THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN MAGAZINE

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On the Cover

Jakob (Jake) Henrickson, the first president of Norðurljós.

On the Cover

Jakob Gunnar Henrickson

Jake was born in 1890 on January 1st in Winnipeg MB. His father died when he was one year old. He then lived with an aunt and uncle at Churchbridge, SK until he was six, he then returned to his mother and got his education at Pinkham School.

After leaving school he decided to become a plumber. After completing his apprenticeship at Stephansson's Plumbing in Winnipeg he remained with them several years until the First World War broke out. He enlisted and served with the Canadian Engineers, 1st battalion. He was immediately shipped overseas, landed at Liverpool on to London then stationed in Sussex. After a short training period he was dispatched to Le Havre, France. From that time on he served where he was required on the war front.

For a short time after the armistice he was member of the occupational force and was discharged in July 1919. Jake had to spend about three years recuperating from the effects of being gassed in the war; he then returned to his trade.

After a few years, he heeded the call 'go west young man' and came to Alberta. He first worked as a pipe fitter in the Brule and Mountain Park mines, then on to Edmonton where he continued his trade.

Jake married Ila Fookey in 1930; they were the proud parents of five wonderful daughters, Margaret, Joan, Irene, Eleanor and Thelma.

In 1940, he felt compelled to serve his country again and joined the RCAF. They felt he could serve his country better at home and most of his time was spent in Canada. The twins, Eleanor and Thelma were born in Gimli.

Jake loved his mother very much, Ásdís Henrickson. She was the first matron of the Betel Old Folks Home in Gimli where she served for 28 years before she died.

Jake was very proud of his Icelandic heritage and culture and this is exemplified in his service to the club in Edmonton. He was president many times. He also worked hard for the Scandinavian Centre as well.

He loved to sing and he sang in the Icelandic choir, his church choir and the Welsh choir. He served as president of local 488 Union and made five trips for them as a delegate to conventions. He was also on the benevolent board.

He was president of the Ritchie Home and School Association and was very active in the community.

Three daughters remain, Irene Drummond at Magrath near Calgary, also the twins in Sherwood Park near Edmonton, Thelma (Skippy) & Barry Harvey and Eleanor (Ellie) & Robin Templeton.

Editorial

by Atli Asmundsson

Those who publish this magazine as well as those who read it are people dedicated to culture, art and heritage.

The Icelandic Canadian by definition deals among other things with the Icelandic legacy and contribution to Canadian culture.

The question of how important such things are is an interesting one and I suspect that the answers might be radically different from one person to the next.

My take on this is that these things (culture, heritage and history) can be vital to the individual. In order to go through life and survive both success and adversity, a person needs self-confidence. We have to believe in ourselves to achieve.

Self-confidence's twin sister is self-identity, self-confidence without identity is without reason and can therefore be more akin to arrogance than confidence.

People find self-identity within themselves. It is born of and nurtured by personal experiences and the environment we are brought up and live in.

It develops our opinions and strength of conviction to address the issues we face in our normal daily life as well as in personal crisis.

But our self-identity is also in our history, culture and heritage.This is available to us through literature, history books and many different art forms which also create the environment that shapes our character .

People often seek inspiration and courage in their history and Icelanders find in their literature, not the least the Sagas, an endless source for reflection and sometimes pride.

To know your history and the culture created by your forefathers, helps to foster self-identity. History and culture are preserved in books and institutions like museums and universities which are vital to their survival. This is true of the Icelanders in Manitoba who recognized this and through tireless efforts of many dedicated people saved the Icelandic Department at the University of Manitoba and are now helping the Logberg Heimskringla.

Thrudur Helgadottir & Atli Asmundsson

But there are so many others that are keeping the Icelandic heritage alive in Canada in countless INL chapters, publications and through other activities. Most of this work is done by volunteers who give freely of their valuable time and resources so the heritage is not lost. We seldom praise them or give them the recognition they deserve for the important work they are doing – for all of us. We owe them much.

I would like to thank The Icelandic Canadian for the invitation to write this and also to use this opportunity to send its readers best wishes from Thrudur and I.

We would also like to thank all of you wonderful people for the kindness and generosity you have shown us from the day we arrived. We hope that we will be allowed to work with you much longer.

The Scandinavian Centre

The Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton

A brief history

Submitted by Gunnar Thorvaldson

How the Edmonton Club started

The Icelandic club in Edmonton was established as a result of a visit, in 1933, by Reverend Marteinsson. He was enroute to Vancouver when he stopped in Edmonton to christen little Margaret Henrickson. Séra Runólfur stopped on the return trip to preach a sermon.

A reception was arranged at the Independent Order of Foresters (IOOF) Hall at 11201 95 street. The well-advertised event resulted in a large turnout of Icelanders. Somebody in this enthusiastic group of people of Icelandic heritage suggested that an Icelandic club be formed.

In 1941, July 7th, though the U.S. is not yet engaged in the Second World War, President Franklin C. Roosevelt announces American troops have been moved to Iceland in order to ward off a German invasion of the North Atlantic Island.

First Executive

The first organizational meeting was held at the Jakob Henrickson home, 10157 94A Street. The first Executive was: Jakob Henrickson, president, Siggi Sigurjonsson, secretary and Larus Oliver, treasurer. The first regular meeting was held at the home of John Johnson, the Edmonton builder. Later the meetings were held in the Arts Building on 109 Street.

The Icelandic Club was active until the Second World War (WWII) and then lapsed into a dormant period.

After the war, the club was revived and became known as "Northern Lights". Three women, Pauline Mitchell, Margret Robertson and Lillian Sumarlidason called every Icelandic name in the EdmontonTel directory. They started in 1951 and in the following years built up the club again. Many meetings were held at the home of Pauline and Alex Mitchell in Grandview.

The first regular meeting where Jake Henrickson was re-elected president was held in 1954. He continued to be a worker for the Icelandic club and the Scandinavian Centre until he died in 1974.

Their first meetings were held in private homes and later in the Gas Company Building. Many functions were held in the Scandinavian Centre while it was in operation, from 1964 to 1981. It was on the Yellowhead Trail north of 142 street. Currently (2006) there is a McDonald's restaurant there.

Club Presidents

1954-55	Jakob Henrickson
1956	Stanley Samson
1957-59	Jakob Henrickson
1960	Norman Vigfússon
1961	William Halldorson
1962-63	Gunnar Thorvaldson
1964	Leifur Oddson
1965-66	Walter Arason
1967-68	Albert Arnason
1969	Gunnar Thorvaldson
1970-71	Earl Valgardson
1972-73	Barney Thorlakson
1974	Leifur Oddson
1975-76	Sam Thorkelson
1977-78	Barney Thorkelson
1979-80	Leifur Oddson

1981-82	Solli Sigurdson
1983-84	Brian Sveinbjörnson
1985	Dennis Eyólfson
1986-87	Brian Sveinbjörnson
1988-89	Sam Thorkelson
1990-92	Solli Sigurdson
1993-96	Joanne Olafson
1997	Lillian McPherson
1998-99	Gloria Krenbrenk
	Helga and Bob Rennie
2000-03	Bob Rennie
2004	Walter Sopher
2005-06	Del Sveinsson

Del Sveinsson

Walter Sopher

Saga Singers

The Saga Singers is a group of non-professional singers who are interested in learning and preserving the Icelandic culture and traditions. They do this through the English explanation of their choral singing. The ladies' costumes are the authentic or faithful copies of the 18th century costumes known as the Upphlutur.

The Saga Singers have had five directors since its beginning. In 1968 it was formally organized and affiliated with Norðurljós under the directorship of Lil Sumarlidason and adopted the name Saga Singers. Years 1969-1979 - directed by Della Roland, 1979-1989 - directed by Guðbjörg (Burky) Letourneau, 1989-2002 - directed by Gloria Krenbrenk and 2002- to present – directed by Calvin Krenbrenk.

They have entertained at many functions of the Norðurljós Club, including Þorrablót, Christmas Party, Edmonton Heritage Days, Scandinavian Showcase, K-Days, the crowning of the Fjallkona at Íslendingamót in Markerville, Markerville Centennial, Centennial of Vonin, for visiting dignitaries including the Icelandic President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, Past President Vigdís Finnbógadóttir and Pope John Paul II. They also entertained at the Provincial Museum, Stephansson House, Senior Lodges, Nursing Homes, multicultural programs at St. Albert and Stony Plain, and have participated in the Celebrations of Life and a marriage.

