



# Connect

*INLUS is Six Years Old!* Spring 2025



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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.



Spend any time in Iceland and the beautiful landscape will enchant you. Capturing that magic of Iceland in Summer is the focus of the first ever INLUS photo contest.

The theme of the contest is Summer Scenes in Iceland and we want you to look through your photos from any trip you took to Iceland and submit any and all images that you feel convey the beauty of Iceland, its landscapes, its seascapes, its wildlife, its people.

The contest starts March 1. You can submit your favorite photos during the next three weeks, but all photos need to be submitted before March 23. The INLUS social media team will select the top photos for the voting phase and will open up voting on March 30 and keep voting open for two weeks. April 13: The votes will be tabulated and we will announce the top three photos selected by the voting public.

**[Get all the contest details on the INLUS website.](#)** And in the meantime, take a trip back to Iceland by looking through the photos you took and find a few to enter into the Summer in Iceland photo contest!

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## INLUS Language Classes: Learn Icelandic

If you have been meaning to brush up on your Icelandic language skills or don't *have* any but want to start learning in 2025, the INLUS has an opportunity for you. The classes that began in January are finishing and the following classes are now registering:

Basic 1.5: Begins Monday, March 31st

Basic 2.0: Begins Tuesday, April 1st

Basic 2.5: Begins Wednesday, April 2nd.

All these are taught by Birna and each section run six weeks.

Basic 1.0: Begins Thursday, April 24th. This intro class will be taught by David Johnson and runs six weeks.

The classes are online and taught in a relaxed setting. The class is recorded so you can review previous lessons. And these are some of the most affordable Icelandic language classes available. Tuition for each course is only \$60.

Registration link:

[Language Classes January 2025 – Icelandic National League](#)



# LEARN ICELANDIC

Registration Is Now Open

<https://inlus.org/travel-culture/icelandic-language/>

# Going Home With the Snorri Program

by Diann Barbacci

My personal Snorri story is a bit unusual from the rest of the Snorri participants, in the fact that I was born and raised in Iceland. After moving to the US at the young age of 10, many subsequent summers were spent traveling back "home" with Mom (Alda) to visit Amma and Afi and the rest of the family. Mom made sure we all kept speaking Icelandic so transitioning on family visits was quite easy. However, we did not attend school in the Icelandic school system. Instead, we attended the NATO school on base. Although I do read Icelandic, I am a more proficient speaker of the language.

Our Father, John Barbacci, was stationed in Iceland during WWII. After spending a little more than 2 years in Iceland during the war, he went home to Pennsylvania when the war was over. After the war, with his aircraft mechanical knowledge he quickly found a job with Lockheed airlines. This job took him to France for a year. At the conclusion of that year, he was asked if he would like to continue working but return to the NATO base in Iceland and work there.

It is on Dad's return to Iceland that he met Alda. After the NATO base was built, commercial air travel began in Iceland. American Airlines began flying to Iceland and my mother worked as a waitress at the American Airlines café up on base. They met at the café as Dad was a prolific coffee drinker! Dad transitioned to working with the US Department of Defense as a civilian contractor. Mom and Dad were married and raised our family all the while living off base with my grandparents for 20 years.

Both of my parents are now buried in Iceland. My grandfather was once asked "What it was like having an American as a son-in-law?" His response, "He is the best there is."

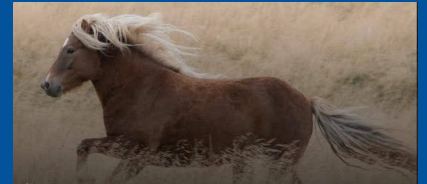
Needless to say, we all had a close relationship with my grandparents. It was his dying wish to be buried at the foot of their grave. Dad passed away in 2015, but it was not until 2017 when my Aunt Jona passed, that we took his ashes to Iceland. Mom passed in 2020, two months before the pandemic lockdown, so we waited until 2022 to bury her ashes alongside Dad.

