

# LÖGBERG HEIMSKRINGLA

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PHOTO: STEFAN JONASSON

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PHOTO: ÁSTA SÖL KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR

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IMAGE: © HOWARD DAVID JOHNSON

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## Discover Your Land at the 128th Íslendingadagurinn

Recently named by Expedia as the "Best Small Town in Manitoba," the town of Gimli is getting ready to host the 128th Icelandic Festival of Manitoba – Íslendingadagurinn – on the August long weekend, August 4th to 7th, 2017.

This year's theme, "Discover Your Land," honours the year-long celebration of the 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation and is a call for all of us to discover our roots. Icelandic settlers are spread out across our great land, from the original Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows to the western coasts of Vancouver Island, and Icelandic history has been interwoven with Canada's since Sigtryggur Jónasson arrived in Quebec City in 1872 in search of new lands for his countrymen. Icelanders can proudly lay claim to the likes of astronauts, world-class scientists, acclaimed athletes, renowned musicians and celebrated authors, poets and artists – such as Björk, Laura Goodman Salverson, Bjarni Tryggvason, Halldór Laxness, and Eiður Smári Guðjohnsen, to name only a few.

And what better way to celebrate Canada's birthday than with the opening of the Íslendingadagurinn 125th legacy project, Viking Park. Campaign co-chairs Grant Stefanson and Kathi Thorarinson-Neal, together with the Rural Municipality of Gimli and Betel Home Foundation, are proud to unveil the beautiful new space created around the Viking statue. The park, filled with elves and trolls and other nods to Norse mythology, is unlike any attraction outside of Iceland, and it promises to put Gimli on the map as a destination location for visitors travelling to Manitoba. The grand opening of the park will take place Saturday, August 5th, from noon to 2:00 p.m.

Speaking of Vikings, Íslendingadagurinn wouldn't be complete without the Bell-MTS Viking Village. Almost 100 re-enactors live like authentic 800 AD period Vikings on the Harbour Park Hill during the festival and will "battle" each day at 3:00 p.m. The Viking Village is open from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. for visitors interested in seeing Norse jewellers, wood carvers, and other demonstrations of authentic Viking life.

Enjoy live music all weekend long, starting Friday at the Harbour Stage, as Sigur Rök kicks off the festival with Stefanie Blondal Johnson, The Hard Maybes, Young Pixels, and Mulligrub. On Saturday, children's entertainers, The Happy Campers, are performing and BIG GAMES returns to the harbour area. Saturday Nite at the Pier features Eon Longson, Bright Righteous, Slow Spirit, MiddleCoast, and VIKINGS, followed by a stunning display of fireworks over the harbour. On Sunday, the Alternative Folk Festival features Mitchell Schimnowski, Nation of Two, Leaf



PHOTO: STEFAN JONASSON / AT 2016 ÍSLENDINGADAGURINN

Rapids, Lindy Vopnfjörð, the Micah Erenberg Band, and Lanikai.

Jazz enthusiasts will enjoy Music on the Rooftop on Saturday night, featuring Jóhann Kristinsson (from Iceland), Esprit de Choeur (a choir), and Dallas Nedotiafko (a jazz group).

Enjoy a pancake breakfast, Saturday to Monday, at the New Horizons Centre and authentic Icelandic food at Amma's Kitchen at the Cultural and Heritage Pavilion at Gimli Park. The Wondershows Midway and Rides open in Gimli Park on Friday night and run until Monday. Saturday features beach volleyball, Íslendingadunk, sandcastle contests on the beach, and the chance to "Get Dinged" by dressing up in a traditional Viking costume, eating a piece of harðfiskur (dried fish), drinking a shot of brennivín, chanting "Íslendingadagurinn," and showing us your best Viking roar.

On Sunday, visitors can continue to enjoy road races, craft vendors, the Culture and Heritage Pavilion, Music and Poetry in the Park, the Fine Art Show, and the Fris-Nok tournament. The Monday parade begins at 10:00 a.m. at the Gimli Recreation Centre and travels through town, family sports begins at 12:30 p.m., and the Traditional Program gets underway at 2:00 p.m. in Gimli Park.

The Icelandic Festival of Manitoba is pleased to extend a warm welcome to Anne-Tamara Lorre, Ambassador of Canada to Iceland, and our friend, Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Iceland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, who will be presenting the Toast to Canada during the Traditional Program at Gimli Park, starting Monday at 2:00 p.m., under the watchful eye of this year's Fjallkona, Tami Jakobson Schirlie.

The festival offers affordable events thanks to the support of all its sponsors, including the Government of Canada, the Government of Iceland, the Province of Manitoba, the Rural Municipality of Gimli, Bell-MTS, Honest Agency, and other corporate and individual donors. For a full program of events, please visit [icelandicfestival.com](http://icelandicfestival.com) or download the Icelandic Festival of Manitoba's free app for Android and Apple devices.

## 2017 FESTIVAL ISSUE



PHOTOS: CINDY JONASSON AND MATT ANDVIK



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# GETTING TO KNOW ALBERTA'S FJALLKONA



PHOTO: BERNICE ANDERSEN

**Donna Nelson**  
Markerville, AB

The Stephan G. Stephansson Icelandic Society is pleased to introduce the Fjallkona for Alberta for the coming year. She is Della Branson and she was accompanied by her princesses, Diana and Naomi Kure, at the Íslendingadagurinn. Being the daughter of Pastor and Mrs. Palmer, Della was raised in several communities of Western Canada where her father was called to serve.

She married Earl Branson, a farmer in the Craig district, in 1964, and they were blessed with a family of four daughters and one son. They were young when their father died of a heart attack, but being strong and courageous, Della carried on caring for her children and the farm.

Della is not Icelandic and neither was her late husband, but she is no stranger to Icelandic culture, history, and community volunteering.

Many of us in Markerville have known Della for years but our society became more aware of her talents back in the 1990s when she worked at

Stephansson House for twelve years as manager, interpreter, historian, event planner, and whatever it is one does at a provincial museum. She became very knowledgeable and passionate about Icelandic history, traditions, and culture. While on staff there, she helped promote both their museum and our Creamery Museum happenings and then, later, she served as our society's newsletter editor for over twelve years.

Della is also a dedicated church and community volunteer. She has been chairperson to promote and organize Vacation Bible School for several years; she also was a lead person committed to and completing the church's history book. Della continues to coordinate volunteers for a weekly reading program at Spruce View School. Meanwhile, when our neighbouring Craig community has an event, such as turkey supper, wedding shower, Christmas program, etc., Della can be counted on to help. But that's not all: she is a devoted grandmother to 38 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, many of whom came on June 17th.

We thank Della for all the ways she has served our Icelandic society and our community, and we trust she will feel rewarded and blessed as Fjallkona in this special year of historical significance for Canada's 150th birthday.

## Almar Grímsson coming to North America as INLNA International Visitor



PHOTO: STEFAN JONASSON

The Icelandic National League of North America is very pleased to announce that the International Visitor from Iceland this fall will be

Almar Grímsson. The theme for his tour will be Icelandic Heritage in North America: opportunities for strengthening the relations within North America and between the

people and communities of Icelandic descent in North America with Iceland.

Many of you already know Almar. He has worked tirelessly and passionately to bring together Icelanders and North Americans of Icelandic descent. He is such a positive ambassador for Iceland. We always enjoy his visits as he is escorting Icelanders around the Icelandic settlements in Canada and the United States.

Almar was president of the Icelandic National League of Iceland from 2003 to 2011 and was a co-founder of the Snorri Program. He served as the chairman on the Snorri Foundation from 1998 to 2010. He has also been an honorary member of the INLNA. Anyone who has been part of the Snorri Program has Almar as their honorary Icelandic afi.

Arrangements are currently being made with the INLNA clubs. His finalized itinerary will be available by the end of August.



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# ICELAND'S FOREIGN MINISTER TO SPEAK AT THE DEUCE OF AUGUST

Thousands of eager people will descend on Mountain, North Dakota, during the first weekend of August for the 118th annual Deuce of August Icelandic Celebration. The town has been known to swell to a hundred times its normal population on this weekend of the year as descendants of the original settlers and visitors from miles around join residents for this signature heritage celebration.

Those who arrive before the weekend itself can take advantage of the Icelandic Roots Genealogy Center on Thursday and Friday afternoons (see below) and then join the Mountain Legion Fish Fry on Friday, August 4, at 5:00 p.m. Afterwards, there will be a street dance with music by Boom Town.

Saturday is the "big day" at the Deuce of August and it opens with a parade down Main Street beginning at 10:30 a.m. This year's honorary parade marshals are Vilmar Kristjanson and Norma Nason. Coverage of the parade will be broadcast live on KXPO AM 1340. Following the parade, there's a salad luncheon at Vikur Lutheran Church, the Car Show and Shine, kid's games, and the Pedal Tractor Pull. Merchandise will be on sale along throughout the day.

Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Iceland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, will be the keynote speaker at this year's Heritage Program in the Mountain Community Center on Saturday, August 5, at 2:00 p.m. Following the formal program, a historic sites tour will depart from the Mountain Community Center, returning in time for the Icelandic Communities International Fellowship Supper at 6:00 p.m. The day will conclude with a street dance featuring music by Front Fenders.

Icelandic Roots is sponsoring the Genealogy Center, now a 15-year tradition, for those who are interested in learning more about their Icelandic ancestry or who could simply use some help from IR's experienced genealogists. The Genealogy Center will be located in the Mountain Community Center and will be open on Thursday and Friday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., on Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (See our story about the Genealogy Center in the July 15 issue of L-H.)

On Sunday, August 6, there will be a worship service at Vikur Lutheran Church at 11:00 a.m., followed by a



© PHOTO COURTESY OF ALTHINGI.IS

**Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson.**  
The iconic Vikur Lutheran Church in Mountain.



PHOTO: STEFAN JONASSON

catered brunch. The last event of the weekend will begin at 1:00 p.m. – the North Dakota State Tractor and Pickup

Pulling Contest. (For more details about the weekend, see the Deuce of August ad on page 18 of this issue.)

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# Stefan's Saga

## FREE TRADE, PERSONAL LIBERTY, AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE



**Stefan Jonasson**  
*Editor*

As the six-part series about Jón Sigurðsson, written by an unidentified nephew, has unfolded on the pages of *Lögberg-Heimskringla*, I have learned countless things I never knew about Jón *forseti* and the Icelandic independence movement in the 19th century. One of the most surprising things to me was the discovery that Jón was a zealous advocate of free trade. I don't know how I could have missed the significance of this before now and, on reflection, it seems like a perfectly obvious position for him to have adopted, but I was a surprised nonetheless.

According to Jón's nephew, "Jón Sigurðsson wrote an able and detailed article in the *Ný Félagsrit* demonstrating the necessity of making trade entirely free. He pursued this cause with great energy, but it was strongly opposed by the Danes and the Danish government." Denmark and its merchants had a great deal to lose if their monopoly on trade in Iceland was interrupted and even many Icelanders were fearful of freer trade, concerned that such a policy might interrupt

the flow of imported goods. Jón pressed forward and, in 1855, the Danish trade monopoly was broken and restrictions on foreign trade in Iceland were lifted. It was a critical step in the slow but steady march towards national independence.

As I read Jón *forseti*, he wasn't really advocating for free trade in the sense of a wholly unregulated economy or completely unfettered trade between nations, since that might have risked the growth of new kinds of monopoly in place of the old one. He didn't support free trade for its ability to concentrate wealth and make rich merchants richer, but rather for its potential to give every individual the maximum degree of choice they might enjoy in a free society.

