. They eventually become mature horses with the endurance for an all-day trek around age 6, but before they reach that age, they grow their character, sure-footedness, dependability, and smarts. A unique feature of the Icelandic horse is its ability to walk, trot, canter, and smoothly tölt. Kozubal and Brown talked about some of the challenges and joys unique to owning an Icelandic horse versus any other breed. They also mentioned the United States Icelandic Horse Congress as a resource for anyone interested in the breed. Brown stated that her husband remarked, "Joy just bubbles up inside me when I ride that horse." Brown also said, "You learn an awful lot about yourself when you ride these horses."

INLUS featured The Leifur Eiríksson Foundation for a June 8 webinar about the foundation's mission to enhance collaboration between Iceland and the United States. Kristín Ingólfssdóttir, Chair of the The Leifur Eiríksson Board, started the webinar by explaining that the foundation fulfills its mission by funding graduate fellowship exchange programs for United States students going to Iceland and vice versa. Over \$4 million in scholarships has been awarded by the foundation to 130 students, with scholarships of up to \$25,000 per individual. Ingólfssdóttir stated that students from all academic disciplines are eligible and that the deadline for the next round of applications will be in November 2021. Scholars interested in finding out more can visit their website at [www.leifureirikssonfoundation.org](http://www.leifureirikssonfoundation.org). The foundation was started as a result of a collaboration between Iceland and the University of Virginia, and early funding was provided by American and Icelandic commemorative coins minted in 2000 to celebrate Leifur Eiríksson's discovery of North America about the year 1000. Jennifer Grayburn, Chair of the Screening Committee, was herself a recipient of a scholarship to study medieval architecture in Iceland. Grayburn shared that the networking opportunities with experts in medieval Icelandic studies, the opportunities to visit the locations of the sagas, and the opportunity to research at the Árni Magnússon Institute were all life-changing. Her dissertation included research from her experiences in Iceland and she continues to benefit from her experience personally and professionally today.

Each INLUS webinar is recorded and posted to the INLUS website a few days after the live event. To view recordings of each of these webinars, go to <https://inlus.org/community/webinars/>. More webinars are planned in the coming months and will be announced with a blog and Facebook post. Future webinars will also be posted on the INLUS events calendar.



University of Akureyri



Árni Magnússon Institute



*A Good Horse Has No Color*  
By Nancy Marie Brown



Leifur Eiríksson Commemorative  
One Dollar Coin

## **Chef Brent Skarðaborg** *(Continued from Page 3)*

**Have you had surprising discoveries as you've been crafting Nordic cuisine?** I believe the surprise is that anyone can craft easy meat and fish dishes with groceries found in local supermarkets. Things like plukkfiskur, the many dessert items and pastries Icelanders are familiar with, and smoking/curing meats are all pretty accessible. Lamb stews are really easy and a common item in our home.

**What is one of the most challenging Nordic recipes you've perfected?** After 5 years of experimenting with mead, I think I have settled on a very simple "session mead" that crosses a bridge between old techniques and ingredients with modern accessibility. Old alcoholic beverages were thought to be very low in alcohol content. Most ales were around 2%, and it's thought that mead prepared for feasts was around 2-4%. Today, off the shelf meads are around 13-16% ABV and are targeted to wine drinkers...think drinking from wine glasses. Feasting meads were quaffed by the pint, so to speak, so higher proof alcohol would have been more common through Danish trade from wines from Germany. Not mead or beer/ ale.

I use Norwegian farmhouse yeast called "Kveik" for brewing. The strains are over 1,000 years old and are still used in remote farming communities for making ale and mead today. Using this ingredient over regular ale and wine yeast strains will get you "grain to glass" inside 5 days with 6% ABV. Way better than 5 months! This is how our forebears were able to plan feasts and weddings so quickly in the Sagas, I believe. Ale and mead could be ready in days.

I'd really like to experiment with making slátur, but until I can source fresh sheep's blood, I'll have to settle with lifrarpylsur... My daughter is a daring eater and is more than helpful when it comes to tasting. Ha!

**Has creating Nordic foods changed any of your perspectives on Iceland or its food?** For me, it isn't so much as a changed perspective, but more of a profound respect. Think of everything our forebears weathered both in Iceland and moving to the Northern United States to make ends meet in the kitchen. You have to make do with what you have.

**What's a piece of advice you can share with someone who might be interested in learning how to cook a Nordic recipe that is new to them?** Use Google or YouTube as an immediate resource. Lots of fine books on Icelandic cooking come available on Amazon every so often. Your next step will be experimenting. Have a sharp knife and an open mind at the ready! You'll never know what you like until you try it. Surprises await you!

**What has been one of the most interesting things you've learned about Iceland as you've been creating Nordic cuisine?** They're hardy and passionate about their unique identity.

From an *Bandarikjamaður* perspective, they know where they are from and want to know where they are going in the future. I pray Icelanders keep their identity and never forget where we're from.

**"We come from the land of the ice and snow, from the midnight sun where the hot springs flow."**

**Robert Plant and Jimmy Page**

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