



# INLNA Newsletter

ICELANDIC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF NORTH AMERICA

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

<https://www.facebook.com/IcelandicNationalLeagueofNorthAmerica/>

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## Not Alone on the Prairie

### How Indigenous Wisdom Helped New Icelanders Endure and Thrive

This year - 2025 - marks the 150th anniversary of the landing of Icelandic immigrants at Willow Island near Gimli, Manitoba, that left over 60 families on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. The settlers arrived in land that had been 'given to them' by the Dominion of Canada to start a new colony and found Nýja Ísland. However, the land already had people living on it. This proved to be fortuitous for the newcomers. The weary Icelanders arrived on October 21<sup>st</sup> which was very late in the year to be successful in enduring the winter. We know that the local Indigenous groups, particularly the Anishinaabe, Cree, and Métis, were key to their survival. In the 150 celebrations in Gimli and Riverton, Manitoba this year, the memory of John Ramsay, who was of the Saulteaux peoples, was honoured. Ramsay, despite the arrival of settlers on land he called home, chose to offer incredible generosity and selfless compassion at a great personal cost. In that first winter, he is credited for saving as many as 75 of the settlers from starving and freezing to death. Ramsay's beloved wife, Betsey and four of his five children died of smallpox the following year.

There were many hardships, as we know, but the Icelanders more than survived, they thrived. In those early years, learning from Indigenous people how to fish through ice was essential for food, but later it became the basis of an international commercial fishing industry on Lake Manitoba. This is just one story of the success of Icelanders in this country. This year as we celebrate the 150 years of Icelandic heritage in Canada, the INLNA invites us to take a pause on Truth and Reconciliation Day to recognize how the people who were here already helped our ancestors. In a sense we stand on their shoulders – most with names unknown but acts of kindness and generosity are to be remembered. The stories of John Ramsay also remind us of the cost of colonial encounter—not only in land, but in lives and culture. His generosity did not shield his family from the devastating impact of disease or displacement, yet his actions endure as a model of courage and grace in the face of great challenges and shine like a beacon into the future. Go to page 4 and 5 for more information.

**The INLNA is pleased to be joined online a conversation led by distinguished guests  
Glenn Sigurdson CM KC and Professor Niigaan Sinclair in honour of Canada's Day of Truth & Reconciliation  
Register to attend online Zoom at**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_R4gMW1xhQGapNiwXY5RJlg#/registration](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_R4gMW1xhQGapNiwXY5RJlg#/registration)



Everything Icelandic - Not Alone on the Prairie

*Everything Icelandic*

Presented by the Icelandic National League of North America

## Not Alone on the Prairie

**Glenn Sigurdson C.M. K. C. and Professor Niigaan Sinclair**

In Recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of Nýja Ísland, the INLNA is honored to host author, lawyer and mediator **Glenn Sigurdson and Professor Niigaan Sinclair**, Anishinaabe writer, editor and activist to share stories of how the Indigenous People aided and guided those first settlers and what we can do today to honour this special friendship.



Glenn Sigurdson



Niigaan Sinclair

**Online Webinar**  
**Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**  
**7 pm Central Time 8pm Eastern/ 6 pm MT/ 5pm PT**  
**Register at: <https://bit.ly/INLOCT1>**

# President's Message –



To be president of the Icelandic National League of North America in this momentous year—the 150th anniversary of New Iceland—has been such an honour. The year has unfolded as a celebration not just of a community's endurance, but of the connections that span generations and the stories that bind us together across time and distance.

The INLNA celebrations began in May with the convention in Gimli, where members and friends gathered under the theme of “Þó Líði Ár og Öld – Though Years and Centuries Pass”. In my presentation, I spoke of my mother who was born in Piney. Afterwards two women approached me. They were from Piney, and they knew my Amma. They told me how my Amma used to stop on her way from Vancouver to visit us in Ontario,

and go by bus to Piney to visit old friends. I had no idea. It really touched my heart to meet people who knew my Amma. It was a living link to the past.

In my address to the convention, I had shared that, as far as I knew, I had no direct family connection to New Iceland: my mother was from Piney and my Amma was born in North Dakota, while my Afi came from Iceland. Yet, as is often the case with family histories, there are gaps and omissions, and people at the conference came up to me to let me know that my great-grandparents had in fact arrived in 1876, part of "the large group" of Icelandic emigrants. They had settled on the banks of the Icelandic River near Riverton and suffered the hardships of cold, famine, flood and smallpox that all the settlers experienced in those first years. With many others, they had moved south to North Dakota, homesteading near Mountain. Their years in New Iceland were not talked about—which is why I didn't know this story. Perhaps this omission is an echo of that Icelandic trait of not dwelling on hardship and loss but simply forging ahead.

