



Connect

INLUS is 4 Years Old! Winter 2023



Inside this issue:

Expanding Family with Snorri	2
Life at the End of the Comfort Zone	4
Snorri Application Deadline	5
No English	6
Leap Into Icelandic	7
Snorri Sturuson Tale	8
Thank You	9
Winter Events	10

Connect newsletter welcomes your submissions!

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

info@inlus.org

Connect newsletter is published quarterly.

Njal's Tapestry

Nearly one-thousand years ago, a tapestry 224 feet long was created to celebrate the Norman Conquest of England.

Known as the Bayeux tapestry, it has survived to the present day and is on display in Bayeux, France. Survival wasn't easy, over the centuries the tapestry was threatened by wars ranging from the Huguenots' attack on the city, the French Revolution, to the Nazi invasion during World War II.



In *Hvolsvöllur*, Iceland, about a decade ago, two avid fiber artists, Gunnhildur Edda Kristjánsdóttir and Christina M. Bengtsson, thought about how their small community could do something really big to bring additional interest to the region. They explored how they might create a fiber project on the scale of the Bayeux tapestry. While this dream might seem extraordinary

for a small rural community to tackle, they had one major advantage. Hvolsvöllur just happened to be "ground zero" for one of the most famous Sagas ever written: Njal's Saga. They formed the Njal's Saga Tapestry Embroiderers (*Njálurefill* SES) and developed a plan.

Their idea caught on in the community. The graphic artist Kristín Ragna Gunnarsdóttir was chosen to design the tapestry. She created images drawn from all chapters of the saga. The designs were transferred to Swedish linen. The project was massive and took nearly one hundred yards of linen to complete.

The first stitch was made in 2013, with the goal of finishing the tapestry within an ambitious ten-year time frame. The effort would rely on volunteers to embroider all the images of the story. As word got out about the community project, people from across the globe came to Iceland to take part. Tapestry enthusiast Claudia Pétursson said people would fly to Iceland, head to Hvolsvöllur, work several hours on the tapestry, then return to the airport to fly back to their corner of the world. The ten-year project was ultimately completed in seven, thanks to the help of over 12,500 volunteers.

The tapestry, now completed, is safely stored awaiting a location to permanently be put on display in the Hvolsvöllur area. **Continued on Page 2**



Join us for an INLUS Webinar on the Njal's Saga Tapestry Project on January 10, 2024. Claudia Pétursson will be presenting information and upcoming events about the project. Details on the INLUS calendar.

MEÐ
VERKUM
HAFDANNA
CREATIVE
HAND

To celebrate its 160th anniversary, the National Museum of Iceland chose to do an exhibit on Icelandic embroidery.

[Visit the website](#)

Continued from previous page: However, a fifteen foot "traveling tapestry" is being sewn that can tour Iceland and the Western Icelandic communities in North America and other venues. They estimate the traveling tapestry will be completed this winter.

Claudia Pétursson is eager to bring the traveling tapestry to a celebration or exhibition near you. She may even give you a quick lesson in the age-old stitching method deployed in making the tapestry that the Njal's Saga Tapestry Embroiderers hope people will still be admiring their tapestry a thousand years from now.



The Icelandic graphic artist Kristín Ragna Gunnarsdóttir, who designed the artwork, views the progress of Njal's Saga tapestry.

Expanding My Family

By Tor Kartenson

My five weeks in Iceland went fast and left me wanting to go back as soon as I could. Of the past three times that I had been there visiting my family, the Snorri trip was the longest. I felt like I could finally become fully immersed in the culture and make real connections with my relatives, and I am forever grateful for that opportunity. This trip has given me countless meaningful stories, lifelong friends, and a strong beginning of an education of Iceland's language and history.

I was lucky enough to start the trip with two wonderful flight partners, Jared and Julia. Us three Minnesotans became inseparable during the three weeks that we spent together. Us three were gladly met by our Canadian cousins in the Keflavík airport where all of us, being incredibly sleep-deprived, were happy to see each other nonetheless. The first two weeks in Reykjavík were full of getting to know everyone and their stories. Up until this point, the number of Icelandic-Northern Americans I had met was not

large, and the number of them that were my age was even fewer. I was ecstatic to meet people with similar experiences as myself. Everyone also had a passion to learn more about their history and culture. I loved the freedom we had to explore the capital as well as the events that the Snorri program had planned for us. I wish that I could experience those first two weeks many times over. It was quite possibly the most affirming time of my life.