Fast forward to the present day and we find ourselves living in a world where Icelanders debate whether or not membership in the European Union would be in their best interests while the United Kingdom has made the decision to leave it, although both countries seem to support the idea of a common market while continuing to protect national interests. The new administration in the United States argues that the country has been disadvantaged by the North American Free Trade Agreement and has petitioned to reopen the agreement, while public opinion has moved increasingly in the direction of skepticism about international trade agreements. Meanwhile, Canada has emerged as one



**Portrait of Jón Sigurðsson by August Schiøtt**

of the primary defenders of liberalized trade on the global stage.

I wonder what Jón Sigurðsson would make of the current situation and what trade policy he would advocate if he were alive today. The global economy has changed in unimaginable ways and Iceland has developed a strong economy of its own. Overall, he was an advocate for national independence and individual liberty. In his own time, he rebelled against an economic system that concentrated

power in the hands of Danish merchants, yet he refrained from demonizing the merchants themselves. He saw free trade as an antidote to the stifling commercial laws and economic challenges of the era. The challenges are different today and trade policy is necessarily different, too, but I somehow suspect that Jón *foresti* would favour policies that preserve the autonomy of nations while ensuring the maximum degree of individual freedom for the people of every country.

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# Canada: quiet patriotism and a unique moral ground

Ambassador Hjalmar W. Hannesson  
Reykjavík, Iceland

**F**irst Lady Eliza Reid, Ambassador Anne-Tamara Lorre, Canadians in Iceland, Icelandic friends of Canada, *kæru vinir, dear friends, children and grown-ups:*

When I was asked to say a few words here today, I accepted right away. It is indeed an honour and privilege, as well as a joy to do so, on this Canada Day in 2017, when the 150 years are celebrated.

Iceland is Canada's nearest European state and, after the USA, Canada's closest neighbouring state, geographically speaking. There is much room for even closer relations, including trade. In fact, several of us have stated that Canada should be seen as Iceland's most natural partner in many ways. This is not the time nor place to dwell on that issue. However, many found it remarkable that the two allies had not established embassies until 2001. But that is the way it was until the 1st of May, 2001, when I took part in officially opening the doors of Iceland's first embassy in Canada. That sure was a memorable day in Ottawa.

Since then I have learned a lot about Canada, its remarkable history and people. And later my wife and I had the good fortune to live in Winnipeg for three years. I have travelled all over the ten provinces of Canada, from the Eastern Maritimes to the Pacific Coast, to some of them many times, and also to the beautiful, rugged, and rich three territories up north, from Nunavut through the Northwest Territories to Yukon. Canada is the second largest country in the world, as we know, and a land of remarkable beauty, diverse landscapes, from vast prairies to majestic mountains, from the wine-growing Okanagan Valley in British Columbia and the Niagara area in Ontario to the Arctic Sea and permanent ice. It really is so vast that sometimes, when you are driving or even flying, you think it never ends.

But after all the travelling around Canada, meetings and events, it is the people, the social system, the politics and the traditional policy called cultural mosaic that impresses the most. Canada has been a welcoming land of immigrants throughout and continues to this day to be a model to other states. It is known for the tolerance of different religions, cultures, and ethnicity of those who seek to become Canadians. Its humanitarian approach is world-renowned. In fact, Canada is a leader at the United Nations on such issues as humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, development aid, and has developed such notions there as the obligation to protect. Such great Canadian leaders as the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Lester B. Pearson, and the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, Lloyd Axworthy, quickly come to mind. Our friend Lloyd Axworthy was among the most impressive speakers at the UN when I served there. By the way: he was the one to announce the opening of the Canadian embassy in Reykjavík. He did that in Gimli, Manitoba, in early August 2000. I just mention these two great Canadians out of so many impressive leaders, I could, for example, mention the two Trudeau prime ministers. And I haven't mentioned the impressive Canadian academic leaders that welcome a great number of foreign students every year at Canadian universities.

A society can be judged by the way it takes care of its less fortunate citizens, the ill and needy. The Canadian welfare system is second to none in the world. It is perhaps not well known here but the way Canadians take care of their sick and poor citizens is at least on par with the five Nordic states. Mistakes in the past vis-à-vis First Nations have been and are still being openly addressed and rectified. Democracy, rule of law, pluralism, human rights and fundamental freedoms are all natural to the proud citizens of Canada, who are encouraged not to forget where they came from originally. Canadian society is strong and blossoming in liberty and diversity. I have not even mentioned the exemplary environmental protection policies in Canada. So Canadians can indeed practice their quiet patriotism, as former prime minister Paul Martin once said.

The Icelanders that moved to Canada more than 100 years ago became, like all immigrants, good and productive Canadians, while at the same time being encouraged to keep the bridges to the old country open and strong. This has been a general Canadian immigration approach resulting in a remarkable and thriving society. It gives Canada a unique moral ground to stand on.

Happy 150th Canada and Canadians! The world continues to need your leadership.

## CELEBRATING 150 YEARS TOGETHER



PHOTO: STEFAN JONASSON

Senator Pat Bovey at the Canada Day ceremony in Gimli

**The Honourable Patricia Bovey, FRSA, FCMA**  
Senator for Manitoba

**Y**our Worship, Mr. Wharton, Honoured Elders, guests, ladies, gentlemen and children:

Happy Birthday Canada! I bring special anniversary greetings from the Senate of Canada. Gimli is where I have celebrated many Canada Days – since the mid-1970s whenever I have been in Manitoba.

*Bon anniversaire à toutes et à tous! Aujourd'hui nous célébrons les cent cinquante ans de notre pays, un pays fort, un pays forgé par nos ancêtres provenant de cultures diverses et qui ont immigré au Canada et par les autochtones qui sont ici depuis des temps immémoriaux. Tous ensemble nous avons développé un pays vraiment riche.*

Today, as Canadians, we celebrate 150 years together – all of us whose ancestors immigrated to Canada, those who immigrated themselves, and of course the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples on whose land we are today. As with any coming together, we develop shared values and, we hope, increasingly deep understandings and respect for each other's cultures.

That is what makes Canada so rich and a much-envied nation. Our history is unique, our diversity heralded, our geography like no other country, our international position central, and our spirit strong.

I am sure, too, that you share with me very real concerns this Canada Day faced by Churchill and its neighbouring communities.

The cultural richness brought by the Icelandic pioneers who arrived in Gimli and this central part of Canada has become a truly integral part of our history and of who we are. I can't imagine the challenges and difficulties they

faced that cold, windswept October in 1875, when they landed at Willow Point, five years after Manitoba joined Confederation and only eight years after Confederation itself. Perhaps I can imagine the hardships of weather, the stony soils, and more, but I certainly can't fathom doing so myself. We are all grateful for their strength and tenacity.

I have participated in a number of Century Farm ceremonies in this region honouring those whose farms have been worked by that one family for one hundred years – Icelandic and Ukrainian. Reading some of their letters and diaries, and seeing their photographs was compelling,

heartrending, and inspirational.

So today, as Canadians from coast to coast to coast, we honour, celebrate and mark our 150 years together as a nation. I, as a proud Manitoban, pay tribute to all our forefathers who had the vision and commitment to develop our country, giving us all the gifts of their own particular heritage. I want to give special thanks and congratulations to the Gimli High School art class and artist James Culleton on their contribution to the 150th art installation. I also want to congratulate Gimli on the Viking Park project – impressive!

As we begin our second 150 years, I look forward to meaningful reconciliation and healing between Canada's Indigenous peoples and cultures and all immigrant cultures – English, French, Icelandic, and so many more.

To our children and grandchildren, I say you will add your voices, your insights, and your commitment to your beliefs, place, and work, which in turn, will continue to strengthen this country we all love so dearly.

Happy Birthday Canada! As we celebrate and *Love Our Lake* today, enjoy your festivities, public and private – and, as we go forward, here's to an ever stronger coming together with respect, understanding, and pride.

Thank you. *Miigwech.*



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# Honouring Friðrika: a regal ribbon-cutting for a royal grave



PHOTO: CINDY JONASSON

## The ribbon cutting

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the interpretative panel telling the story of Friðrika Björnsdóttir, at the Riverton Centennial Memorial Park on July 1, 2017, was a fitting culmination to the decade-long project to honour this New Iceland pioneer who is believed to have been descended from royalty and whose life

and death reminds us of the hardships faced by the first Icelandic settlers in Manitoba. The event also proved to be a highlight of the Canada 150 celebrations in Riverton.

Salín Guttormsson, Friðrika's great-great-granddaughter and the driving force behind the project, presided over the ribbon-cutting. There were short speeches by Jeff Wharton, MLA for Gimli; Þórður Bjarni Guðjónsson, Consul-General of Iceland; Helle Wilson, the Royal Danish Consul; Harold Foster, Reeve of Bifrost-Riverton; and Jóel Friðfinnsson, Secretary of Icelandic River Heritage Sites, Inc. The group then ceremonially cut the decorated ribbon to mark the memorial's official unveiling.

The Honourable Janice Filmon, Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, could not be on hand for the ceremony but she sent a letter of congratulations that stated, in part, "This project is a wonderful reminder of the human kindness and rich history that make this region such a great place to live and visit."

Danish journalist Anette Lillevang Kristiansen was also on hand for the event. She has been reporting on Friðrika's story on the other side of the ocean. Also present was David O. Vidalin, who is the last surviving grandchild of Friðrika.

Following the ribbon-cutting

ceremony, the descendants of Friðrika who were present for the event gathered for a group photograph.

The interpretive panel was designed by Nelson Gerrard and reflects architectural elements from the settlement era in New Iceland. The words on the panel were written by Nelson Gerrard in consultation with Salín Guttormsson.

\*\*\*

## "THE ROYAL GRAVE"

While Icelanders in general claim descent from ancient Scandinavian kings and warlords, pioneer Friðrika Björnsdóttir inherited much closer family ties with royalty; her great-grandfather was said to have been the Danish Prince Regent, who, in 1808, became King Frederick VI of Denmark, Norway, and Iceland (1768-1839) – twice descended from King George II of Great Britain.

A native of the East Fjords of Iceland, Friðrika was born at Seljateigshjáleiga in Reyðarfjörður on July 25, 1849, to Lovísa María Samúelsdóttir and Björn Jónsson. Raised from the age of 10 in affluent homes at Eskifjörður, she was confirmed there with an excellent testimonial in 1864. On October 17, 1869, at age 20, Friðrika married Pétur Árnason from Ketilstaðir, a blacksmith and sailor. After two years at Seldalur, Friðrika and Pétur

then farmed at Selláttur and Lambeyrarhóll until 1876, when the emigrated with their three small children aboard the *SS Verona*.

Members of the "Large Group" that settled in New Iceland, Friðrika and Pétur spent the "Smallpox Winter" at Sandy Bar sharing a 10' x 12' log house with Pétur's cousin Margrét and her husband, Jón Björnsson. Tragically, they lost all three children during this first year in the new land. They then homesteaded at nearby Hof, where three daughters, Gytte "Elín," Vilborg "Borga," and "Lovísa" Benedikta, were born. In 1881, the couple moved to Árskógur, where they were blessed with two more girls, Gudrun "Gunna" Sigurborg and Friðrika "Rikka." On August 8, 1884, Friðrika died at age 35, just 20 days after the birth of her namesake.