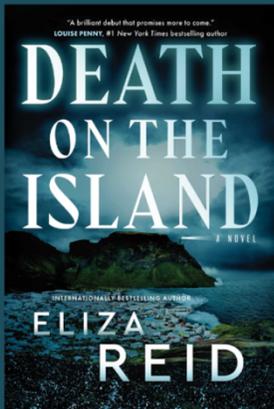
One of my aspirations this summer was to drive out to the Icelandic festivals in both Mountain, ND and Gimli so that I could look for the homesteads of my ancestors. At the old churchyard of Hallson, North Dakota, I stood among the stones and wildflowers, knowing that the farm where my Amma was born, could not be far. The landscape—endless yellow canola fields giving way to wooded trails in the Icelandic State Park—invited me to imagine what my great-grandparents saw and felt. I pictured the arduous trek from Riverton to Mountain; a journey not easily comprehended in our modern age of highways and convenience. Our ancestors were truly tenacious. What courage they had!

The most touching moment for me this summer, was standing by the Icelandic River on the original homestead of my great grandparents. The land is reverting to tall grass with willow shrubs under the towering cottonwood and basswood trees banking the river seemed a place of serene beauty. For them it held too much heartbreak, and they walked away into the unknown. And yet, standing there, I felt the presence of their dreams, their struggles, their silent strength. I am grateful to Nelson Gerrard, who directed me to the site of the homestead. It is in such acts of remembering and sharing that our community finds its heart. These stories—of hardship endured, of hope pursued, of journeys made and homesteads left—are what weaves us together.

As I reflect on this year, I realize how the legacy of New Iceland is not merely a matter of geography or genealogy, but of spirit: a testament to the courage of those who came before, and the lasting ties of family, friendship, and heritage that continue to shape us all. In celebrating this anniversary, we celebrate not only the past, but the living bonds of the INLNA—a family in every sense of the word.

Gwen Sigrid Morgan  
INLNA President 2025

# INLNA READS –



INLNA READS PRESENTS

## DEATH ON THE ISLAND BY ELIZA REID

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2025  
3 PM CENTRAL TIME

### Join INLNA READS

Sunday, September 28<sup>th</sup>

3 pm Central Time

1pm PT/ 2pm MT/ 4pm ET/ 5pm AT

Register for Zoom link at

<https://inlofna.org/inlna-reads>

Eliza Reid needs no introduction to our community. Eliza was the keynote speaker at the 2025 INLNA convention in Gimli where she regaled us with fun stories from her years as First Lady of Iceland. Many of us are familiar Eliza's first book, Secrets of the Sprakkar, which is a non-fiction book exploring the unique role of women in Icelandic society. With Death on the Island Eliza has embarked on a very different path into writing a mystery novel. The setting for the murder is a dark and stormy night, like many of the brooding landscapes of Nordic Noir, but the cast of characters – diplomats, artists and gourmet cooks – weaves together the intricate puzzles of Agatha Christie with personal tensions reminiscent of Louise Penny. Her cast of characters is central to the mystery. As their secrets slowly unravel, the truth begins to be revealed. Or does it? Wait till you get to the very end of the book to find out! (No cheating by reading ahead!)

Eliza's background in journalism and memoir writing has endowed her with a keen ear for dialogue and an instinct for the subtle motivations that drive human behaviour. Death On the Island is full of suspense with a wholly surprising ending that you will enjoy reading and talking about. Looking forward to seeing you at INLNA READS.

## Eliza Reid in Conversation – Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> at 11 CT

**Joint Presentation of The Icelandic National League of North America (INLNA) and the Icelandic National League of the United States (INLUS)**



Meet Eliza Reid online Zoom for a close-up conversation with the former First Lady of Iceland. Learn about what compelled her to write a mystery novel.

How did she conjure up such compelling host of characters?

Why such a unique twist in plot at the end of the novel?

What next lies in the adventures of her amateur sleuths?

