



President's Report 2022 AGM:

Gwen Sigrid Morgan
Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto,
Annual General Meeting 2022
October 23, 2022 – 2pm Hybrid Meeting, Zoom Online & In-Person

Another year has passed and during this time the pandemic slipped into endemic status and the ICCT emerged from the virtual world back to real in-person events. The 2022 Thorraþlot – Together Again! – celebrated the turning point, where over 100 members and friends enjoyed Icelandic Hangikjot, roasted Svid and Harfiskur featured on a decorated Pagan Tabl, and Smoked salmon on delicious Icelandic Brown Bread, mingling and meeting old friends while listening to the soft jazz of a live band. The silent and live auctions were enjoyed by all and very successful in raising funds to support our key commitments to foster and support the bond with Iceland and our Icelandic heritage.

As President, Vice President and Treasurer, Gail Einarson-McCleery, Peter Norman and I set goals to bring the clubs records and governance back into order. Unfortunately Kathleen Muarry, our past president, became very ill during the pandemic, and given the isolation rules, much of our club records were lost, missing or needing to be reassembled. I have applied to Ontario Corporation for recovery of our files, updating information and have established the corporate office at Peter's home 130 Westmount Avenue Toronto. Peter can now receive the Company (online) Key from Ontario Corporation which has to be mailed (snail mail) out to the registered address. He had done this before but the registered address on file was a large law firm where the contact had long since retired and the letter got lost. Now the ICCT records will be kept up-to-date as required.

Peter created an ICCT Google Docs for sharing information. Peter also works hard keeping the website up-to-date, creating all those wonderful You-Tube videos of events. The ICCT could use help in updating historical records both online and in hard copy. All the Board and Committee minutes for the past couple of years have been placed online. Peter has also been collecting and organizing a lot of information here including historical documents and photographs. If you have materials – old photos, minutes etc. – please let us know. This annual report, with all its details, is a step to creating and maintaining the historical record. The Board position of Historian and Compliance is open and this is a focused job that is important to the Club so please do consider this position.

Gail updated all the job descriptions for the Board and some new positions reflecting modern times like directors of social media and technical advisor. The job descriptions are open for reviewing online and in print at the AGM and will be on the agenda for members to add their input and to offer to volunteer for. There may be some task that appeals to you whether on the Board or as part of a Committee. Every bit counts – and it's fun to learn about and celebrate all things Icelandic!

A very exciting project I have been working on all year is the republication of Betty Jane Wylie's Letters to Icelanders: Exploring the Northern Soul. Betty Jane donated the

copyright to the ICCT which can then be used as a fundraiser for supporting Snorri grants and Gimli camp grants to meet the ICCT goal of fostering and nurturing our connections with Iceland and our Icelandic heritage. The book will be ready to launch in time for Christmas Jolabokafloð. Thank you Betty Jane for the generous donation to the club and the continuing legacy of not only financial support but the knowledge of our Icelandic Canadian heritage. Her book contains a wealth of historical and useful information and inspirational wisdom. Reading it will make you proud of being a Western Icelander.

ONLINE EVENTS:

Most of the ICCT's regular programming continued in its online format. Nordic Nights, Saga Connections and the Book Club continued to be very successful online events. As the pandemic subsides, we have moved to in-person events, although people are still cautious about meeting up live. Below, I have highlighted, for the record, the titles and themes of what was offered and enjoyed by club members and friends who tuned in online from all across North America or attended one of our live events.

Nordic Nights Films:

This past year saw Katrine Handley Derry and Jack Dodds step in as the ICCT organizers and hosts of Nordic Nights. They continue to work with the Finnish Consulate, Laura McSwiggan and University of Toronto film professor Anu Muhonen to offer this joint program online. Gail Einarson-McCleery stepped down after many many years running the program, and Pierre Tremblay, professor at Ryerson Images retired from Nordic Nights after 10 years. I put together an Icelandic basket of delights from items I brought back from a summer trip to Iceland and delivered the basket and thank you to Pierre on behalf of the ICCT. We thank both Gail and Pierre for their many years of service bringing our members films on Nordic Nights.

Saga Connections, our online seminar series, hosted a series of diverse speakers. Fashion Designer and philanthropist Linda Lundström started the year off in September near the date of the first National Truth and Reconciliation Day with a call for us to read the official document and do one practical action to make reconciliation a reality. Linda created a Kiishik fund in 1989 for increasing awareness of Red Lake indigenous culture and a Sewing Circle (sewingcircle.org) to teach skills, create jobs and encourage entrepreneurship. ICCT's former Falkinn editor Natalie Guttormsson came on to talk about Folklore, Stephen Bright and Joe Martin gave a fascinating history of Icelandic - Canadians in both World wars Stephen Bright's original research published last year is linked on our website. Our own Betty Jane Wylie joined Saga Connections to share her humour and wisdom gleaned from her over 40 publications which include practical self help (cooking and widowhood) to books, poetry and plays. Radio host and classical musician Kathleen Kajioka shared how her Icelandic mother, who was functionally deaf, inspired her love of music. All the sagas shared are beautiful stories you can view again in recordings made for ICCT by Peter and place on our website.

