



# Connect

INLUS is Five Years Old!

Winter 2024



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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.

## Enjoy *Skammdegi*—The Short Days of Winter

We are in the depths of the Icelandic winter months having passed through *Gormánuður*, to now live in *Ýlir* as we anticipate moving into *Mörsugur* and *Þorri*. This edition of *Connect* brings tales from this past summer and notice of some future *Þorri* celebrations to warm our winter days and nights.

*Glesileg jól*



The INLUS wishes you a  
Happy and Healthy  
Holiday Season  
And a Prosperous  
New Year.



INLUS.org

## INLUS President's Year-End Report

By Doug Hanson

This year I have visited several local Icelandic group events across the country. These events provide a unique opportunity to meet fellow Icelanders and also to expose the general public to Icelandic heritage and culture. (Cont. on p. 2)

## Connect

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Rob Olason, Vice-president

Dianne O'Konski, Past-president

David Johnson, Treasurer

Dísa Guðjónsdóttir,  
Secretary

Lauren Fields, Board member

(Cont. from p. 1) I really enjoy meeting with local Icelandic groups and members at their events and I encourage everyone to attend a local club event, if possible. Check the INLUS calendar for some possibilities.

An important mission objective of INLUS is to promote, encourage, connect and support local Icelandic organizations all across the USA. We recently renewed our Club Leaders' Forum where local club leaders can share their challenges and best practices as they work to sustain their groups in a challenging environment.

We are all more successful when we support one another.

Are you active in your local Icelandic club?

Do you want to create an Icelandic group in your area?

INLUS can help – please reach out to us via email at [info@inlus.org](mailto:info@inlus.org)

Happy Holidays and I hope to see many of you in the new year, either in person or via one of our online offerings.



L-R: Lauren Fields, INLUS Board member; Doug Hanson, INLUS President; Alicia Bjornson, INLUS volunteer. They attended the annual Christmas Bazaar hosted by the Icelandic Association of D.C.

## INLUS Receives Heritage Grant From Icelandic Roots

On November 11, 2024, the Icelandic National League of the United States (INLUS) received a \$2500 Heritage grant from Icelandic Roots. The grant was made to help fund many of the initiatives the INLUS engages in that support Icelandic heritage and culture in the United States.

Sunna Furstenau, President of Icelandic Roots (IR), said the grant recognizes the unique contributions the INLUS makes in this effort. She cited the example of the growing and robust Icelandic language classes that are attracting students from across the nation who want to learn the Icelandic language as a way to better understand Iceland and its people.

Doug Hanson, INLUS President, added that the grant will help ensure funding for future initiatives such as local Icelandic organizations and projects in the USA.

Furstenau applauded the work of the INLUS as being complimentary to the mission of Icelandic Roots.

She said the INLUS is able to support cultural events and activities or assist local clubs in boosting their membership for club events.

"There are numerous opportunities for growth in the INLUS," Furstenau stated. "From the beginning, Icelandic Roots has supported the mission of the INLUS. By focusing both the INLUS and Icelandic Roots on different tasks and areas of work, we can expand our reach and effectively utilize our resources. This will maximize Icelandic collaboration and community connections to help us achieve more of our shared goals."

Learn more about Icelandic Roots at: [icelandicroots.com](http://icelandicroots.com)



## January Icelandic Language Classes

Over 200 language learners have enjoyed Icelandic classes sponsored by INLUS over the past four years. The classes are low-pressure and fun yet informative and challenging, taught by two experienced teachers.

Each class runs for six weeks, with a one-hour live class each week. Total cost is \$60 – just \$10 per class. Classes are held via Zoom and recorded for later watching if desired. Students are also given access to a document folder for class materials and an on-line closed group forum that facilitates communication within each class.

Classes for the first level class start on Thursday, January 9, 2025 and go through Thursday, February 13th. Even if you know a little bit about Icelandic, this is an excellent and still challenging place to start.

The next three levels of classes will also be offered starting the week of January 20th on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

For more information about classes and to register for a class, please visit our website at <https://inlus.org/travel-culture/icelandic-language/language-classes-jan-2025/>

Contact David Johnson with any questions at [david@inlus.org](mailto:david@inlus.org).

<b>LEARN</b>		
REGISTRATION NOW OPEN	 ICELANDIC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF THE UNITED STATES	CLASSES START IN JANUARY 2025
<b>ICELANDIC</b>		



Did you catch the latest INLUS webinar on Icelandic Cuisine?

Check out the DIY Skyr demonstration.

Now streaming on the INLUS YouTube channel.

