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Connect newsletter
welcomes your
submissions!

Send your news, ideas,
photos, and articles to:

info@inlus.org

Connect newsletter is
published quarterly.

“This past week has been wonderfully relaxing, yet it’s starting to sink in that my time here is limited...”



Hofsós Harbor, Summer 2025 (Photo by Amber Drake)

With these words, Amber Drake, the recipient of the INLUS 2025 Snorri Alumni Scholarship, starts her August 17 blog entry describing her time as the U.S. Snorri Intern at The Icelandic Emigration Center in *Hofsós* this summer.

“I have just one more week in Hófsos before my cousin Þora arrives to whisk me away for an adventure during my final days in Iceland. The thought of leaving makes me appreciate every moment I have left in this beautifully peaceful town. Having the chance to come here, help out at the museum, and connect with such amazing people has honestly been an incredible experience. Although there have been a fair share of adventures this week, I’ve intentionally focused on settling in and staying close to Hófsos, wanting to savor these remaining days. The week started off calmly, with the museum relatively quiet, giving me the chance to work on the final portions of the big project I’ve been developing since I arrived.”

Drake began her blog on June 21, with the entry titled “A Journey to the Homelands.” She writes:

“I feel incredibly grateful for the chance to spend the next few months traveling, especially after the ups and downs of recent years. This journey is extra meaningful, as I get to return to my roots—starting in Iceland, where I’ll serve as this year’s Snorri Alumni Intern. (Continued on page 2)

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**Amber greeting cruise ship
visitors to Hofsós
(Amber Drake photo)**

(Continued from page 1) "As the intern, I'll be supporting new participants in the Snorri Program and working at *Vesturfarasetrið*, the Icelandic Emigration Center in Hofsós. My days will be spent welcoming museum guests and helping both Icelanders and Western Icelanders trace their family histories—a rewarding way to connect with heritage and community."

Over the summer months Drake worked at the Emigration Center and during her free time explored the Icelandic landscape. Her blog is filled with those experiences in words and photos as she shares a wonderful adventure hiking trails, discovering native flora, hidden coves and new friends along the way.

You can follow along on Amber's adventures by reading her blog entries at ambercamiaart14.wordpress.com.

In the coming months we will feature more excerpts from her Iceland journey on the [INLUS Facebook page](#).

Registration is Now Open for Fall INLUS Language Classes

Sessions for the Fall INLUS language classes begin late September, and registration is in full swing. The good news is a small class sizes make the best learning environment. The bad news is that a small class size also means each course fills up quickly. The three advanced classes are limited to just 10 people per class.

All classes are live on a Zoom video platform and all classes are recorded for later viewing in case you miss a session, or just want to go back later and reinforce themes from a prior lesson.

Over 150 people have taken the INLUS Language classes in the past four years as a way to start their language journey.

The 2.0 class will be offered Mondays, starting 9/29/2025

The 2.5 class will be offered Tuesdays, starting 9/30/2025

A new, more advanced 3.0 class will be offered Wednesdays, starting 10/1/2025.

The basic 1.0 class will be offered Mondays, starting 10/2/2025.

Registration is at: <https://inlus.org/travel-culture/icelandic-language/language-classes-fall-2025/>

If you have any questions, please reach out to Class Coordinator David Johnson at david@inlus.org.

The Deuce of August Keeps on Going

By Dianne O'Konski

After a grand celebration of the 125th Deuce of August in 2024, I didn't know what to expect in 2025. Last year included wine tastings in Mountain, ND and Icelandic gin in Gardar, ND, just down the road. The gin and vodka tasting continued this year.