Find us online at INLUS Author's Corner Webinars and INLNA Everything Icelandic

<https://inlofna.org/everything-icelandic>

**Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
11 am Central Time**

# The Heartbeat of Reconciliation

Excerpts from Glenn Sigurdson's *Vikings on a Prairie Ocean*. For the full article please go to <https://www.glennsigurdson.com/the-heartbeat-of-reconciliation-your-dad-and-auntie-were-such-good-friends/>

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I believe there's much to learn from my Dad's life and way of being that provides a deep insight into that relationship [between Indigenous people and the Icelanders since their arrival in 1875]. In the Preface of *Vikings On a Prairie Ocean*, I shared these thoughts about him: "Stefan Sigurdson was a special man with a quiet way. He was born into an Icelandic-Canadian fishing family in Hnaua, Manitoba on the shores of Lake Winnipeg on November 21, 1921. He spent the first seventy years of his life in the village of Riverton, the family home and headquarters of Sigurdson Fisheries Ltd., with its own legacy of more than a century on Lake Winnipeg. Dad was known as a statesman within the Lake Winnipeg fishery. His gentle wisdom and charisma were felt in the communities around the lake, in Winnipeg doing business or selling fish into the markets of Chicago. He formed deep relationships with the Indigenous people, always mindful that they had lived around the lake and off the lake and the mighty rivers that enter and leave it, long before the arrival of any Icelanders. Dad gave strong leadership by giving strength to others without ego, and always with respect."

Glenn tells the story of when he was a boy working in the fishing station. He says, "I would stand around the men cutting and cleaning the fish and with each flash of the knife they pushed the entrails toward me so that I could pull out a big fat whitefish liver and drop it into a pail where I would take them up to Dollie to cook for the evening meal. Whitefish livers are exemplary. Their only problem is that they are delicate and cannot be frozen, so you had best eat them fresh, and there was nothing more of a delicacy. I would stand in the large shed and walked amongst the tables. Five or six men stood around each 'table' – a piece of white plywood with a diamond hole in the middle planted on top of the 45-gallon drum in which the top had been peeled off like a can of salmon. Here the Icelanders and the Indians, as they were known and called themselves in those days, together would laugh and talk as they worked. They would so in both Icelandic and Ojibway and together in English. It was no big deal. It was all just part of living and working together."

"Now, as a national community in Canada we are having to come to grips with how we are going to remake the relationship with Indigenous Canadians across the length and breadth of the country. It is not an easy task on an easy road. Men like Dad and Afi and women like my Mom and Dollie are no longer around to impart their wisdom. But there are, in many ways and places, giving leadership on the pathways to reconciliation. For me, I am blessed for I can drill deeply into my memories to know the essential elements of what "it will take". I learned this from the life I grew into as a boy on Lake Winnipeg. Today the watchword is reconciliation: Dad and Mom, my Ammas and Afis never heard that word in their days; they lived it."



Berens River Fishing Station - Photo Courtesy of Glenn Sigurdson

**Reconciliation is a fancy word for living and working together, respecting each other and our differences. It is about being together and doing things together and getting to know each other as human beings and as friends. There is no more powerful elixir than respect each for the other. That is what it's going to take.**

"I have lived much of my life helping others to build relationships between a range of people and organizations on the land and on the water, with different values and interests across this big robust country, and to resolve differences. For inevitably, in any relationship, there are differences. But differences are bigger than that. We are each different. Differences are what gives life its energy. Differences give us our identity. Differences are who we are. Much of my work has inevitably involved First Nation Peoples. I came to understand, in writing *Vikings On a Prairie Ocean* that my boyhood experiences guided and grounded me for the work I do today."

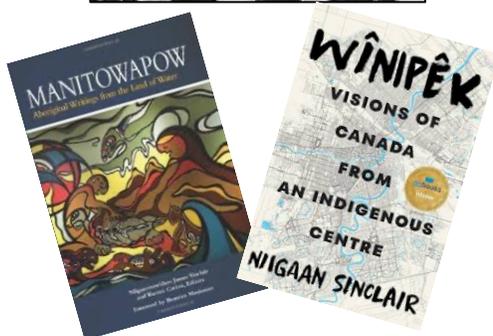
# Presenters for ‘Not Alone on the Prairie’

Glenn Sigurdson CM KC grew up in Riverton, Manitoba and is the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of one the original Icelandic fishing families on Lake Winnipeg. He is author of two books telling the story of the Icelanders and the fishing industry: Vikings on a Prairie Ocean and My Viking Lady of the Lake. Glenn became a lawyer and later an internationally recognized mediator specializing in collaborative leadership and dispute resolution around environmental, resource and land use issues, often involving Indigenous rights and interests. Glenn convened and facilitated a series of Exploratory Dialogues across Canada that brought together for the first time survivors of Residential Schools, and representatives of senior levels of the churches and the Government of Canada. Glenn is the Icelandic Honorary Consul General of Iceland in Vancouver. This year, he received the INLNA Joan Inga Eyolfson Cadham Award and in 2022 received the Order of Canada.