Friðrika's intriguing claim to kinship with the Danish royal family came through her mother Lovísa (born at Berufjörður on July 14, 1829), the daughter of Jörunn Tómasdóttir and her Danish husband, Samúel Friðriksson, an artistically gifted woodcarver and iron craftsman. Samúel, born in Copenhagen in 1793, was considered a son of King Frederick VI of Denmark and was raised in the royal household or at least at royal expense. In the word's of Samúel's mother, known only as Soffía María, "It was no bit of trash with whom I had Samúel."

## HOME BURIALS

During a three-year period in the mid-1880s, home burials were practised in the Icelandic River Settlement. Following the exodus of many of the district's original settlers and the departures of Pastors Jón Bjarnason (1880) and Halldór Briem (1881), the Bræðrasöfnuður Congregation at Icelandic River ceased to function for a time, and, in 1883, the original community cemetery situated at Nes (RL 1 East) became the site of a homestead. As the present-day Riverton Cemetery was not taken into use until 1886, following the arrival of new settlers and a revitalization of the congregation, home burials were the only recourse from 1883 to 1886.

Although other home burial sites in the district still exist, the grave of Friðrika Björnsdóttir is the only one known to be still marked by its original picket fencing. The triangular pillar installed in July 2016 to permanently mark where Friðrika rests at Árskógur serves to represent past, present, and future generations.

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# Western Icelanders descend on the Brandon Travellers' Day Parade



PHOTOS: NUKTE EDGUER, SUNNA FURSTENAU, AND HAROLD JONASSON.

From left: Sunna walks with a Viking warrior. ICCWM float in parade. Don't these members look happy – and no brennivín.

**Dennis Oleson, President**  
*Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba*

The Icelandic Canadian Club of Western Manitoba (ICCW) is a group of 23 people who have an interest in things Icelandic. Some members have an Icelandic background genetically while others married people of Icelandic descent. Since the ICCW is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2017, we were looking for ways to celebrate this milestone and also to let the others know we exist. Sharon McMaster and Donna Staples came up with the idea of putting a float in the Travellers' Day Parade, which is held at the time of the Brandon Summer Fair in June. The ICCW supported the idea enthusiastically.

Sharon said her husband Gord had a trailer we could use in the parade so the next issue was the type of float. Several members put their heads together and, after much surfing of their brains and the web, it was decided to go with Bob Isleifson's idea of building a Viking ship for the float.

Since this was the first year the ICCW participated in a parade, we had to build the float from scratch. Building a "Viking ship" so it would fit securely on a trailer bed being pulled by a truck presented some challenges for our construction crew. The crew consisted primarily of members Harold Jonasson, Bob Isleifson, Garnet Shearer, Barry Hill, and Doug Staples, along with Gord McMaster. The crew was chaired by and under the control of Sharon McMaster. As it turned out, Sharon went to Iceland during the time that the float was being built so at least partial control was transferred to her husband, Gord, who was around to pick up the slack – and pick it up he did.

It was, in the writer's opinion, largely due to Gord's creative solutions for putting the vessel together that the Viking replica did indeed float on top of the flatbed that it was built upon. The sides of the craft did indeed resemble the pictures of Viking

ships that we've all seen in that it had a nice curving tail at the back and, at the front, a fire-breathing dragon's head cut out by Harold and with an eye meticulously painted on each side by Garnet.

On each side of the float hung some seven shields fashioned out of plywood and hand-painted, some more meticulously than others. Shields painted by Garnet Shearer and Bea Storm stood out for their artistic flair. Some said the other member warriors, Dennis Oleson, Adam Staples, Wayne Isleifson, and "warrioresses" – female member warriors – Olive Norberg, Carol Mcinnis, Norma Jonasson, Donna Staples, Sheila Shearer, Inga Bjornson, and Gloria Hill were too busy fighting off marauders to spend the time needed to "professionally" paint their shields.

As everyone knows, a Viking ship cannot get very far without a good mast and sail along with sturdy "oarspeople." The sail, fashioned largely under the direction of Donna and Sharon, was made out of a tablecloth provided by Wayne and Debby Isleifson. The club name and logo was printed on the sail and also on a banner made by Regent Custom Cresting who already had the Club's fálkinn/falcon logo. They had used the logo when producing club t-shirts, another good Donna type idea. Marilyn Walton, Inga Bjornson, Doreen Isleifson, and Debbie Isleifson were also instrumental in making the sail and the banner

that was carried in the parade. Perched majestically on top of the mast was the club logo of a falcon, laboriously created by Garnet and securely attached to the collapsible mast by Gord.

Some of the club members, along with some family members and associates, rode inside the ship as "oarspeople" while others walked beside, in front of, or behind the vessel. One of the walkers was Sunna Furstenau, the president of the Icelandic National League of North America, who came from Fargo, North Dakota, to help us celebrate our anniversary. Sunna had intended to wear her Icelandic costume but, before she left her home, she was advised to wear something cooler since the forecast for the day of the parade was to be about 93 degrees Fahrenheit. Sunna brought with her not only her charming personality and a better "waking-in-the-heat dress" but also a number of Icelandic flags for waving and Icelandic candy for eating.

Also walking with us was a group of individuals called the Sons of Lugh, a Viking reenactment society. The Viking look-a-likes, wearing chainmail and carrying replicas of Viking swords and axes, walked with the float, all the time flashing their swords and shields in mock battle. They put on a good show for the parade viewers. About halfway through the parade route, they staged a kidnapping of an unsuspecting

young lady who was thrown onto the ship. This was the one and only captive taken during the expedition. In line with the Geneva Convention, the captive was released unharmed at the end of the parade.

After the parade, Sunna provided a workshop on the use of the Icelandic Roots website, which is renowned for its information on Iceland and people of Icelandic descent in North America. The website also provides a vehicle for people of Icelandic descent to find genealogical information about their families and their relationships with other people of Icelandic descent who are in

the database. The workshop was very much appreciated by all the members who were able to attend, which was most of us.

For logistical and weather-related reasons, three members of the club – Mary Thorgeirson, Jeannette Holm and Sheila Shearer – could not do the float with us but thankfully they were able to come to the potluck supper held at the home of Harold and Norma Jonasson. This, too, was most enjoyable.

All in all, our first experience participating in the Travellers' Day Parade was very positive and discussions will be held about participating in next year's parade.



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PHOTOS: ÁSTA SÓL KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR



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**Kent Lárus Björnsson**  
*Reykjavík, Iceland*

**W**e started celebrating when most of Canada was still asleep – well, especially Winnipeg and westward. We were fortunate to get to use an area at Árbæjarsafn, the Reykjavik Open Air

Historical Museum. We were even able to fly the flag, which is not that frequent a sight in Iceland. The Canadian flag only flies at the embassy, the ambassador's residence, and Hofsós.

The Canadians and friends have held a number of casual, family-friendly Canada Day events, but we felt this year should be special. One of the main instigators in pushing for a bigger event was Þór Jakobsson. He arranged the first few meetings and was involved all the way. In an un-Icelandic way, we actually had a number of meetings and discussed plans with each other and delegated work amongst ourselves.

We had some great corporate sponsors and we were very grateful for that. The Icelandic National League of Iceland, WOW Air, and Vodafone, the telecom and internet company, were the main sponsors. The Canadian embassy also stepped up, supplying refreshments, flags, and pins for everyone. I was also able to borrow a hot dog van from one of the gas companies, Atlantsoliu. We could not have done much without them. It was great that we were able to make it a free event for everyone. Besides hotdogs, polish sausage, and bratwurst, we had cotton candy for the children, and the ice-cream truck visited so people could choose their favorite. Canadian music was also a hit. We kept speeches to a minimum. The Canadian ambassador, Anne-Tamara Lorre, welcomed everyone and thanked the organizers and Hjálmar W. Hannesson, former ambassador to Canada and consul-general in Winnipeg, also gave an eloquent talk.

In the end, we had over 100 people attend – at least 80 adults and probably more than 30 children. We had a variety of people... people born and raised in Canada, people who studied in Canada, and just friends of Canada. There were even a few Canadians who just happened to be visiting the museum who joined us. Hopefully we can keep this event an annual one, but I think it will return to being a smaller event in someone's yard. Happy Birthday Canada!



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# Toronto club's Icelandic Independence Day celebrations blend variety with family fun

Gail Einarson-McCleery, OF  
Toronto, ON

The Icelandic Canadian Club in Toronto has always treated Iceland's Independence Day, June 17, as a casual event, hosting a picnic that includes good food and companionship, games for the children, and live music.

For 26 years, founding club members Erla and Cam Macaulay hosted the event at their farm near Hillsburg where traditional games such as tug-of-war and three-legged races provided fun, sometimes there was storytelling in the loft, investigating the barn, and walks to the pond. Often special guests from Iceland were in attendance: for example, a choir from Skagafjörður, a Reykjavík band, and a busload of tourists from Iceland. When at Expo in Montreal in 1967, on hearing that Icelandic glíma had been performed, Erla arranged for team members to stop in Toronto for two days enroute to New York on their way home. There was only one day to phone members of

the club and arrange to meet them at the train and billet the 22 members of the group, but there was a good turnout and all enjoyed the demonstration.

After Cam's death, the venues varied. We visited Viking carver Thorsteinn's lovely home near Orangeville, arranged a joint picnic with the Ottawa club at the Icelandic sheep farm north of Kingston, went to see the Icelandic horses demonstrate their paces at the Helgasons' Gimli Farm near Colborne, and enjoyed a bonfire and potato roast, as well as hiking, while picnicing at High Park and a new park in Mimico. Last year, we were treated to a very interesting riding demonstration at Onice Horse Farm in Caledon Hills. For a few years, we have also spent the day in Dufferin Grove Park in Toronto and were entertained by singers, including the delightful Svavar Knútur from Iceland, as well as our great local singers, Lindy and Sigrun Stella.

This year, we returned to Dufferin Grove Park. The threatened rain held off and



all enjoyed the drumming demonstration by Reynir Sæmundsson on his newly-acquired handmade drum from Taos Pueblo in New Mexico, as well as a few songs from Lindy. The children enjoyed all the park has to offer and also playing games like Cubbur, while the adults ate well and enjoyed socializing with old friends and new.



PHOTOS: GAIL EINARSON-MCCLEERY, OF

Above: Kristin and Danny Finkleman with their grandchildren, Sidney and Jacob. Left: Eyvindur and Einar. Below: Icelandic colours.



## DISCOVER YOUR LAND

Jenna Boholij  
Winnipeg, MB



The theme for this year's 128th Icelandic Festival of Manitoba – Íslendingadagurinn – is “Discover Your Land.” In celebration of Canada's 150th birthday, the theme encourages, even challenges people to discover more about their country, their roots and, in turn, themselves.

Iceland and Canada have a long history together that's as intertwined as a Viking's chainmail. The first Europeans known to have reached North America were Icelandic Norsemen who established a settlement in L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland during the decade after the year 1,000 AD. Canada has the largest Icelandic population outside of Iceland, with over 30,000 residing in Manitoba.

As Canada lights 150 candles on its maple leaf cake, Icelandic Canadians celebrate 142 years since the first Icelandic settlers made the arduous journey from Iceland to Manitoba and established what is commonly referred to as New Iceland. They traded lava fields for wheat and canola and the North Atlantic Ocean for Lake Winnipeg, but I'll tell you, from having been to both places, the feeling that you get when you're in either place is the same.

From the time I was a young girl, growing up in

Northwestern Ontario, far removed from any type of Icelandic community, it was instilled in me that being Icelandic was something special and that there was more to it than Vikings and vínarterta.

