



Connect

Celebrating 3 Years!

Fall 2022



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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.

A Busy INLUS Summer

By INLUS President Dianne O'Konski

I hope you were able to make happy memories this summer. The INLUS was represented at the 1st annual Nordic Midsummer Fest in Minnesota in June. Authors Heidi Herman and Gay Strandemo, both INLUS members, attended and it was so nice to visit with them face-to-face. It was a picture-perfect day and there was an excellent crowd.

In late July, I brought greetings from the INLUS to the 123rd annual Deuce of August in Mountain, ND. During "the Deuce", the town swells from a population of less than 100 to well into the thousands. I was able to meet two of the US Snorri participants as well as the two Snorri West participants who were close to the end of their experience. Hulda Karen Danielsdottir, President of INL Iceland, also attended and we rode in the parade with several other Icelanders in glorious sunshine prior to their Heritage Program.

Just three weeks later, I brought greetings from the INLUS at the INL Iceland convention on August 21st in Reykjavik. Stefan Jonasson, Past President of the INL North America, also brought greetings to the well-attended event. The Snorri Plus participants were wrapping up their tour and I was invited to their final dinner. They were very happy with the program and the new friendships they had made.

I want to hear what you have been doing this summer! The INLUS Kaffi Timi starts again on Friday, September 9 at 3:00 PM Eastern. You can join the conversation by clicking on the Kaffi Timi listing in the INLUS Events Calendar to find the link.

See you there!



INLUS President Dianne O'Konski speaking in Reykjavik

Some of the photos from
Grace's Snorri Experience:



The Cousins

By Grace Lenhart

Note: Grace received an INLUS Scholarship to participate in the Snorri program. She wrote this story to share her experience.

In early June my bags were packed. I rolled up to the airport check in, and in found another Snorri, Sierra, in the line in front of me. We hugged and excitedly discussed the adventure ahead. At the gate, was Cass, another Snorri, we excitedly boarded the plane, and watched movies until they got tiring. I looked out the window and saw colossal icebergs in the frigid sea, then the tip of Greenland - my heart lurched, we were almost there!

Flying into Keflavik, I felt a rush of joy mixed with the tired haze of staying awake longer than the body cares for. We got our bags, met Kent our driver, and walked to the bus. I savored those first breaths of fresh Icelandic air. Driving into Reykjavik we passed through endless fields of lupines. The ground was purple, the sky was gray, it was already feeling very special, indeed.

At our hostel, we waited for rooms, ate, and rested up in the hostel yard, and enjoyed the nearby pool. Pala the Snorri director, welcomed us, and we all received packets containing a multitude of information - schedules for class, giant genealogical charts showing our relations. We were all distant cousins!

Finding our rooms, I was happy to find Kaela and Chlo, two Canadian women, who like me, were also in their last year of the 20's.. I was glad to have peers that shared the same vibe. New distant cousins from Vancouver and Nova Scotia.

Our classes began. Each morning we boarded *Strætó*, the local bus, and headed across town to the University. Our teachers and lecturers filled us to the brim with information on the Icelandic language, genealogy, geography, politics, history, literature, music, and folklore. I began saying "*góðan daginn*" and ordering my *kaffi* in Icelandic.

In the evenings we roamed and explored Reykjavik. I found solace at a greenhouse cafe in *Grasagarður* Botanical Gardens where the hot chocolate (*heitt súkkulaði*) was marvelous, and at the local pools, which I visited nearly daily to relax and swim, just like an Ice-lander.

Highlights of our group excursions included having tea at *Bessastaðir* with the President and First Lady, visiting Þingvellir National Park which houses *Alþing*, the site of Iceland's parliament from the 10th to 18th centuries.

After our first two weeks of classes, and a group bout with COVID, we headed across the country to our homestays. I stayed in Álf-tanes, a small peninsula in the capitol region. My host family was very gracious to welcome me amidst my sickness. The first days I recovered, laid low, slept, and walked along the sea. I was grateful for the peaceful place, for the sheep, horses, and the black sand beaches near my homestay. When my isolation was over, I was glad to get out of the house and join my host sister for an ice cream outing in *Hafnarfjörður*.