(Continued on next page)



Diann's parent's grave in Iceland

## The Next INLUS Webinar: *Photographing The Horse Réttir*



Photographer Nancy Johnson and artist Gail Murton share their photos and adventures photographing the 2024 Réttir in Skagafjörður in Northern Iceland.

Join us on Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 8:00 PM Eastern for a webinar that is a feast for the eyes!

Find the Webinar link on our [Event Calendar](#).

I have been working on a family book about my parents' time in Iceland for a while. As my Icelandic cousin Birna once said to me. You must tell the story, "*þetta deyr með þér.*" Being the youngest, "it dies with me."

So, my Snorri journey began during my Mom's funeral. For it was at Mom's funeral that my cousin Mágnea started telling me the story about our great uncle Óli who emigrated to Canada. This was all news to me, but I promised her I would find a living relative. Not only have I found some relatives, but we have also met in Canada! Mágnea shared that my great grandfather Konráð would often say how he regretted not finding his brother. Well we have now come full circle.

It was during my family research, I came across the Icelandic Roots database as well as the Snorri Program. While only scratching the surface, the Snorri program allowed me to delve deeper into Icelandic history and gain a greater appreciation for the culture.



**Konráð Andrésón, (Óli's brother) (then left to right) along with my Afi Kristján, Aunt Magga and Uncle Valdi. Circa 1954.**



**Njarðvíkurkirkja, where Diann's parents are buried.**

# Happy Birthday Hekla Club!

By Dianne O’Konski  
Lakeville, MN



January 30th was a great day for a 100th birthday party. The weather was beautiful, not a given for the end of January in Minnesota, with a record-high temperature of 47° F, no snow, and no wind.



**The 2024–2025 Board: (Back Row) Elin Hansen, President; Jean Mendenhall, Treasurer; Dianne O’Konski, Senior Advisor; Nancy Johnson, Secretary; (Front Row) Maren Koncilja, Treasurer–Elect; Ann Hobbs, Past President; Kari Shogren, Vice President.**

(Story continues on next page)



**Honorary Consul to Iceland, Jeannie Entenza, read the Proclamation by Governor Tim Walz recognizing Icelandic Hekla Club Day.**