I learned that perhaps the only thing more important to Icelanders than being Icelandic is being with family. It may stem from being contained on a mostly uninhabited island with a small group of people, but Icelanders by nature are family oriented. I was taught the importance of family and to respect my elders, and maybe even took it too far when, at the age of 20, I moved to Gimli and became “roommates” with my then 85-year-old Afi.

I also learned that Icelanders are bred with a strong sense of community and it was all but a rite of passage in my family to be pulled out of bed bleary-eyed on festival Monday to throw on a pinny and help organize the cars for the parade. We all had a job to do on festival weekend but, when we did it together, it never really felt like work. Once you strip away the dressings of Íslendingadagurinn – the midway, events, music, and Vikings – you're left with the heart of what it's really about: friends and family.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNA BOHOLIJ

Jenna's uncle, Valdi Arnason, and afi, Joey Arnason, dressed up for the festival in bygone days.

Best wishes to all for the  
Íslendingadagurinn



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# GREAT FUN at the Arborg Agricultural Fair and Rodeo



PHOTOS: ALICYN GOODMAN



**Alicyn Goodman**  
Winnipeg, MB

Once again, the *Lögberg-Heimskringla* newspaper team took part in the parade in Arborg and had a table in the Merchants' Mall on the rodeo grounds in nearby Silver. We had a wonderful time.

There is always lots to see and do at the fair and rodeo. It really is a fun event. Arborg held its first fair in 1924 and it just keeps getting better and better.

The Kid Zone featured a number of bouncy structures, face painting, and a fun petting zoo. On Saturday afternoon, there was an old-time dance in the hall and the free stage provided continuous entertainment outside. There was also a pioneer life demonstration put on by the Manitoba Historical Society. Supper was a ten-dollar plate of pulled pork, baked beans, coleslaw, and baked potato that was enough to feed a hungry cowboy. Dave Greene provided the evening entertainment.

The big excitement on both days took place in front of the grandstand – barrel racing, cowboy polo, calf roping, and more. At the other end of the fair grounds was the tractor pull contest. Some events, such as the horse show, vaulting demonstrations, and wagon rides had to be cancelled due to the equine infectious anemia, commonly known as swamp fever, that's surfaced in the area.

We loved seeing old friends and making new ones. We give a great big thank you to Corrine, Tommi, and Matthias Einarsson for providing us a place to sleep on Saturday night. We look forward to attending again next year.

**Left: Trucker Vi Bjarnason Hilton and Tommi Einarsson. Brian Johnson on a tractor. Far left: Ready for cowboy polo.**

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From Left: Þórður Guðjónsson, Consul General of Iceland, Jórunn Kristinsdóttir, Judy Richardson, David Gislason. Tommi, Matthias and Corrine Einarsson. Miniature horses at the Arborg parade. Below: The petting zoo, an antique car, cowboys, and one of many bouncy structures.



L-H Volunteers Alicyn Goodman, Vi Bjarnason Hilton and Kristine Palsson.







IMAGES: © HOWARD DAVID JOHNSON

Above (left to right): A female archer of the forest elves. The binding of Fenrir. A male archer of the forest elves. Below: The Norse cosmos.

## The greatest saga never told

**Peter Johnson**  
Winnipeg, MB

To most people, the word *Edda* is a four-letter word they find in their crossword puzzle.

The amazing fact is that the Icelandic Eddas are one of the world's greatest cultural treasures because they contain eighty-five percent of what we know as Norse mythology, which was the shared wisdom that informed the Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, and Scandinavian people for centuries in pre-Christian Europe and which continues to influence our lives to the present day.

Some people may be surprised that the Anglo-Saxon world is included, but we can appreciate the power of these myths on the English-speaking world when we realise that four of the days of our week are named for Norse gods, about whom we would know almost nothing if it were not for the Eddas.

Tuesday is named for Tiew, who Icelanders know as Týr, the god of justice and courage. A story in the Eddas tells us:

*There was a terrible supernatural wolf named Fenrir. The gods knew Fenrir was growing at an unnatural rate and would soon be too powerful for them to control and that he would wreak havoc and chaos throughout the nine worlds.*

*The gods devised a plan to tether the mighty Fenrir.*

*They asked the dark dwarves, being the most skilled craftspeople in the cosmos, to forge a chain whose strength could not be equaled.*

*They then challenged the wolf to test his strength against this chain. The wary wolf, suspecting trickery, said he would only allow himself to be tethered if one of the gods would put his or her hand between his powerful jaws. Týr placed his hand between the jowls of the terrible wolf. When Fenrir realized he had been tricked he ripped off Týr's hand and swallowed it whole. For the wellbeing of the cosmos, Týr had sacrificed his hand.*

Thursday honours Thor, or Þór, the most beloved of the gods. As the ruler of the skies he brought fertility, the rain that ensured good crops, but most of all he was the champion of the people.

Þór, the mightiest warrior in the cosmos, battled malevolent forces that threatened to destroy all that was good. The skies were illuminated as he hurled his mighty hammer, Mjölner, at the enemies of humankind and a resounding roar could be heard as Mjölner found her mark.

Wednesday honours Woden, who Icelanders know as Óðinn. He was the co-creator of the Norse universe, with the mighty

World Tree, Yggdrasil, at the center and a giant eagle perched at the very highest point. There were nine worlds hanging from her branches. The upper four worlds were inhabited by forces of light. The highest world was the realm of the gods; below them the world of the Vanir or lesser gods; then the world of the light elves, a tall, vigorous race who were fairer than the sun to look at; below them was the world of the dark elves, the greatest craftsmen in the Norse universe.

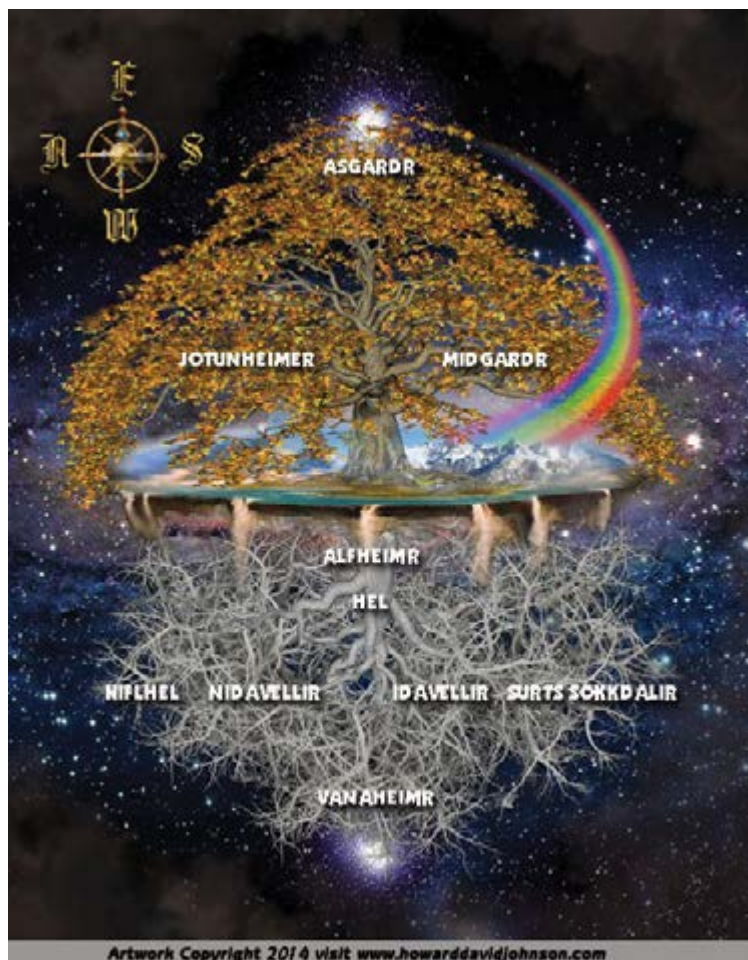
The lower four worlds were inhabited by forces of chaos and darkness.

At one of the roots of the Tree of Life, there lived a terrible dragon who gnawed at the root and sucked the blood of the inhabitants of the lowest world, Hel, the world of the unworthy dead, those who had been guilty of the most terrible crimes of the Nordic world – murder, adultery, and oath-breaking. Those bloodless corpses were stored to become an army of the dead to fight on the side of the forces of darkness.

Above Hel the three worlds were a world of unbearable heat, lava and fire; a world of darkness, ice, wind and glacial cold; and a world of menacing giants.

Between the four worlds of light above and the four worlds of chaos and darkness below was the middle world, Midgard or Miðgarður. This is where Óðinn created the first woman and the first man, who were tugged at by the worlds of light above them and by the worlds of darkness below them.

Óðinn was deeply troubled by the dark and chaotic forces that threatened to destroy the cosmos. He required wisdom to meet this colossal threat. There was only one place where he could find such wisdom: he

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Valkyrie maiden



Þór battles Jörmungandur



Óðinn and the Norns at Yggdrasil



Freyja's chariot

IMAGES: © HOWARD DAVID JOHNSON

must drink from the Well of Destiny.

The well was at another of the roots of the World Tree, it was dwelling place of the Norns – three sisters: Past, Present, and Future – who weave Destiny's Web, determining the fate of the cosmos and of every living thing in it, from the gods to smallest living creature. Fate in the Nordic sense is not final and unalterable; it leaves the possibility for individual agency in the shaping of one's own destiny, so it was important for Óðinn to understand the destiny of the cosmos so he could determine the best way to preserve it.

The well was presided over by a severed head named Mímir, who exacted a terrible price to drink from the well. Óðinn agreed to the price. He took the horn in both his hands and drank and drank. And, as he drank, all the future became clear to him. He saw that, one day, there would be an unspeakable war between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. The war would be the Twilight of the Gods. The gods and their armies would destroy much of the evil that brought terror, sorrow, and despair into the nine worlds, but, in that struggle, they would pay with their own lives. Then, there would be a great rebirth of the cosmos, after it was purged by fire and cleansed by a great flood. Óðinn paid the terrible price required for drinking from the well: he plucked out his own right eye.

To prepare for this dreadful war, Óðinn would have to raise a formidable army. He would enlist the help of the Valkyries (*Valkyrja*), a powerful, elegant race of women who would circle over battle fields, where they would harvest the most heroic, most valiant of those who had fallen in battle. People knew when the Valkyries rode forth on their terrible missions because the reflection from their armour caused the eerily

beautiful flickering light that we know as the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights.

The Valkyries would transport half of their corpses to Óðinn's Valhalla, the hall of the slain, where they were restored to life and health and lived as sons of Óðinn, leading idyllic lives for warriors – fighting all day and feasting all night while they prepared to be warriors in the great apocalyptic war Ragnarök, which would be the Twilight of the Gods.

The second half of the Valkyries' heroic dead, who would fight on the side of the forces of light, were delivered to Freyja, the goddess for whom the day Friday is named. Those souls who were sent to spend the afterlife in Freyja's dwelling were given perpetual rest and recreation. A sweet and generous woman, Freyja always invited their wives or lovers to come and live with them.

Freyja, the most beautiful and best loved of the goddesses, symbolised sexuality, fertility, and prosperity. Perhaps the reason people prayed to Freyja was that she was the most powerful practitioner of the art of *Seiðr*, a form of magic concerned with discerning and altering the course of destiny by re-weaving part of Destiny's Web. Thus, if humans were unhappy with their lot, they prayed to Freyja.

These wonderful stories are part of a much larger story. This was a transformational age in human history, when there was a quantum advancement in the evolution of human thought.

"What is new about this age ... is that man becomes conscious of Being, as a whole, of himself and his limitations. He experiences the terror of the world and his own powerlessness. He asks radical questions. Face to face with the void he strives for liberation and redemption. By consciously recognising his limits he sets

himself the highest goals ... a strange veil seems to have been lifted from ancient cultures ... as though man had really come to himself ..."

