

ICCT President's AGM Report October 6, 2024

The highlight of 2024 is that this is the sesquicentennial of the Kinmount settlement. It was 150 years ago, around this time in 1874, that a large group of Icelandic immigrants arrived in Quebec and made their journey overland by train to the Toronto Immigration sheds to await their fate. Sadly, infection spread through the group so that by the time they arrived at the shanties in the woods south of Kinmount on a cold October night, many were already ill. We joined with the village of Kinmount not to mourn the sad fate of those first Icelanders but to celebrate their resilience and fortitude, as they went on to found New Iceland and make significant contributions to the development of this great country.

Throughout the year, the ICCT offered all its usual activities – Nordic Nights, Book club, Saga Connections, Jol celebration and Thorrrablót – and other opportunities to meet club members and to join online activities in the wider North American network of Icelandic groups. The INLNA (Icelandic National League of North America) offered webinars as well as the Embassy of Iceland in Ottawa. You can find these webinars on their websites. Remember that as a member of the ICCT, you are also automatically a member of the INLNA.

GOVERNANCE AND BYLAWS UPDATE:

At the last AGM, we voted to appoint Randy Baldwin of Gimli Acorn Partners Inc. to prepare the financial statements and reports of the ICCT finance committee to be presented at the 2024 ICCT Annual General Meeting. Randy was not able to do them in the end. To be following our bylaws the accounts are to be reviewed by a third party and the Board is looking for another person and hopes to have in time for this AGM.

BYLAWS - The by-laws are being changed to conform with new regulations for non-profit associations. The Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act (ONCA) requires the bylaws and governance of not-for-profit community organizations to conform with new regulations by October 18th, 2024. Glen Thordarson has been reviewing the bylaws and changes required and these will be presented at the AGM to be ratified. It is a lot of work to review and update the bylaws and saves the ICCT the cost for this to be done as volunteer work. Thank you so much, Glen.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

KINMOUNT 150 was held as the ICCT National Day celebrations. I worked with the local organizations in the village of Kinmount who put a lot of work into the celebration. The Ottawa club, Friends of Iceland and the Nordic Club were invited to join us and showed up in their car caravan. It was wonderful to meet the presidents and members of these clubs 'live and in person' (as we say now since the pandemic). Local reporters came out and the event was covered in the local newspapers, The Highlander and the Minden Times. You can read all about it in the Falkinn newsletter and the Icelandic newspaper Lögberg- Heimskringla.

It was a splendid day. Arriving by car, we drove over the bridge decorated with garlands in the colours of Iceland – red, white and blue. Janice Stange of the The Kinmount Heritage Centre had done more research into local Icelandic settlers and created an amazing display of information and artefacts. The Kinmount Artisans Marketplace featured a special art show titled, 'From the Land of Fire and Ice' and served up complementary coffee, orange soda, home-made cookies and kleinur.

Guy Scott took the group on a guided tour to see the ruins of an old iron smelting site and to view the still standing original log house of an Icelandic settler. We shared a delicious pot-luck picnic and then gathered by sculptor Gudrun Sigursteinsdóttir Girgis' monument, 'In the Presence of a Soul' for a ceremony to commemorate the Icelandic settlers and those who died that cold winter. Over 50 gathered to listen to Lindy Vopnfjörð perform and to hear the story of the settlers. We ended with releasing a paper boat for each of those who died to sail on the Burnt River.

If you are going to the Kawarthas, I encourage you to drop by to visit the monument and visit the Heritage Centre in the lower floor of the historic Kinmount train station, and to visit the wonderful artwork of locals at the Kinmount Artisans Marketplace. A big thankyou to the Jane and Diane Austin, of the historic Austin Sawmill where we had our picnic, and to all the Kinmount villagers for all they did to make this a special day.

Heritage STORIES FESTIVAL: Peter Norman was a guest speaker at the Heritage Stories Festival held in Lindsay Ontario on August 17th. The Ottawa-Huron Tract History Association organized a Sunday afternoon to celebrate the Icelandic settlers to Ontario with Icelandic art, artefacts and music. There were prizes for the best story, song and photo image, with complementary Icelandic inspired food and beverages. Peter prepared a PowerPoint presentation on the story of the Kinmount Icelandic settlers.

PÖNNUKÖKUR PARTY: ICCT's board member, Madeline Ashley, hosted a Pönnukökur party at which she shared her family's best recipe, gave the group a hands-on cooking class in making the pönnukökurs. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed eating their creations and visiting.

OTHER ICCT 2024 EVENTS:

ICCT members went out to the Toronto Book Festival to hear Makoto Yukimura, the famous Japanese manga artists who published 13 volumes based on the Viking epic Vinland Saga. This was Yukimura's first visit to Toronto. It has also become a successful television series. His book series is very popular in Japan. Amazing how the Icelandic sagas capture the heart and imagination of people worldwide.