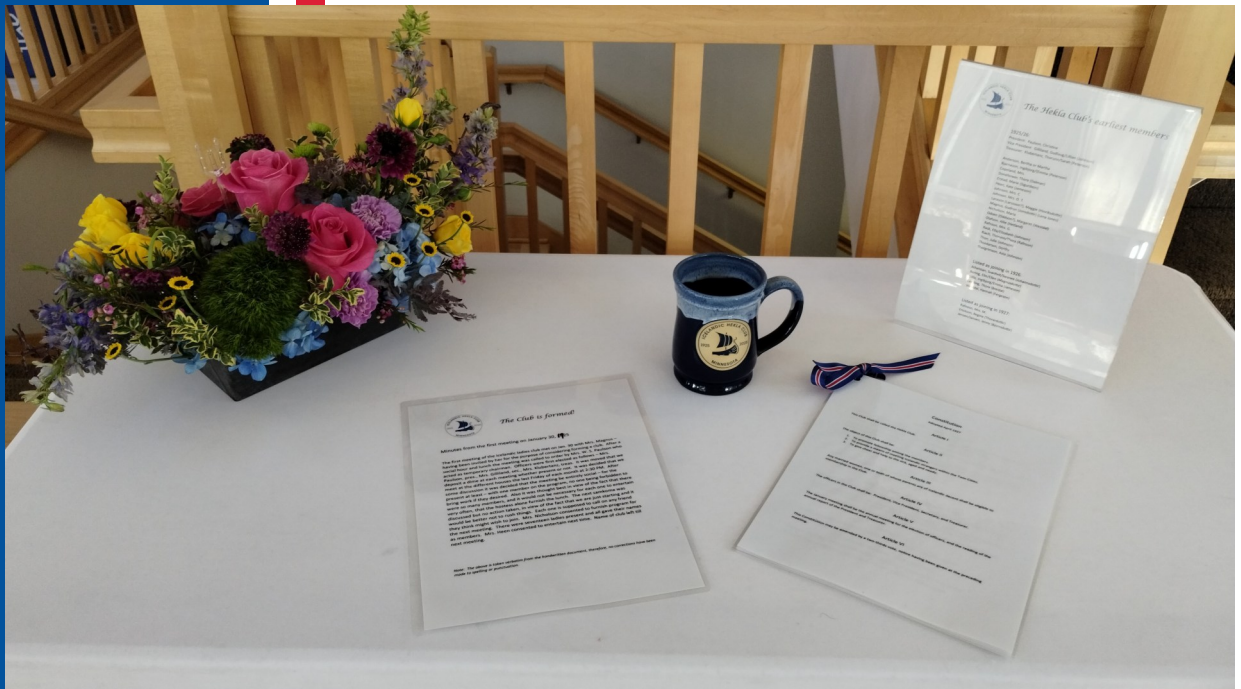


Proclamation by Governor Tim Walz declaring Icelandic Hekla Club Day



The Icelandic treats were delicious and plentiful.

The Icelandic Hekla Club of Minnesota had been planning for the centennial celebration year since late 2023, but the idea of a gathering on the founding date had been lukewarm, given the founding date of January 30th. Would anyone show up on a Thursday afternoon, and what if the weather doesn't cooperate? In the end, it was decided that we may regret not honoring the date when 17 women of Icelandic descent met at Mrs. Magus' home in 1925 and decided to form a club. In that first meeting, it was decided that the club would be solely social, meetings would consist of a program and lunch, and that members would pay ten cents per meeting whether they attended or not. The name of the club was established several months later, after the selection of Freya was thrown out and a second vote was taken two months



The tribute table with the minutes from the January 30, 1925 meeting, the 1927 constitution, a roster of the known members 1925-1927, and the club's 100th anniversary mug.

later with Hekla being chosen.

Over 40 people attended the 100th anniversary party – current and former members and friends. The glass enclosed atrium at the Danish American Center provided the perfect setting for the party. Of course, there were vinarterta, kleinur, and pönnukökur along with a beautiful cake and many other dishes. A tribute table displayed minutes from the first meeting, the first constitution in 1927, and a list of the documented members from that time.



**Ambassador of Iceland to the U.S. Svanhildur Valsdóttir sent greetings from the Icelandic Embassy.**

In a nod to the first meeting, this was a social event. Much of the three-hour party was spent visiting and catching up with other attendees. A video of member photos looped on a video screen which sparked many conversations and memories. A professional photographer captured the spirit of the day. Short remarks were made by President Elin Hansen and Honorary Consul to Iceland, Jeannie Entenza, read the Proclamation by Governor Tim Walz of Icelandic Hekla Club Day. A video of congratulations and comments made by Svanhildur Hólm Valsdóttir, Ambassador of Iceland to the United States, was played.

The Danish American Center was very supportive of the event. To honor the day, they raised the Icelandic flag alongside of the Danish and US flags. In addition, the librarian at the DAC published a document introducing Icelandic authors and books and various genres.

Throughout the day, Jody Arman-Jones posted updates on the Hekla Facebook page regarding the various people and events that have been part of the Hekla tapestry. Times have changed greatly since that first meeting and the Icelandic Hekla Club, so far, has been able to adapt and evolve. We hope that future generations of members have the same pride as we do today in what those 17 women started one hundred years ago.

**Article photos courtesy of Nancy Johnson, Jody Arman-Jones, Dianne O’Konski, and Lucie Photos.**



**The Icelandic flag flying proudly at the Danish American Center.**

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)



### Will You Celebrate *Bjórdagurinn*, Iceland's Beer Day?

March 1 is a very special day in Iceland for anyone who enjoys a good beer. On March 1, 1989, Iceland's prohibition on beer was lifted.

Before that day was celebrated as *Bjórdagurinn* (Beer Day), it was just another beer-less day in Iceland. In fact, Iceland's first beer-less day began with the country's passage of alcohol prohibition referendum in 1908. They had a few years to think about the impact of this vote because prohibition didn't go into effect until January 1, 1915.

