



ICCT President's AGM Report

October 26, 2025

Throughout the year, ICCT offered several activities- Nordic Nights, Travel Show, þorablót, the Annual Icelandic National Day Picnic - and other opportunities to meet club members and to join online activities in the wider North American network of Iceland groups. Remember that as a member of the ICCT, you are also automatically a member of the INLNA.

The **INLNA** (Icelandic National League of North America) offered webinars as well as the Embassy of Iceland in Ottawa. You can find these webinars on their websites. The September 29 Embassy webinar featured speakers discussing *The Icelandic Emigration to the Americas 1860-1914 From an International Perspective*. You can listen to a recording of the webinar at, <https://www.government.is/diplomatic-missions/embassy-article/2025/09/29/New-Iceland-in-Canada-150th-Anniversary-Reflections-Recording/>

Every two months, Club Presidents get together on Zoom with Gwen facilitating as INLNA President. The meetings centre on a Meet and Greet and Updates from various clubs in Canada and the States. It is enjoyable getting to know other Club presidents and hearing about their clubs' activities and plans. It is a great way to share news, gain information and stay connected.

The INLNA Newsletter is full of information about events, programs and webinars. For example, INLNA Reads, Artist Residency Grant at historic Markerville's Buttermaker's house, highlights of Snorri adventures and upcoming deadlines for 2026. You can download the September newsletter from the Fálkinn update sent to ICCT members September 25th.

The **INLNA 2026 Calendar** is out with the theme: *The Influencers, Celebrating the Legacy*. It is a beautiful calendar and what more worthwhile present could you gift someone than a hand held or mount on study wall calendar?! As you flip through the months and read the stories, pause at the month of June where a generous supporter of ICCT and INLNA is featured, Donald K. Johnson. I paused at the month of May that features Margret Benedictsson, who helped to bring Women's Suffrage to Manitoba in 1916. My great, great Aunt on my mother's side of the family was Nellie McClung, and I am grateful to have most of Nellie's first edition books.

ICCT EVENTS

We had our annual **Travel Show** on Saturday, March 2 at the Parkdale Toronto Library. A huge thank-you to Madeline Stapleton for organizing a wonderful afternoon that featured beautiful photographs of Iceland, plus powerpoint videos of people having adventures in Icelandic land and water terrains. There was yummy food provided by Madeline, including homemade cocktail sandwiches and vínarterta. Selected photographs from the Travel Show were available at the þorablót Silent Auction. I bid (and won) a meaningful photo taken on Drangey Island that Madeline had taken. In 2004 I proudly made it to the top of Drangey Island (and back down to the boat) as a Snorri Plus participant.

þorablót was April 12 at a new venue, the Royal Canada Legion, Branch 344, 1395 Lake Shore Blvd West Toronto, Toronto, and we sold out! The þorablót committee, ably led by our Events Coordinator Angela Mancini, met regularly to organize ICCT's signature banquet and fundraiser. Our favourite performer Lindy Vopnfjörð performed the music and he really got "into the groove" with his fantastic songs! Lindy was joined by his family, Wallis Vopnfjörð, Lennon Cooper, Joni Vopnfjörð and Gusti Ragnar Vopnfjörð. We were very pleased to have Adam Kalbfleisch, Honorary Consulate General of Iceland in Toronto speak at þorablót. He was joined by his wife Jessica Roberts and their children Isadora (17), Atli (5) and Linnea (3). They were also joined by Adam's father-in-law William Roberts and his wife Eileen Turner.

The Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto has a proud tradition of naming certain members to be Lifetime Honorary Members. Lifetime Honorary membership is bestowed for exemplary philanthropy within the Icelandic Canadian community and/or longstanding service to the Club. Present at this year's þorablót were Donald K. Johnson and Lindy Vopnfjörð. Also attending were Mel and Angela Johnson. Mel was treasurer of the Club for many years to about 2007 and they were present to help celebrate their grandson Lewis Johnson, one of this year's ICCT Scholarship recipients. We also acknowledged Honorary Members who were not able to attend: Gail Einarson-McCleery, Betty Jane Wylie, Don Gislason, Bruce Crawford, Guðrun Sigursteinsdóttir Girgis, Jon R. Johnson and Erla Pálmason Macaulay.