My work placement was at the Museum of design in *Gardabær*. I created mathematical assignments for school groups based off the work of Einar Þorsteinn, an Icelandic mathematician and designer.

Highlights of my host family stay include delicious meals of lamb and fish, daily walks by the sea, learning the familial history of my Icelandic relatives, and a trip to the highlands where I learned how to pick blooms for *Blóðberg Te*.

On my favorite day of all, I hiked up into the mountains with Claire, a fellow Snorri participant. We bathed and basked in the geothermal river at *Reykjadalur* Hot Springs. On my last day with my host family, I went with my host sister to Sky Lagoon where we talked for hours in the water.

To finish the Snorri experience, our whole group met up again for a bus trip along the North West coast! We stayed at a horse farm, visited many cute sea towns, and saw historical sites such as the land and a replica of Leif Erikson's sod house! I aimed to swim as much as possible and soak in the gorgeous countryside, and enjoy final moments with my Snorri cousins.

On our last day, we returned to Reykjavik, and stayed downtown. We gave presentations at the Canadian embassy. It was heartwarming to learn about everyone's journey, wonderful to see how each person found beauty and meaning in their Snorri experience. I loved how each person's presentation uniquely reflected their interests. That night we partied on the town, and watched as the sun dipped to the horizon. On the morning of our departure I got one last kaffi at my favorite place.

Leaving Iceland was bittersweet. I was glad to be returning to my family and loved ones at home, but sad to be leaving my now beloved Snorri cousins, and the country I came to love.

Takk Fyrir Snorri, Takk Fyrir Iceland.

Watch Grace's video
on making
Blóðberg Te:



<https://youtu.be/vEL0Ug6aPRE>

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Icelandic are cool?

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[https://www.inlus.org/
about-us/membership/](https://www.inlus.org/about-us/membership/)

Erik Schoonover also received an INLUS Scholarship to the Snorri Program.



2022 SnorriParticipant
Erik Schoonover

More than a Rock in the Ocean

By Erik Schoonover

I love rocks. I am a trained geologist and am working towards a doctorate in the geosciences. Day in and day out, I look at rocks. Specifically volcanic and magmatic rocks. This makes Iceland a wonderful spot for someone in my line of work to visit. Yet, this was not a work visit. The Snorri program is an experience. It went much deeper than tourism or rock hunting.

Upon arrival, I was surrounded with people from all walks of life. A lawyer in training, engineers in various fields, an accountant, students, artists, and more. Despite our differences, we were family immediately. We joked, debated, explored, and worked together to get the most out of our time together.



We each shared our expertise with each other. A big portion of our first few weeks were classes. Those interested in linguistics helped us learn the language. Those who studied politics discussed the government and economy. I was able to assist with the geology lesson. We each contributed and made the experience deeper for one another. I was able to invest myself in all the other facets of learning outside of just rocks.

When we parted for our homestays, the trip became much more personal. I stayed with distant relatives, who took me in and treated me as a close family member. I toured Reykjavík with their recommendations, went on hikes and explained some rocks to them, and enjoyed classic Icelandic dishes. During this time with family, I felt truly connected to Iceland. It was not just a visit anymore. I realized how my grandmother grew up. I walked the same streets she did, ate the food she did, and was able to share those experiences with her.

(More than a Rock...Continued) The final week, all the Snorris came back together. It was a consensus that we all felt more connected to our heritage. We were able to speak in broken Icelandic to one another, recounted stories of our families, and shared pictures of the all the beautiful places we visited. Then, together, we toured the northwestern part of Iceland. We visited family farms and villages, fjords and volcanoes, and museums. In parallel to class, we now could share our personal experiences within Iceland, rather than what we brought from North America.