The Saga Singers have been great ambassadors for Edmonton. Their participation and presentations in all these activities were applauded when they presented concerts in Ottawa, Gimli (twice); Lundar, Wynyard and more recently in Alberta: The Icelandic Connection in Red Deer, the INL Conference in Calgary, the Stefan & Olla Stefanson Traveling Exhibit in Calgary, and the Viking Night at Viking.

Financial

Norðurljós membership fees continued to be low. The bank balance was small, generally about $30, until Walter Arason became active in the club in the 1960's. One of his many good ideas for increasing revenue was to sell Grey Cup Pool tickets. For several years the club sold 2500 tickets for $1. The prizes were generous and took up about one third of the revenue. The resulting windfall allowed the club to purchase investment bonds, make large donations to: the Betel homes, Lögberg-Heimskringla, Scandinavian Centre News and Beulah and Walter Arason Stephansson House to name a few.

Today much of the money raised goes to support L-H subscriptions, the Snorri Program and development of the Dutch Canadian Club, a Centre that is shared by

ICCE and other Scandinavian Clubs.

Cultural

We have always had many cultural events, the main one being the crowning of the Fjallkona (Maid of the Mountain). The event now takes place at the annual picnic in Markerville, held on the weekend nearest June 17, Iceland's Independence Day. Alberta Icelandic clubs share the crowning of a Fjallkona. Edmonton chooses a Fjallkona every third year. On the alternate years she is chosen by the Leifur Eiriksson Club of Calgary and then followed by a Fjallkona from Markerville.

Thorrablot is the next major event. It is an ancient pagan feast which was held in the month of Þorri (thorri). It corresponds to February or early March of today's calendar. It was celebrated to herald the coming of longer days prior to Christianity. Lillian Sumarlidason is the person credited for recommending the feast and it has become an annual event.

The Fall Supper held in September and the Christmas party are annual events that provide people of Icelandic Heritage with the opportunity to gather and celebrate. Card parties and local picnics that once took place have not been held for some time.

The Saga Singers got their start at a Christmas party in 1964; Lillian Sumarlidason gathered a group around the piano to sing Icelandic carols. Their first public performance was at Scandapades, a variety show produced by the Scandinavian Centre and held annually at the Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium. Each of the five groups did a part of the two hour performance.

When the Edmonton club joined the Icelandic National League (INL), Lillian recommended the name Norðurljós (Northern Lights) for our chapter. Lillian also designed the logo that continues to be used on our letterhead.

Scandinavian Centre

We have cooperated with and supported other Scandinavian groups. A very popular affair was Scandapades, which was held annually at the Jubilee Auditorium.

The Saga Singers

We collaborate with the other Scandinavians for the Heritage Days weekend. This is an annual culturally diverse celebration that takes place in Hawrelak Park. In 2004 our club, along with other Scandinavian Clubs participated in the Klondike Days event in which we hosted a Scandinavian Pavilion. For years we took part in the Klondike Days Parade and often had a beautifully built Viking longboat.

Scandinavian Centre 1964

The Scandinavian Centre was built with splendid co-operation between the five ethnic groups; Danes, Finlanders, Icelanders, Norwegians and Swedes.

Our library (bóksafn) is now housed in the Danish Library, which is on the second floor of the K. Hansen Masonry Ltd.

Building at 15212 117 Avenue. The Danish Library is huge but they have made room at one end for the ICCE books. It is very generous of Konrad to provide that space.

The library is open May to August from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. and September to April from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. It is nice to visit there to browse the books and enjoy coffee and Scandinavian goodies.

Publications

The Norðurljós Club prints an informative newsletter several times a year to keep members aware of coming events, reminders to pay dues and what to bring for social events. Our newsletter is called the Norðurljós Newsletter.

All members of the club are provided with a subscription to Lögberg-Heimskringla, an Icelandic – North American newspaper that comes out twice monthly. This provides a great incentive to keep your membership current.

Membership directories are updated from time to time, the one published in 2003 was a real showpiece. It contained the names of all the members as well as a lot of good information about club activities.

The Scandinavian Centre News, an excellent newspaper, was sent free to anyone who wanted it. That newspaper had to be discontinued as a result of the great increase in postal rates.

Honorary Consul

Al Arnason was appointed Iceland's Honorary Consul for both Northern Alberta and Northwest Territories in 1978. Residing in Edmonton, he served as Consul for more than two decades, retiring in 2001.

Al was active in the Icelandic community and was a strong supporter of cultural activities. He offered his house as a library (bóksafn) for the club's Icelandic books. He also sang with the Saga Singers.

He chaired the Stephan G. Stephansson House Restoration Committee, which led to the establishment of an important cultural tourist attraction in Alberta.

Al Arnason

Al Arnason was born at Kristnes, near Foam Lake, SK, September 26, 1915. His parents, Jón Arnason and Guðbjörg Sigríður Baldwinsdóttir were born Iceland, Jón at Vopnafjord and Guðbjörg at Skagafjord. Al and his wife Martha raised two children, Arni and Marion who still reside in the Edmonton area.

As Honorary Consul, he organized the itinerary for the visit to Edmonton of the President of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir and other dignitaries. Prior to having our own consulate office, consular matters were handled from Winnipeg.

Gordon Reykdal was appointed to fill the post in 2001, after Al Arnason retired. He has been very generous in helping the Icelandic community and Lögberg-Heimskringla.

To paraphrase 'Alberta Venture', Gordon Reykdal is a Phoenix who has risen from the ashes. He started renting furniture and appliances out of a single Edmonton store in 1980, went bankrupt and lost Rentown in 1991, started his own rival Rent To Own chain that same year, bought back Rentown in 1994, severed his ties with the amalgamated company in 2000 after a failed attempt to go public, and in 2001 launched Rentcash, which today operates more than 330 stores in nine provinces (payday loan brokers The Cash Store and Instaloans as well as Insta-rent

Gordon Reykdal

rental outlets). During this roller coaster ride he was named one of Canada's top 40 under 40 executives.

Gordon is the son of Margret Johnson (Lundar MB) and Walter (Oak Point MB) Reykdal. He is well suited for the consular position.

Gordon is dynamic and energetic and he has taken the lead for promoting the Icelandic – Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Edmonton individuals have many talents and energy and when there is a project, people pitch in and get things done.

Lil Sumarlidason

Woman's Group

Lillian Sumarlidason reported in the 1964 April issue of the Scandinavian Centre News that the women met to formally organize a group for raising funds and helping worthy causes in the Icelandic community in Edmonton.

Following much discussion as to ways and means, a slate of officers was elected as follows: Chairman, Thora Orr; Secretary, Lucille Oddson; Treasurer, Pearl Valgardson; Phoning, Mickey Shaw; Shopping, Freda Smith.

A Tombola and a Bazaar were planned for early fall.

Fjallkona 1957 – 2006

The queen crowning ceremony was at first only for Edmonton and the coronation held in May. Since 1978, the Fjallkona or Maid of the Mountains has been crowned at Markerville in June and reigns for all of Alberta for one year. Donna Nelson's term was extended to the following year to enable her to participate in all activities as Markerville celebrated the 100th Anniversary of Settlement in 1988.