Glenn will share stories of how deep bonds of friendship grew between Icelanders and Indigenous Peoples as they built the fishing industry on Lake Manitoba. The stories he shares are personal – family stories passed down through the generations that shaped his life path and offer ways to move forward towards in living together with respect and friendship.



Professor Niigaan Sinclair is Head of the Department of Native Studies at the University of Manitoba where he also holds the Faculty of Arts Professorship in Indigenous Knowledge and Aesthetics. Sinclair is a co-editor of award-winning books Manitowapow: Aboriginal Writings from the Land of Water (Highwater Press, 2011), Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories (Michigan State University Press, 2013). His book Wînipêk: Visions of Canada from an Indigenous Centre won the Governor General’s Award for English-language non-fiction. Professor Sinclair has won many awards in recognition of public engagement. In 2018, he won Canadian Columnist of the Year at the National Newspaper Awards for his bi-weekly columns in The Winnipeg Free Press. He was awarded the 2019 Peace Educator of the Year from the Peace and Justice Studies Association, Georgetown University in Washington, DC.



Professor Sinclair is recognized as one of Canada’s most influential thinkers on the issues impacting Indigenous culture, communities and reconciliation in Canada. Professor Sinclair will talk to us about how to carry forward today along our path of Truth and Reconciliation.

Join us for this Everything Icelandic webinar in which we have an opportunity to learn, to reflect and to renew our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, carrying deep respect and friendships forward.

**Not Alone on the Prairie INLNA Webinar Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, at 7pm Central Time**

Register for Zoom link at <https://bit.ly/INLOCT1>

# INLNA 2025 Membership Survey

INLNA Board - Membership Co-Chairs John Hofteig for USA & Nancy Tarr for Canada

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The INLNA, formed in 1919 by four hundred visionary Icelandic-Americans and Icelandic Canadians committed to preserving and enhancing their Icelandic heritage, is celebrating the Sesquicentennial of New Iceland, the 500 square mile reserve north of Winnipeg between Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg. The New Iceland reserve was created by the Government of Canada to welcome Icelandic immigrants in 1875. The INLNA Convention/AGM was held in Gimli, Manitoba from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2025, with the theme þó Líði Ár Og Öld – Though Years and Centuries Pass. The INLNA-2025 Calendar celebrates this same Sesquicentennial with vintage photographs and vignettes. The upcoming 2026 INLNA calendar titled “Influencers’ highlights those of Icelandic descent have made significant contributions to North American society.



There are other noteworthy Icelandic anniversaries, milestones, and luminaries in North America worthy of celebration which is why this survey is being conducted. It is also intended to create a data base which could be used to revive the International Visits Program (IVP) which brought Icelandic artists from Iceland to North America and North American artists to Iceland. The artistic purview of the IVP extended to include all the arts: poetry, prose, history, music, theatre, dance, etc. Survey results will be circulated and used to highlight Icelandic artists throughout North America and significant anniversaries and milestones, past, present, and pending.

Your club executive will receive an online survey to complete. It has been formatted as a fillable Google document and is easy and convenient to complete. Information being sought includes:

- Name and dates of notable Icelandic settlements
- Notable anniversaries of organizations and communities
- Luminaries past or present of those in your Icelandic communities including artists, public figures and innovators and details of their claim to fame

If you have any recommendations for artists to be invited from Iceland or sent to Iceland those names would be most welcome! Thank you for taking the time to complete the online questionnaire:

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## INLNA Artist Residency Grant Accepting Applications Now

Historic Markerville is ready to welcome writers, musicians, painters and performers to stay in their fully restored Buttermaker’s House. Come and be inspired by the Alberta landscapes that were the muse for the great Icelandic poet Stephan G. Stephansson. The INLNA Artist Residency Grant offers support to artists with Icelandic heritage or those with projects relating to Iceland. Our member club, the Stephan G Stephansson Icelandic Society administers the grants for the INLNA. Application Deadline is November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025