Those are the words of German philosopher Karl Jaspers describing this amazing phenomenon he referred to as the Axial Age or the age of great change. He showed that, in a five-century time span, between the eighth and third centuries BCE, there was a fundamental advancement in the evolution of human thought, a period when, in every part of the world, the great intellectual, philosophical, and religious systems that have shaped subsequent human society and culture came into being.

This was the time when, independently, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism arose in India; Taoism and Confucianism in China; the Torah was written by the prophets of Israel; Zoroastrianism arose in Persia; and the philosophies of Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato, in Greece, laid the foundation for science, mathematics, and higher education.

The religions and philosophies that arose in the axial period profoundly impacted human civilization and continue to impact our lives today. The question we must address is: did a similar phenomenon occur in other parts of the world where there was no written language and, if so, is there a way we may learn how the people of those areas understood the deep questions about life and its meaning and purpose? In Northern and Western Europe, we have an answer to that question.

The first-century Roman senator, historian, and ethnologist, Tacitus, in his book *Germania*, gives the first evidence that the Germanic tribes had a unique religion with a pantheon of gods whom he compared with the Greco-Roman gods.

We would know little else about their religion, commonly called paganism, if it were not for the fact that centuries later the stories of this religion were recorded in the Icelandic Eddas.

The mythical poems of the Eddas are the primary remnant of the pre-Christian beliefs of the Germanic people. They contain many of the elements that are found in other philosophies and religions that arose in the axial period. There was a pantheon of gods, a creation myth beginning with a great void, an apocalyptic war between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, a world tree, and a promise of the reward of a pleasant afterlife for the worthy and terrible punishment for unworthy.

There were no commandments, but, from the Eddas, we can discern nine virtues that governed the lives of the people of the Germanic and Scandinavian worlds: courage, truth, honour, fidelity, discipline, hospitality, industriousness, self-reliance, and perseverance.

The reason that the Anglo-Saxon world shared paganism is that, after the Roman legions left Britain, the power vacuum was filled by two Germanic tribes, the Angles and the Saxons. Æthelstan, the first king to unite all of Britain, was Anglo-Saxon. In his battle to secure domination over Britain, in part, Æthelstan used 300 Icelandic and Norwegian mercenaries whose language, at that time, was so similar that they could communicate with each other. Thus paganism became the state religion in Britain.

The question then is: how did Icelandic scholars know these amazing centuries-old stories that had never been written down? The answer to that question lies in the Norwegian part of Iceland's heritage.

... continued on page 14

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# Jón Sigurðsson, the Icelandic patriot

## PART 5

Jón Sigurðsson did not devote himself solely to political and patriotic work, but engaged also in literary labours, and it is surprising how he could find time to carry out both and still at the same time take part in the social life as much, as he did, for it was remarkable that however busy he might be, still one scarcely was aware of it, for he always found time to speak with the utmost kindness and readiness to everyone that applied to him, and they were very many. This must be chiefly attributed to his remarkably methodical and industrious habits, while at work, thereby proving the truth of the proverb: "Give everything its time and you will find time for everything." And not only was he extremely industrious and got through an incredible amount of work, but he executed everything with great care and exactness. His literary labours, besides affording him means of subsistence, secured for

him much renown. He devoted himself chiefly to the history and literature of Iceland and thus his literary pursuits were in thorough agreement with his political labours, as he thereby acquired a deeper insight into the different questions relating to Iceland and its intellectual and material affairs in the past and present, than any one else possessed."

From the time he obtained the Arna-Magnæan Fellowship, he took a considerable part in the works which the Arna-Magnæan Commission published, and he wrote reports of its proceedings which contain much important information. He also wrote an account of a part of the Arna-Magnæan collection of manuscripts, a voluminous and accurate work, which has not yet been published. In the year 1848, he was appointed secretary to the Arna-Magnæan Commissioners in succession to the famous archæologist, Professor Finnur Magnússon,

which position he held to his death. He also executed considerable work for the Northern Archæological Society and published various of its old manuscripts; in 1841 he went to Sweden in the interest of the society and at its expense, along with another man of letters, Ólafur Pálsson, afterwards Dean of the Cathedral of Reykjavík; they were charged with the examination of Icelandic manuscripts in the libraries and collections in Uppsala and Stockholm. They spent three months in this work and Jón Sigurðsson discovered many Icelandic manuscripts which till then had been overlooked. In the year 1847, he was appointed as a member of the publishing committee of the archæological society and for 18 years he was Keeper of the Records to the Society. He was also charged with various tasks for the Danish Scientific Society.

But of all learned societies, the Icelandic Literary Society owed most to Jón Sigurðsson. In the year 1839, he was elected vice president of the Copenhagen Section and the following year

he became secretary; from that time he was the principal mover in all its actions. It was at his suggestion that the excellent map of Iceland, founded on the survey by the able geometrician Björn Gunnlögsson, was issued; then it was chiefly due to him that a great many descriptions of parishes and meteorological observations were sent to the society. He was also the founder of the collection of manuscripts belonging to the society. In 1851, he was elected president and held that post ever since.

It was not long before clear proofs of his exertions and energy in the interest of the society appeared. Within only a few years, the number of the members increased greatly and the income and activity grew in the same proportions. One has only to look at the publications of the society during this period in order to be convinced that it was never so flourishing as under his direction. He himself worked and wrote more than any one else for the society and he was the life and soul of all its proceedings. Among the works published by the

society at this period we may mention *Íslenzkt Fornbréfasafn* (Diplomatarinni Islandicum), edited by Jón Sigurðsson; in it are to be found full and accurate details on various subjects which no one but he could give; "Byskupasögur" (Lives of the Bishops of Iceland from the earliest times down to the Reformation), and "Safn til sögu Íslands," in both of which he took a great part. With regard to the proceedings of the society in other respects, he thought it of the greatest importance that it published scientific works or such as might be an honour to Icelandic literature and especially such as were not likely to be published by private individuals. He devoted much time to the management of the society and carried on constant correspondence with a great many people all over the country, which together with his popularity contributed much to further the prosperity of the society.

One of his most extensive and most important of his literary labours is the *Lovsamling for Island* (Icelandic Collection

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### The greatest saga never told ... from page 13

In every oral society, there are people who develop an incredible capacity to remember the history and lore of their society. The Norwegians raised this ability to a high art. They developed a system of poetry which allowed them to accurately record the history of the Scandinavian kings and the remarkable stories of paganism in poetry. The system was skáldic poetry and the poets were called skálds, who were richly rewarded for their ability to tell these stories. They became the storytellers who entertained the courts of the Scandinavia.

During the settlement period in Iceland, virtually all the skálds of Norway migrated to Iceland and brought this amazing lore with them. For centuries, this allowed Icelanders to be exclusively the skálds in all of the Scandinavian courts. This is why it became important for Icelanders to record these amazing stories.

The last piece of this amazing story is how it came about that the Icelanders were able to write these stories down, long before other countries in Europe were able to write in their own language. Writing came late to Northern Europe; it came through the spread of Christianity and it came in the form of Latin.

Icelanders had a problem. Because they were the first republic in Western Europe to live by the rule of law, they accumulated a very large body of law. Late in the twelfth century an unknown Icelander set out the rules of writing in Icelandic. About forty years later, in 1117, the Icelandic parliament, Alþingi, voted to write down their laws in Icelandic. Prior to that time almost all writing in Iceland was done in scriptoria controlled by the church; now secular writing was done in many parts of Iceland.

This initiated an incredible outpouring of writing in Icelandic, including the most important book written in medieval Europe, Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*; *Grágás*, or the corpus of Icelandic law; *Landnámabók*, the 100-chapter book that made Icelanders the first people in the world to document the settlement of their country; *Heimskringla*,



IMAGE: © HOWARD DAVID JOHNSON

### Óðinn and his horse Sleipnir

the historical record of the Norse kings and early mythology; the Sagas, an entire genre of literature written before Chaucer and Dante were born; and their most important contribution to world culture, the *Poetic Edda*.

There are two considerations that make this achievement even more impressive. First was the incredible cost of writing at that time. To write one book, *Heimskringla*, would require the slaughter of 200 sheep whose skins would be treated to create vellum and a calligrapher would have to enter each letter by hand to create this 800-page book. The cost of a single copy of this book would have been equivalent to the cost of a large farm. Second, and what is even more astounding about this story, is all of this was all accomplished by a country with a population of perhaps fewer than 40,000 people – certainly less than 50,000 – scattered across the second-largest island in Europe, a country with no large towns and no universities.

See more of the artist's work at his website: [www.howarddavidjohnson.com](http://www.howarddavidjohnson.com).

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of Laws) in 17 volumes. It is true that another man's name, Oddgeir Stephensen, Chief of the Icelandic Department, stands also on the title page, but his share in the work was much inferior. In this work the laws and documents are not merely reproduced, but generally accompanied by very instructive introductory notes of great importance for the legal history of the country. This work is therefore a gold mine not only for the lawyer and historian, but also for everyone who in any way is engaged in the study of the history of Iceland, and certainly no one will undertake to write any historical work on Iceland relating to that period without consulting it. Jón Sigurðsson had access to the government archives in order to collect the material for this great work, to which he devoted much time as may be seen from his collection of manuscripts, where no less than 10 quarto volumes bear the title "Regesta," which no doubt, were written to prepare for the publishing of the collection of laws.

Besides these scientific works, various of his political treatises in the *Ný Félagsrit* contain much historical information, based on accurate researches; thus some of these treatises, especially those in the elder series, are of much scientific value. In conjunction with Svend Grundtvig, Professor of the University in Copenhagen, he edited *Íslenzk Fornkvæði* (Old Icelandic Ballads), the material of which was collected and the text edited by himself alone, while Grundtvig wrote the introductions and comparisons with the ballads of other nations. He translated the almanack of the university and adapted it to the Icelandic chronology; this task he continued to execute for 30 years. To various noteworthy books he wrote introductions, as for example the *Lexicon Poeticum* by Sveinbjörn Egilsson.

It may be considered a branch of his literary activity that he all his lifetime, with the utmost energy and industry, collected all manuscripts, letters, documents and records in any way relating to the history and affairs of Iceland. In this he spared neither expense nor trouble. He examined very carefully all collections in Copenhagen where it might be expected that any thing regarding Iceland could be discovered and when at the Alþing he constantly sought for information in the various collections of documents and records in Reykjavík. It is quite astonishing how much he effected in this respect, for while engaged in these researches he wrote down every thing he considered of

any significance and added thereto accurate annotations. He was extremely clear-sighted in judging of ancient manuscripts and when he saw an old letter or manuscript, he was quick in deciding to what period it belonged. This was the result both of his extended learning and uncommon keenness of his eyes, so that he could even read worn out manuscripts, illegible to others.

For a long time he had been gathering a great and remarkable collection of manuscripts, consisting of about 2,000 volumes. This collection, along with his excellent library (of about 5,000 volumes), his country bought of him one of the last years of his life for the sum of 25,000 krónur (about £1,389) on the condition that both should at his death be added to the Landsbókasafn (National Library), where they now are. Jón Sigurðsson strove also with all his might to assist all public collections in Iceland, in particular the Archæological Museum and the National Library in Reykjavík. Last we may mention as a branch of his literary activity that he by his extended acquaintance, exhortations, suggestions and important information exercised great influence on the younger men of letters and on the whole gave other scientific men assistance and advice in many ways.