1957 Irene Henrickson
1958 Ila Amfinnson
1959 Patricia Lane
1960 Freda Smith
1961 Margaret Cameron
1962 Mickey Shaw
1963 Inga Bachmann
1964 Ruth MacNaughton
1965 Shirley Thorsteinson
1966 Della Roland
1967 Ninna Campbell
1968 Johanna Couves
1969 Olive Goodman
1970 Lucille Oddson
1971 Joe Wetterburg
1972 Lillian MacPherson
1973 Elinor Farrel
1974 Thorey Greenham
1975 Guðbjörg Letourneau
1976 Shirley Thorvaldson
1977 Shirley Lundberg
1978 Rosa Benediktsson (M)
1979 Margaret Geppert (C)
2003 Connie Clark (E)
1980 June Parker (E)
1981 Bernice Anderson (M)
1982 Lil Hiebert (C)
1983 Margret Duncombe, Ninna Campbell (E)
1984 Sandy Bourse (M)
1985 Ragnheiður Gunnarsson (C)
1986 Gloria Krenbrenk (E)
1987 Donna Nelson (M)
1988 Donna Nelson (M)
1989 Mary Stewart (C)
1990 Alison King (E)
1991 Fretha (Dolly) Stephansson (M)
1992 Freda Abrahamson (C)
1993 Judith Jonsson (E)
1994 Dorothy Murray (M)
1995 Thordis Gutnik (C)
1996 Joanne Olafson (E)
1997 Evelyn Johannson (M)
1998 Eleanor Oltean (C)
1999 Shirley Dye (M)
2000 Helga Rennie (E)
2001 Alda Sigvaldason (C)
2002 Marie Sveinson (M)
2004 Margaret Grisdale (C)
2005 Helen Johannson (M)
2006 Julie Sopher (E)

Legend: C- Calgary, E- Edmonton, M - Markerville.

Gloria Krenbrenk

Language Instruction

As new members joined our Norðurljós Club, the need and desire for Icelandic lessons emerged. Ninna Campbell and Lára Hale offered to teach the interested ones in a school classroom on the south side. They divided this first class of 12 – 15 members into "beginners" and"brush-up" groups. Many were members of the Saga Singers who had been invited by the federal government to sing in a multicultural celebration in Ottawa. What an honour! With a federal grant to cover all expenses, including airfare and accommodation, the singers practiced many hours to put on a good concert. A provincial grant was acquired for men's costumes; the ladies paid for their own. All this excitement initiated the desire to have classes before they sang in Ottawa in 1975.

In the late 1980's and into 1990, Lillian McPherson and Christopher Hale, organized Icelandic language sessions attended by at least a dozen adult people in each class. Evening students were given the privilege to remain after class to use the University language lab with Icelandic tapes.

In 1993, with just a few younger members in the Club to shoulder the load, much concern and many discussions were had about the Club's future. Furthering this

Þorrablót 2004

Bob Rennie, Wilfred Helgason, Gil Benedictson, Sam Thorkelson, Gunnar Thorvaldson

discussion Judith Jónsson and June Parker developed the idea of a language camp – a weekend immersion of Icelandic for children accompanied by an adult. It would be held at June's lakefront cottage, less than an hour northwest of Edmonton and with Judith's bolo trailer and tents, a maximum of 20-25 participants could be accommodated.

Participants came from near and far—a mother and adult daughter from Saskatoon, grandparents with grandson from Dawson Creek, three generations from Fort St. John, and a linguist from Ft. McMurray. He went home happy because, although he could read and write in Icelandic, he finally heard the language and now he could enjoy reading it aloud. No one became bilingual but everyone absorbed something from the experience if only the enjoyment of meeting new friends, having lots of laughs and great eating! Interest in heritage was sparked! Having been charged with intrigue and manned with a few basic language learning, a few ventured to Iceland 'to see for themselves' and to extend their knowledge of language and culture. Two of these have participated in the Snorri program.

During the restoration of Stephansson House, Jane W. McCracken wrote *Stephan G. Stephansson: The Poet of the Rocky Mountains.* The hard cover edition is available from the Edmonton Public Library.

Banquets and Receptions

Banquets are often organized for dignitaries from Iceland and smaller receptions for tour bus groups and others.

Banquet 1961

In 1961, the Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton hosted the President of Iceland at a gala banquet at the Hotel MacDonald. It was held on Wednesday, September 20th. The event had been announced in the media and there was a large turnout.

Seated at the head table were the guest of honour, Ásgeir Ásgeirsson and his wife, Dora Thorhallsdottir; Mr and Mrs L.C. Halmrast, representing the provincial government; Mayor and Mrs Roper, representing the city of Edmonton; Mr and Mrs Haraldur Kroyer, secretary to the president; Bill and Thora Halldorson; and Mr and Mrs Glen Eyford.

Other noted guests included Grettir Leo Johannson of Winnipeg, Consul for the three western provinces; Dr. and Mrs Finnbogi Gudmundsson from Iceland; Mr and Mrs Eric Stefanson of Gimli, acting as official escort from the Federal Government; and the two daughters of the poet, Stephan G Stephansson – Jenny Sigurdson and Rosa Benediktsson.

Banquet 1964

In 1964, Friday, August 7th, a banquet was held for the Prime Minister of Iceland at the new Scandinavian Centre

Twenty people waited at the airport to meet the Prime Minister of Iceland, Dr Bjarni Benediktsson, his wife, Sigríður Björnsdóttir and son Björn. When they arrived, they were ushered into the room by President Leifur Oddson and little Arlene Valgardson presented Sigríður Björnsdóttir with a bouquet of flowers and curtsied. Everyone had an opportunity to chat with the visitors and to take pictures.

The sumptuous dinner was catered by the House of Hanratty and the tickets cost four dollars per person.

Before the dinner commenced Della Roland played 'God Save the Queen' followed by the Icelandic National Anthem, sung by Margret Decosse. Ruth MacNaughton, Fjallkona for 1964, gave the blessing.

Following the dinner, President Leif Oddson gave an interesting speech welcoming our visitors and presented them with a wooden fruit bowl hand-crafted in Edmonton. Dr. Benediktsson replied, first briefly in Icelandic, then in English. He gave an outline of the first Icelandic settlers to come to Canada and commented on how well they had done. He also said these people had opened the window to the world for the people who remained in Iceland. Dr. Benediktsson remarked that he was surprised to find the number of people who still spoke Icelandic or understood the language.

Margret Decosse sang two selections in Icelandic and Viola Wallbank sang a medley of western songs. Two sets of high stepping guys and gals from the International Order of Foresters square danced to caller Gerry Landers. Dr. Benediktsson commented later that it was the first time he and his family had seen square dancing. Coffee and dainties were served and people were free to chat with the honoured guests and friends.

The Prime Minister was pleased to discover a relative among the guests – Barney Eyford of Hay River, Northwest Territories.

Banquet 1972

When the Reykjavik City Band came to Edmonton in 1972, they were billeted in private homes throughout the city.

Gisli Guðmundsson was the tour group leader. He had lived in Canada in the 1920's and then moved back to Iceland. Gisli was a teacher in Iceland and worked as a tour guide in Iceland during the summer.

As of February, 2006 we are officially registered as the Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton, Norðurljós Chapter of the Icelandic National League of North America.

We will simply use the short version: Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton. The abbreviation will be ICCE.

Honorary Lifetime Members

Walter Arason
Al Arnason
Ninna Campbell
Clara Jonsson
Ruth MacNaughton
Lucille Oddson
June Parker
Helga & Bob Rennie
Carrie & Gordon Reykdal
Margret Reykdal
Don Shaw
Shirley & Solli Sigurdson
Julie & Walter Sopher
Laura & Sam Thorkelson
Marilyn & Gordon Thorlakson
Gunnar Thorvaldson
Bill Valgardson
Phyllis & Herb Vigfusson

Helga & Bob Rennie

For more information about the Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton visit: www.iccedmonton.org

Tales from Liceland

The Outdated Aspects of the Modern Icelandic Canadian Identity

by Sara Weselake

"Without a poet you and yours/will disappear and leave no trace." This quote, taken from the Icelandic Canadian immigrant poet, Stephan G. Stephansson's poem "Bragamál," epitomizes the revered and relied upon position literature holds among people of Icelandic descent. According to Daisy Neijmann, "literature constituted . . . the main cultural baggage of the Icelandic immigrants and it remained the main vehicle for cultural expression in the New World, as well as the most important link with the Icelandic past."

Focusing on this consistently emphasized literary presence, the work of Charlie Thorson and Guy Maddin, first and second generation Icelandic Canadians respectively, can be examined in terms of their artistic contributions to the Icelandic Canadian identity. The Icelandic Canadian identity as absorbed by Thorson and Maddin is presented as therapeutic myths of identity borne from their immigrant predecessors. Both animator Charlie Thorson's poem "Liceland" and Guy Maddin's film *Tales From the Gimli Hospital* present a caricature of the Icelandic Canadian identity as it has permeated subsequent generations and create a more radical perspective derived from their own ethnic experiences and a perceived stagnancy and inaccessibility of the tradition identity.