Saga Connections 2021-2022 was produced and hosted by Gwen Morgan, tech support by Peter Norman, and Peter prepared YouTube recordings. Saga Connections titles were:

- A Fashionable Evening with Linda Lundström September 22, 2021
- Building Bridges with Folklore: From Iceland to Beyond. An Evening with Natalie Guttormsson, October 20, 2022
- Northern Bridge: Icelandic Canadian Links in the Two World Wars with Joe Marin and Steven Bright. November 10, 2021

- Exploring a Northern Soul: An Evening with Betty Jane Wylie March 16, 2022
- The Heart of Music: A Conversation with Kathleen Kajioka April 13, 2022

BOOK CLUB: Thank you Rachel Norman for continuing to organize and host the online Book Club. Rachel posts online the books and films for the year. Last year, the books read were: *The Young Icelander: The Story of an Immigrant in Nova Scotia and Manitoba* by Johan Magnus Bjarnason; *Snare (Reykjavik Noir trilogy)* by Lilja Sigurðardóttir, *How Iceland Changed the World* by Egill Bjarnason; *The Greenhouse* by Auður Ava Olafsdóttir, *The Window of Brimnes: An American in Iceland* by Bill Holm; *On Time and Water* by Andri Snaer Magnason.

This coming year, the Book Club will read: *The Secrets of the Sprakkar* by Eliza Reid; *The Sealwoman's Gift* by Sally Magnusson; *Quake* by Auður Jónsdóttir; *Gudrun* (an audio drama) and *The Darkness: A Thriller* by Ragnar Jonasson. There are also films. See the ICCT website for details.

YOUTH & SNORRI GRANTS

ICCT was pleased to receive multiple applications for the both the 2022 scholarship and Snorri Youth grant, which Madeline Pekary took the lead in reviewing and organizing. The ICCT presented the 2022 scholarship to Thor Goodman, and the 2022 Snorri Youth grant to Elizabeth Handley-Derry. Both recipients have since each written an article for the *Fálkinn*. The Icelandic Language Camp grant was not awarded as the camp did not operate this year.

The application deadline for the 2023 scholarship and grants is March 1, 2023, and the recipients will be announced at Thorrablót 2023. An additional expectation has been added to the scholarship application: Award recipients are expected to remain engaged with ICCT activities and to provide about 10 hours of volunteer time toward Club initiatives or events before the application deadline. An additional expectation has also been added to the Snorri Youth grant application: A letter of application to the ICCT from the applicant should indicate an interest in sharing the Snorri experience with the club and becoming involved with the club in the future. Specifically, ways to participate in the club are: to be a presenter at an event promoting Snorri programs, write an article for the *Fálkinn*, help with Thorrablót, Travel show, Kinmount clean-up, and engage social media and outreach. Snorri West alumni could help in hosting the Snorri guests who come on the exchange from Iceland to visit North America

EVENTS:

The ICCT main events are Thorrablót, Jolavidburdir (Christmas celebration) Travel Show and Icelandic National Day picnic. We do not have the position of Events Director on the Board filled, but people on the Board stepped up to make these events happen. This past year, we also initiated a new and exciting event, the Author's Social.

Meet the Authors: ICCT added a new event last year – the Author's Social where we had the opportunity to meet Iceland's top authors in an intimate environment. Toronto hosts an International Author's Festival and each year invites authors from all around the world. Meet the Author's twice last year, hosting authors who came for the Toronto International Author's Festival. On December 5th, 2021, ICCT members bundled up to host an outdoors social gathering with three visiting Icelandic

authors: Andri Snær Magnason, Einar Kárason and Thora Hjörleifsdóttir. Andri Snær was also here for the premier of his film _____. When the Author's International Festival returned in September 2022, ICCT members were treated to an up-close coffee klatch with First Lady Eliza Reid and author Auður Jónsdóttir (who is the grand-daughter of Nobel Prizewinner Halldor Laxness). At these events, the authors spoke of their books and poetry and members had a chance to have books signed. There was a door prize and delicious food served. Arden Jackson provided the vinertarta and Logan Prong organized catering and offered his business offices as a space to meet in. It was so successful we will be sure to organize the Author's Social again next year during the International Author's Festival.

Thorrablot: Many thanks to the Thorrablot Committee for organizing and fund-raising, and being there early and late on the day to make this pivotal event a great success. Thank you to Rachel Norman for chairing the Thorrablot committee and supervising volunteers in the kitchen; to Sharon Hansen for organizing the Silent Auction; Glen Thordason for helping to organize fund-raising and others for making one of the best Live Auctions, to Donald K Johnson for his donation of \$1000; to Julianne Cuthbert for organizing the desserts; Arden Jackson for supplying the Icelandic speciality food and donating a vinarterta for auction and dozens of Kleinur; Robert Cuthbert for MC hosting and organizing the music; Peter for doing all the finances and the Executive and Board members who gave hours to make this *out of the pandemic* Thorrablot a night to remember. A special thanks to The Honourable Ambassador Hlynur Gudjónsson who gave an entertaining speech and gifted the guests with shots of Brennivin for raising a toast to 75 years of Iceland and Canadian diplomatic relations.