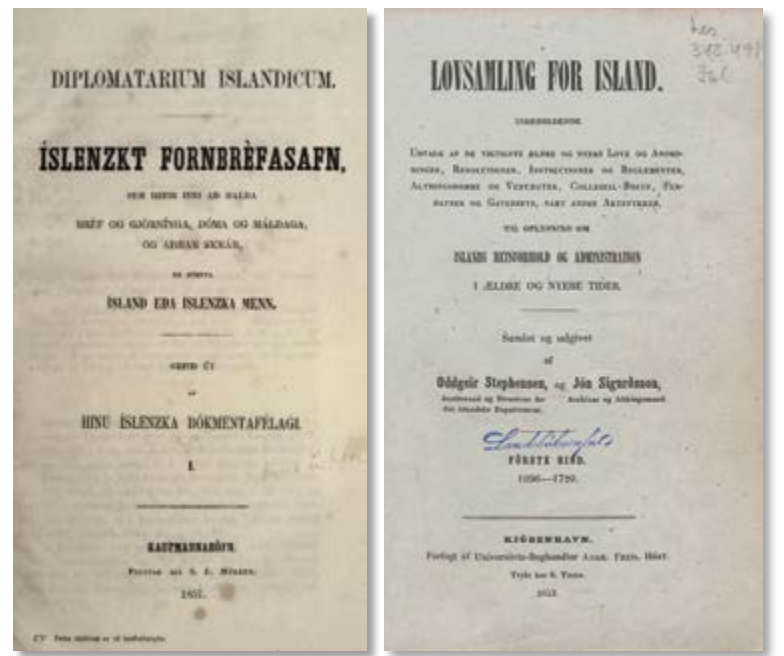
This short account suffices to show that his literary services stand on equal footing with those which he rendered his country as a statesman and it is indeed surprising how much he executed in spite of many unavoidable hindrances. He spent much time in correspondence with his countrymen and foreigners, in executing commissions for others, further his journeys to the Alps every other year took up a considerable part of his time. It shows the power and grasp of his mind that he could with success have so many irons in the fire at once in addition to the load of daily cares which he, a man without office or fixed income, must bear in providing for himself and his family in a manner suitable to their requirements and social position and exercising a generous hospitality.

As to Jón Sigurðsson's, literary services they consist chiefly, as we have already mentioned, in his writings relating to Iceland, its history (\* see endnote), literature and general condition, both in the past and present. He was also well versed in the history and archæology of Scandinavia. To philology he devoted less-time, though he also in that branch of science kept abreast of the times. He was well skilled in many other branches of learning

and had many-sided interests, of which his admirably selected library is the strongest proof.

It has been mentioned above that Jón Sigurðsson did not hold any office. He was indeed appointed Keeper of the Records with a salary of 600 *rigsdalers* (about £66), but that post he only held for two years (1847-1848), for when he came back to Copenhagen from the Alþing in 1849, that office was abolished, no doubt because his political action did not find favour in the eyes of the government. While he sat in the National Assembly, it was suggested to him that he should apply for a post then vacant in Copenhagen, which he did, but when he returned to Copenhagen in the autumn, it was intimated to him that he could not obtain the post applied for unless he promised never more to accept a seat in the Alþing or in the Danish parliament. This Jón Sigurðsson refused to do.

The gratitude of the Icelanders and the esteem they bore him appeared in many ways both in words and deeds. The Icelandic poets never honoured any other Icelander in the same degree in their verses and on almost every occasion that he left Copenhagen to attend the Alþing, and again on his return, the Icelandic students in Copenhagen held a banquet in his honour at which verses were sung to his praise. The members of the Alþing had a portrait of him painted and it hangs in the Lower Chamber in Reykjavík, and the Icelandic students in Copenhagen issued a lithographic print of his picture, which is seen in almost every farmhouse in Iceland, and his bust in marble executed by the eminent Norwegian sculptor, Bergslien. The meeting at Þingvellir in 1873 resolved to pay him a sum of money of the funds of the Þjóðvinafélag and, at the millennial festival at Þingvellir in 1874, this resolution was renewed and at the same time the assembly sent to him an address thanking him for his share in the constitutional reform obtained by the country. When the Alþing met for the first time in the capacity of a



Cover page of the first issue of *Íslenzkt Fornbréfasafn*.  
Title page of the first volume of *Lovsamling for Island*.

legislative assembly in 1875, both chambers unanimously voted him an honorary salary of 3,200 Danish *kroner* (about £178) yearly for life, which vote was confirmed by the king. He was President of the Alþing nearly every session from 1841 to 1879; thus it became the custom to call him the “President,” though indeed the word was used in a wider meaning, indicating that he was the chief of all the Icelanders.

don't know any other Icelander that has accomplished so much and at the same time done it so well. Finnur Magnússon, who deserves all honour for his incomparable industry, has no doubt written more, but he is not so trustworthy and accurate as Jón Sigurðsson." See Dr. Jón Þorkelsson, "Um vísindalega starfsemi Jóns Sigurðssonar" in *Timarit hins íslenska Bókmentafélags*, volume III, 1882-83.

Part 5 of 6 installments. This series was produced by someone identified as "one of his relatives," but whom the preface reveals to have been one of Jón Sigurðsson's many nephews, and translated into English W.G. Spence Paterson, who was the British Consul for Iceland, and Geir Zoega, professor of the College in Reykjavík. Published in Reykjavík by the Printing House of S. Eymundsson and S. Jónsson in 1887, this biographical sketch drew upon the essays "Yfirlit yfir æfi Jóns Sigurðssonar" by Rev. Eiríkur Briem (1880) and "Um vísindalega starfsemi Jóns Sigurðssonar" by Dr. Jón Þorkelsson (1882).

\* \* \*

\* 'His knowledge of the history of Iceland was quite unequalled and not only do I believe that no other Icelander ever possessed the same knowledge of it from the beginning to the present date, but I am also convinced that no single man has done so much for it as he, and that he has even done more for the history of Iceland than Jón Halldórsson, Finnur Jónsson and Hannes Finnsson together, though Iceland, in this respect, is greatly indebted to these three eminent historians. And if I consider the whole extent of Jón Sigurðsson's literary activity, I

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Events

**SUNDAY 30 JULY**  
**Blaine WA:** The Blaine Icelandic Picnic at Peace Arch Park 1 - 4 pm. U.S. side. You can park on the Canadian side and walk through Peace Arch Park. Families find the picnic to be a great way to create an impromptu family reunion as well as spend an afternoon with other Icelandic descendants. You are invited to bring your picnic lunch (and tablecloths) and join in the fun. Cake is provided, a group photo is taken, and the weather is always beautiful at this time of year.

**THURSDAY 3 AUGUST**  
**Winnipeg, MB:** Opening of Solo Exhibition by Inga Torfadóttir. "Sögubrot" Series by Inga Torfadóttir Icelandic-Canadian Artist Hosted by: the Icelandic Collection, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, University of MB and Soul Gallery Inc. Refreshments Served. RSVP by July 27 to julie.soulgallery@gmail.com. Opening Reception: 4:30-6:30 pm. Iceland Reading Room, Elizabeth Dafoe Library. Exhibit on display to 29 Sep. Open 8:30-4:30, Mon-Fri. "Sögubrot" means The History – exhibition features a vast collection of fascinating and stirring monoprints showcased for sale Aug 3 - Sept. 29. These are the artist's expression of her beloved culture, its language, stories, fables and mythology.A "must see" this summer in the Iceland Reading Room of University of Manitoba.

**FRIDAY TO SUNDAY 4 TO 6 AUGUST**  
**Mountain, ND:** The Deuce of August, 118th

annual Icelandic celebration. Northeast North Dakota is the home of a large Icelandic settlement, many historic sites. This weekend celebration is the oldest ethnic festival in North Dakota and the largest Icelandic event in the United States. We have a wonderful parade on Saturday morning which goes down the historic Main Street and past the Vikur Church. Vikur is the oldest Icelandic Church in all of North America. Activities for everyone in the family and lots of food. Street dances, fireworks, and kids games plus much more. Most of the weekend activities take place in Mountain including the very popular, high-octane, North Dakota State Pickup and Tractor Pull, which happens on Sunday. There is a Kids Pedal Tractor Pull, in the Saturday line-up of events and it is not to be missed! thedeuce.org.  
*Free Genealogy Center:* Icelandic Roots - connect cousins, find ancestors, and help people discover their Icelandic story. Thu and Fri 3-4 Aug: 1-4. Sat 5 Aug: 11-4 (after the parade). Mountain Community Center. More info on Facebook and at www.thedeuce.org. Come to www.IcelandicRoots.com and click on "Join Us." We provide many free services as well as a Membership Database.

**FRIDAY TO MONDAY 4 TO 7 AUGUST**  
**Gimli, MB:** Íslendingadagurinn. The Icelandic Festival of Manitoba. 2017 Theme: *Discover your Land.* The Icelandic Festival in itself is a celebration of Iceland and Canada together. Visitors, sponsors, friends and locals, no matter who you are, while you are at the festival: we

are all Icelandic and we are all Canadian. This year's theme celebrates the coming together of Canadian and Icelandic culture forged together over 100 years. An important aspect of this year's theme is storytelling. Storytelling is one way to unite these two distinct cultures. The stories of bold pasts and bright futures creates a bond that has endured through time. Brush strokes and brand elements are used to paint a story, while still featuring the runes within the headline, giving the type a mythical feeling. The brush strokes take the form of Canada and Iceland, while contrast and vibrancy conjure the celebratory feeling of the festival. We are bound together by our rich histories, and the tales of bright and bold are emphasized. Despite being an ocean apart, our two countries are similar in strength, pride and perseverance. Bonded in northern weather and weight, we are fearless and enduring in our respective country's landscapes. Enjoy food, music, entertainment, events/activities, Icelandic culture, and of course, Vikings! With the support of our sponsors, donors and volunteers we offer many festival events for free or low cost. www.icelandicfestival.com.  
**Sat 5 Aug:** The Black River Drifters perform, Ship and Plough beer tent. 10 pm. This outdoor venue will be located directly behind the Ship and Plough at 42 Centre St.

**SATURDAY TO MONDAY 5 TO 7 AUGUST**  
**Edmonton, AB:** Heritage Festival. William Hawrelak Park, 9330 Groat Rd. A three-day event to sample delicious food, see creative performances, and experience world Cultures. Enjoy the tastes, smells, sights and sounds from 100 countries and cultures at 71 pavilions. Explore the festival while enjoying free entertainment on more than 25 stages throughout the park.

**SUNDAY 6 AUGUST**  
**Gimli, MB:** Gimli Unitarian Church holds summer services on the first and third Sundays of the month in their historic building on Second Avenue near Centre Street. On August 6, at 11:00 am, the sermon will be: "Thought and Memory." In old Nordic mythology, the two ravens who perch on Óðinn's shoulders are called Huginn and Muninn – that's Thought and

Memory in English – and they fly over the world daily. According to an ancient verse, Óðinn says, "I fear for Thought, that he may not return / But I fear more for Memory." We will reflect on the meaning of this ancient verse during Icelandic Festival weekend. Dress is casual since it's vacation season and Gimli is a vacation destination. For further information, contact Rev. Stefan Jonasson at (204) 781-0320. To be added to our mailing list for updates, send an email to interlake-unitarians@shaw.ca.

**SATURDAY 12 AUGUST**  
**Reykjavik, Iceland:** The Pride Parade.

**SATURDAY 19 AUGUST**  
**Reykjavik, Iceland:** Reykjavik Marathon. 42.2 km, 21.1 km and 10 km. This event goes hand-in-hand with the Reykjavik Cultural Night. marathon.is/reykjavik-marathon.