The Icelandic quality experienced by Thorson and Maddin is a remnant of the tradition created by the Icelandic immigrants as a means of dealing with their new environment. The beginning of the migrants lives in Manitoba and the surrounding areas tested the group's resilience in dealing with unknown methods of agriculture, unknown climate and food, and the travesty of the small pox epidemic. The result of these experiences combined with a growing level of resentment from the homeland expanded this perseverance into more concrete aspects of the Icelandic-Canadian identity. This identity is composed of three beliefs emphasizing the "Viking spirit of proud independence, noble courage, and... útprá", the unbearable nature of life in Iceland, and the attitude that "Western Icelanders must be shown to be both the best Icelanders and the best Canadians."

The fact that this identity was built to be an unflinching shelter against the challenges of Old and New Iceland suggests a potential unsuitability for times when the storms subside. Writer Kristjana Gunnars raises such questions about the usability of an ethnic identity for first and second generation Icelandic Canadians:

> We do not really know where the Icelandic culture in Canada has gone . . . Is belonging to a group like this in Canada something you carry with you, as in cultural roots that pervade your whole outlook, or is it something contrived, as in taking part in activities about which you have no real feelings?"

Without a doubt, for the Icelandic people who first encountered the New World, the self-image they created for themselves infiltrated all aspects of their lives and could be readily applied to the needs of the society. The pride of the Icelandic Canadian identity itself has persisted. Neijmann notes that it is "still quite difficult to find works by Icelandic Canadians which give a less idealistic and more realistic picture of the Western Icelanders" and that "those who did write more critical works were certainly not the more popular for it."

One such artist who challenged the modern conception of this traditional

Icelandic Canadian identity was Charles Thorson, a first generation Canadian. In many ways, Charlie was the quintessence of the Icelandic Canadian immigrant ideal. Most significant of these immigrant myth embodiments, was Charlie's personification of the true Viking spirit: "When Charlie was young, Joe Thorson, Charlie's brother says, 'there was an inner restlessness of spirit, sometime turbulent and explosive, that led him to wander, in search of adventure, from place to place in Western Canada, without fixed objective'" .

Just as the Icelandic immigrants conceptualized their brave independent spirit igniting and fueling their search for a better life, Charlie exhibited courage to seek out something that would help him be more successful. No more pronounced was this restlessness than during times of most catastrophic personal loss, a second experience Charlie shared with his immigrant predecessors. In the space of a year, Charlie dealt with the loss of his favourite brother Stephan, his beloved wife Ranka, his son Charlie, and several of his friends: "An ordinary man would have buckled under the weight of these tragedies." Whether consciously or purely by nature, Charlie "reverted to type" as a means of overcoming these heartbreaks, spending a year adventuring and getting work in the west before returning to Winnipeg in 1918 to work on his art. Thorson's return saw him invigorated and fulfilling the third component of the Icelandic Canadian identity; Charlie achieved remarkable success at his work, doing animation work for such giants as Walt Disney, MGM, Warner Brothers.

Through these experiences therefore, Charlie developed an acute appreciation of the crucial role that the Icelandic Canadian identity played for the immigrants, and could play for the benefit of subsequent generations. It is Charlie Thorson's famous poem "Liceland" which seems to question whether or not this attitude was shared by his fellow Icelandic Canadians. In the poem, Charlie humorously criticizes the traditionally uncharacteristic ways in which Icelandic Canadians were dealing with the Depression:

> Once it filled my heart with pleasure
> To an overflowing measure
> When the praises of my country filled my ears.
> Now I'm sad and heavy-hearted,
> Dreams and faith have all departed,
> Dreams and faith I've cherished many years.

Charlie acknowledges that the Icelanders' unbreakable patriotism is still present. However, there is a lack of response which in true Icelandic Canadian fashion should accompany such challenges. The Depression is exactly the type of struggle that historically best demonstrated the Icelandic Canadian ability to persevere and offset adversity with accomplishment. Thorson's disappointment with his countrymen's empty Icelandic pride arises because it is not legitimated by any action. As such,

Thorson provides an analysis on what the Icelandic Canadian identity has become and what it should be.

Another Icelandic Canadian artist who casts doubt on the modern manifestations of the traditional Canadian Icelandic identity is filmmaker Guy Maddin. Maddin, a second generation Canadian, shares more with Thorson than simply ethnic heritage. Guy's life has also been associated with great tragedy: his teenage brother Cameron killed himself upon the grave of a recently deceased girlfriend, and his father died suddenly some years later. Just as the Icelandic immigrants moved beyond their overbearing hardships through the development of Icelandic-Canadian myths, so too did Maddin: "Guy's infatuation with movies has also fueled a deeply autobiographical compulsion to mythologize his own life," and for him, "filmmaking is a way of coping." This transformation of his own life into the cinematic medium is illustrated through the climactic ending to his second film *Tales from the Gimli Hospital.* Drawing from a traumatic first love and "all the jealousy that sprang from it," Maddin transmitted these experiences into what he deemed "probably the most autobiographical moment of his own career."

Yet while he shares the mythologizing aspect with his Icelandic counterparts, Maddin's method of therapy exists in startling contrast. To recognize this difference, it is important to note once again that the immigrants' myths evolved from feelings of isolation, both from their homeland and their new land. As such, the self-image of the Icelandic people seemed to evolve into a feeling that in order to establish a place in the New World, they had to place themselves above tragedy – as though their historic Viking courage and present-day successes would provide an immunity to any hardships they were dealt. Maddin's personal myths do exactly the opposite; they in fact seek to ease the pain of an ordeal through the illumination that such trials are experienced by all:

"Offscreen: . . . do you think your films will ever help provide solace for the biggest traumas in your life? Maddin: . . . it sounds so self-centred, but it's enabled me to continually think of people and myself, and how I'm just regular like everyone else."

Therefore, it is through his own type of mythmaking, which equates his tragedies with those of others, that Maddin finds the ability to move beyond these struggles.

Maddin also suggests in *Tales from the Gimli Hospital,* much as Charles Thorson did, that the traditional Icelandic-Canadian identity has become an inaccessible remnant of past generations. This is emphasized through the opening of the film in which "there have been clouds, maybe angels and the sound of what may be a motorcycle engine – completely incongruous, repeated over and over, modern urban din in a time warp and the presence of Icelanders in traditional dress. It is the juxtaposition of these two extremes, modernity and historical tradition, that Maddin seems to suggest that the stagnant

Canadian Icelandic identity is keeping the culture in the past: "Still a great source of pride among Western Icelanders, this experiment in autonomy, coupled with an impressively adversity-laden history, is probably what has encouraged the community to remain as endearingly touchy and vain as they are." Maddin thus portrays the Canadian Icelandic identity as a legacy to which subsequent generations have attached themselves without regard for its applicability in an evolved environment.

The establishment of the Icelandic people in the New World was encircled in a shroud of hardship and isolation and a specific New World mythology was created as means of coping with these challenges. This mythology also served in solidifying an Icelandic-Canadian pride that has been passed on to succeeding Canadian generations. However, it is the resistance of this identity to evolving with the needs of the culture that weakens its accessibility to experiences outside those of the immigrants. Charlie Thorson hints at this criticism in his poem Liceland in which he expresses frustration over the absence of Icelander resilience during the Depression. However, it is in Guy Maddin's *Tales from the Gimli Hospital* that the futility of an empty Icelandic Canadian patriotism is fully articulated. Ultimately, it remains to be seen how the Icelandic-Canadian self-image, developed out of the immigrant experience, will itself persevere as an unaltered relic in an ever-changing environment.