Two Icelandic choirs performed at the Deuce (Jody Arman-Jones photo)

Icelandic Roots sponsored a lunch, and an afternoon of programs and Icelandic genealogy with a welcome by Sunna Furstenau. The program featured talks by Dr. Aaron Kennedy on the differences in weather between North Dakota and Iceland, by Claudia Petursson on the *Njál's Saga* Tapestry project, and by Jason Doctor on our genealogical connection to the sagas. A talk by Ambassador of Iceland to the United States, Svanhildur Hólm Valsdóttir, was a bonus to the afternoon. (Continues on page 4)



Ambassador of Iceland to the United States, Svanhildur Hólm Valsdóttir (Dianne O'Konski photo)

Njál's Saga Traveling Tapestry Schedule:

Claudia Pétursson is bringing the tapestry to these locations:

Sept. 13-19 Boulder, Colorado

Oct. Date Pending: Washington, D.C.

See page 5 for detailed information.

Your paid memberships and donations help the INLUS offer financial scholarships to all U.S. Snorri participants.



The mighty Viking ship prepares to sail in the parade. (Jody Arman-Jones photo)

Saturday's parade was much scaled back from last year but still a perfectly wonderful small-town parade.

A "salad lunch" was served at the historic Vikur Church in Mountain. For those of you who grew up in small-town churches, you may remember the Cool Whip salads with fruit and sometimes with mini-marshmallows (a staple for every event), or the many kinds of pasta salad. The luncheon was a walk down memory lane with only one or two salads that were "vegetable forward". The proceeds from the luncheon go towards the maintenance of the church and grounds.

The main event of the weekend was the Heritage Program; this year held on the lawn next to Borg Home. The highlights were an address by Ambassador Valsdóttir and a wonderful concert by the combined men's choirs *Karlakór Hreppamanna* and *Sprettskórinn*. The music was wonderful, and it was a beautiful day to be outside.

There were many other events going on over the weekend, but you just can't be everywhere!



The overflowing Icelandic goodies table was a popular site. (Jody Arman-Jones photo)

Ferðarefill, the *Njál's* Saga Traveling Tapestry Winding Down



After a busy spring and summer schedule, the *Njál's* Saga Traveling Tapestry tour is nearing the conclusion of the journey.

Claudia Pétursson, has been conducting presentations, workshops and exhibitions across the continent with the able assistance of her husband, Ingvar.

While there may be a change or two in the schedule, these are the remaining stops on the tour:

Sept. 13 Boulder, Colorado – Embroidery Workshop, 9am to 12 noon – register here: <https://handweaversofboulder.org/event-6303729>

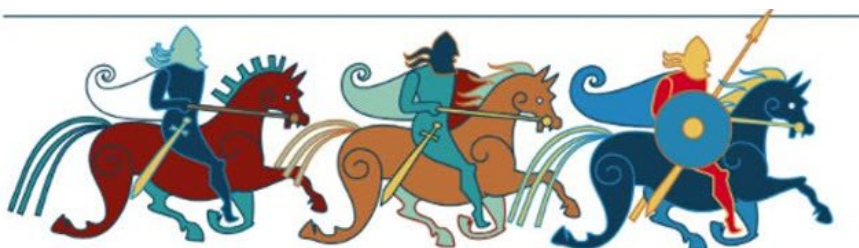
Sept. 16 Boulder, CO – Reception at Colorado University Boulder, Main Campus, McKenna Languages Room 103, 6:30–8:00pm

Sept. 17 Boulder, CO – Colorado University Boulder, Main Campus, McKenna Languages Room 103 – Daily Showing – 9:00am–4:30pm/ Formal presentation 1:00–2:00pm

Sept. 18 Boulder, CO– Colorado University Boulder, Main Campus, McKenna Languages Room 103 – Daily Showing – 9:00am–4:30pm/ Formal presentation 1:00–2:00pm

Sept. 19 Boulder, CO– Colorado University Boulder, Main Campus, McKenna Languages Room 103 – Daily Showing – 9:00am–4:30pm/ Formal presentation 1:00–2:00pm

Oct. Date Pending: Washington, D.C.



