

# **Icelandic National League of North America**

## **85<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention**

**Gull Harbour Resort, Hecla, Manitoba, Canada**  
**April 23, 24, 25, 2004**

### **REKINDLING THE PAST – IGNITING THE FUTURE**

The theme of the conference was well chosen. For some delegates, this was a chance to return to their homes, for some it was learning about their ancestors and for others it was a chance to see a very important page in Icelandic history. But most important it was an opportunity for everyone to renew friendships, gain new friendships and as we bonded in the “Icelandic Family” we were able to make significant strides forward in achieving the goals and “future directions” of the INL of NA. Yes, there is lots of work to be done but as we left there is a focus and enthusiasm to move forward. I hope to report briefly on the conference, giving highlights so that those who were unable to attend will know what happened.

**PRESIDENT’S REMARKS:** Paul Westdal welcomed everyone and gave a review of the past years activities.

**VICE-PRESIDENTS REMARKS;** Walter Sopher’s grandparents were some of the people that came to Hecla in 1884 making this location importance to him. He stressed the importance of Clubs:

- Getting to know their members individually through personal contact,
- phoning for every event
- promoting the Snorri program
- communicating across the country, Unity

**INTERNATIONAL VISITS PROGRAM:** Joan Eyolfson Cadham reported on the success of Inga and Gurry’s visit to Canada and the visits to Martha Brooks and Ruth Christie to Iceland. The plans to Kristin Steinsdottir, author of a child’s book that tell the story of immigration to Canada, are not recommended at this time because the book is not translated to English at this time and has been postponed to next year. The suggestion has been made to have other authors tour Canada, eg. Bill Valgardson or Betty Jane Wylie.

Iceland gave significant funding for the IVP.

**ICELANDIC CLASSES;** Loren Gudbjartson reported on the success of some of the Icelandic Classes that have been held in MB. He encouraged language classes be held at each of the conventions and that each club have language classes in their areas. Attempts should be made to have the curriculum of the language classes be approved so that they can be given credit.

Robert Asgeirsson is attempting to have the classes listed on the INL website.

The delegates listed reasons to take language classes:

- strongest bond for a culture
- learn the vocabulary, carry on the language
- fun to talk the language with friends
- translate family history
- communicate with Icelandic relatives
- to make relatives (my aunt) happy
- Enjoy Icelandic History, read the sagas

- View videos
- Travel
- To understand the culture of a society, language is the vehicle.
- Sing Icelandic songs
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**GUEST FROM ICELAND:** Júlíus Hafstein – Director of Government Special Projects.

Topic: Home Rule in Iceland. He gave a very informative talk about the conditions in Iceland and how things changed. Of special interest was the process where women gained the right to vote, June 1913 and the King's passing of the new constitution in 1915.

**NEW ICELAND YOUTH CHOIR:** David Gislason gave a slide presentation of the choir's trip to Iceland in 2003. The trip was very successful and the slides provided a magnificent tour of Iceland.

**ICELANDIC CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:** President Gordon Reykdal was unable to attend (donated \$1000.00 to the INL) so Walter Sopher reported that building business relationships and partnerships is the objective of the organization. They hope to increase trade between Iceland and North America.

**ICELAND HOMECOMING 2004** - Harley Jonasson reported at the end of the conference that 20 people have committed so far to going, so the Homecoming 2004 event is on. With the lower number of participants, the program will be changed a little where the conference is concerned.

Almar Grímsson gave a brief history of the INL in Iceland. It was established Dec. 1, 1939 to nurture cultural and social ties with Icelandic Canadians. There were good times and bad times when after 1970 activities began to dwindle. There was revitalization in 1997. There are tours from Iceland coming to America this summer. There may be a tour of Icelanders to Alberta in June/July, 2005.

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS:** Many suggestions were given as to how we can improve the working and finances of the INL. Such suggestions were:

- Scale back activities to more manageable levels
- Explore charitable options in both Canada and the US.
- Apply for cultural, educational and historical charitable status.
- Improve treasurer status and budgeting methods
- Separate cultural activities and administration
- Reach out for donations beyond membership.

**FRIDAY NIGHT SPECIAL EVENT:** Two choirs from Reykjavík , Iceland, The Pastime Choir (Dægurkórinn) and The Rainbow Choir (Regnbogakórinn), entertained the crowd with both traditional Icelandic and English songs. A very lively and energetic conductor, Esther Helga Guðmundsdóttir, made sure to get the audience involved in the singing.

**ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE:** Lorna Tergesen explained the difficulties that the increased postage has caused for the magazine. She encouraged the membership to buy subscriptions for themselves, as gifts or as donations to libraries in your area. They have 800 subscriptions.

**LOGBERG HEIMSKRINGLA:** Steinþór Guðbjartsson - new managing editor for the paper plans to visit the different area of the countries to report on Chapter activities and interview people. He hopes to increase the subscriptions to the paper.

**FISHING IN LAKE WINNIPEG:** Maxine Ingalls gave a review of the fishing industry in Lake Winnipeg from 1875 to the present. She brought examples of some of the equipment that the fishermen used and showed how the 2 thumbed mitts worked. Maxine plans to make this presentation in a format that will be available to the Clubs for their information.

**EAST MEADOW RANCH GOOSE SANTUARY:** Lawrence King from the Lundar Chapter gave a delightful video presentation of wild animals. He videotaped the animals from the area, for example he showed beavers dragging willow branches under the ice, close-up of beavers, goslings, fox, grouse beat, mink, canvas back ducks, weasels and fawns having lunch.

**GUEST FROM ICELAND -** Árni Magnússon, Minister of Social Affairs, brought greetings from the government. He stated that Iceland owes the INL a debt of gratitude and expressed pride in our achievements. He listed many areas of cooperation between Iceland and North America.