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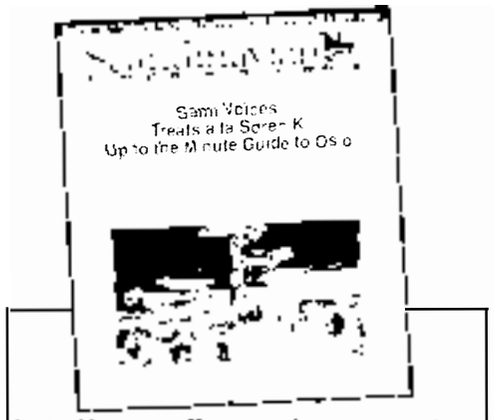

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Translation mystery solved

by Nelson Gerrard

During The Icelandic Canadian Magazine´s recent serial publication of letters by pioneer entrepreneur Friðjon Friðriksson, it became apparent that the English translation could not have been done by Sigurbjörg Stefánsson of Gimli, as originally believed. This was evident not only from various misunderstandings regarding names and places integral to the history of New Iceland, but also from the diction and non-standard syntax, punctuation, etc. used by the translator. Sigurbjörg Stefánsson, an individual very much at home in the history of New Iceland and an English teacher of high standards, could not have produced this translation.

Accordingly, The Icelandic Canadian Magazine recently carried a note that the attribution of this translation to Sigurbjörg Stefánsson was in question. This, in turn, resulted in some speculation as to who in fact had translated the letters.

Now the answer has been found. In August, while working at the Icelandic Emigration Centre at Hofsós in Northern Iceland, I came across a binder with the typed transcripts (in Icelandic) of Friðjón´s letters all neatly sequenced. An introductory note signed by Ingveldur Sveinbjörnsdóttir explained the circumstances (in Icelandic):

"While I was studying in St. Louis, Missouri, from 1976-1980, I was approached by Dr. Larson, one of my professors at the University of Missouri, who said that he had an odd request. A woman had phoned the university to find out if anyone knew Icelandic. She claimed that she had been in touch with other universities, but to no avail. The reason this woman, whose name was Virginia McDaniel (nee Johnson), wanted to meet someone who spoke Icelandic was that she had letters in Icelandic, from her great-grandfather Friðjon Friðriksson to Rev. Jón Bjarnason. To make a long story short, I got in touch with Virginia and we became good friends. I translated the letters into English for her."

Ingveldur concluded her introductory note by mentioning that Virginia had subsequently visited Iceland twice, in 1979 and again in 1987, but died in 1988. She added that she was donating the typed Icelandic transcripts of the letters to the Emigration Center at Hofsós in the hope that "Friðjon's letters would sharpen the image that people have of the Icelandic pioneer experience in America."

In keeping with this aim, some corrections and alterations have been made to these translations during the course of publication in The Icelandic Canadian.

Front l-r: Gudrun Goodman, midwife; her fosterdaughter, Gudbjorg Eyjolfson (Halldorson); and Maria Eyjolfson (stepmother to Gudbjorg). Back: Barney Thordarson (for whom Gudrun Goodman kept house near Foam Lake); Thomas S. Halldorson (husband of Gudbjorg); and Konrad Eyjolfsson (father of Gudbjorg). The photo was taken at the time of Gudbjorg's marriage to Thomas S. Halldorson in 1913.

In search of Gudrun Goodman

Reflections on gender, "doing history" and memory

by Lesley Biggs with Stella Stephanson

It is a typical hot, July day in Saskatchewan. Cumulus clouds billow across the deep blue sky and the wind hurtles across the fields. Blooming fields of canola, flax, oats and wheat race by leaving a blur of lemon-yellow, lavender blue and gold carpets floating on verdant stalks. I am driving with Stella Stephanson, whom I affectionately refer to as my surrogate mum, along Highway #16 toward Leslie, Saskatchewan, in search of the grave site of Gudrun Goodman.

Gudrun Goodman was a midwife who practiced from 1887 to 1922 in what is known as the Vatnabyggd (Lake Settlement) area in Saskatchewan. I first learned about Gudrun Gudman from the 1976 book, A Harvest Yet to Reap: A History of Prairie Women, researched and compiled by Linda Rasmussen, Lorna Rasmussen, Candace Savage, and Anne Wheeler.[3] In the section on childbirth, the authors excerpt a passage from Walter Lindal's 1955 book, The Saskatchewan Icelanders: A Strand of the Canadian Fabric,[4] in which Lindal praises the contributions of Icelandic midwives to the early pioneer communities in Saskatchewan; but he singled out Gudrun Goodman:

All the Icelandic midwives deserve special mention but one of them, Gudrun Goodman, had one experience, while still a young woman, which stands out as the finest example of courage and initiative in an emergency. A young woman was with child, expecting in about a week. She was pumping water for a team of oxen who were drinking out of a low trough. Both the oxen had long sharp horns. One of them suddenly raised its head and one of the horns caught the woman in the side and ripped it open. Gudrun Goodman was immediately summoned. She saw that she could not save the woman but was determined to save the child. She administered an anesthetic, choloroform, operated and got the child while still alive. She brought it up--Gudbjorg Eyjolfson "sic", who later became Mrs. Thomas Halldorson, of Leslie, Saskatchewan.[5]

Lindal was right; Goodman does deserve special attention since performing a Caesarian section at the turn of the twentieth century was a remarkable feat. That the baby lived was nothing short of a miracle; that Goodman raised the baby as her own was testament to extraordinary kindness and compassion. When I first encountered this story, I was struck by the tragedy of this unnamed woman's death; but I also became intrigued because it contradicted the prevailing trope of the "neighbour midwife' in the historiography of Canadian midwifery. Since Goodman clearly had the skills and the equipment to carry out a Caesarian section, she simply did not 'fit' the model of the neighbour midwife who learned her skills on the job. Gudrun Goodman's story inspired me to rethink my own historiographic practice, as well as that of other historians and social scientists involved in the study of midwives, and childbirth more generally.[6]

I found other examples, albeit fragmentary, of midwifery practices which also did not fit the neighbour midwife model. This research revealed that midwifery practices varied widely across Canada and over time, according to class, race, ethnicity, region, levels of industrialization and colonization. In particular, for our purposes here, I concluded that historians' knowledge about midwives depended in part on having access to linguistic and ethnic communities. But since most Canadian historians of midwifery were predominantly

white and Anglophone, their histories (including my own) were based primarily on English language texts (medical journals, magazines, diaries, newspapers and archival documents). As a result, these histories presented mostly the stories of Anglophone settlers from the mid-1800s to the 1920s but excluded the stories of European, Chinese, Japanese, or black immigrants who also contributed to the remaking of Canada.

Although the story of Gudrun Goodman represented a small piece in my earlier work, she remained part of my imagination. I wanted to know who she was, why she came to Saskatchewan, and where she learned her skills. In this article, I recount my search for Gudrun Goodman with Stella Stephanson, who drew on her local knowledge of the Canadian-Icelandic community and culture both in finding Gudrun Goodman and in making sense of the cultural context in which Goodman practised. In the process, through our research and conversations, I began to see other ways of 'doing history'—outside of the archive—where meaning is created in the everyday practices of remembering.

These insights first emerged not from the mandatory review of the literature but when Stella and I were walking around two Icelandic cemeteries (Leslie and Bildfell) looking for the gravestone of Gudrun Goodman. Our experiences of this walk were quite different. For me, it was a pleasant stroll, an amiable way to spend the afternoon framed within my desire to find Gudrun Goodman. But as Stella wandered around the tombstones, she would mention that she knew this individual or that individual or their family. For Stella, the gravestones evoked wistful and fleeting memories of family, friends, neighbours, and acquaintances. It became clear to me that cemeteries invoked remembering in two senses.[7] The most common and obvious meaning is that they are places of mourning, representing ruptures with the past; yet simultaneously they are places of continuity where the dead are remembered by the living. The second and less apparent understanding is that cemeteries dedicated to a particular group of people—the Icelandic settlers in this case—are a material way of reconnecting or re-membering a community, and not just individuals. These Icelandic cemeteries are sites of collective memory that have emerged out of the historical experience of immigration and settlement to which the gates of the Bildfell cemetery attest. On one gatepost a plaque reads "In Memory of the Pioneers Resting Here. Money Donated By Bjarni Thordarson." The other post indicates that the land was donated by Gisili Bildfell, 1895, an early settler who lived in the area.