Join the CU Nordic Program to experience

The *Njál's* Saga Traveling Tapestry

Free Exhibit open 9am–4:30pm

September 17–19, 2025

McKenna Languages room 103

CU Boulder Main Campus

Reception Tuesday September 16th 6:30–8pm

Formal Presentations from 1–2pm:

Wednesday: Lecture	Friday: Embroidery workshop
Thursday: Book Discussion	(free embroidery kits)

Finding My Roots in Iceland

Note: Kevin Encinas received an INLUS scholarship to help defray the cost of being a 2025 participant of the Snorri Program to Iceland. He shared his experience in this article. (Photos provided by Kevin Encinas)

By Kevin Encinas

This summer, I spent five unforgettable weeks in Iceland through the Snorri Program, a cultural exchange designed to connect North Americans of Icelandic descent with their heritage. For me, it became one of the most meaningful experiences of my life.

Before I left, people often asked me, “Why Iceland?” At first, my answer was vague, I told them it would be a nice vacation. But the truth was deeper. I wanted to know what it meant to be Icelandic. I wanted to stand where my ancestors once stood, hear the language they spoke, taste the food they ate, and yes, see if anyone truly enjoys fermented shark.

So I packed my journal, my open mind, and my rain gear, and flew across the Atlantic.



Kevin Encinas, Iceland 2025

Reykjavík: Where It Began

The program started in Reykjavík, a city that blends old and new in a way I hadn’t seen before. We studied Iceland’s sagas at the Árni Magnússon Institute, visited cemeteries and churches steeped in history, and tried our hand at learning the Icelandic language.

Watching Americans wrestle with Icelandic pronunciation was worth the flight alone. Even in those early days, though, something stirred in me. This wasn’t just a trip. It felt like a homecoming.

I also had the surreal opportunity to meet President Halla Tomasdóttir, and visit the Canadian Embassy. Both encounters were surprisingly warm; the kind of conversations where you feel genuinely listened to. In between, I hiked in the rain through *Nauthúsagil* Canyon and around *Viðey* Island, which felt like the most authentic Icelandic experience possible.

Life with My Host Family

The next stage took me east, where I lived with my Icelandic relatives in *Neskaupstaður* and *Egilsstaðir*. My fourth cousins, Steinnum, Svenni, and his wife Kirsten, welcomed me as if we’d known each other all our lives. We bonded over family stories, long dinners, and our shared love of the outdoors.





The 2025 Snorri members visiting with Iceland's President, Halla Tomasdóttir at Bessastaðir, the official residence of the president.

I also worked alongside locals, first in a fish factory in Neskaupstaður and later with the forestry service in Hallormsstaður. Those jobs weren't glamorous, but they gave me a real taste of daily Icelandic life.

The most powerful moment came when I visited Vopnafjörður, the home of my great-great-great-grandparents. Standing on the same ground they once did, looking out at the same rugged landscape, I didn't feel like a visitor anymore. I felt like I had come home.

The Road Back Together

In the final week, our Snorri group reunited for a road trip across the country. We drove through Vík, the Westman Islands, geyser fields, and Höfsós, covering countless kilometers. Packed into vans for hours, we laughed, shared reflections, and grew even closer. Those hours on the road became some of the most memorable of all. (Continues on page 8)

Know of an event in your area that would be of interest to the INLUS community?

Send news, photos and stories to:

info@inlus.org



Kevin rides through the Icelandic countryside on his Snorri adventure.

What I Brought Home

The Snorri Program turned out to be so much more than a heritage trip. I arrived in Iceland searching for roots and adventure. What I found was family, silence that spoke louder than noise, and connections that will stay with me for life.

For anyone curious about their heritage, I can say this: it's not just about the past. It's about rediscovering parts of yourself you didn't even know were missing.

Learn more about the Snorri program at: [Home | Snorri Programs](#)

Local Club's Summer Fun

The Icelandic Clubs Association held their 126th annual Deuce of August celebration August 1-3 with two visiting choirs from Iceland and Icelandic dignitaries.

Icelandic Klub of Fargo Moorhead was busy hosting Claudia Pétursson and the Traveling Tapestry project Hjemkomst Center. They held a presentation on August 7, a workshop on the stitches used in the tapestry August 8 & 9, and a book discussion on Njál's saga, August 12.