ICCT members attended the Icelandic premiere of Ninna Pálmadóttir's film Solitude at the TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival) on September 8th.

ICCT joined the INLNA for the inaugural Nordic Noir November with an online book discussion of Yrsa Sigurðardóttir's *I Remember You*, a chilling account of an encounter with Icelandic ghosts on the deserted village of Hesteyri in the outer Western Fjords.

The AGM (Annual General Meeting) was scheduled for October but had to be moved forward into January, which still fell within the guidelines set by the bylaws. Richard Eriksson hosted the club at his condo party room and Peter set up the computer for people to join online. Icelandic Roots volunteers Cathy Josephson & Becky Byerly-Adams gave an excellent presentation titled "Discover Your Ancestors".

Christmas was celebrated with a traditional Jólalögg at the President's home with lots of yummy food shared of course. It was fun to sit and relax by the fire and catch up with fellow members. Members had the opportunity to go up and see the library resources on the shelves. Rayner (who is from Iceland) noted that we have a valuable collection of very old Icelandic leather-bound books.

Thorrablót – the highlight of the ICCT calendar – was held again at the Latvian Centre. The Sytryggrring Vikings returned and provided an entertaining demonstration of sword prowess. Lindy who never fails to step up and offer to support the club, performed for us. Lindy was awarded an

ICCT Honorary Membership in recognition of his contributions to the club over many years. The food, was delicious. Honorary Consul General Adam Kalbfleisch addressed the audience speaking to the courage of the Kinmount settlers. Sharon Hanson organized and set up the Silent Auction which was a huge success. Peter handled all the finances and ticket sales. Robert Cuthbert and Chloe Connors were the master of ceremonies. Thank you to the board and all the volunteers. ICCT couldn't put on the Thorrablót without you.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES:

ICCT subcommittees Saga Connections, Nordic Nights and Book Club hosted their series of events for members to join online or in person. Please see their reports for detail or below for highlights.

FALKINN NEWSLETTER: Madeline Stapleton took over the editing and producing of the Falkinn newsletter. She introduced a brilliant new design and wrote several articles elucidating the current volcanic eruptions on the Reykjanes Peninsula in Iceland. Thank you, Madeline, for all your hard work. The newsletter is fantastic. Members, please remember to submit information for the newsletter, like births, deaths and marriages and stories of interest to you. Keep in touch!

ICELANDIC LANGUAGE CLASSES: Peggy MacFarlane came on the Board at the last AGM to take on organizing Icelandic language classes. She arranged for both a beginner and an advanced class with Járngerður Guttormsdóttir, the teacher from Reykjavik. She is in the process of getting classes organized for this coming year so we can all learn to pronounce our ancestor's names properly – at the least – or converse with simple phrases when we visit Iceland.

YOUTH GRANTS: Madeline Ashley remains the board member covering youth grants. As one of ICCT's mandates is to foster the bond with Iceland, funding of youth programs like the Icelandic summer camp and Snorri programs is important. We also award grants to students entering college or university studies. The club asks the youth to give back to our community through ten hours of volunteer work. You can learn more on our website and in Madeline's report to the AGM.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND FACEBOOK: Chloe Connors deftly and efficiently handles our Instagram account and Richard Eriksson keeps our Facebook account up to date. If you are not connected already, do look for the ICCT accounts and go to 'like' the posts on a regular basis.

ICCT BOOK CLUB: Rachel Young has been the Chair of the ICCT book club for many years. Each September she puts together a selection of books to read and films to share covering a wide range of Icelandic literature and genres. She writes up an annotated bibliography describing the choices and forwards it to be published on the ICCT website. It has been a wonderful resource for members to turn to when looking for a good Icelandic author to read.

This past year, Rachel also co-hosted and presented at the INLNA Reads March book Sarah Tolmie's All the Horses of Iceland. The INLNA book club which draws Western Icelanders from both Canada and United States. About 30 people joined online to hear her give an interesting and highly informative presentation on the history of the Norse (Vikings) who traded eastward, all the way to the steppes of Mongolia, where it is believed the unique Icelandic horse originated. This presentation is available online through the INLNA website.

Rachel is retiring from the position of chair of the book club. Thank you, Rachel, for sharing your love of reading and inspiring us all to learn about our rich Icelandic literary tradition.

We need a new volunteer to step up to chair the ICCT Book Club. Please consider joining the club and/or volunteering as a lead. The group is very collaborative so there is lots of support for you, and a great opportunity to connect more deeply with fellow members and your Icelandic heritage.

SAGA CONNECTIONS: Gwen, Peter, Richard, Gail and Don are on the Saga Connection committee. Last year we had hosted Professor Julie Salverson's book, *Lines of Flight, An Atomic Memoir* on March 21st, 2024. In this book, Prof Salverson writes about her personal journey in tracing the journey of the uranium from Canada to New Mexico and onto Japan and what she discovers about its impact on local communities.