**SATURDAY 19 AUGUST**  
**Reykjavik, Iceland:** Reykjavik Culture Night will be held for the 22nd time. The event, which is both created and enjoyed by city residents, takes place all across Reykjavik.

**TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER**  
**Winnipeg, MB:** Icelandic Canadian Frón Annual General Meeting at the Scandinavian Cultural Centre, 764 Erin Street. Doors open at 6:30 for Icelandic language class registration followed by the AGM at 7:00. Everyone welcome.

**SUNDAY 24 SEPTEMBER**  
**Winnipeg, MB:** The Icelandic Canadian Frón will be hosting the Sunday Bruch at the Scandinavian Cultural Centre 764 Erin Street 10:30 – 1 p.m. \$15 adults, \$7.50 children 8-12, under age 7 free. Reservations requested: sccreservations@shaw.ca or 204-774-8047 (include name, phone #, number of adults and age of children in party).

**27 - 30 SEPTEMBER**  
**Minot, ND:** Norsk Høstfest, 40 years of pure scandimonium! Norsk Høstfest is an annual festival held each fall in Minot, North Dakota. It is North America's largest Scandinavian festival. The event is held

on the North Dakota State Fair grounds in Minot. Details: Hostfest.com.

**SATURDAY 30 SEPTEMBER**  
**Calgary AB:** The Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club of Calgary Fall Feast featuring presentations of the Snorris' trip to Iceland. Scandinavian Centre, 739 - 20th Ave. NW.

**Edmonton, AB:** Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton Leifur Eiriksson Dinner.

Icelandic classes

**TUESDAYS STARTING 26 SEPTEMBER**  
**Winnipeg, MB:** The Icelandic Canadian Frón is offering three levels of Icelandic classes at the Scandinavian Cultural Centre 764 Erin St. Registration at 6:30 Tuesday September 19 or start of classes. Fee for 10 week session until November 28 is \$50 for members and \$55 for non-members. Classes start September 26 at 6:30. Contact Kendra at kensuloa@mts.net.

**WEDNESDAYS**  
**Gimli, MB:** Kaffitimi in Gimli is every Wednesday, 3 pm in the Harbour Cafe in Gimli Waterfront Centre. Coffee and conversation (in Icelandic). Everyone is welcome to join in or come to listen.

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# Weird desolation: Iceland in 1882

## An account by Rev. C.L. Acland, a friend of Iceland

W.D. Valgardson  
Victoria, BC

Rev. C.L. Acland wrote a second report on the situation in Iceland in 1882. His original trip to Iceland had obviously made him a fan of all things Icelandic: the people, the landscape, and the literature.

By the time he gives this second report, he has discovered who it is that is spreading rumours that there is no famine in Iceland. Scottish sheep dealers have been discouraging people from donating to the famine fund because they've already been going to Iceland and taking advantage of the Icelandic situation. The Icelanders are in no condition to bargain on prices. Their situation is so desperate that they have to take whatever the Scottish sheep dealers offer and they offer as little as possible. Rev. Mr. Acland regards them with absolute contempt.

He's only been to Iceland once but he went well prepared. He is well-read in the sagas. He compares the Iceland in *Njáls saga* to present-day Iceland and grieves the difference. "As I said last week, the Iceland farmer has now no crop but his hay crop, no kind of corn or grain food is raised at all; there is a wild oat found in certain parts of the island, which may be degenerate descendant of the cultivated crops of earlier days – for there can be no doubt that corn was grown in Iceland when Iceland was the home of a civilisation and a literature of her own. ... It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if in the early days of its history corn and timber did grow in Iceland, whereas now neither is grown, there must have been a very decided change for the worse in the climate of the country." (Corn is the general term for grain; he's not referring to maize.)

"The largest trees now remaining in Iceland are three or four rowans, mountain ash-trees, at Akureyri. ... On the approach of winter these much valued trees are carefully swathed in sheepskins to preserve them from the bitter frost. Not far from Akureyri is the so-called forest, sole remains of the birch-woods which once flourished in Iceland. This forest consists of a few hundred gnarled and stunted birch plants ..."

He then says that the volcanic eruptions have done tremendous harm, not because of the lava but because of the volcanic ash. He gives one of the best descriptions I have read of what the Icelandic farmers faced. "This volcanic ash, poured out from Askja,

covered many fertile farms ... to a depth of from eighteen inches to two feet, and so permanently diminished the productive area of the country. Imagine three or four contiguous farms in an English agricultural county simultaneously covered with two feet of ashes; and picture to yourselves the task of again bringing them under cultivation. It would be hardly less than impossible, even among ourselves, with abundance of labour, and carts and waggons of all kinds available for the removal of this deadly top-dressing. What, then, must it be in Iceland, with its scanty and widely-scattered population, and no wheeled vehicles whatever or roads for them to go on, even if they were there."

"Kirkuvogr is one of the greenest and brightest spots in the south-west of Iceland, and on a warm summer-day, when the hay is just off the land, it looks very fair and fertile. At the end of a short half-hour's canter over smooth close turf, your ponies are at once and without any warning fetlock deep in light dry ashes, which take hardly any impression from the hoofs, so fine, almost impalpable, are they. No words of mine can give the slightest idea of the weird desolation of the scene. Mile after mile, mile after mile, of ashes underfoot, ashes all around, and the view bounded by low, sharp, jagged hills of what looks like coke more than anything else, the whole more like the pictures one sees of lunar scenery than anything on earth. Not a plant of any kind is to be seen, except here and there a solitary blade and ear of a peculiar grass that can extract nourishment enough for its small needs even from so hopeless a soil as this."

"Age by age its climate grows worse – year by year its productive area gets smaller – and the time can hardly be far distant, as such times are reckoned, when, compelled by

**At Home and Abroad.**  
ICELAND.  
No. II.  
BY REV. C. L. ACLAND, M.A.  
SINCE I wrote my opening paper on this subject, I have been at some trouble to trace the origin of the Iceland famine contradiction. I have good reason to believe that it took its rise with certain Scotch sheep dealers, who, finding that the Icelanders were willing to part with their sheep at a low price rather than let them die of starvation, thought it conducive to their interests to start the report that there was no famine or fear of famine in Iceland at all. I do not think that their conduct needs much comment, so, wishing them all the joy they deserve of their ill-gotten gains, let us pass on.

### Acland's second article about Iceland in *The Family Churchman*

forces utterly irresistible, the last of her inhabitants shall seek elsewhere a more genial home, and leave the country."

This is 1882. Iceland is still a rural society of isolated farms. There are, as he says, no roads. All travel is on horseback. There are no wheeled vehicles. No one has control over the ice from Siberia. No one has control over the wind. No one has control over the temperatures. As he points out, even in England it would be impossible to remove all the ash from the fields. There were no cities where the displaced farm owners and their workers could find employment. Today, with a modern society where daily survival doesn't depend on one crop, grass, it is hard to imagine the situation of those whose land has been buried beneath volcanic ash.

It is hard to grasp how desperate the situation is. King Christian IX came in 1874. He brought with him a constitution for the Icelanders. It was a day of great celebration. However, as much as it is celebrated, the growing independence from Denmark does not add one blade of grass to the fields. Conditions continue to be desperate, so desperate, in fact, that there are many statements about the need of the population of Iceland to move abroad. In 1784, during *Móðuharðindin* (the Mist Hardships), the Danes even considered moving the entire



PHOTO: STEFAN JONASSON

### Old rowan trees at Skriða, planted by Þorlákur Hallgrímsson in 1828

population to Denmark. Around a hundred years later, there was talk of the entire population moving to New Iceland.

As we know, these draconian plans were never implemented. Icelanders suffered cold and hunger, but stubbornly held on. As long as control remained rural, locking everyone into an agricultural structure that, at best, provided subsistence living for the majority of the population, there was no hope of having a better life for the ordinary person. The shackles were tradition, political control, a system that gave all decision-

making power to the few who used it for their own benefit. Changes had to come. Roads had to be built. Bridges had to be built. Once those existed, vehicles could replace the horse. Villages could spring up. A new way of life could begin.

This article follows on W.D. Valgardson's earlier story, "Iceland and Canada in 1882" (July 15, 2017), which compared and contrasted Rev. C.L. Acland's account of the hardships in Iceland with Charles N. Bell's account of "The Great Boom" occurring in Manitoba at the same time.

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PHOTOS: STEFAN JONASSON

**Statue of a woman churning butter at Árbæjarsafn. Dairy implements on display at the Minjasafn Austurlands in Egilsstaðir.**



## THE ELFIN LOVER

A certain rich farmer and his wife had two daughters, who were named Margrét and Ólöf.

Margrét was the darling of her parents' hearts and used to take care of a dairy and pasture in the mountains during the summer, for her father and

mother always put more trust in her than in anybody else.

One summer, it happened that, while she was sitting milking the ewes, a little boy

came to her several evenings in succession and brought with him a small wooden jug, which he asked her to fill with milk for him. This Margrét always refused to do and, as he still came day after day with the same request, she at last became angry and threatened him with a good whipping if he troubled her again.

"I have plenty to do without giving milk to all the little boys who choose to come with jugs for it. Be gone!"

At this, the child ran back crying to his mother, who was an elf-woman and who lived near the mountain-farm. He told her how harshly Margrét had spoken to him. The elf-woman was mighty angry at this and said, "Harsh words shall meet with a harsh lot. This shall be Margrét's fate. She shall spend and fritter away everything that comes into her hands just as lavishly as she has stingily refused to give you milk. She shall see how she likes poverty and loss of trust." And true enough, she certainly did become such a spendthrift that her father and mother soon noticed it and, not caring that she should waste all they had, withdrew her from the mountain pasture and sent Ólöf there in her place.

When the latter had been there some little time, the same child came to her as she sat out in the evening milking the ewes, and, holding out his little askur, said, "Ólöf, my mother sends her love to you and begs you to give her a little milk for her child. When your sister Margrét was here, I often asked her for some, but she was harsh and said no – and drove me out of her sight."

Ólöf was tender-hearted

and willingly gave the boy some milk to drink himself and filled his jug for him, at the same time telling him to come whenever he liked. The boy ran off to his mother and told her how different things were now and how kindly the girl had spoken to him and treated him. Whereupon the elf-woman said, "Good words shall have a good reward. This shall be Ólöf's fate. All that comes into her hands shall turn to fair luck and all she has shall increase as many-fold as her kindness to you has been greater than her sister's cruelty."

So for some summers, the boy came often to Ólöf for milk. Now, one autumn, her companions in the mountain-farm noticed that she was soon to give birth to a child, but being discreet, and moreover loving her well, they kept their discovery from everyone else, though they could not help whispering among themselves that the boy who used to beg for milk was just as fond of Ólöf herself as of her milk-pails, if not more so.

One night, Ólöf was delivered of a child. As soon as it was born, an old man and old woman, together with the boy who had so often visited Ólöf on the mountains, came into the cottage and, taking the child in their arms, went out with it after bidding her an affectionate farewell. All this her companions saw, and that the youth often came and spoke with her, though Ólöf fully believed that not only the birth of her child, but also the visits of the elves, were unknown to all but herself.