Earlier, on June 20 & 21, the club participated in the Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival on June 20, 21 with a Heritage table and in the Taste of Scandinavia where we sold open faced sandwiches with Icelandic brown bread and *rúllupylsa* or smoked salmon spread, *vínarterta*, *pónnukökur* (rolled/sugared or with whipped cream and jam), and *jónabandssæl* "matrimonial bliss bars". Funds raised at the taste of Scandinavia support the Iceland Klub Student/Snorri scholarship and other activities of the Klub.

Icelandic Hekla Club has had a busy summer with several events:

-Danish Day on June 1, 2025 at the Danish American Center in Minneapolis where Hekla members promoted the *Njál's Saga* Tapestry exhibition.

-Nordic Summer Fest on June 14, 2025 in Minneapolis where Hekla members promoted travel in Iceland and sold Hekla mugs and decals.

-Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival on June 20-21, 2025 in Moorhead MN where Hekla members again promoted travel to Iceland and sold Hekla mugs.

-150th Anniversary Celebration of the Icelandic Settlement in Minneota, Minnesota, July 26-27, 2025. Many Hekla members have roots in Minneota, and the celebration was fun and informative with a Keynote address by Cathy Josephson, a past Hekla Club president who now lives in Iceland.

-The Deuce, August 1-2, 2025 in Mountain, ND, where Hekla members promoted travel to Iceland and sold Hekla mugs and decals.

-Njal's Saga Tapestry exhibition August 15-19th in Minneapolis where nearly 600 people visited over the five day event.

Blaine Icelandic Heritage Club caught up with INLUS President Doug Hanson while he was visiting family in the Pacific Northwest.



Goodies at the F-M Klub's Traveling Tapestry Presentation.



F-M Klub presenting the Icelandic flag.



L-R Jody Arman-Jones, Dianne O'Konski and Claudia Pétursson at the Icelandic Hekla club presentation of the Traveling Tapestry project.



Minneota, Minnesota Celebrates 150th Anniversary of Icelandic Settlement

By Dianne O'Konski, Lakeville, MN

Gunnlaugur Petursson settled onto his land in Westerheim Township, Lyon County, Minnesota on July 4, 1875, marking the start of the Minneota Icelandic Settlement. He wasn't the only Icelandic to arrive at that time, just the first Icelandic (and his family) to homestead.

1880 Icelandic farms in Westerheim

The first Icelandic to settle in the area was Gunnlaugur Petursson on the Riverside Farm in Westerheim Township sec 14 in 1875. Gunnlaugur along with Bjorn Gislason sec 10, Gudmundur H Jonsson (Johnson) sec 14, Sibbjorn Sigurdson (Hofteig) sec 2, Josef Josefsson (Josephson) sec 8, Snorri Hoganson sec 2, Thorlak Peterson Sec 10 and Sigmundi Jonathan (Jonathan) sec 10, all purchased farms in Westerheim Township as part of the Homestead Act of 1862. Eggert Fjeldsted worked on a farm in the area for a year before purchasing a farm from the Railroad. The Homestead act of 1862 did not clearly state how the land was to be sold resulting in speculation by the Railroad and others. Land then become much more expensive.

Homestead Certificate No. 2287
Application 2/1882 of 2/1882
Whereas there has been deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE
of the United States a CERTIFICATE of the Register of the Land Office at
Redwood Falls, Minnesota, whereby it appears that, pursuant to the Act
of Congress approved 20th May, 1862, "To secure Homesteads to actual settlers on
the public domain," and the acts supplemental thereto, the claim of
Gunnlaugur Petursson has been established and duly consummated in
conformity to law for the north west quarter of section fifteen in
township one hundred and thirteen north of range forty-two
west of the Fifth Principal Meridian in Minnesota contain-
ing one hundred and sixty acres

The settlers had to travel to the Land office in Redwood Falls or later at the Land office in Marshall to file papers. The document was signed by the President in office at the time.

Photo by Jody
Arman-Jones

Flash forward 150 years and Minneota looks much different. It is a small community where most people call themselves American, having multiple ethnicities in their ancestral trees. When Society for the Preservation of Minneota's Heritage (SPMH), a small group of five active members, and four former Minneotans started planning a celebration, we had no idea of what to expect.