When the first 14 days ended, it was sad to leave my friends, but exciting to travel across the country to Höfn. I had met lots of my family in Reykjavík before, but I had never heard much of my family in the East. I stayed with my *frænka þóra*, always called *Nóna*, and her husband, *Fúsi*. My cousin, *Þórey* drove me halfway to Höfn with a tour group, and we had the opportunity to get to know each other while stopping at breathtaking geological sites across the South shore. Þórey dropped me off in Vík where I met with Nóna and Fúsi. They were the kindest and most gracious hosts I could have ever asked for, and they were so incredibly excited to see me as I was to them. Nóna and I had many long talks about our family history, and I learned so much about my relatives that I never got to meet. I learned the exact reasons why my family ended up in North America and the things they had to endure. Nothing has ever made me more proud to be Icelandic, and being in the East, where my family was from, made it that much more meaningful.

My favorite day of the trip was going up to *Vattarnes* in *Reyðarfjörður*, where my great-grandfather's home was. It took all day, and we visited many spots along the way, but we finally arrived in the beautiful *fjörð* with 16 members of my family, and I truly felt at home.

It was cold and overcast all the way there, but the sky cleared and the sun greeted us as soon as we took the road down to Vattarnes. I helped Nóna find the old house of my great-great grandmother, *Konráðína*, which my family had never seen. We sat with it for a while, and I cried both out of sadness for loss, and happiness for our family's reunion.

Nearing the end of my time with Nóna and Fúsi, we made plans for when we could see each other again. We still text often, and Nóna helps me with my Icelandic. I got a bus back to Reykjavík and spent the last week touring the Northwest with all my Snorri friends. I could tell after getting back together that everyone felt so much more comfortable in the new culture. We arrived in the country together as strangers and left with many new family members.



Tor Kartenson in Iceland

I want to offer my sincerest thanks to the Snorri foundation and INLUS for making this trip possible for me as it is one of the most memorable and meaningful adventures that I have ever had the opportunity to experience mentally, physically, and emotionally.



Stopping for a picture on the road trip

The Icelandic National League of the United States (INLUS) awarded the four United States Snorri participants scholarships to help cover their costs for the five week Snorri program in Iceland. Upon return, they share their experiences in the program.



At Vattarnes in Reyðarfjörður

Life Begins at the End of Your Comfort Zone

By Sarah Iverson



Sarah and her Afi

In September 2022 I lost my Afi, who was my father figure, role model, and best friend. He was the proudest Icelander you could ever imagine. Always updating me with stories from the daily Iceland news or telling one of his many enthralling childhood stories. When I stepped onto the plane in Seattle, all I could think about was how proud my Afi would be that I am going on this trip of a lifetime to Iceland.

The first two weeks we stayed in Reykjavík, at the Dalur Hostel. I was amazed by how quickly all of us Snorri's went from complete strangers to the best of friends. I can also say that I have met fourteen new cousins! We studied at the University of Iceland where we dove right into learning Icelandic. During our school days we got the pleasure of having lectures about genealogy, politics, art, folklore, etc. When class was over, we were off to explore the town of Reykjavik. Some of our adventures included Harpa, tour of the parliament, meeting the president, and lots of ice cream! This was my first time being in Iceland on their Independence Day and it was amazing.

What a special experience watching the ceremony and being surrounded by culture. A few Snorri's and I got to walk in the parade with all the locals and it was so much fun. Later on that week I made an impulse decision and bought a ticket to the Iceland vs. Portugal soccer game. Add that



to the list of best impulse decisions of my life! Me and three other Snorri's all went to the game and had such a wonderful time. I am a huge soccer fan so to be able to support Iceland but also get to see Cristiano Ronaldo play.....I'm speechless!!



Third week of the program we all split up and went off to spend time with our Icelandic relatives. This was not my first time meeting my relatives, so it was very easy staying with them. We spent lots of time catching up and it felt like no time had passed since I last saw them. I tagged along with my cousins while they ran errands and continued with normal Icelandic life. A couple day trips were taken which included a surprise trip to the zoo. Many family dinners were arranged so we could all sit around the table and talk about anything and everything.