Time passed without any new occurrence until Ólöf's mother fell into a sickness

*"Hvað er svo glatt sem góðra vina fundur?"*



*"What is as joyful as a gathering of good friends?"*

### 118th Annual Deuce of August Icelandic Celebration Árið tvö þúsund og sautján (2017) Mountain, North Dakota

#### THURSDAY, AUGUST 3RD

1:00 PM **Genealogy Center** - Mountain Community Center 1-4 PM-Sponsored by Icelandic Roots  
<https://www.icelandicroots.com/>

#### FRIDAY, AUGUST 4TH

1:00 PM **Genealogy Center** - Mountain Community Center - **1-4 PM**

5:00 PM **Mountain Legion Fish Fry** - Main Street

9:00 PM **Street Dance** - Main Street of Mountain - Music by "Boom Town"  
Sponsored by the Mountain/Thingvalla Fire Department

#### SATURDAY, AUGUST 5TH

10:30 AM **Parade** - Main Street - **Parade will be broadcast live on KXPO AM 1340**  
**Souvenir Sales** - On Main Street

11:00 AM **Vikur Salad Luncheon** - Vikur Church Basement

11:00 AM **Genealogy Center** - Mountain Community Center - **11:00 AM-4 PM**

12:00 Noon **Car Show and Shine** - Main Street

12:00 Noon **Kid's Inflatable Games** - North End of Main Street - **12:00 Noon-4 PM**

12:30 PM **Pedal Tractor Pull for Kids** - Main Street

2:00 PM **Heritage Program** - Mountain Community Center

**Keynote Speaker:** Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Iceland Minister for Foreign Affairs

5:30 PM **Icelandic Communities International Fellowship Supper** - Mountain Community Center

9:00 PM **Street Dance** - Main Street of Mountain - Music by "Front Fenders"

#### SUNDAY, AUGUST 6TH

11:00 AM **Worship Service** - Vikur Church - Catered Brunch to follow - Mountain Community Center

1:00 PM **North Dakota State Tractor & Pickup Pulling Contest** - West of Mountain Community Center

**Cash Raffle drawing to be held after Tractor Pull** - West of Mountain Community Center

The Souvenir Booth will also be selling Icelandic Hardfish and Raffle Tickets for the cash raffle. Cash raffle prizes of \$1,000 and \$500 will be awarded, with the drawing to be held at the conclusion of the Tractor Pull on Sunday, August 6th. Traditional Icelandic foods will be available at the Akra Snack Shack during and after the parade on Saturday. Saturday's Parade will be broadcast live on KXPO AM 1340.

**Honorary Parade Marshals: Vilmar Kristjanson & Norma Nason**



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which was her last. After her mother's death, Ólöf took her place in keeping the house, but never seemed quite happy after what had happened at the mountain-hut. Many fine young fellows wooed and wished to win her, but she said no to them all and sent them off without so much as turning her head to look after them.

At last, one came to whom Ólöf's father, wearied with her eternal refusals, bade her to give herself. For some while, she would not listen to him but at length consented to marry him, only on the condition that he would never allow anyone to pass the winter with them, until he had first spoken to her and asked her leave to do so. He made her this promise and they were speedily married and went to live at the husband's farm (for he was a well-to-do farmer), which was in the mountains, far from her old home.

She had not been there long when her mother-in-law saw that some weight lay upon Ólöf's heart and that her eyes were often filled with tears. She begged Ólöf to tell her the cause of her grief, but Ólöf would not be persuaded and always put off her mother-in-law with shirking answers. At last, however, her mother-in-law promised never, as long as she lived, to repeat to anyone the truth, if Ólöf would only tell it her. So Ólöf told it her and, when she found how the good woman pitied her and how kind was that heart into which she poured her sorrow, she wondered why she had not trusted her at first. For there is no balm like pity to a wounded soul, however deep the wound and however long it may have ached in secret.

In the third year after Ólöf's marriage, but the twelfth from the birth of her child in the mountain-hut, it happened that, towards the end of the hay harvest in autumn, a man and a young boy came to the farmer's house and greeted him. He had never seen them before, but he noticed that they kept their hats pulled down over their brows, as if they were unwilling to be known. When the farmer had returned their greetings, they begged him to allow them to pass the winter in his house. The former answered, "It is not my custom to receive strangers thus. It is long since I have done so."

But when they became more urgent, he said, "I cannot bid you welcome, nor will I send you away, until I have first seen my wife, and spoken to her about it."

The man answered, "Truly you do well and it becomes you to let your wife have the upper hand of you. If you send us away, be sure that all your

neighbours shall know which of you two is the master."

This taunt was more than the farmer could bear, so he promised to let them stay with him. Then, going into the house, he met Ólöf, who said to him, "Who are these men?"

"I know not," he replied. "They have come to me to ask lodging for the winter and they pressured me, so that I promised to let them stay with us."

Then Ólöf said, "In doing so, you have broken your promise to me, but I will have a say in this matter. These men shall not sleep in the house with the rest of the servants, but shall spend the winter in one of the outbuildings." And she left him and went to her own room weeping.

So the farmer made ready one of the outlying buildings, furnishing it with every necessity from the farm, and gave it up as a winter dwelling for the two strangers; but his wife never set foot inside its door, nor went near it. The man and the boy took up their abode there, joining the farmer's family every evening in the family room, as was the custom, but always sitting apart in a dark corner and never speaking unless the farmer first addressed them. Ólöf always seemed as if she did not see them, never once looking at them or speaking to them. Thus the winter passed away and spring came.

Now it happened one Sunday that the farmer and his wife were going to church in order to take the Holy Communion, having bidden farewell to all their household. When they were a little way from home, the farmer asked Ólöf, "Have you bidden farewell to all at home?" She said, "To all." Then he

asked again, "Have you bidden farewell to the strangers also?" "No," she said, "I have not, nor need I, for the whole winter through I have neither spoken to nor looked at them. How then can I have trespassed against them?" But the farmer was not pleased at this and he urged her to return and bid the strangers farewell. The more she refused, the more angry he became, till at length she said, "Well! I will return, as you have bidden, but for what comes of it, blame yourself, not me."

She went back home and the farmer waited for her, but she stayed away so long that he turned back after her to see what

had delayed her. When he came to the outhouse in which the two strangers lived, he found the door unlatched and, stopping by it to see if his wife were there, he heard her say these words: "This is the sweetest draught that ever passed my lips from thine."

He waited a while to hear if more would be said, but no other sound came from the house. So he went in and, there on the couch, lay his wife and the stranger – dead, for their hearts had broken from love and sorrow. And over them the young boy stood weeping. When he asked the lad what this meant, and how death had

befallen them, he only said, "These are my parents."

But the farmer's mother told him Ólöf's story, for she felt freed from her promise, now that Ólöf was dead. And the farmer, full of grief, bade the lad welcome to stay with him and, as he had been Ólöf's child, so to be his. But from the moment when Ólöf and her elfin lover were hidden by the earth, the boy was no longer seen.

*A folktale from the collection of Jón Árnason (1819-1888), Íslenzkar þjóðsögur og ævintýry (Icelandic Folk Tales and Legends), adapted from the translation by George E.J. Powell and Eiríkur Magnússon.*



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PHOTOS: ÞÓR JAKOBSSON

Left: Meeting at Perlan on March 8, 2017 (left to right): Catharine Fulton with little Gola, Kent Lárus Björnsson, Robyn Phaedra Mitchell, and Margaret Unger.  
Right: Meeting at Perlan May 31, 2017 (left to right): Robyn Phaedra Mitchell, Kent Lárus Björnsson, Baldur with Oliver Axel, Jörunn Rothenborg, Anne-Marie Tremblay Quenneville, Danielle Pamela Neben, and Catharine Fulton with Gola and Esja.

## CELEBRATING CANADA'S 150 YEARS IN ICELAND

*How advance planning, social media, and coffee meetings created a celebration*

**Þór Jakobsson**  
Reykjavík, Iceland

On July 1, 2016, I realized that in a year an extraordinary day in Canada's history would take place. Canada would become 150 years old! Certainly, there would be reason for Canadians and friends of Canada here in Iceland to celebrate. Sometime in late summer, I booked the Nordic House in Reykjavík as a venue for a celebration event on July 1, 2017. Soon in the New Year, I talked with Kent Lárus Björnsson about this and he was quick to act and established a Facebook group where he

invited a few individuals who were likely to be interested in the idea and willing to spend some time preparing a festive event in Reykjavík on July 1, 2017.

"Þór Jakobsson has booked Norræna húsið for Canada Day 2017, where we can celebrate Canada's 150th," Kent posted in his welcome to the group at the end of February. "Maybe we can come up with some ideas of what to do. I added a few people, if you are not interested or will not be able to attend or help with some input, we will understand. If you can think of someone who should be with us in the group please add them."

On March 8, a small

group met for the first time in Cafeteria Perlan (The Pearl) where we discussed plans and possibilities. A little later, a few more people joined the active group, including Danielle Pamela Neben. In the coming weeks, we exchanged Facebook messages and email letters as needed. Despite a generous grant from the Icelandic National League, it became clear that the Nordic House would be rather expensive and, more importantly, the location would offer rather limited possibilities for outdoor activities for children. Several other locations were therefore considered and some of them reserved until, finally, the Árbær Open Air Museum was chosen.

On May 31, most of the planning group managed to meet once more at Perlan, when there was just a month to go. At this meeting, it was decided to contact the Canadian ambassador to Iceland, Madame Anne-Tamara Lorre, and Hjálmar W. Hannesson, former ambassador to Canada and the recently-

elected president of the Icelandic National League, and ask if they would be available to address the gathering, which they both generously agreed to do.

On June 1, I reported to the group: "Ambassador Hjálmar W. Hannesson, former ambassador to Canada (and many other countries around the world) and newly elected chairman of the INL in Iceland (Icelandic National League) has kindly accepted our request to address the gathering on Canada Day July 1st." The day after, I wrote to the group: "Now since the Perla Group (the preparation group) has finally decided to celebrate Canada Day 150 at Árbæjarsafn, I wrote to the other locations we had booked (formally or as a possibility) and cancelled our bookings. These were the Nordic House, Guðmundarlundur, and Veröld – Hús Vigdísar. It started with the booking of the Nordic House way back in autumn 2016 with the intention to encourage 'ordinary' Canadians and friends of Canada in Iceland to celebrate the BIG DAY coming

up. Things have developed so here we are. Fine planning and great cooperation will result in an enjoyable celebration of Canada's 150 years at Árbæjarsafn (Árbær Open Air Museum)!"

During June, the last month of preparations, this small, dedicated group worked hard and efficiently where the old man (Þór) did not contribute much. And more donations were provided.

I hope some of my fellow workers will add to this brief description of mine and write their narrative of events and actions during preparations and the day of celebration. I thank them (alphabetically, Catharine, Danielle, Kent Lárus, Margaret, Robyn, etc.) very much for their delightful cooperation. I am grateful for the fine result culminating on July 1, 2017.

The Canada 150 celebration in Iceland was a success and approximately 100 participants, young and old, thoroughly enjoyed the lively afternoon at Árbær Open Air Museum.



### THE WESTSHORE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION INC.

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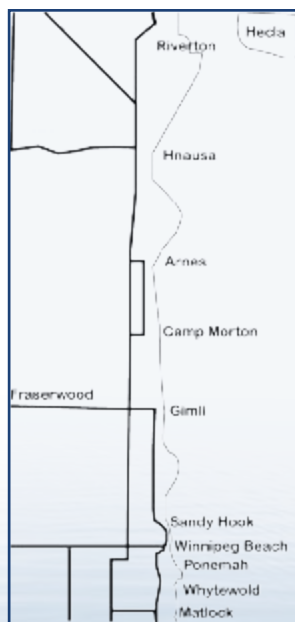
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