We talked for nearly a year and decided to have the celebration July 26-27 with activities held at the Icelandic O.G. Anderson & Co. "Big Store", a 1901 building constructed to house a dry goods and grocery business. The main floor of the building is now home to the Minneota Public Library and the second story houses the original Opera Hall which would be ground zero for the majority of activities. A Sunday service would be held in St. Paul's Icelandic Lutheran Church. A self-guided tour of Icelandic points of interest in town was created along with a map to the three Icelandic cemeteries and Gunnlaugur's farm. A grant from the Icelandic National League of the United States (INLUS) helped with expenses.

But would anyone come? When we opened the doors at 9:00 AM on Saturday, people were waiting! Arriving from coast to coast and many places in between, they looked at photos of early Icelanders, known and unknown, took classes in Icelandic wool and knitting, looked up recipes in the old Icelandic church cookbooks, and researched their genealogy. Story boards educated us on the early settlement and why people left Iceland. Visitors also brought their own family stories and photos to share. Many people spent the entire day at the event, catching up with old friends and family. At the end of the day, over 100 people signed the Opera Hall guest book!

Wendy Sarazyn, President of SPMH, welcomed guests on Saturday evening. Icelandic Honorary Consul of Iceland to Minnesota, Jeannie Entenza, brought greetings on behalf of Iceland and introduced Minneota native, Cathy Josephson, now living in Vopnafjörður, Iceland.

Cathy gave a wonderful program titled "Ties that Bind" which recounted the emigration to the Minneota area. This was followed by Icelandic treats for all to enjoy.



Cathy Josephson's presentation (James Nelson photo)

Retired pastor Kathryn Rothman conducted the service on Sunday morning which followed the traditional framework from Hallgrímskirkja Church in Reykjavík. Readings were done in English and Icelandic, and a solo was performed in Icelandic by Scott Josephson. Of course, Sunday coffee and treats followed the service.

An added bonus for Helga (Björnson) Visscher and family came from *Minneota Mascot* editor Scott Thomas. In years past, Helga's father Valdimar, her uncles, and her grandfather Gunnar all edited the paper. Scott gave the Visschers a tour of the Mascot offices including the original printing machine. Helga's son Paul was gifted with a *Minneota Mascot* masthead printing plate used by his ancestors.

At the end of Saturday's events, a woman approached me. She hoped we realized what a special weekend this was and how much joy we had brought people.

We could not have asked for anything better.

The INLUS congratulates SPMH members Wendy Sarazyn, Sandy Josephson, Karen Golden, Judy Hagen, and Claren Novotny along with former Minneotans Patricia Brennecke, Jeannie Entenza, Dianne O'Konski, and Kathryn Rothman, and the many volunteers for a very successful celebration.



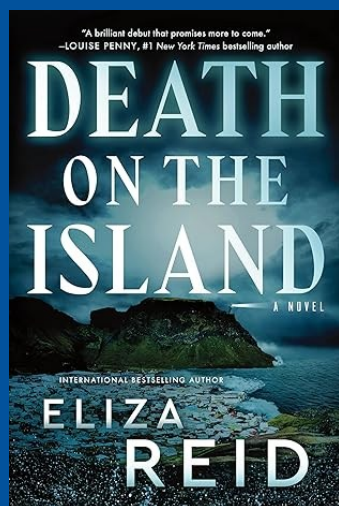
Photo by Jody Arman-Jones

Find all our videos at:

[https://inlus.org/
community/
webinars/](https://inlus.org/community/webinars/)



Iceland's former First Lady and author, Eliza Reid, will talk about her new book in a joint INLUS and INLNA webinar on Wednesday, October 8th at 12:00 PM (Noon) Eastern.



Three Summer Webinars Explore Iceland Weather, History and North American Settlements

This summer INLUS Webinar producer, Dianne O'Konski, found three fascinating topics that offer an in depth exploration of the Icelandic experience. These programs join the other more than fifty videos the INLUS offers on its video channel to explore the land, culture and history of Iceland.