After prohibition became a daily reality, prevailing thoughts on the subject began to change. One of the largest buyers of Icelandic fish, Spain, made plain that unless Iceland opened its borders to Spanish wine, Spain would buy its fish elsewhere.

This challenge led to an ingenious 1921 compromise: Iceland would modify the prohibition and start importing Spanish wine. By 1935 another national referendum allowed for sales of all spirits except for "strong beer" (2.25% or more alcohol content). This appeased the temperance forces at the time but was lamented by those who were willing to risk imbibing such strong beer.

As Icelanders began more international travel, the idea of legalizing beer began to grow. Fifty-four years after keeping the ban only on beer in place, Icelandic parliament put the question to a vote and ended the prohibition on March 1, 1989.

If you are in Seattle on March 1 this year, consider joining with members of the Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle at the Skál Beerhall in celebrating the anniversary of beer being legalized in Iceland.

Skál!



# Western Icelanders: Our Story, Our Legacy

INLUS and INLNA Joint Webinar Explores Icelandic Settlements of North America



Screencapture of the Utah Settlement presentation by Susan Huff

An intriguing series of webinars exploring Icelandic settlement history launched in 2025 with a look at the two oldest Icelandic communities in North America.

The U.S. based INLUS and Canada based INLNA (Icelandic National League of North America) jointly produced their first webinar by examining the two oldest settlements in each country. Susan Bearnsen Huff shares the story of the Westman Islands emigrants to Spanish Fork, Utah, the oldest continuous Icelandic settlement in North America, first settled in 1854.

Jay Lalonde talks about the settlement in Markland, Nova Scotia where a weary group of Icelandic emigrants arrived from the failed settlement in Kinmount, Ontario in 1875. He explores how their story was shaped by the local conditions and government policies. Markland was also deemed “another failed settlement” and many of the Icelanders moved west to join relatives in Manitoba, North Dakota, and Minnesota. However, a few stayed, and their descendants proudly formed the Icelandic Memorial Society of Nova Scotia.

The settlements in Utah and Nova Scotia reveal a less well-known history than the primary settlement stories of Icelanders settling in the prairies of Canada and the U.S.



[Click here to view the webinar](#)

Catch this first webinar in this series that explores the rich settlement history of the communities Icelanders joined across North America. More webinars will be produced over the next several years that tell the story of this broader continent wide settlement process.



*Explore the 50 plus videos in our growing library.*

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](#)



# The Traveling Tapestry Project Arrives in North America This Year

Claudia Pétursson has been working tirelessly to champion awareness of the 90 meter “Njal’s Saga” tapestry created in the tiny Icelandic community of Hvolsvöllur.



Started in 2013, the tapestry depicts the events in the famous Icelandic saga. Many of the events took place in the vicinity of Hvolsvöllur, near Vík on Iceland’s south coast. (see more on the project in the [winter 2023 Connect](#)). Claudia has made webinars on the tapestry for the INLUS and Icelandic Roots. [The INLUS Webinar is here.](#)

Now the small community is working to build a permanent home to display the large tapestry and has come up with an ingenious plan to spread the word.

A 15 meter “excerpt” from the larger tapestry was created so that it could be displayed in North American Icelandic settlement communities to show the craftsmanship of the project and share the unique artistry the tapestry represents.

Beginning in April 2025 Claudia will be bringing the tapestry on a tour across North America that concludes in late September. Several stops on the tour have already been scheduled. More stops will be added as the tour develops.