Near the end of that week, I had to make a tough decision about the program. I was 20 weeks pregnant at the time and my body was starting to feel all the travel I had been doing. After a good cry, I knew what I had to do.

Mentally I wanted to stay and continue but then realized that my body was telling me that I had pushed it to the end. I was extremely sad when I booked my trip back home to Seattle early but also proud of what I accomplished. Messages were sent between me and the other Snorri's with lots of hearts and hugs and plans to meet up again.

Takk Fyrir Iceland and everyone who made The Snorri Program a lifechanging experience. Years into the future, I hope that my daughter will apply for this program and get to experience all that it has to offer her. I am so grateful to those who provided scholarships, like INLUS, which made it possible for me to attend this outstanding program.



Sarah meets Icelandic President Guðni Th. Jóhannesson at Bessastaðir.



Visiting with Cousins

2024 Snorri Program

Want to be a Snorri in 2024?

If reading the reports from past Snorri participants has gotten you thinking about how valuable such an experience can be, what are you waiting for?

To get all the details, go to the Snorri website today. Applications are due by January 15, 2024.

The Snorri Plus program is another option for those 30 years of age and older.



www.Snorri.is

Don't be a tourist, be a Snorri!
Make your Iceland dreams
come true in 2024!

The Snorri Program

June 9 to July 13, 2024

Are you

- 20-30 years old?
- American or Canadian?
- of Icelandic descent?

If so, you could

- spend 5 weeks in Iceland
- explore the land and language of your ancestors
- make lifelong friends
- meet Icelandic relatives
- tour the wild Westfjords
- have the best summer of your life
- and even get help paying for it!

Grants are available to help cover participation fees!

Snorri Plus

Aug. 19 to Sept. 2, 2024

Are you

- Age 30 or above?
- of Icelandic descent?
- or just crazy about Iceland?

Join us for a once-in-a-lifetime two-week adventure open to individuals, couples, and family groups. Discover Reykjavik and explore beautiful north Iceland. Experience Icelandic nature and culture - with a group of people who love Iceland as much as you do!

For 2024 rates and more information on what's included, visit www.snorri.is.

Questions?
Email us at info@snorri.is.



Apply by
January 15!



THE SNORRI PROGRAMS





Passionate about Icelandic culture and heritage?

So are we!

Join us in the quest to celebrate Icelandic culture whether in Iceland or North America.

Become a member of the INLUS or renew your membership and let's celebrate together!

[Click Our Membership Link](#)

No English

This is an Interview with INLUS member Rikki Allen about the conversational Icelandic group he formed.

The number of Icelandic class options are expanding, seemingly with new vendors coming online every week. However, most of them do not have a meaningful way for the student to follow up.

Rikki recently spoke to *Connect* about the Icelandic language practice program he started.

Connect: Tell us a bit about yourself. How did you get interested in learning Iceland and how did you go about learning the language?

Rikki: My family and I spent four days in Reykjavik in 2018. Before we left, my wife, daughter, and I spent a few days trying to learn polite phrases like “góðan daginn” and “takk fyrir.” Icelanders’ reactions to an American attempting to speak the language was amazing. I wanted more. Upon returning home, I scrambled to see what resources were available for me to begin learning.

Connect: Where did the idea of an Icelandic practice group come from?

Rikki: Though the Icelanders in my area are very supportive, it’s not fair to make them my “language tutor of the hour.” I needed something that fit right in the middle between beginner and native. I posted on line and I was surprised how quickly a roster of people built up – from around the world. We have people from Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

Connect: Tell us about the Icelandic lunchtime practice sessions – how do they work? Whose lunchtime is it (what are the hours)? How long is each session and how often does the group meet?

Rikki: The group is called *Ekki Ensku* and meets on Wednesdays noon Chicago time (5 or 6pm UTC). It only lasts 30 minutes and our only rule is no English. The rule is meant to open space for everyone to try and use Icelandic without judgment and without the temptation to revert to English.

Connect: You have people from around the world joining in – how do you manage the sessions? Do you have a specific topic for each session or is it free flowing?