HOW COME WE HAVEN'T HEARD OF MINNEOTA???

Most Icelandic immigrants settled in Canada where the early years were very difficult, followed by religious controversy.

Kathryn Rothman talked about the early Icelandic Settlement of Minneota, Minnesota. Mark Petursson explored the later settlements in Alberta, Canada. This was a joint webinar project between the Icelandic National League of the United States and the Icelandic National League of North America. The program aired on 24 June 2025.



What's it like living in Iceland's remote Westfjords during winter? Aaron Kennedy talked about his experiences as a Fulbright Scholar, living and conducting weather research in Iceland's Westfjords. Aired 22 July 2025.



October 2025 is the 50th anniversary of the "Woman's Day Off" when 90% of Iceland's women walked off the job and told their spouses it "was their turn" to take care of the kids. While women rallied in Reykjavík, the country was shut down. Pamela Hogan talks about the new film she created from archival footage, animation and present day interviews of the participants in the new documentary, *The Day Iceland Stood Still*. Aired 13 August 2025.

Take in a Fall Club Event Near You

Icelandic Association of Utah celebrates Iceland Days September 6 at Spanish Fork City Park. Details on the website (see page 14 for club's contact information).

Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle hosts *Sunnudagsspjall*, "Sunday Chat" on Sunday, Sept 07 at Reuben's Brews, followed by *Fimmtudags Fjör*, "Happy Hour" on Thursday, Sept 18 at the Swedish Club.

Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club of Calgary has a busy fall schedule of events: Sept. 6 & 7 - Casino; Saturday, Oct. 18 - Fall Feast; Friday, Oct. 24 - *The Day Iceland Stood Still* Film Screening; Sunday, Nov. 9 - Scan Centre Christmas Bazaar; Saturday, November 29 - Yuletide Celebration. In addition, the club is hosting Icelandic Language Lessons Sept. 15, 22, 29, Oct. 6, 20, 27, and Nov. 3, 10.

Icelandic Hekla Club is participating in the Nordic Music Festival Saturday Sept. 13, 2025 in Victoria, MN. Hekla club members will promote the Icelandic Hekla Club and sell Hekla mugs and decals all while enjoying music from various Nordic music groups. The first meeting of the club is on Sept. 20, 2025. Club members look forward to another year of Hekla as we continue to celebrate 100 years as a club.

THE ICELANDIC ASSOCIATION OF UTAH
PRESENTS...



ICELAND
DAYS



SEPTEMBER 6, 2025
10 AM - 1 PM
SPANISH FORK CITY PARK

PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN AMAZING EVENT
FEATURING ICELANDIC FOOD, MUSICAL
ENTERTAINMENT, FUN ACTIVITIES, & MORE!

PLEASE HELP US SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT
THIS EVENT. PLEASE INVITE YOUR FRIENDS &
FAMILY!



Club Contacts:

Visit these websites for the most up-to-date information.

Local Organizations:

Blaine Icelandic Heritage Society: www.blaineicelanders.com

Icelandic Klub of Fargo Moorhead Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064853736042#>

Hoosiers for Iceland Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/983963210591932>

Icelandic Association of Colorado:
<https://icelandersincolorado.com/>

Icelandic Association of Northern California Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/24320765656/>

Icelandic Association of Utah:
<http://www.utahicelanders.org/home.html>

Icelandic Club of Greater Seattle: <https://www.icelandseattle.com/>

Icelandic Communities Association of North Dakota:
<https://www.thedeuce.org/>

Icelandic Hekla Club:
<https://sites.google.com/view/icelandic-hekla-club>

Leif Eiriksson Icelandic Club of Calgary: <https://leicyyc.weebly.com/>

International Organizations:

Icelandic Online Club: <https://www.icelandiconlineclub.org/>

Icelandic Roots: <https://www.icelandicroots.com/>

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So are we! Join us in the quest to celebrate Icelandic culture whether in Iceland or North America.

Become a member of the INLUS or renew your membership and let's celebrate together!

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