Touring Tapestry Schedule:

April 24–26, 2025: Minneapolis, MN [Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study Annual Conference](#)

May 1–4: Gimli, MB Icelandic National League of North America Convention

July 31–Aug 2: Mountain, ND [The Deuce of August Celebration](#)

Aug 3–4: Gimli, MB [Íslendingadagurinn](#)

Aug 6–13: Moorhead, MN – Historical Society of Clay County, Hjemkomst Center

Sept. 4–8: Rapid City, SD [Sons of Norway Lodge](#), St. Martin Village



Tapestry photos courtesy of Claudia Pétursson

## INLUS Turns Six Years Old!

Fresh on the heels of the Hekla club celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, the INLUS is also celebrating a birthday milestone. On March 2, 2019, the Icelandic National League of the United States (INLUS) was incorporated in North Dakota. The cofounders of the non-profit organization were Sunna Furstenau, Douglas Hanson, David Johnson, and Dianne O’Konski. The INLUS is an online, all-volunteer organization with the goal to heighten Icelandic cultural awareness and unity by building a vibrant community throughout the United States.

Happy sixth birthday INLUS!



### 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!](#)

## The Next Author’s Corner: *Intersecting Worlds*



**Professor of English and Author Jenna Grace Sciuto** explores the world portrayed by southern U.S. writers by comparing their views through the lens and world view of Icelandic literature.

Join the presentation on Tuesday, March 25th starting at 8 PM Eastern.

Details and link on the [INLUS Event Calendar](#).

# Views of Three 2025 Þorrablót Celebrations

The Icelandic Association of Utah, the Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle, and the Icelandic Communities Association of North Dakota all had large and fabulous þorrablót events during the month of Þorri. Friends gathered, the feast began and song and good times followed.



A full house in Utah listens to presentations.



Another full house in Seattle.



Hákarl (fermented shark) washed down with a shot of Brennivín.

Photos provided by the clubs. Thanks to Jeanne Bowen and Rick Mathews (Utah); Susan Sigurdson and Shirley J. Olgeirson (ICA); and Sölvi Sigmarsson (Seattle)



Passionate singing in Seattle's Nordic Museum.



Preparing cod and mashing the potatoes.



The sell out crowd in Mountain, ND waits for the announcement of this year's ICA Heritage Site Grant recipients.



The winning raffle ticket is drawn in Mountain.



The nine ICA Heritage Site Grant recipients.

## Club Updates

**Colorado Icelandic Association:** We had our first annual Christmas get together or *Litlu Jólin*, on December 15th. We had a great turn out and so much yummy food! Lots of familiar faces as well as many new ones.

On January 24th we celebrated *Bónda dagur* by getting together at a bowling alley for some fun.

Coming up we plan to get together for *Sumardaginn fyrsta* (First day of summer) which is April 24th, but we'll likely celebrate on the 26th when it is the weekend.

All our events and clubs are posted on our new site:  
[icelandersincolorado.com](http://icelandersincolorado.com)

**The Icelandic Klub of Fargo Moorhead** will be meeting at 6:30pm on Monday, March 3, 2025 at the Moorhead Public Library (Moorhead, MN), lower level for a business meeting and short program on *Bollardagur*.

**The Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle** celebrates *Bjórdagurinn* ("Beer Day" the beer ban was eventually lifted on the 1st of March in 1989) on March 1st, plus our regular *Fimmtudagsfjör* and *Sunnudagsspjall*.



Icelandic Klub The Icelandic Klub of Fargo Moorhead Christmas gathering on December 8, 2024. Tor Kartenson (on the right) and Jaeden Alverson who shared contemporary Icelandic music.



Icelandic Association of Colorado's *Litlu Jólin*, on December 15th was a houseful.

## INLUS Reports

Each year since our founding year in 2019, INLUS has published an Annual Report. Our 2024 Annual Report, like those of prior years, is an excellent snapshot of our financial position, the grants and scholarships we've funded, and the educational events we've hosted.

We encourage everyone to go to this webpage where our Annual Reports are housed. [Here is the link.](#)



### 2024 Annual Report

We encourage you to not only examine our recently completed 2024 Annual Report but also look at some of the prior years to see how far we've come in the past five years.

We'd also like to use this opportunity to thank those of you that support our work, both through our annual memberships of various kinds and through generous donations. With your financial support, our goals of providing scholarships, grants and promotions of all-things Icelandic are indeed possible.

Passing forward our own love of Iceland to others is what the INLUS is really all about.

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