Photo By Megan Veldhuis

This experience with Snorri was not a geological visit for me. I was able to connect with Iceland. The people of the program were the biggest impact. I want to extend my appreciation and gratitude to Sunna, INLUS, and everyone else that made Snorri a world-opening experience.

Author's Corner Webinar

Join us on Tuesday, September 20th as we talk with Karítas Hrundar Pálsdóttir about her latest book, *Dagatal – Sögur á einföldu máli*. This book is written for the Icelandic language learner as was her first book *Árstíðir*. In 2019 Karítas Pálsdóttir visited the Pacific coast of North America as a member of the Snorri West program.

This Author's Corner will take place online at 2:00 PM Eastern and the link may be found on the INLUS Events Calendar.



Six Icelandic clubs sent in pictures showing what they were up to this summer. These pictures came from Calgary, Alberta to the north, Seattle and Blaine, Washington to the West, Utah to the south and Mountain, North Dakota and Minneapolis, Minnesota in the heartland.

Our thanks to:

Leif Eiricksson Icelandic Club of Calgary

Icelandic Hekla Club

Icelandic Communities Association

Icelandic Association of Utah

Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle

Blaine Icelandic Heritage Society

You can find out more on these and our other local clubs on our website

INLUS.ORG

Under the Community tab

INLUS Member Clubs...



Visiting an original Icelandic log cabin in Spanish Fork, Utah.

Photo provided by Jeanne Bowen.

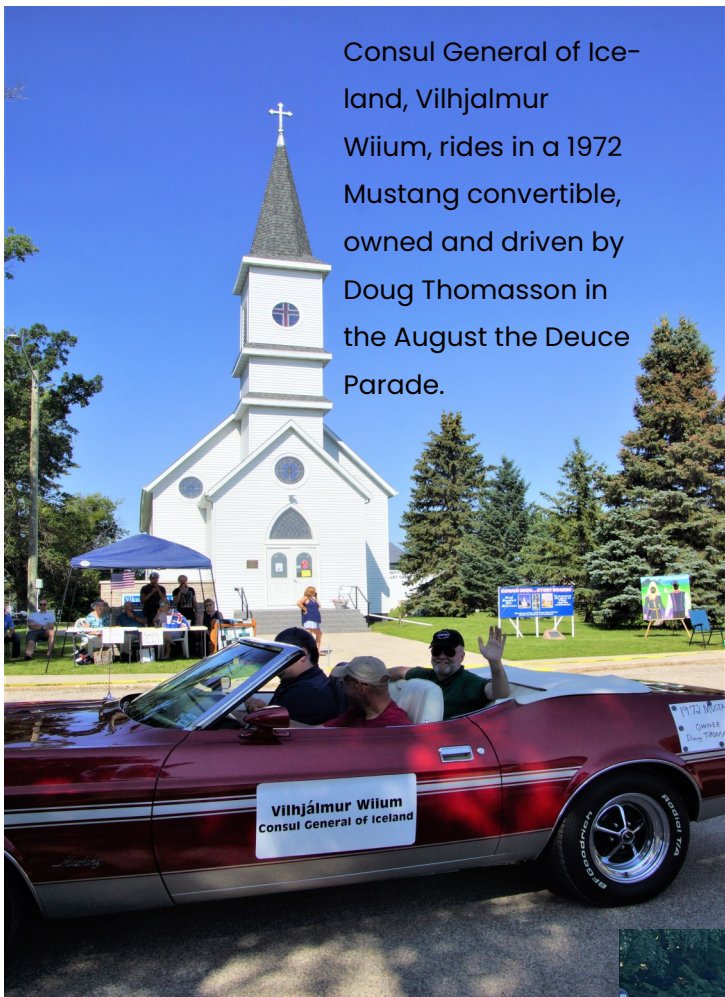


Fun stuff to explore at the Nordic Midsummer Fest. Photo by Nancy Johnson, Hekla Club and Board member.



Donna Crozier is the 2022 Alberta Fjallkona. Photo by Gwen Mann .