[Click to View](#)

And when you're at the channel, be sure to hit that subscribe button! Thanks!

# Icelandic Hekla Club Turns 100

By Dianne O'Konski

Seventeen women of Icelandic descent met on January 30, 1925 in Minneapolis with the goal of forming an Icelandic social club. The initial guidelines were that members must be married and must be full-blooded Icelandic. Membership was by invitation only. Many guidelines changed

throughout the century: members could be part Icelandic, they did not need to be from the Minnesota, MN area, they did not need to be married, they did not need to be Icelandic at all, and in 2015, men were welcomed to join as full members.

One cannot guess how many *kleinar*, *vínarterta*, and *pönnukökur* have been served at monthly meetings and card parties, or to visiting dignitaries and choirs. Hekla's annual *Samkoma* started in 1926 with sandwiches, coffee, doughnuts, cake and ice cream served for 150 attendees. For the last 30 years or so, the meal has been catered to allow all members to enjoy the event.

Christmas parties, until 1997, were members-only affairs. Now, it is a *Jólabarnaball*, a children's Christmas party, open to everyone with singing and dancing around the Christmas tree, *Jólasveinar*, (the Yule Lads) and enough food brought by the attendees to feed an army.

Through the years, the Hekla Club has supported the North American Icelandic community. Several members attended the 1934 Millennial celebration of the *Althing* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and the club has donated to the Thor Thors Fund and to *Íslendingadagurinn*.

Donations were also made directly to Iceland in support of disaster relief.

In 1982, the University of Minnesota and the University of Iceland formed the Minnesota-Iceland Exchange. Along with it was the Val Bjornson Icelandic Exchange Scholarship program to help with the exchange student's living expenses. Hekla has been a donor to that program since the beginning and is a member of the President's Circle at the University of Minnesota.

The one thing that has not changed through the years is that the members support each other and the Icelandic community. In the early days, cards and flowers were given to those who were ill, showers thrown for women getting married or having babies, and many cards were sent out to the Icelandic community at Christmas and Easter. The Hekla Club is very proud that we were able to provide support through food, clothing, and home maintenance for many years so that a family could be kept together after the mother died. That same sense of community lives on today.

In today's environment, growing the membership in clubs is becoming more difficult. People's lives have gotten more complex. We cannot foresee how long the Hekla Club will survive, but the first 100 years has been testament to the Icelandic spirit.



# Making Peace With *þetta reddast*

By Codi Shogren

My name is Codi and I am from Minnesota. My great-great-grandmother immigrated to Minnesota, Minnesota from Iceland and married a man whose parents moved to Minnesota from Iceland. Thanks to the two of them, I am one eighth Icelandic which qualified me for the Summer 2024 Snorri program. Previously in my life, I have explored other languages and cultures through language immersion summer camps, exchange programs, and traditional language courses in a classroom setting. The five weeks of Snorri proved to be different from any prior experience and brought both expected and unexpected learning challenges.

The biggest challenge for me was learning to embrace the Icelandic phrase *þetta reddast* which roughly translates to: everything will work out



**The 2024 Snorri Participants on their Iceland adventure tour.**

in the end. I like to know what is going on: when something is going to happen, how it will take place, who will make it happen, and when it will all stop. That is not necessarily how Icelandic culture functions.

Throughout the first week I think I heard *þetta reddast* maybe twenty to thirty times, and frequently as a response to a question I had about an itinerary, or a housing placement, or a volunteer placement, or even the weather. Slowly I learned that I needed to chill out, be more present, and just trust that what needed to happen would happen.

Week one and two of the program filled my heart (and my Instagram) with joyful moments of living in the present. I met the other 14 Snorris, including the three incredible women with whom I shared a room and bunk beds.

After getting off the airplane, we dropped our bags and picked up our suits for a relaxing afternoon at the national pool.



**Cody Shogren at  
*Bessastaðir*, the official  
residence of the  
President of Iceland.**



Codi and Inga volunteered together at 66North during their homestay portion of the Snorri Program.

The 15 of us followed in previous Snorris' footsteps in both meeting the sitting president of Iceland and in our love of frequently tasting ice cream.

Other classic Reykjavík activities included eating *pylsa* (Icelandic hotdogs with the special sauce), a trip to Bónus, going up into the steeple of *Hallgrímskirkja* to look out and hear the bells, drinking *Kókomjólk*, taking the public transport, hiking Mt. Esja, enjoying spa time (Sky Lagoon), and visiting many many museums. Then it was time to take buses, ferries, and cars to meet our host families.