When Stella and I first found Goodman's gravestone in the Bildfell cemetery that summer day in 2001, we had a 'eureka' moment and Goodman became immediately more real than Lindal's story. Gravestones are concrete, material markers, monuments to a body interred while the memory of the individual is etched in

stone. Written in Icelandic, Gudrun Goodman's head stone reads: "Born 1 Oct. 1853; died 24 March 1922. In memory of Gudrun Goodman. She was a midwife. She delivered 336 children and she never lost a mother. Her memory be blessed."[8] This simple tribute to Gudrun Goodman acknowledges her contribution to the Icelandic community and remains a lasting memory. Tombstones, however, are not only monuments to individuals, but they are also repositories of cultural practices. Goodman's grave is marked by her cultural identity as evidenced not only by the Icelandic inscription but the iconography—on top of the tomb stone is an open book—a symbol of literacy—a most cherished value, as I have learned, among Icelandic settlers.

The Icelandic cemetery and Gudrun Goodman's tombstone are sites of material culture that also serve as an emblem for the links between collective memory and individual biography, between the local experience and national formations, between commemoration and recall. These themes emerged during this research, and demanded that I engage with the burgeoning literature on memory and history.[9] My thinking on this topic began with Pierre Nora's now classical work, *Les Lieux de Mémoire*[10] *(Places of Memory).* Nora argues that "there are lieux de mémoire, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory."[11] Through the twin processes of the globalization of cultures and the deritualization of traditional cultures, memory—'the remnants of experience'—have been lost and instead has been replaced by commemorative practices (including the establishment of archives, libraries, dictionaries, museums, celebrations, and monuments).

Ironically, Nora's recovery project itself could be considered an act of commemoration as he seeks to preserve 'real' memory, thus blurring the lines between memory and history. Providing a more nuanced view of commemorative practices, often cited John Bodnar argues that "public memory represents the intersection of vernacular and official cultural expressions."[12] Vernacular culture is grounded in the first-hand experiences of ordinary people who wish to commemorate local and autobiographical events (such as the pioneers or dead soldiers). In contrast, official culture represents an idealized image of the nation cultivated by "cultural leaders and authorities at all levels of society." Although noting that ordinary people are not opposed necessarily to defending the symbol of the nation, Bodnar's methodology depends upon a rigid distinction between vernacular and official cultures because, in his view, they represent competing interpretations of reality.[13] Other scholars, however, argue for a more fluid approach.[14] As Coates and Morgan observed, the relationship between these interests can be "dialectical even dialogical."[15]

Women's role as creators of historical memory, a point overlooked by Nora, dates back to the nineteenth century in English Canada,[16] Britain,[17] and Europe.[18] A few women were able to make their living as writers of history, particularly biographies of famous women, or historical fiction but the majority were engaged in the preservation of their oral and material heritage—an activity that was pejoratively dubbed as 'amateur' by professionalizing historians. These preservationist practices however did not often translate into a celebration of women's contributions in public space. Instead monuments of famous male military and political figures dot the urban landscape—attesting to male power, accomplishment and heroism while images of women are notably absent. When they are present, women are most often represented as allegories and archetypes—mythical symbols which bear no relationship to the lives of real women. Only occasionally are monuments of historical women erected (for example, *Madeleine de Verchères, Laura Secord, and Queens Victoria and Elizabeth 11*) after they have entered the male spheres of politics and the military as symbols of political power or saviors of the nation.[19]

There is no official monument celebrating the accomplishments of Gudrun Goodman, and yet her family and commu-

nity found ways to commemorate her life—on her grave stone, in an obituary, and in the local/family histories. These local sites of memory highlight the importance of vernacular culture for doing women's history. In the absence of an archive—the site for the authoritative storing and inscription of memory[20]—local commemorative practices provide a way into recovering the stories of ordinary women and men. But through the process of doing this research, it became apparent that each site of memory generated a different account of this remarkable woman. These nuanced inflections of meaning reinforce Lambek and Antze's view of memory as a practice. "Memories", they argue, "are never simply records of the past, but are interpretative reconstructions that bear the imprint of local narrative conventions, cultural assumptions, discursive formations and practices, and social contexts of recall and commemoration."[21]

Central to the stories generated about Gudrun Goodman is the symbol of the pioneer. This vernacular symbol is founded upon a tension between "people's desire both to honor and break their ancestral and familial ties of descent and to express their consent to a new culture of individualism and new political structures."[22] But, as Bodnar also found cultural leaders attempt to co-opt this symbol as builders and defenders of the nation. In the case of Gudrun Goodman, the distinction between vernacular and official discourses is not easily disentangled. The identity of Icelandic Canadians as pioneers was constituted through the twin processes of the remembering of immigration and settlement and the active 'forgetting' of colonization. Through local commemorative practices, Icelandic Canadians were imbricated in the liberal order framework,[23] not only in affirming Saskatchewan/Canada as a pluralistic society, predicated on the hard work of impoverished immigrants, but also constitutive of that image of the nation-state. At the same time, maintaining familial ties by honouring one's ancestors and the continued assertion of a unique Icelandic identity as a way of maintaining community, contradicts the culture of individualism which sustained liberal rule and the nation-state of Canada.[24]

Part 1: "Doing History"

I called Stella. "Have you heard of this midwife, Gudrun Goodman?" "No," she replies, "but I'll ask around." Stella and her husband, Eric (now deceased) Stephanson, were and are active members of the Vatnabyggd Icelandic Club of Saskatchewan that they helped found twenty years ago. They were instrumental in reviving and retaining Icelandic cultural traditions and customs in the Quill Lakes area in Saskatchewan. They are well-known not only locally but in Icelandic communities across Canada, and they know everyone. As a result, Stella became my entry point into the Canadian Icelandic community. Based on her local knowledge,[25] she knew whom to ask, and because of her status within the community, individuals were willing to help out.

Stella called me back several days later. She had checked around and nobody seems to know anything about Gudrun Goodman except Nelson Gerrard, a historian of Icelandic descent living in Winnipeg, who speaks and writes Icelandic fluently. Over the phone with Stella, Mr. Gerrard translated an entry in the 1922 Almanak[26] marking Gudrun Goodman's death.

Stella and I are bubbling over with excitement. Stella is delighted by her finds and so am I. A few more pieces of the puzzle have been put in place. Yet when I ask Stella for the full citation (i.e. the date and publisher), she doesn't know. Not bound by the institutional requirements of academia, these details are unimportant to Stella. I feel in a bind. Without seeming to be ungrateful, I need to be able to document my/our sources (whose story is this anyway?). I press a little and she reveals that the date is 1922. I make a mental note to call Nelson Gerrard and find out the rest of the pertinent information. But I also realize that I will have to get a direct translation since I cannot 'reliably' trust a summary of this entry.

This incident reveals at the micro level the clash of knowledge claims—between academic and local knowledge. In the name of rigour, academic knowledge is developed within a particular set of structures (peer-reviewed journals), carries its own conventions, and epistemological assumptions. Through these parameters, academic knowledge defines what constitutes 'valid' and 'reliable' and sets itself apart from the knowledge of the everyday. The knowledge that Stella brought to the project was of a different order. This local knowledge is based in part on Stella's experiences living in a community for over seventy years; and in part, on her relationship to her husband who was actively engaged in the reclamation of Icelandic culture. This local knowledge also draws on folklore that has been passed down from one generation to the next—some of which has been encoded within texts such as that written by Walter Lindal referred to earlier, the Almanak, and local histories.

Recalling the Pioneer Spirit

One warm summer evening in 2001, Stella and I are having dinner and the conversation turns to the research that we are doing together. For much of the night, Stella reminisces about her travels with Eric in search of his Icelandic roots, and Stella tells some great stories of chance encounters with individuals who knew an ancestor; the kindness of strangers who invited them in for a meal; the discovery of an unmarked Icelandic cemetery, as well as the location of the burial site of one of Eric's sisters who had died at a young age. Stella recalls these times with great fondness; the long drives afforded them a time of intimacy, freed temporarily from the demands of work and family. As Stella talks, it becomes clear to me that she is doing this project, not just because she loves me and wants to help me out, but also our travels and conversations revive warm memories of her relationship with her husband. The act of remembering allows Stella to keep her husband's spirit alive.