See more summer event pictures on the INLUS Blog!



Consul General of Iceland, Vilhjálmur Wílum, rides in a 1972 Mustang convertible, owned and driven by Doug Thomasson in the August the Deuce Parade.

Photo by Shirley J. Olgeirson

...Had a Busy Summer



Stick Toss game at Seattle picnic



Blaine Icelanders celebrate member Sigríð Powers' 100th birthday.
Photo by Rob Olason

Photo provided
by Petur Gudmundsson

Snorri Plus Participants Renew Wedding Vows

Kathryn Rothman wanted to visit Iceland and the area her ancestors came from. In 2021 she and her husband Ken signed up for the Snorri Plus program, which was cancelled due to Covid. The plan was that the trip would be their way of celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. In 2022, they were still on the participant list, Snorri Plus was a “go”, so in August they boarded the plane for Iceland with a new plan.

As they toured the island, their anticipation grew. Kathryn’s ancestors came from East Iceland, leaving *Vopnafjörður* in the late 1800’s and settling in southwest Minnesota. She was so excited to see where they came from, meet her relatives, and learn the history of the area.

Their new plan came together with the help of Cathy Josephson, Director of the East Iceland Immigration Center, *Vesturfaramiðstöð*. What

better way to celebrate a fifty-first anniversary than to renew their wedding vows in Kathryn’s ancestral church? On August 14th they did just that at *Hofskirkja* near *Vopnafjörður*. Cathy Josephson officiated and Kathryn’s newly discovered cousins and a few fellow Snorri Plus participants helped celebrate the event.



Photo by Cathy Josephson

Language Student Meets Teacher Far From Home



Alicia Bjornsson (left) took several of our INLUS Language classes, the latest of which was taught by Birna

Sigurbjörnsdóttir (right). Alicia was so motivated by her language learning that she decided to go to Iceland for a 3-week language immersion class taught up in the

northern town of *Ísafjörður* in August 2022. Birna generally lives in *Reykjavík* from where she remotely taught Alicia's last class. Birna however took a job for the summer in a town up north called *Flat-eyri*. One day, a few hours before Birna's shift was to begin in *Flateyri*, she was in *Ísafjörður* in a little coffee shop knitting with a bunch of her friends. Lo and behold, Alicia entered the coffee shop and began to sign-on to the Wi-Fi internet connection in the coffee shop. Somehow a pop-up message appeared on Birna's phone that Alicia had signed-on to the WiFi network also. Birna remembered Alicia's name, looked around and saw Alicia's familiar face. Birna went over to introduce herself and this wonderful, by-chance, first-ever, in-person meeting between the two ensued. It's amazing the connections and further learning our INLUS language classes have created.

100th Birthday Celebrated

On August 30, 2022, Sigrid Powers celebrated her 100th birthday with members of the Blaine Icelandic Heritage Society. Sigrid, who is a

very spry and delightful conversationalist, shared some of her life story.



Sigrid grew up in Marietta, a village north of Bellingham, Washington in the 1920s. After graduating high school, she moved to Seattle to attend business school. When the United States entered World War II, she joined other women to work at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in support of the

U.S. war effort.

After the war, and now married, she and her husband moved to Guam. They worked for the Department of Defense and Navy to help rebuild the island's infrastructure which had been destroyed during the war. They lived on Guam for twenty years, returning to the Pacific Northwest in the 1970s.

In 1989 Sigrid made her first trip to Iceland and loved the country. She was able to stay in her grandparent's home, which later became a hotel.

She returned in 2015 and travelled Iceland's Ring Road in "the opposite direction" from the traditional routing. (Continued on p. 10)

100th Birthday Celebrated (Contd.)

In 2016 she returned to explore the Westfjords region. Three trips to Iceland is not enough for Sigrid. On her 100th birthday she said she “would go again, anytime!”