Daily life with my host family was one of my favorite parts of Snorri because I got to be a part of their family and pretend that I actually lived in Iceland full time. I lived with my mom's third cousin, Margaret, and her family in *Hafnarfjörður*. In addition to the family in the house, her daughter lived a street over with her family. Between the two households there were also two dogs which I was delighted to hang out with. I even got to join my fourth cousin (an 11 year old bilingual boy who loves soccer and kindly took pity on me and became my tour guide and translator) on a few walks and I am forever thankful to him. I also got to help make Icelandic pancakes, play uno, hike another mountain, hang out with a group of funny and strong Icelandic women, and watch multiple Euro cup games. I didn't grow up in a big sports family so getting to watch soccer with my host cousin's husband and two young boy cousins was really fun because they were full of enthusiasm and knowledge about the games. They were also not always cheering for the same team. I didn't have a nice laid out itinerary for how the home stay would go, but I wouldn't change a thing about it.



Codi with her Icelandic cousins and their dogs after hiking up *Helgafell*

The final part of the Snorri Program was an adventure tour in the Westfjords. Reuniting with my fellow Snorris was exhilarating with all of us full of stories to share from our time spread out around the country. I was lucky enough to enjoy more unplanned moments of excitement and peace on the adventure tour. One evening a bunch of us ran down to the shore of a fjord to watch whales during their feeding. Another time we all went swimming in a hot spring after horseback riding. Of course the sunsets each night took my breath away. Luckily, we had consistently beautiful weather. Though I did buy myself a really nice rain jacket, we didn't experience those sideways windy and rainy days of Iceland until the end of our trip. These moments were all worth

waiting for and most of them happened beyond the explicitly planned itinerary.

In Iceland I had to set aside what can feel like a constant need to plan for the future and just enjoy the nature and the people around me. I guess I learned to trust *þetta reddast* but being only one eighth Icelandic, I still think that

order for everything to work out, sometimes it takes a little help.

This five week island adventure would not have been possible without scholarships from Icelandic Roots, INLUS, the Fargo–Moorhead Icelandic Klubb, the Guttormsson Memorial Scholarship, and the Icelandic Hekla Club. I would also like to thank the Icelandic women in my family who encouraged me to apply for the program which helped me travel to Iceland for the first time and to make connections with so many new people.

*Don't be a tourist. Be a Snorri.*

**Snorri 2025**  
Who: Canadians and Americans of Icelandic descent, ages 20–30  
When: June 14 – July 21

**Snorri Plus 2025**  
Who: Anyone 30+ – individuals, couples, family groups  
When: Aug 17 – Sept 1

Apply by January 13!

[www.snorri.is](http://www.snorri.is)

**THE SNORRI PROGRAMS**

Applications are now open for Snorri and Snorri Plus 2025. Program dates have been confirmed and can be found on the [Snorri website](http://www.snorri.is), along with links to the application forms.

Snorri Program for North Americans of Icelandic descent ages 20 – 30 provides five weeks in Iceland. The summer 2025 Snorri Adventure Tour explore the south coast and the Westman Islands before heading north to Hofsós. The tour continues by circling Snæfellsnes before returning to the capital region. Participants arrive in Iceland early morning June 14, depart July 21. Application deadline is January 13, 2025.

Snorri Plus Program for anyone over the age of 30 to travel to Iceland as individuals, couples, or families, there is no requirement to be of Icelandic descent. The week-long Adventure Tour includes a visit to Northeast, North and Western Iceland. Participants arrive in Iceland early morning August 17 and depart September 1. Application deadline January 13, 2025.

Snorri Alumni Internship is available to previous North American Snorri participants, one Canadian and one American. The interns will spend up to 12 weeks of the summer in Iceland assisting at the Iceland Emigration center in Hofsos. The application deadline is January 6, 2025.

Application forms are online at [www.snorri.is](http://www.snorri.is)

**GEFUM  
ÍSLENSKU  
SÉNS  
í Chicago**

INLUS member Rikki has created an additional online opportunity to practice using your Icelandic language skills.