**SNORRI, SNORRI-WEST, SNORRI-PLUS:** Harley Jonasson introduced the programs. Wanda Anderson described the program where young people from Iceland came to “New Iceland” for 2 weeks. This year 8 students will come.

Almar Grimsson reported that the 6 year old Snorri program is very successful.

Ásta Sól Krisjansdóttir reported that there has been 65 students from Canada and 10 from the US that have attended the Snorri program since 1999. Each year they get an increased number of applicants. During the 6-week program, 2 weeks is spent in Reykjavik, 3 weeks working in the areas where they have relatives and 1 week on an adventure tour around the island. Two students: Jennifer Holand from Fargo, ND and Brad Hirst, Selkirk, MB, reported very positively and enthusiastically on their activities in the program. The Snorri Alumni meet at the Icelandic Festival in August. Jacqueline Walker attended the 1<sup>st</sup> Snorri Plus program last year and reported a wonderful experience.

**ICELANDIC READING ROOM:** Sigríð Johnson showed slides and described activities in this area at the University of Manitoba. Linda Collette described their Book Club and gave a hand out on how to organize a similar Club to enjoy reading.

**IODE – Jon Sigurdson Chapter.** Erla Wankling described the many activities and scholarship that their group provide. They are willing to accept more scholarships.

**NEW ICELAND HERITAGE MUSEUM:** Tammy Axelsson , Executive Director, reported that in 2003 there were 18,000 visitors to the 3 locations in Gimli. Special feature was the Viking ship in 2003. The Prairie Vikings are hoping to build a Viking Ship for Manitoba.

Arni Vigfusson described the development of the Arborg Multi Cultured Heritage Village. The Vigfusson Pioneer House has been moved to the site.

Sherry Rozecki talked about the Riverton Transportation and Heritage project; the renovating and restoring of the CPR Station so that it can be a local museum. The building is back on its foundation, with new windows, paint job and furnace. There will be a boardwalk built.

**ISLENDINGADAGURINN:** Sandra Sigurdson described some of the activities for this year’s Festival. There will be an Icelandic Choir, a hydrogen exhibit and other programs.

**HECLA TOUR:** Binnie Sigurgeirson led a tour from the local church to the tools museum, house dating from 1920 – 1940 and the hall. Unfortunately there was not adequate time for the entire tour.

**GALA DINNER:** Guest speaker, Peter Bjornson, MLA for Gimli was very complimentary of the activities of various Icelandic groups in the area and the multicultural program in the province.

**ENTERTAINMENT:** The New Iceland Youth Choir led by Rosalind Vigfusson sang to a very appreciative audience. This was followed by the Solli Singers from Arborg, which is a men's choir. The Selkirk Bruin Chapter included all their members in a very well done comical skit which was all in Icelandic. Not to be outdone by the New Iceland Youth Choir, the Selkirk Bruin Chapter then showed off their choir and proved what hard work and Icelandic classes can do. The grand finale included an Icelandic Sing-Song with some English songs as well. A very entertaining evening.

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### **85<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:**

Resolutions passed:

- Resolved that the fee schedule of the INL remain as is.
- Resolved that the Executive explore ways and means of funding the operations of the INL.
- Resolved that the Executive explore options to retain the ICC of BC as a full INL member.
- Resolved to create and empower a constitution committee to redraft the INL constitution with respect to the following items: Membership definition; Procedures to be followed to assign and revise membership
- Be it resolved that by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2004, the executive of the INL meet with the executive of the Canada-Iceland Foundation (in Canada) and the Icelandic Association of North America (in the USA) to explore the implementation within six months an avenue whereby the INL can become a recipient of donations via the Canada-Iceland Foundation's charitable status. This in turn can be utilized by the INL for culture and heritage activities as per the INL Future Directions or activities consistent with the INL future directions.
- Be it resolved that the INL executive and Executive secretary revise the method whereby information from the Chapter Clubs is gathered with the intent to do away with the paper report and yet retain a method whereby a report is available for access.

Resolutions NOT passed:

- Resolved that the annual conference call be reduced to one.

### **EXECUTIVE 2004**

President..... Walter Sopher  
1<sup>st</sup> VP..... Garry Oddeifson – Wpg.  
2<sup>nd</sup> VP..... Geraldine McDonald – Victoria (BC)  
Treasurer ..... Rosa Johnston  
Financial Sec..... Brian Gudmundson – Wpg.  
Communications ... Margaret Grisdale – Calgary (I will ask for a new INL Executive list)

The history book is finished and a condensed version will be made available to Clubs. An electronic format will also be available.

**FUTURE CONVENTIONS:**

- 2005 Saskatchewan
- 2006 Victoria
- 2007 Utah with help from Minneapolis
- 2008 Winnipeg Fron
- 2009 – Calgary has volunteered, no vote on this one.

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST:**

- Highlight of the Convention was the presentations of Honourary Memberships to Christine Stuart-Smith and Lilja Hiebert.
- The Convention host was the Selkirk Club with the help of other Manitoba Clubs. The Selkirk Club may be low in numbers but high in spirit.
- I was very proud of the contributions of the Calgary Troops whose contributions helped make such a successful Convention, e.g. Carol as spokesperson for the Club, Ron and his constitutional and electronic wizardry, Linda Bjarnason acting as scrutineer, Iris acting as parliamentarian, etc.
- And a person always learns the unexpected. As a farm girl from SK, I had not heard of a potty trained horse, but according to Lorne and Linda, there is such an animal. On their hay ride, the horse was driven to a secluded spot and “dumped” on command making it possible to have this heritage activity take place and also have clean highways.