Reflecting on her century of life, she marveled at all the advances that have occurred in medicine and technology, both of which have become such an important part of our lives. However, these advances are not all for the best. She said she regrets the invasiveness that technology has in our lives and she fondly remembers the time in her life when this was not so.

In reflecting further about her own life, Sigrid said she was grateful for the good things she has found in life. She subscribes to the importance of being your best self, being honest with yourself and with others, and in being kind, thankful, and loving your neighbor.

Her thoughts returned to Iceland, saying, “there is something special about this beautiful, rugged diverse and endlessly fascinating country. I have great admiration for the accomplishments of the Icelandic people.” She said the beauty of Iceland’s landscape is just magical.

“I’m proud of my Icelandic heritage.”

Bjornson Estate Vineyard

By Jackie Flaten



Iceland and fine wine are not often paired in the popular imagination, but [Björnson Estate Vineyard](#) is a bold exception. Founded in 2006 by Icelandic descendant and Bismarck, N.D. native Mark Björnson and his wife, Pattie (maiden name Knight, originally from Owatonna, MN), the vineyard is a testament to turning a longtime dream into a successful reality, influenced by a strong heritage of Icelandic determination.

The Björnson Estate Vineyard is one of the most acclaimed vineyards and wineries of Oregon's famous wine region, the Willamette Valley. The Björnsons have a straightforward mission for their business: to care for the land, make exceptional wine and enjoy life's journey. They believe sustainable farming makes for the best quality wine, and their vineyard is certified Salmon-Safe and sustainable by L.I.V.E. (Low Input Viticulture and Enology). The vineyard's terroir-driven Pinot Noir, Gamay Noir, Rosé, Chardonnay and Auxerrois are crafted from fruit grown on their own land.

"Our passion for wine has grown out of an interest in many things. We love to grow and prepare quality food. We love to travel and meet new people. We love to work with our hands and be outside. We love to learn. Growing grapes and making wine embodies all these interests in a special way."

How did a business school-trained Midwesterner of Icelandic descent come to be the owner and visionary of an award-winning, 107-acre farm and winery set in the sumptuous rolling landscape of Oregon's coastal region?

"I think my Icelandic ancestry may have given me the persistence and audacity to work toward a goal that seemed very unrealistic to others," Mark said.

Pattie and Mark founded the winery in 2006, and their family endeavor is a blend of advanced vinicultural techniques meshed with a poetic embrace of tradition and heritage. Mark's deep roots in the Icelandic community of Mountain, N.D., have continued to influence him in his vocation. A portrait of Mark's Icelandic great-grandfather, Icelandic immigrant Fridbjorn Björnson, is prominently displayed over the tasting room's fireplace. The wine bottles' label art evokes Iceland in their stylized beauty of fire and ice.

They've created a highly successful, sustainable operation in a demanding industry that requires hard work and vision. He describes their foray into the business as being driven by "raw foolishness" when they were young.

"We were biking through Europe in 1993 with a tandem bike and a bike trailer," Mark recalled. Their oldest daughter, Kaitlyn, who was two and a half (they now have four children) traveled with them.

"We biked about 1,500 miles from Amsterdam to Germany and all through Alsace during the month of September, (Contd. on P. 12)



(Contd. From p. 11) staying at small wineries,” he said. This experience planted the seed, and they decided they would buy land in Oregon, plant a vineyard, and build a winery.

“We were too naive to realize what that entailed,” he added. “I remember when we lived in Minneapolis, Pattie gave me a lecture one night as we were driving home from a party: ‘Mark, you’ve got to quit telling people we are going to move to Oregon, buy land, and plant a vineyard. Everybody thinks you’re crazy.’ ”

Mark responded as he noted many Icelanders might: “I don’t give a damn what people think.”

Mark’s father, Arni Björnson, who spoke fluent Icelandic, was born in Mountain in 1910, the son of Magnus and Gudbjorg Björnson. Magnus was a pillar of the community, serving as mayor and Magnus’s



father, Fridbjorn, was instrumental in the town’s early history, donating lumber for the Vikur Lutheran Church.