My conversations with Stella are a reminder that professional historians (i.e. those trained in the academy) are not the only people who 'do history.' Individuals and communities are often engaged in a search for their roots, preserving their histories, and inserting them into the present. Genealogical investigation is a popular form of doing history although its cultural significance and interest in it has waxed and waned over the centuries.[27] Originally, genealogies were used to establish lines of descent as a way of securing title and land through inheritance, or to provide a pedigree and confer elite status. Since the 1960s, the appeal of genealogy has broadened to include a wide spectrum of classes and ethnic groups across the Western industrialized world. Genealogical activity has not only been democratized but its function has shifted from "the legitimization of exclusive status to a concern with emergent identity."[28] In contemporary genealogy, the search for roots encourages individuals to locate their own biographies within the context of their family history. Laying claim to a collective heritage, Hareven argues, enables contemporary individuals to connect with larger historical events and to forge a sense of political and

cultural belonging.[29]

Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen drew similar conclusions from their survey of patterns in popular historymaking. They found that their respondents used the past to make sense of current issues centering on relationships, identity, immortality, and agency. A sense of self was partly achieved by establishing a trajectory between one's past and her/his current position and thus is intertwined with discourses of continuity and disruption, progress and decline, success and failure. Moreover, although the ways in which individuals and groups practice history varied across gender, socioeconomic level, and race, Rosenzweig and Thelen found that a common narrative was "history as a story of struggle."[30] Participants wanted the next generation to take responsibility for the past, by learning from the mistakes (both personal and collective). This knowledge, in turn, allowed them to imagine "a new sense of themselves as agents with the desire and capacity to change patterns they had fallen into."[31]

Stella was no stranger to doing historical research. She and Eric had spent many years looking for Eric's ancestors who had emigrated from Iceland. Through their genealogical research, Stella and Eric Stephanson were able to keep alive a pioneer spirit that had been nurtured through the stories told from one generation to the next, and continued to fuel the imagination of his generation. Eric and Stella are the last generation to have any direct connection with the pioneers who had settled in Saskatchewan at the turn of the century. They remember what it was like to travel by a team of horses, to grow most of your own food, to raise your own cattle, and to have no running water or electricity. These stories are embodied tales of hard work, self-reliance, and sacrifice; they highlight the importance of family and community; and they are told with immense pride. These stories are also about by-gone days and are framed within the language of loss and nostalgia and offer "pleasurable memories of endurance."[32] At the same time recalling the pioneer spirit establishes a trajectory between the humble

origins of immigrants, the accomplishments of succeeding generations, and the ability to imagine an even brighter future.

The desire to preserve the pioneer spirit was not unique to Eric but also became a cultural project of the government of Saskatchewan. In the early 1980s, through the New Horizons grant, the provincial government funded the publication of dozens of local histories throughout the province. These books represent sites of memory, a place where a collective identity or sense of community is forged. Compiled by large numbers of volunteers, some of whom formed themselves into historical societies, these massive tomes recorded the history of towns, villages, and hamlets, as well as their schools, hospitals, businesses, and churches. These institutional histories comprised about half of each book while the remainder was devoted to short genealogies of the families whose ancestors had settled there. Among these local histories was the Foam Lake Historical Society's history, They Came From Many Lands,[33] which includes the history of the

Halldorson family, the family into which Gudbjorg Eyjolfson married and whose tragic birth is recounted.

Before turning to this story, however, it is useful to understand the ways in which official and vernacular cultural expressions intersect in constituting public memory in Saskatchewan. First and foremost, Saskatchewan's history is presented as a history of settlement. For example, the history of Foam Lake and area, They Came From Many Lands, states that:

> This project is an attempt to give the reader an over-all picture of the origins of settlements in these areas and to recall with grateful pride the early pioneers who, through faith, courage and perseverance, braved the hardships of the founding years in this land where freedom abounded…Let us not forget the early pioneers who toiled with axe and ox to open up this country and pave the way for an easier life for those who came after them. It is hoped this book will help the present generation to understand and appreciate more fully the heritage of their forefathers who lived through times when there were no roads, no automobiles or power machinery, no modern conveniences, little or no money and a candy or chocolate bar was a rare treat.[34]

These tributes to the pioneers reaffirm a commitment to democratic values (Saskatchewan as a place where freedom abounded) and to meritocracy (success built upon sacrifice and hard work), as well as a desire for economic prosperity. In making the link between the efforts of the first generation (the early pioneers who toiled with axe and ox to open up this country) and the legacy that it has bestowed on the third (an easier life for those who came after them), the latter generation is able to establish a connection with the past and a trajectory for formulating identity. This narrative also reveals an enduring faith in progress through its contrast of the pioneers' achievements against the lack of technology and 'modern conveniences;' the implicit message here is that "if the pioneers could accomplish this much with so very little, what heights could the present generation reach?" This question is more than rhetorical. The changes in the agricultural economy and the decline of many small towns in Saskatchewan had become increasingly pressing and visible by the 1980s. Resurrecting the past may have been one way for individuals and communities to deal with an uncertain future.

These local histories not only framed the history of Saskatchewan as a history of settlement but they also affirmed the multicultural agenda of the Saskatchewan government. They are a testament to the contributions of immigrants drawn 'from many lands,' as the title of the Foam Lake history reminds its readers, to the 'founding' of Saskatchewan/Canada. Like the 'humble origins' narratives of genealogical research, these local histories also serve to democratize the past by recognizing the sacrifice and hard work of individuals drawn from a diverse set of ethnic communities who came to Canada to escape economic hardship and/or religious persecution. They reinforce the view that Saskatchewan/Canada is a pluralistic society where religious freedom prevails, ethnic differences are tolerated, and economic prosperity is within the grasp of those willing to work.

Because these texts are commemorative, they omit parts of their history that do not fit into the community and nation-building mythologies. In her analysis of female and widowed, Mennonite refugees, Marlene Epp found that a 'split memory' occurred between the 'social memory' of

Mennonites, articulated through its recollections of being victims of Stalinist oppression and women's gender specific experiences of wartime rape which were erased from this master narrative.[35] Similarly, the gap between official and unofficial histories is revealed in a story recounted by Stella on numerous occasions. While Stella was in hospital, she served as a translator for a group of elderly female patients who spoke only Polish. After Stella earned their trust, these women confided that they did not regret the death of their husbands who had treated them no better than animals. One woman recalled that her husband made her sleep in the barn in the middle of winter because she had placed 'the pisspot' on the wrong side of the bed. These hardships—associated with humiliation and degradation—contrast dramatically with the ennobling discourse of hard work that features prominently in the settlement narratives. Both forms of sacrifice contributed to the re-making of Canada but only stories that bestow honour make their way into 'official' history books; the morally repugnant, based in this case on patriarchal violence, are erased.

The remembering of Saskatchewan's history within the twin narratives of settlement and multiculturalism is predicated on the active 'forgetting' of colonization and the selective inclusion of Aboriginal peoples. The concepts of 'founding years' and 'settlement' discursively presuppose that nothing existed or more precisely no one inhabited the land prior to the arrival of the settlers. The absence of Aboriginal peoples, most notably the Cree and Saulteaux, is evident in the opening paragraph of They Came From Many Lands.

As far as is known, there was no settlement in the area covered by this book until the early 1880's, although for many years the area had been traversed by fur traders, adventurers, and surveyors.[36]

In this first chapter, only fleeting references are made to a history of Aboriginal peoples, as traders with the Hudson's Bay Company, as dependents upon the network of forts when the buffalo declined, and as beneficiaries of government policy encouraging settlers to produce much

needed food. Why the status of Aboriginal people declined to the point where they needed food handouts is not explained, and what has happened to Aboriginal people since the turn of the twentieth century is not discussed.

I first made the connection between the remembering of settlement and the forgetting of colonization when we were trying to locate Gudrun Goodman's property on the ordinance maps reproduced in the Foam Lake history. Initially, Stella and I were very pleased to see Gudrun Goodman's name on a quarter section located on range 12, Township 30, section 28. But as I looked at the map, where the names of the 'original' owners were displayed, it became obvious that the mapping of territory and the renaming of the area with Icelandic names, was part of the colonization process resulting in the effacement of Aboriginal history. Does this imply that the settlers are colonizers? If they are colonizers, their tales of hardship and poverty do not fit with the image of cruel and aggressive colonial masters that I associate with colonialism—and allow me to say, not me. I don't talk to Stella about my troubling perceptions for fear of offending.