Details at:

[Icelandic Practice Groups Online and In Person – Icelandic Association of Chicago \(\[icelandchicago.org\]\(http://icelandchicago.org\)\)](http://www.snorri.is)



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](mailto:info@inlus.org)

## North American Club Events

December 7 – Annual Breakfast with the Yule Lads in Spanish Fork, Utah. Tickets available at [Home | Icelandic Association Of Utah](#)

Dec 8 – Icelandic Hekla Club’s *Jólabarnaball*, DAC Dining Room and Danebo Lounge, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Club website: [Icelandic Hekla Club](#)

December 8 – The Icelandic Klub of Fargo/Moorhead’s 45th annual Christmas Gathering Sunday December 8 at 2 pm at Broadway Station (1461 Broadway, Fargo, ND) in Fargo. Bring a plate of goodies to share, Klub will provide *rúllupylsa* and smoked salmon appetizers, hot chocolate. Entertainment by club member, Tor Kartenson on guitar and singing some Icelandic songs. He will also lead us in Silent Night in Icelandic.

December 15 – Icelandic Association of Colorado’s *Litlu jólin* or little Christmas celebration. Email contact: [icelandcolorado@gmail.com](mailto:icelandcolorado@gmail.com)

January 10–12 and Jan. 16–18 – Icelandic Hekla Club: Nordic Soundscapes, Festival, Orchestra Hall, 1111 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, MN 55403 <https://www.minnesotaorchestra.org/tickets/calendar/calendar>

January 18 – Icelandic Hekla Club: Nancy Johnson presents her photo shoot of *Laufskálarétt* 2024, the world-famous annual horse roundup in Skagafjörður, Northern Iceland. DAC Danebo Lounge, Saturday, 10:30 a.m.

### Þorablót 2025:

February 8 – Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle’s Þorablót, 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM. Seattle, 2655 NW Market St, Seattle, WA. Website: [Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle](#)

February 15 – Icelandic Association of Utah’s Þorablót. 6–8 pm, Ponderosa Room, Spanish Forks Fairground. [Website](#)

February 22 – Icelandic Communities Association’s 12th Annual Þorablót Saturday, Mountain Community Center, North Dakota. Social Hour: 5–6:30 pm, Supper 6:30 pm Tickets: \$40.00. Door Prizes, Entertainment, Silent & Live Auction Raffle Drawing: 1st Prize \$500 cash, 2nd Prize \$250 cash. Proceeds benefit the Snorri Scholarship and local Icelandic heritage projects.

## Passionate About Icelandic Culture?

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 Here to Join!](#)



# An Unforgettable Experience



By Dianne O’Konski

For many years I’ve heard about the Snorri Plus program. It is a two-week experience in Iceland for people over 30. I decided this is the year to do it, and it was unforgettable.

Eleven North Americans met in *Reykjavík* in late August to begin a week of learning. The days were filled with speakers on a wide variety of topics such as Iceland’s political system, volcanology, and Icelandic folklore. In total, we had ten classes over four days.

Not all learning was done in the classroom, however. We also toured the Parliament building, the U.S. Embassy, and ate a traditional Icelandic meal in a home environment.



Another trip took us to *Bessastaðir*, the President’s residence, where we were the first group to meet with President Halla Tómasdóttir, a true honor. One day was devoted to a workplace/hobby visit where each of us met Icelanders to see and learn about the work they do and compare it to our jobs or hobbies.

On our last day in Reykjavik, we had the opportunity to participate in the Reykjavik Marathon and Culture Night. Needless to say, we were kept busy over those seven days!

L-R: Iceland’s President, Halla Tómasdóttir and Dianne O’Konski



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With topics ranging from Sagas, Volcanoes, and Iceland Travel to Yule Lads, Making Mead or Chocolate Icelandic Easter Eggs or finding your next book about Iceland, there is a video topic for everyone!

[Webinars – Icelandic National League](#)



Our second week was spent touring North Iceland. The tour routes may change each year based on the participants.



**The view from Hótel Á**

The weather was very cool (48-52 F for highs) but was mostly dry. We stayed at farms, hotels, and houses through the week and had many stops along the way. The Icelandic Emigration Center in Hofsós was an obvious visit, and we were warmly welcomed. We also made good use of the town's beautiful pools. We made our way to Akureyri which served as our home base for two days. A dip in the new Forest Lagoon spa was much



**The Christmas Store in Akureyri**

appreciated. As we went into the later part of the week, the weather started to turn, and not in a good way. We made it as far east as *Mývatn* but had to forego a trip to Husavík due to the wind and rain. We all got a good soaking while exploring the geothermic areas around the lake. Our project managers were amazing at finding substitutions for us and we never felt like we had missed out on anything.

Our last night was spent in *Kópavogur* where we had a farewell dinner and met with many of the Snorri Board members.

A huge thank you to the Snorri Plus program managers, Julie Summers and Atli Geir Halldórsson, and our wonderful bus driver, Erlendur Ólafsson. They made sure our experience was memorable and once-in-a-lifetime.