Jolavidburdir: Thank you Katrine Handley-Derry and Elizabeth Handley-Derry for organizing and hosting the online Jolavidburdir Christmas event. Elizabeth featured an interview with Icelandic weaving specialist Margrét Katrín Guttormdóttir who works for the Icelandic Textile Centre and the children enjoyed the trivia games, videos, Gryla and Santa Claus.

Icelandic Travel Show: (online event) was organized by me, supported by Peter and featured four guests. I had done a wonderful tour in Iceland of The Cave People of Iceland. A guide from Iceland came on the call to tell us the stories and legends of the Cave People. Laurielle Penny from Worldwide Quest that offers unique cultural and women's only travel groups tantalized us with literary tours. Glen Thordason shared his family travel experience and offered tips for travelling with kids and Alex Ciappara shared his epic during-the-pandemic- trip around Iceland. Lots of great tips, unique suggestions and useful information for those planning a trip to Iceland.

Our **National Day Picnic** was held as a live event in Kinmount Ontario. I had reached out to the Kinmount community last summer about having our picnic in the historical site where the Kinmount Memorial is located. As Saga Connections has presented the story of the Kinmount settlers and the milenial celebrations in 2000 to commenorate the people who died and were buried in unmarked graves along the riverbank, I thought it was fitting that we went to celebrate along the river bank. I was surprised and deeply honoured when I arrived a few days before the picnic to find town voluntters busily cleaning, painting and gardening the historic site in preparation for "the Icelanders who were coming." I spent two days weeding the site along with my husband and the Kinmount voluntters. The memorial was really looking good for the picnic day. Janice Stange of the Kinmount Historical Society created a special display to view and Guy Scott gave a tour of the historic cinema. I spoke to the history and meaning of Gudrun Sigursteinsdóttir Girgis' monument, In the Presence of a Soul. We had a delicious pot-luck picnic by the river and enjoyed the sunny weather.

OTHER CLUB ACTIVITIES:

Falkinn Newsletter: A special thank you to Betty Jane Wylie who continues to write lively articles for the newsletter and edits and supports me as I put out the bimonthly Falkinn. Rachel Norman resigned as editor in March 21 as she got busy with her new job, so Peter and I have taken on the main roles of researching, writing, formatting and delivery. The ICCT is looking for a new Falkinn editor. Are you someone who is interested in writing? Get in touch. Also, if you have an article or hear of something interesting, pass the information along to us so we can include it in the Falkinn for the community to learn about or enjoy.

Library: The library housed by Kara Schuster for the past several years has been moved to my house. Thanks to Kara, my daughter Siobhan and husband Mark for hauling thirty boxes of books up and down flights of stairs. I created a gift basket of Ontario farm harvest goodies on behalf of ICCT to deliver to Kara and thank her for housing the library. ICCT is still looking to catalogue our books and provide a permanent home and better access. Cataloguing is a volunteer job potential applicants for the ICCT grants could consider to fulfill the required 10 hours of ICCT volunteering.

Language Classes: Junior Chang has been in Vancouver for most of the pandemic, taking advantage of working online to be close to family as he expanded his young family. He has been very busy with his expanding young family and could not teach the classes so ICCT has not offered language classes for a while. I was able to find a teacher from Reykjavik who agreed to teach online and we held the first class last week. We have people from Chicago and all across Ontario, and a few new members as a result. The teacher, Járngerðer Guttormsdóttir, who is a Grade 4 teacher in Reykjavik, is excellent. She has us doing exaggerated mouth exercises to get our sounds coming out in the Icelandic pronunciations. Lots of fun. She is teaching one beginning class for now. I hope to be able to organize an Intermediate class in the future. Meanwhile, Junior needs to step down as Board Language Class Director so we are looking for someone to take over this position.

Special Iceletters Project: ICCT is republishing Betty Jane Wylie's Letters to Icelanders: Exploring the Northern Soul and it will be out in time for the Jolabokaflod, Christmas book giving. I have been working since last AGM with Karl Griffiths-Fulton to scan the original document into a printable format, a job that has proven harder than imagined as the computer makes mistakes on both the Icelandic and English words. I have edited three times, slowly comparing the scanned versions to the original book and think we have a clean copy now. Peter contacted a cousin in Iceland for a beautiful cover photo. You can find more by the photographer, Soggi Anton at [instagram.com/siggianton](https://www.instagram.com/siggianton). I had hoped the prototype would be here for the AGM but it will arrive next week. ICCT will be planning a launch to coincide with Christmas celebrations this year.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL

I wish to thank all the club members and Board who have volunteered and participated ideas, time and energy to keep the Club alive and vibrant during these difficult times. Thank you Board members, and thank you Club members for your support and commitment.