Rikki: We have a number of potential activities listed on our website: *Dagbækur* (Icelandic journals), reading from www.ruv.is/audskilid, *Ein mynd á dag* (explain a photograph in Icelandic), reading from a YA novel, or working from the workbook *Íslenska Fyrir Alla*. However, as people get to know each other, normal conversation just takes over.

Connect: How do people join into the conversation? Is there a minimum level of language competency required?



Rikki: The group collectively sits around an upper-beginner (A2) to lower-intermediate (B1) levels. It's not a place to start from scratch but you don't have to have your declension tables mastered. We all make mistakes; we're all learning. To join in or learn more see, <https://icelandchicago.org/icelandic-language-practice-group/>

Connect: What are some of the challenges that you have overcome with this?

Rikki: Seasonal time changes throw off schedules. Sometimes work responsibilities bleed into this time forcing me to hand off the zoom call to the first person that shows up after me.

Connect: How may people contact you with any additional questions?

Rikki: It's a group effort. See our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/IcelandicAssociationChicago>) or our website (<https://icelandchicago.org>).

Note: If your Icelandic language skills aren't quite at the A2 level to join in the *Ekki Ensku* sessions, be sure to check out the Icelandic language classes INLUS offers. See the article below:

Leap Into Icelandic

Whether you want to give yourself or someone else a *Jólagjóf* (Christmas gift) or perhaps want to make learning Icelandic a New Year's resolution, here's your opportunity!

We are rolling out another series of Icelandic classes starting the week of January 22, 2024. Classes last for six weeks and are presented live via Zoom for one hour each week. The registration fee for the whole series is just \$60. Classes start at 8PM Eastern, 7PM Central, 6PM Mountain and 5PM Pacific time.

Beyond class time, our instructors are at-the-ready with support and additional language insights, including all classes being recorded in case you have to miss a class or just want to repeat a session.

Over the past three years, we've supported over 200 individuals from across the globe to learn and advance their Icelandic language knowledge. Our classes start with Basic 1.0 level class that is a wonderful, well-paced, low-pressure introduction to the often skipped over all-important mechanics of the language.

Beyond that level, we offer a 1.5 and 2.0 level, and this January we're introducing a new 2.5 even more advanced class. The more advanced classes allow students more of an opportunity to safely practice some of the key lesson points verbally.

Check out our class descriptions at this webpage: [Language Classes January 2024 – Icelandic National League \(inlus.org\)](https://inlus.org/language-classes-january-2024)

Classes fill-up quickly, so register early. The first Basic 1.0 level class is limited to 25 students and the other classes are limited to 10 students.

If you have any questions, reach out to our language classes coordinator, David Johnson, at david@inlus.org.

Check out all the recent INLUS webinars on our webinar page:

Including “Discover Your Immigration Story with Icelandic Roots:



Snorri Sturluson—Tale Weaver of Iceland

By David Johnson

Ann Hoekstra is the author of a fine new book called *Snorri Sturluson: The Tale-Weaver of Iceland*. It's a beautifully illustrated and magically told story about Snorri Sturluson (1170–1241 AD) who became Iceland's premier historian, poet and politician of his day. If not for his prolific writings, we wouldn't know much today about the history of Iceland or the intriguing stories of Scandinavian royals, adventures and conquests.

Ann Hoekstra, has a deep connection to Iceland, having visited many times. Falling in love with the stories told in this mystical land, Ann Hoekstra became captivated by Snorri Sturluson, the weaver of Icelandic tales. Through Snorri, Ann discovered the magic that lies within each story, a magic that inspired her to delve into the world of art during the challenges of the Covid era.



Her story begins with Snorri as a young boy at the knees of his grandmother mother learning the oral tales, traditions and genealogies passed down through the generations. With every page, you'll witness Snorri's journey from a dreamy-eyed boy to a renowned storyteller and the creation of his masterpiece, the *Edda* – a treasury of myths, gods, heroes, and legends that have fascinated readers for generations.

It's also presented as a story in both English and Icelandic languages on the same page which presents Icelandic language learners a great opportunity to analyze the Icelandic words alongside the English.