Mother Nature gave us fairly warm Spring weather, which allowed people to go out on the lovely patio overlooking Lake Ontario. A great menu was provided by the Blazing Kitchens caterers, Arden Jackson provided Icelandic food and we could bid on items in the live and silent auctions. We are grateful to Glen Thordarson for securing live auction donors, Sharon Hanson for organizing the silent auction and those who donated gift baskets for the Raffle. We had a team of dessert volunteers providing the Icelandic desserts we love; pönnukökur, kleinur, skúffukaka and saet suppa as well as Arden's vínarterta.

On June 22, ICCT had its **National Day Picnic**. People will remember this date because it was the first day of a prolonged Summer heat wave in Ontario. Members and friends of the Icelandic Canadian Club of Toronto gathered this year at Christie Pits Park and the picnic was filled with

fellowship, food and fun. Long tables of shared dishes, cold drinks and plenty of conversation made for a lively community event. A highlight of the day was the spirited performance by the Sygtryggring Vikings, who brought energy, heritage and entertainment to the crowd. Special thanks go to Chloe Connors for securing the location and to Gwen, Carolyn and Richard for their organization and, of course, to the Sygtryggring Vikings for the continued support of our traditions. Go to the ICCT website to see photographs of the celebration, plus a video of the Vikings' performance, <https://www.icct.info/news/picnic25>

Board Retreat: The ICCT Board had a Retreat August 17 at Gwen's and Mark's lovely home in Scarborough. We fuelled ourselves with a delicious pot luck and Gwen introduced us to the secret ingredients for cooking hotdogs, Icelandic style. I had been thinking about the retreat for some time; a time where we could be together and lift out of Board business to focus on visioning perspectives for moving forward. There was lively discussion and everyone present contributed their thoughts and ideas. Thank-you Richard (as Secretary) for taking copious notes, which were helped by phone recordings. Takk fyrir all for reflecting on: what is working, how we can expand on what is working, where we are facing challenges and how to meet those challenges and what steps to take to get where we want to go (e.g., labour, money, marketing/public image, outreach, finding and engaging people, making our events happen).

We were so pleased that Gail Einarson-McCleery attended with her partner Reynir. Gail brings a wealth of knowledge and experience. It is vital for an organization to remember their history and roots. Over 3 hours, a variety of topics related to the Club were covered: *Succession*: Board positions; *Communication*: with Members and outreach to keep the Club vibrant and growing; *Finances*: fund-raising, Youth grants/scholarships and (importantly) the procedure for gaining charitable status.

We discussed our *Current Events*, *Program/Projects* and *Connections with Iceland*. This last topic generated rich discussion on how to cultivate relationships with other Clubs, and collaborations with Iceland and the Honorary Consul General of Iceland in Toronto. Our final topic was the ICCT Library, which is housed at Gwen's home, and the steps needed to create a catalogued inventory, plus get the word out to our Members. The library has many interesting and valuable books, in Icelandic and English, and there are boxes of books/newsletters donated by Members for someone to sort through.

At this year's AGM we will have two presentations: (1) Siobhan Handley-Derry will present as a Snorri graduate her experience being in Iceland this Summer; (2) DeeAnn Sagar has much experience working with arts organizations and she will present on the steps towards achieving charitable status.

OTHER EVENTS

In Gimli, May 1st to the 4th, the **INLNA convention** honoured the settlers who arrived in Gimli 150 years ago at Willow Point because a storm prevented them from travelling to Riverton, their

original destination. For nostalgic reasons, my husband Boyd and I did the road trip to Gimli from Kitchener, driving North before turning West, over Lake Superior, past Thunder Bay to Winnipeg, Hecla Island, then back to Gimli for the convention. As a Prairie Girl, I grew up with the saying: *A good days drive is 8 hours!*

The INLNA Convention was so much fun and a heartfelt thank-you to the Gimli Icelandic Canadian Society and everyone involved (notably Vivian Painter) for organizing an incredible convention that truly celebrated and reflected a rich Icelandic heritage and community. There were generous sponsors, especially Donald K. Johnson who was a Gulfoss (Gold) Title Sponsor for the Gala Dinner. It was such a treat to have Eliza Reid as the Gala Dinner Keynote Speaker. She spoke about *The Bend in the Road: How to Make the Most of Unexpected Opportunity*. In her words, the keynote was for “everyone who strives to write their own fairytale, and who wants to counteract identities and expectations others might impose on us.”