For more information and to apply, go to the SGSIS website at <https://www.historicmarkerville.com/residency-award.html>



# Congratulations to Snorri Adventurers

## Celebrating Connection, Heritage, and Adventure

Today, at the farewell dinner in Reykjavik, you are gathering in celebration—not only of a journey completed, but of roots discovered and new friendships forged. To you, the remarkable group who embarked on the adventure tour to Iceland with the Snorri Foundation: congratulations on this accomplishment. You have followed in the spirit of the Vinland Sagas and Snorri himself, born to adventure, exploration and discovery.

I want to congratulate you on your courage and enthusiasm to embark on this adventurous and immersive experience to learn about your Icelandic heritage. By setting foot on the ancient and awe-inspiring landscapes of Iceland, you have embraced the legacy of your ancestors, seeking with open hearts the cultural riches that are your inheritance. Through the photos, messages and stories you have shared, it is clear that this journey has

been more than travel—it has been a transformation. The new cousins discovered, and the memories made along the way will echo for years, inspiring others to follow your example.

The Icelandic National League of North America is honoured to support the Snorri Program—a program that lies at the very heart of our mission: to foster deep and lasting connections with our extraordinary Icelandic heritage. You have become stewards of a living tradition, carrying the stories, the language, and the spirit of Iceland across the ocean and into your communities back in North America. May you continue to build on what you've learned and experienced here, and strengthen the bonds between Icelanders and Western Icelanders, today, tomorrow and for years to come.

Skál!

Gwen Sigrid Morgan  
INLNA President 2025



Astrid, Jess, George, Gunnar, Dagrún, Atli  
Siobhan & Icelandic sheep

# Highlights INLNA Snorri Director's Report

## Snorri West Co-Director Mentee for 2026 INLNA Board Needed

INLNA is looking for a Snorri co-director for the board. Jody Arman-Jones, who has is currently the USA representative will stay to mentor the new co-director for a year as they settle in the role. Jody has been mentoring Natalie Wirth from Calgary and Natalie is well settled in the role. Together they do a fantastic job of organizing The Snorri West program and Snorri Alumni Internship, representing the INLNA in Iceland and working with the Snorri Foundation on all the Snorri programs. It's a signature program of the INLNA and well-loved and supported by the wider Icelandic groups and organizations in both the USA and Canada.

The INLNA would ideally like to have the co-director replacing Jody to be from the USA, representing our American chapters and partnerships.

The job description will be posted on the INLNA website as well as on the Snorri website. If you are interested or know someone who would make a great Snorri West coordinator, please get in touch. Please go to [2026 Search for Snorri West Co-Director Mentee](#)

## Tentative Dates for 2026 Snorri Programs

Snorri Program for North Americans of Icelandic descent for ages 20 - 30 to spend five weeks in Iceland. This program includes language and historical studies, home stay with cousins and travel. Arrive in Iceland in the early morning of June 13<sup>th</sup> and departing July 20<sup>th</sup>. **Application deadline is January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

Snorri Plus Program for anyone over the age of 30 to travel to Iceland as individuals, couples, families, etc.; no need to be of Icelandic descent. The week-long Adventure Tour plans to visit Northeast, North and Western Iceland. Arrive in Iceland early morning August 16<sup>th</sup>, depart August 31<sup>st</sup>. **Application deadline January 12, 2026.**

Snorri Alumni Internship for North Americans to spend up to 12 weeks of the summer in Iceland; one Canadian and one American. **Application deadline is January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

Snorri West for Icelanders is for ages 20 - 30 years of age to spend four weeks in North America. Depart Iceland June 18. Destination will be the Pacific Coast. Locations under consideration include Victoria, Vancouver, Kelowna, Nanaimo. Three weeks in British Columbia with option for one week following in Blaine and Seattle Washington State. Application deadline **February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

Snorri West Alumni Internship for Icelanders to spend up to four weeks of the summer in North America, primarily North Dakota and Manitoba. Application deadline **February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026.**

More information will be available at <https://inlofna.org/snorri>



**INLNA Snorri and Snorri West Grants Available For 2026 Participants. See [inlofna.org/snorri](https://inlofna.org/snorri)**