Mark visited Mountain often during his childhood. “I remember playing in my great-uncle Chris Gudmundson’s yard, just beside the church,” he said. “We would visit the cemetery west of town and I would go down to play in the creek.

“Of course, I remember all the Icelandic food -- hangikjöt, hardfiskur, vínarterta, pönnukökur, skyr, brown bread, kleinur and rúllupylsa. Our family still has these treats every Christmas. My parents often hosted an Icelandic party in Bismarck around the holidays.”

They host many Icelandic people through the winery, some of whom turn out to be relatives. Along with the portrait of Mark’s great-grandfather Fridbjorn, they have several other photos of ancestors decorating the tasting room.

“A man once noticed that we had an identical picture to one he had,” Mark said. “It turned out he was my second cousin.”

The next time you are in Oregon, make plans to visit the spectacular Björnson Estate Vineyard (find online at bjornsonwine.com);

address is 3635 Bethel Heights Rd NW, Salem, Oregon 97304. They are just 15 minutes from Salem and 25 minutes from McMinnville. Mark and Pattie invite INLUS members to join them for a full flight of their wines complemented by majestic views of the vineyard, the Willamette Valley and Mt. Hood in the distance.

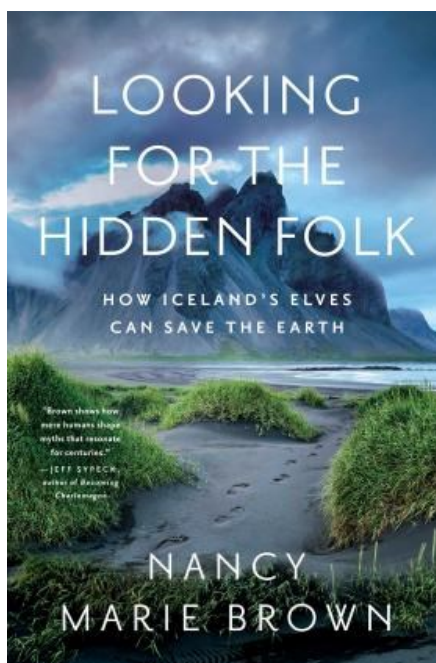


INLUS Webinar October 3:

Author Nancy Marie Brown talks about her just published book "Looking For The Hidden Folk—How Iceland's Elves Can Save The Earth."

In exploring how Icelanders interact with nature, Nancy Marie Brown shows us how altering our perceptions of the environment can be a crucial first step toward saving it.

The book is a wonderfully quirky exploration of our place in the universe. Looking for answers in history, science, religion, and art—from ancient times to today—Brown finds that each discipline defines what is real and unreal, natural and supernatural, demonstrated and theoretical, alive and inert. Each has its own way of perceiving and valuing the world around us. And each discipline defines what an Icelander might call an elf.



Brown offers an intimate conversation about how we look at and find value in nature. It reveals how the words we use and the stories we tell shape the world we see. It argues that our beliefs about the Earth will preserve—or destroy it.

To join this presentation on October 3, go to the INLUS Events Calendar and follow the steps to log into the webinar.

The Back Page– More pictures from summer...



Vilhjalmur Wiium, Consul General of Iceland, sports a new Deuce of August cap from the souvenir shop as he tastes a slice of *vinarterta* from Moore's Icelandic Goodies on Main Street prior to the parade. A lively discussion ensued between the delegation from Iceland and the "locals" about how many layers of crust and filling are appropriate, the firmness of the dough, and the flavor of the filling itself. *Ponnukokur* (thin pancakes) and *kleinur* (twisted donuts), it seems, are not quite so controversial.



The Sons of Finrir battle for supremacy in Markerville, Alberta.



Rita Monson Mielke, Edinburg, leads a convoy of 5 golfcarts, each with a portion of a great message: German, Norse, or Swede... There really is no excuse... For aren't we all Icelandic... As we celebrate the Deuce?? Monson Family Reunion

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