Participation in the Snorri Plus program does not require Icelandic ancestry. Applications for the Snorri programs, Snorri for North Americans 20–30 years of age and Snorri Plus for those over 30, are being accepted now and are due by January 13, 2025. Information on the programs and the application form are found at [www.snorri.is](http://www.snorri.is).

## Icelandic Association of Colorado Activities

By Erla Erlingsdóttir



### The Colorado knitting/sewing club met in November

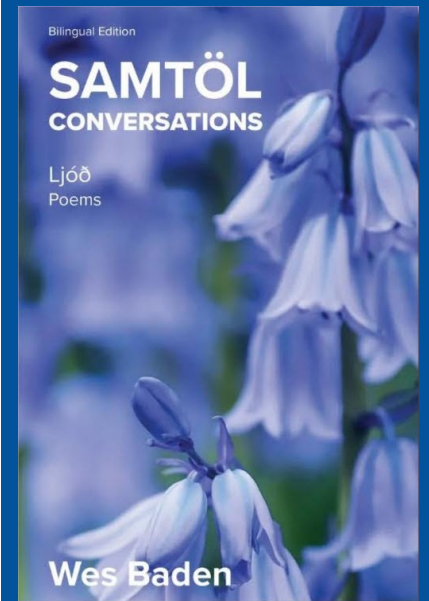
Last month our Honorary Consul Inga Mæja Stefansdóttir invited us to her annual Icelandic hot dog party which was very well attended, and great fun as always. We had wonderful weather and of course lots of hot dogs and more.

Our knitting/sewing club in Colorado, had a meet-up at Ikea the first weekend in November. It was really fun catching up with each other in the cafeteria, and then wandering through the store of course.

Our first Christmas event is coming up on December 15th, *Litlu jólin* or little Christmas. The event will be graciously hosted by Hjördís Schultz at her home in Lone Tree, Colorado. We will have fun traditional crafts for the kids, and lots of traditional Christmas foods like rjómaterta, marengs, smurt brauð and more.

We are also planning to do a Happy Hour on *Bóndadaginn* January 24th, 2025. Icelandic Association of Colorado is the newest INLUS club, forming in April 2024.

In Colorado? Contact the club at [icelandcolorado@gmail.com](mailto:icelandcolorado@gmail.com)



### BILINGUAL ICELANDIC-ENGLISH POETRY

Are you looking for that special book to buy for an Icelandic friend, or maybe even get for yourself, during *Jólabókaflóð*?

INLUS member Wes Baden has just written *SAMTÖL CONVERSATIONS*, a bilingual Icelandic-English book of poetry, available in the U.S.

Order online at:

[wesbaden.com](http://wesbaden.com)

Free shipping is included within the U.S. .

*Gleðileg jól og farsælt komandi ár!*

# Just For Fun...

Do you like *vínarterta*?

Do you make it?

Is it a tradition in your family or for the holidays?

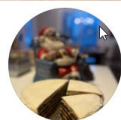
If *vínarterta* has a special meaning for you, there is a place you should check out online.

Icelandic Roots has sponsored a gathering spot for fans of *vínarterta* to *gush* about their favorite food.

The site is on Facebook and is called "[The Twelve Thousand \*Vínartertas\* of Christmas.](#)" The Icelandic Roots *Vínarterta* Research Center (IRVRC) estimates this is the number of *vínartertas* created world-wide each year. The goal of the Facebook page is to gather photos of each and every *vínarterta* created this year.

Not on Facebook? Send your *vínarterta* stories and photos to [vínarterta@icelandicroots.com](mailto:vínarterta@icelandicroots.com) and they will post them for you.

When you just can't get enough *vínarterta*, join the hundreds of other fans who are sharing their thoughts, pictures, hopes, dreams, and even videos about this one item of Icelandic cuisine that has firmly embedded itself in the hearts of Western Icelanders.



**The Twelve Thousand *Vínartertas* of Christmas**

211 likes • 248 followers

Following

Message

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# Parting Shots

The 2024 Snorri Program provided many glimpses of Iceland and North Americans enjoying their time in Iceland.



Codi Shogren with fellow Snorri participant Ty on a horseback ride in Heydalur one fine summer day.



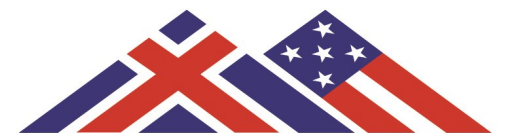
The Snorri Plus visit to Eriksstaðir.

[www.INLUS.org](http://www.INLUS.org)

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