NORDIC NIGHTS: Nordic Nights co-chairs Katrine Handley Derry and Jack Dodds continue to work with the Finnish Consulate, Laura McSwiggan and University of Toronto film professor Anu Muhonen to offer six films a year: three Icelandic and three Finnish. Peter Norman continues to provide technical support as well as organize and track fees, payments and donations. Nordic Nights moved to being a hybrid event last year, and Mike Pezzi offered his condo's screening room as a home for live showings. This coming year, Jack is retiring from the Nordic Nights committee. Thank you so much Jack for all your support over the years. See Katrine's report for a review of the past year and check online, on the ICCT website and in the Falkinn newsletter, for upcoming Nordic Night films.

INLNA 2024 ONLINE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: was held on May 4th, 2024. Part of the program included a special presentation by Professor Þorvaldur Þórðarson, from the department of Volcanology and Petrology at the University of Iceland in conversation with 2022 Snorri alum Erik Schoonover, who is a PhD candidate in Geosciences at Penn State University. The webinar was hosted by ICCT board member, Madeline Stapleton.

Also addressing the members in the AGM were Ambassador Hlynur Guðjónsson, Icelandic Ambassador to Canada, Ottawa, Dr. Vilhjálmur Wíium, Consul General Iceland in Winnipeg, Douglas Hanson, President, Icelandic National League- United States and Pála Hallgrímsdóttir, President, Icelandic National League -Iceland. General business included election of new INLNA board members. The new board has a secretary from Nova Scotia, Daphne Egilsson, a new Vice-president from Calgary, Mark Petursson and a new fund-raiser chair from BC, Tammy Stefansson Evans, as well as a Treasurer from Gimli, Dawn Harris, Snorri board members from Minnesota and me as president and Ashley Thorvaldson as past president from Ontario. There are more board members you can read about on the INLNA website, I just wanted to give a flavour of our broad representation from coast to coast. The **INLNA 2024 CALENDAR** coast to coast. Is available for purchase on the ICCT website and the INLNA website and features the 150th anniversary of the founding of New Iceland. Your purchase support our club as well as the INLNA (which organizes the Snorri programs) and will leave you with a brilliant keepsake detailing the story of Gimli.

INLNA SNORRI WEST INTERN, SIGFÚS SIGFÚSSON was a guest at Gwen Sigrid's home from July 16th to 21st. Gwen drove him to see the Kinmount Icelandic monument and the historical display in the Kinmount Heritage Centre. We walked the Victoria Rail trail to the historical railway trestle bridge build by the Icelanders in 1874 over Crego Creek gorge. We also went out to see the log cabin build by Icelanders 150 years ago that is still standing.

ICCT had a summer BBQ meet-up at my home where club members had the opportunity to visit with Sigfus Sigfusson Sigfus plays the guitar and sang some Icelandic folk songs for us. It was a fun evening and wonderful to have the time to get to know one of the Snorri participants coming out from Iceland. Sigfus met many of our Snorri participants who went out to Iceland two summers ago, so it was a great reunion for Elizabeth, Melissa, Chloe and Madeline Stapleton.

ICELETTERS PROJECT: Good news regarding the Iceletters' project. The Snorri intern who came to Toronto for a few days, flew on to Winnipeg where he was working in the University of Manitoba archives. He offered to look through the many boxes of materials that Betty Jane Wylie has sent to the archives for safe keeping on her work and illustrious career. Sigfus found the papers we needed to prove that Betty Jane had the copyright to her book, Letters to Icelanders. Happy news.

THANK YOU TO ALL: I will now be moving into the role of Past President. It has been a real pleasure to serve as President of the ICCT. I have had an amazing team to work with and I want to thank them for their support and commitment to the ICCT. It is a great club to be part of and so has been so rewarding in expanding and deepening my ties to my Icelandic heritage.

I said this last year and will say it again here. I started coming to the ICCT Thorrablót as a young child and it is those fond childhood memories that brought me back to the club years later. Continuing the tradition, I brought my children to the Thorrablót, Christmas celebration and picnics where they learned to take great pride in their Icelandic heritage. This is what the club is about: celebration, connection, and heritage.

Through volunteering with ICCT, I have had the pleasure to get to know many fellow Western Icelanders and share our love of Iceland and of our heritage. I became involved in our umbrella organization, INLNA and am now president of the INLNA. This year I traveled to the Icelandic festival in North Dakota to see where my grandmother was born and to meet our cousins south of the border. The Deuce was so much fun, we plan to go again next year and then up to the Islendingadagurinn in Gimli to celebrate 150 years since the founding of New Iceland. I have met so many wonderful people from across Canada, USA and Iceland. I see the incredible generosity and creativity of this small band of people. I am proud to be an Icelandic-Canadian. I appreciate all that I have received from the ICCT. Truly, in giving to the community one receives back tenfold.

Takk fyrir,
Gwen Sigrid Morgan
ICCT President
September 2024