There was also an enthusiastic group at the historic Unitarian Church in Gimli who attended the book launch of Eliza’s latest book *Death on the Island*. I love hearing an author read from their writing and am always curious about why they choose certain passages. The event was hosted by Lorna Tergesen and I enjoyed meeting her for the first time. Stefan Jonasson has written an article about this event in the May 15 Lógberg-Heimskringla, *An homage to Iceland and diplomacy*.

The convention program was packed with presentations that communicated to me ÞÓ LÍÐÍ ÁR OG ÖLD - Though Years and Centuries Pass, Icelandic cultural ties are enduring and growing between Western Icelanders in North America and Iceland. We are connected through our ancestry. If you can find a copy of the 2025 Convention souvenir program, take time to read it. The Awards Ceremony was wonderful.

To name a few presentations - Kristín Margret Jóhannsdóttir talked about the Icelandic Language in North America, Ryan Eyfujord shared the history of New Iceland-The First Settlers. There was a showing of the documentary *A Song for John Ramsay*, (Andy Blicq) *The Day Iceland Stood Still*: a virtual presentation by Pamela Hogan and Hraba Gunnarsdóttir, Lógberg-Heimskringla, Icelandic Roots, Nyál’s Saga Tapestry Exhibit and the Chair of the INL of Iceland, Pála Hallgrímsdóttir.

Jóel Friðfinnsson spoke about the work of the Iceland River Heritage Sites and he was our informative guide and story teller (e.g., hauntings) for the Sunday afternoon bus tour to Riverton and environs. Mark Petursson was my bus companion and I enjoyed getting to know him. A special surprise was meeting Nelson Gerrard who arrived by tractor from his farm, holding a day old black ram in his arms.

In true Icelandic tradition, I went hunting for good coffee in Gimli and re-discovered Flatland Coffee Roasters on Centre Street. One morning, I stood behind the Ambassador of Iceland to Canada, Hlynur Guðjónsson who attended and spoke at the convention,.He was also ordering a

latté! I was especially pleased to re-connect after many years with Kerrine Wilson at the Gala dinner. Kerrine was the 100th Fjallkona in 2024 and we grew up in Winnipeg, competing as pianists in yearly music festivals and competitions.

On May 5, there was a fantastic opportunity for ICCT members to be in the audience of **CTV's *The Social***. The audience coordinator invited up to 40 members to attend a free live taping of the show and their guest was **Eliza Reid**, writer, co-founder of the Icelandic Writers Retreat, gender equality advocate and former First Lady of Iceland. Eliza was the Gala Dinner Speaker at the Gimli Convention. In Toronto, tickets were free, the show was live and everyone left with a copy of Eliza's book. The location was CTV Studios, 299 Queen Street West (corner of Queen and John), Toronto and the order of the day was to have a great time being the soundtrack to the show. We had a small but enthusiastic group of ICCT members who attended, thank-you for representing ICCT at this wonderful event!

Íslendingadagurinn, The Icelandic Festival of Manitoba in Gimli was August 1st to the 4th this year. The theme was *Woven Together 150 Years, Iceland & Canada*. On their festival website was a beautiful woven design, inspired by the Lopapeysa, which is the traditional Icelandic patterned sweater made from Icelandic wool known as lopi. Four of our ICCT Board members attended: Past-President, Gwen Sigrid Morgan, Secretary, Richard Eriksson, Social Media Director, Chloe Connors (and Bronze Medalist, Dingadunk, 2025) and Member-at-Large, Peter Eastman. Thank-you for representing ICCT at this iconic festival.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Please see ICCT subcommittee reports for more details or read below for highlights.

