

From the President and Board

Tom Benjamin

Email: benjamin@islandnet.com; phone 250.475.2824.

Although March is still a long way off the board has started to organize the 2009 Thorrablót. If anyone is interested in helping with the food preparation, either by working with us in the kitchen the day of the Thorrablót, or beforehand with dessert preparation we would love to hear from you.

REPORTS

NORDIC FESTIVAL, NORWAY HOUSE *by Vorna Butler*

While January begins the New Year, September always seems the real starting point for new activities and new adventures. And so the Icelanders of Victoria started the “new season” by participating in the Nordic Festival at Norway House on September 19 and 20. There hadn’t been a Nordic Festival since 2004 and this one was a huge success. Local clubs, remembering their homelands of Iceland, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden set up tables of wares portraying the various cultures and giving visitors glimpses into the landscape and symbolism of those cultures. While displaying artifacts from Iceland, our booth also focussed on the lives of Icelandic immigrants to British Columbia.

The Sons of Norway entertained visitors with dances from the Nordic countries and the Scan Trio Plus One provided musical entertainment to welcome patrons. A sumptuous lunch of open-faced sandwiches was available for the bargain price of \$5 and each club also sold desserts originating in their particular homeland. Among the sweets on offer at our table were, of course, vinarterta and ponnukokkur. We sold out both days providing some needed revenue for the club. Each club offered door prizes and at closing on Saturday raffle tickets were drawn and the lucky winners took home some very valuable rewards. A costume parade was also featured on Saturday.

Many thanks to all those club members and friends who volunteered to help out with this event in a variety of ways both before and during the event and with the cleanup. Special thanks to Reyna Jenkyns and Jodi Johl for all the work they did for months and months ahead of time with the Nordic Committee.

ALMANAK

Dec 7 Jóláhátíð Christmas Party 2 pm
(new date and time)

2009

Jan 23	Genealogy	6 pm
March 7	Thorrablót	6 pm
April 26	Movie/Social	2 pm
Sept 25	AGM	5 pm
Oct 25	Movie/Social	2 pm
Dec 6	Christmas Party	1 pm

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Al and Ruth Olafson, life members of Icelanders of Victoria, who celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in September and to Brian and Kay Sessions, also life members, who celebrated their 60th in the same month.

AGM *by Vorna Butler*

September 26 marked the AGM attended by just a small percentage of the club. I often wonder if people don’t attend AGMs for fear of being elected to some very time consuming and onerous position. Far from it! If you’ve not attended before, pluck up courage and come out. You’ll enjoy a potluck dinner, an opportunity to meet fellow club members and you will only have to endure a very short business meeting. No one will put you in a stranglehold to force you into elected office - but you might just find it so interesting you’ll want to volunteer. We’ll look forward to seeing you next year!

“ARTISTS AMONG THE EARLY ICELANDIC IMMIGRANTS”

Rósa Kristín Júlíusdóttir

Richard and Margaret Beck Lecture

October 26, 2008

University of Victoria

Article by: Naomi Smedbol and Michael Stevens

“Artists Among the Early Icelandic Immigrants” was the subject of a recent Beck Lecture at the University of Victoria. The speaker was Rósa Kristín Júlíusdóttir, an assistant professor of Art Education at the University of Akureyri. Though it’s a topic worth exploring, it hasn’t received much attention, as we learned. “Even if you can Google most things today, you cannot Google much art from the early



had an innate sense of visual taste.” This visual taste interacted with the reverence for literature and “sowed” a love of art among the immigrants, whose lives were by no means leisured and for whose sons and daughters it was difficult to find financial support for art education. Some, however, managed to do so, even some of the women among the second generation of immigrants.

It is this second generation that Rósa’s lecture was focused on, and the first real representatives of Icelandic-Canadians who were raised in Canada and the United States and “still sought education in the arts.” Despite hardship and financial struggle, their desire for self-expression drove them to work especially hard at gaining artistic techniques. She mentioned a plethora of Icelandic artists: Sveinbjörn Sveinbjörnsson, Thordur J.W. Swineburne, Helen Sveinbjörnson, Kristín Ketilsdóttir, Gissur Eliasson, Emile Walters, and Jon Magnus Jonsson. To end her lecture, Rósa emphasized her interest in further pursuing the works of women: Gudrun Bildfell, Helga Johnson, Helga Miller, Carol Feldsted, and Anna Johnson.

Finally, as Rósa remarked, we have to decide how to think about all of these artists’ achievements. “To describe them as ethnic artists may be an overstatement. But what did they have in common? Is there a visible thread that ties them together more than other artists among early immigrants? Perhaps not ... but they endured and followed their creative spirit. With that they have given us a legacy that, romantically speaking, can be seen as one patch in the North American cultural quilt.”

If you’d like to listen to this lecture, which was delivered on October 26, you can find an audio version at:

<http://gateway.uvic.ca/beck/media/audio/Rosa-Artists.mp3>.

Board of Directors, Icelanders of Victoria

Tom Benjamin	President	250.475.2824
Beverley Dondale	Vice President & Membership	250.475.2824
Virginia Guenther	Secretary	250.655.4864
Jodi Johl	Coffee & Sales	250.721.4027
Reyna Jenkyns	Youth Involvement	250.483.4235
Brittany Flamank	Youth Involvement	
Lois Turner	Social Convener	250.382.3241
Trish Baer	Beck Trust	250.853.7656
Al Olafson	Member at large	250.727.6842
Fred Bjarnason	Member at large	250.507.6253
Kay Sessions	Member at large	250.595.0938
Brian Sessions	Member at large	250.595.0938
Runa Pleshak	Member at large	250.478.4778
Vorna Butler	Member at large	250.721.3299

<http://www.victoria.tc.ca/Community/Icelanders>

(case sensitive)

Icelandic immigrants,” she joked in her introduction. She herself began to investigate this art during her Masters studies some years ago in Finland, at a time when even fewer resources were available. In fact, Rósa had to rely chiefly on the willing participation of the descendants of these immigrants, and those who have collected their works, to flesh out her research. As it turned out, one of these descendants was present in the audience—W.D.Valgardson—so the discussion of the works of Kristín Ketilsdóttir (later Johnson) took on an unexpectedly personal and immediate quality.

Rósa began her lecture proper by requiring her audience to imagine Iceland in 1875. While beautiful, with some fertile valleys and fjords full of fish ... Iceland in the nineteenth century was also bleak. Little wonder, then, that people decided to emigrate to the United States and to Canada, away from “a place of gnawing hunger, bitter cold, grim pestilence, and baleful oppression” according to Nelson Gerrard's *Icelandic River Saga*, as quoted in her lecture.

When we remember the Icelandic immigrants, we think of them as importing a rich literary tradition, not a tradition of painting or sculpture. Indeed they had “no tradition of visual art (i.e. painting) and therefore no common heritage” in that field. Yet, as she argued, “the Icelandic people at the time