Ann's new book is available for a mere \$12 USD at this Amazon webpage: <https://a.co/d/60aO7u3>

On November 28th, Ann presented a live Author's Corner webinar event for the INLUS where she talked about the inspiration and mechanics of making this book. If you missed it, all our Author's Corner and other educational webinar events are available for replay on this INLUS webpage:

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

The book is aimed at young readers ages 5 – 10, so it would make a wonderful Christmas gift for youngsters who are of Icelandic descent or those whose families have strong ties to Iceland. But I'd venture to say it's an inspiring story for adults too.



INLUS president Dianne O'Konski adds her stitches to Njal's tapestry as (L-R) project creators Gunnhildur Edda Kristjánsdóttir and Christina M. Bengtsson look on.

Thank You

Two little words but being said from the heart – Thank You. My two-year term as President of the INLUS stretched into two terms due to the pandemic. The INLUS grew from an idea to an actual organization under the leadership of Sunna Furstenau in early 2019. I took over from Sunna in late 2019, and the last four years have been an amazing experience. Thank you to the INLUS Board members, past and present, who have poured themselves into making the INLUS a connection point for all things Icelandic.

Thank you for all your ideas, effort, and perseverance in getting the INLUS to this point.

Most of all, I want to thank the INLUS members. Without you, the INLUS would still be an idea. Your support has made it possible to offer scholarships and grants which build and maintain the ties between the US and Iceland. Your ideas for webinars have given us a library full of interesting interviews and programs which continues to grow. The INLUS Icelandic language classes are going strong, as is the INLUS Reading Group. We rely on you for ideas and encouragement – keep them coming!

There are many Icelanders, those of Icelandic descent, and those interested in Iceland who have not yet heard of the INLUS. Spread the word so that we can expand our programs, scholarships, and grants!

And, as with many non-profit organizations, volunteers are always needed. Whether you can volunteer with the INLUS a few hours a year, or something more frequently, your contributions are welcome!

Thank you all so much!

Dianne O'Konski

Know of an event in your area that would be of interest to the INLUS community?

Send news, photos and stories to:

info@inlus.org

Winter Events

Local Icelandic Clubs are hosting a number of events from monthly meet-ups to special Winter holiday gatherings. Here are a few of the offerings appearing in the next few days to few months.

The Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club of Calgary just held their **Annual Icelandic Yuletide Celebrations** Saturday, November 25, but there are more events lining up across the continent. If there is an event in your area, check 'em out!

Jólabarnaball and Nordic Nook – Icelandic Hekla Club, Sunday, December 3, 2023, noon – 3:00 pm, Danish American Center [Website Link](#)

Jólaball – Christmas Festival of the Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle. Get into the festive spirit at our Jólaball on Sunday, December 3. We'll have traditional Icelandic Christmas decorations, live music, dancing, and mouthwatering snacks. Bring your family and friends along to celebrate the holiday season the Icelandic way! [Website Link](#)

Yule Lads Breakfast December 9, 10 am – Icelandic Assn of Utah. Enjoy Icelandic pancakes, a book swap, Icelandic store and Yule Lad hijinks. [Website Link](#)

Þorrablot 2024—Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle. Our Þorrablot celebration is on Saturday, February 10, 2024. Join us for an unforgettable experience of the unique Icelandic winter tradition of Þorrablot, which includes traditional Icelandic food, music, and dancing. This event is a must-attend for anyone who wishes to be fully immersed in Icelandic culture! [Website Link](#)

Þorrablot on February 24th, 2024 at the Mountain Community Center. Social Hour with appetizers of traditional Icelandic Þorri foods, Buffet Supper (Icelandic cod or Chicken and sides, rulluppylsa/hangikjot on brown bread) and traditional desserts. Door prizes, entertainment, Live and Silent Auctions, raffle. Proceeds to benefit the Snorri Scholarship and local Icelandic heritage projects. [Facebook Page Link](#)



125 Years?

Yep!

The Deuce of August will be launching it's 125th celebration in 2024. Mark your calendar and be sure to attend August 2, 3, and 4, 2024 in Mountain, North Dakota.

Organizers are planning all the usual events plus a few extras because it's not every-day an Icelandic institution achieves such a milestone.

www.INLUS.org

info@inlus.org

2843 27th St S

Fargo ND 58103