FÁLKINN NEWSLETTER: Madeline Ashley continues to edit and produce the Fálkinn newsletter. She has introduced a brilliant new design and written several articles. Thank-you Madeline for all your creative work, the newsletter is wonderful. Members, please remember to submit information or articles for the newsletter, like births, deaths, marriages and stories of interest to you. Keep in touch!

ICELANDIC LANGUAGE CLASSES (Íslenskukennsla): Good news! ICCT language classes started again on March 12 (online) Wednesday evenings. Thank-you to Peggy MacFarlane for her persistence in finding a suitable teacher and organizing the classes. There were 9 beginner students and 6 intermediate students. The teacher, Tori Rúnar Josephsson Johns of Adelaide, Australia has a sincere interest in interacting with his heritage and promoting the aims of the ICCT. He brought energy and enthusiasm to the class and gave optional homework and enrichment vocabulary as well as sharing Icelandic songs with students. With Tori's mother as teacher, ICCT again hosted two levels of language classes for the 2025 Fall Session, Saturday nights starting on September 20, 2025.

YOUTH GRANTS: Madeline Ashley continues as the board member managing youth grants. As one of ICCT's mandates is to foster the bond with Iceland, funding of youth grants like the

Icelandic summer camp and Snorri programs are essential. We also award grants to students entering college or university studies. The Club asks recipients to give back to our community through ten hours of volunteer work. You can learn more about the ICCT youth program on our website and in Madeline's AGM report.

NORDIC NIGHTS: Nordic Nights chair Katrine Handley-Derry continues a thriving collaboration with the Finnish Consulate, Laura McSwiggan and University of Toronto film professor Anu Mahoney to offer six films a year: three Icelandic and three Finnish. Peter Norman provides technical support as well as organizing and tracking fees, payment and donations. Nordic Nights is a hybrid event, which makes it very successful. Mike Pezzi offers his condo's screening room as a home for live showings. See Katrine's report for a review of the past year and check on the ICCT website and in the Fálkinn newsletter for upcoming Nordic Nights films.

BOOK CLUB: We are thrilled about the relaunch of our Book Club with DeeAnn Saga as Chair. She diligently worked all Summer to create a schedule of Book Club offerings and the first online Book Club meeting was September 23 at 7:30 pm. For DeeAnn, *there's nothing more Icelandic than a Book Club*. You can read more in the September issue of Fálkinn. DeeAnn has made it so easy to find the books and provided synopses for each of the books as well as relevant articles and music for each book! The first book was *The History of Iceland* by Guðni Thorlacius Jóhannesson (2012), written by Iceland's future President. The February meeting will feature Eliza Reid's new mystery novel, *Death on the Island*. It is a great Summer (or Winter) read and the ending undoubtedly points the way to a second book. Please visit the ICCT website for more details on the schedule and upcoming books to read, <https://www.icct.info/news/book-club>

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

SAGA CONNECTIONS: Gwen Morgan, Richard Eriksson, Gail Einarson-McCleery and Don Gislason are on the Saga Connection committee. 2024 was an active year for Saga Connections, and, understandably, it has been on pause since Gwen became INLNA President. I know Gwen and her committee have ideas for future Saga Connection topics and speakers so stay tuned! There are several past Saga Connections recordings available for listening on the ICCT website, <https://www.icct.info/saga>

THANK-YOU TO ALL: It is a real pleasure to serve as President of the ICCT. I have an amazing Board to work with. I am very grateful for their support, creativity and commitment to ICCT. I was inspired to join the ICCT Board because it felt like the right time for expanding and deepening my ties to my Icelandic heritage, and getting to know similarly inspired people in our community. I did not grow up with Icelandic food, traditions or events, but I have been a member

of ICCT for many years. Now, as an older adult, I am embracing with pride the shared love of Iceland and our heritage. As Gwen said in her 2024 President's Report: *This is what the club is about: celebration, connection and heritage.*

Takk fyrir,
Carolyn Arnason
ICCT President
October, 2025

(from the website)

Volunteer with ICCT Today!

*The heart and soul of our club is our volunteers. There are many ways to get involved make some new great friends and have an important impact on our community. If you would like to join this dynamic team, please send an email to us here: ***"I Want to Volunteer!"****