A year later, in anticipation of giving a public presentation on this work, I tell Stella about my concerns. In the first instance, she allays my fears. 'Why wouldn't I talk to her?', she asks. But I also hear hesitations in her voice, as I explain about colonization and imply that her ancestors were complicit in this process. But as I describe the representation of Aboriginal people in the Foam Lake history, particularly the suggestion that the government encouraged settlers to emigrate to help feed the Aboriginal people, she just snorts, "That's bullshit!" Well aware that immigrants were enticed to settle in Canada with the promise of cheap land, Stella easily recognizes the invention of history to justify actions of the past.

Through the course of our conversation, we grapple with the impoverished status of the settlers and their collusion with colonial aspirations, realized in part by the state's encouragement of European immigration. We understand the settlers to be 'economic refugees' in contemporary parlance that situates the settlers in a liminal position between colonizer and colonized. In his analysis of the colonizer, Albert Memmi notes the relative positioning of colonizer, colonized and settler; European settlers enjoyed privileges on a daily level (such as protection by the law) denied to the colonized.[37] The settlers benefited from colonization, as Memmi suggests "by proxy,"[38] and a comparison of the fate of descendants of both Aboriginal people and European settlers leaves no doubt as to the accrued advantages of the latter group.

Part Two: In the next issue of the Icelandic Canadian Magazine. Footnotes published at the end of essay.

Poetry

Inuvik Remembered

by Norma Guttormson

In Spring -
mounds of longstanding snow
hug the ground
stubbornly yielding to the sun's
persuading rays.
Kids on bicycles, dripping icicles.
Houses in crayola colours
rise on stilts above the permafrost
to view the mighty MacKenzie's
breakup.
Melting and thawing muddy the streets
and the swallows return...

In Summer -
precision of everlasting time
lengthens the day
minutely pushing toward the
appearing Midnight Sun.
Kids are warm, blackflies swarm.
Days wrapped in cloths of dust
greet the mosquitoes in the air
and welcome the trusting tourist's
arrival.
Trimmings and trash litter the streets
and the river flows...

In Autumn -
yellow leaves on enduring birch
droop to their fall
stealthily stealing away the tree's
fading shade.
Kids embrace, rains to face.
Ravens in night attire
encircle the deepening coolness
and usher in the rapid river's
freezeup.
Huddling parkas scurry the streets
and the snow flies...

Tiny flurries of tatting lace
crouch together
silently covering the earth with a
glistening mantle.
Kids delight, raw winds bite.
Ghosts of cold
hover about the gripping chill
as dancing lights sweep their awesome flight
beyond.
The setting sun darkens the streets
then suddenly disappears in flames on the horizon
in Winter.

Book Reviews

Trapper's Wife Claims to have Found the Missing Link

by Ingi G. Bjornson
Reviewed by Gail Halldorson
$19.00

Ingi Bjornson is an enigma.

He's a folksy woodsman—"Yup, it just goes to show that many people would be genuinely surprised to find out what ingredients go into the making of perfumes. So, a man does not necessarily have to lose all of his Casanova instincts merely from being sprayed by a little skunk only an hour prior, …" P. 23

He's a philosopher—"What can our perceived personal opinions be, aside from our upbringings of culture, caste, wealth, and experience? Are not our opinions merely the sum-of? What is right and what is wrong, and are there really absolutes? P. 77

He's a humourist—"Perhaps it is like the statement my friend said to me: 'Don't ever take Viagra and iron pills at the same time.' …..'Why not?' 'Because you'll always point north.'" P. 69

He's a sensitive nature-lover—" There are the sounds of whistling as the wind weaves its way through the willows and shrubs, with percussion-like sounds coming from the tall grasses mixed within. Indeed the whole forest dances in flowing waves of unison….The wind moving through the trees will not be so easily interpreted while listening to loud music on a walkman, sitting by a computer screen, or while rushing along the busy corporate schedule." P. 140

Ingi lives in the boreal forest of Northern Manitoba with his wife, Cindy, and his two sons, Forrest and Fraser. He is a trapper, bear hunting guide, fishing guide and camp owner. All of the stories in this collection are taken from his own experiences in the north, although the reader can easily see he is not as naïve as he sometimes portrays himself. In Prehunt of 1997, he seems oblivious to the fact that the Americans coming up to hunt bear are laughing at his 10-Step Plan B (which is necessitated by the fact that the ice is not off the lakes yet). He still makes it clear to the reader, however, that they are thinking they're going to be enduring one of Ingi's unreliable multi-step plans again.

I find this pretense rather annoying. If he really is the uncomprehending country bumpkin he pretends to be here, then I apologize.

In his short story, Computers are Kinda Neat, Ingi speaks as a "certified opinionologist" because he doesn't have a doctorate on any kind of paper. He notes that we put labels on children and say they have some currently fashionable disorder, but is that just an excuse for personal responsibility—ours and theirs? "Yup, I am bold enough to say that if my former team of Alaskan Malamutes were tied up in front of a TV or computer for many hours each day, a couple of things would happen: they would be putting on extra weight and, by golly, they would become pretty darn restless and irritable."

In spite of the fact that dead animals are a part of many of his short stories, I enjoyed the book. He writes in a conversational style: using words like "Anyhow" and "Yup" to start sentences; and using "uh" in the middle of sentences, as you might when trying to think of the next word you are going to say. There is a lot of humour in the book. "Onlookers" becomes "onsmellers" in the skunk story. In Hey, a Moose! the true meaning of the word vegetarian is revealed as "a North American Indian word for lousy hunter." There's a lot of common sense philosophy, too. And he can write beautiful prose, as shown in the excerpt from page 140 earlier in this review.

Ingi has also written: Sane Trapper Cooped Up in Remote Cabin with Crazed Wife and Bears and Fine Coffee. This is his 3rd book, published in 2005. All the books are collections of short stories. He is working on a new book which should be ready around December of this year. I'm hoping it has a shorter and more representative title than this one. Not only does the title not reflect the book, it is only marginally related to the individual story which bears its name. Whatever the title turns out to be, I will read it.

If you decide to give his current book a try, it will make you laugh, it will make you think, and you'll enjoy the descriptive passages and the loving references to his family, the sled dogs he used to have, and his north country home.

In a letter enclosed with his last shipment of books to Tergesen's in Gimli, Ingi said he'd like to come south for a public reading of the new book. I would certainly like to meet this man, and it looks like I will have that opportunity. Will I find out who he really is? Nope!

'An affectionate tangle of memoirs, family anecdotes and everyday miracles'
DAILY MAIL

SALLY MAGNUSSON

Dreaming of Iceland

By Sally Magnusson

Reviewed by Elva Simundsson
Published by Hodder & Stoughton, London, UK 2004

The book is written as a travel diary of a trip to Iceland Sally took with her famous father, Magnus Magnusson. Magnus is a household name in Britain for his role in a BBC television show for a quarter century. He is also known in Icelandic-English literary circles as a translator of the sagas and several other pieces of Icelandic work. Magnus, although born in Iceland, has lived in Glasgow from the time he was only eight months old. As happens often within expatriate families, Iceland becomes more than just another country to Icelanders living off the island. It becomes larger than life, not quite matched in the reality of the truth. Sally says that in the stories of her family: "Iceland is more than a homeland – it is a crusade."

Sally grew up in Glasgow in a household steeped in stories of Iceland, her Icelandic heritage and her Icelandic ancestors. In other words, she grew up hearing how wonderful everything that a true son of Iceland had never really lived in Iceland could conjure up in the hearts and minds of his children about his Icelandic roots. The stories of hardship and poverty disappear in the memories of the people telling the stories and only the romanticism and beauty remain.

In the prologue of the book, Sally quotes the Laxness character, Pastor Jón from Christianity Under the Glacier: "It is pleasant to hear the birds chirping. But it would be anything but pleasant if the birds were always chirping the truth." This forewarning reminds the reader to take a careful account of what is relayed from the stories Sally heard in her childhood; stories from her father and all the aunts, uncles and grandparents who were part of her Icelandic family.

The whole book is devoted to Sally's trip with her father to the home sites of her ancestors, in order to – as Sally puts it – "to penetrate my own legends." She interspersses the travelogue with short history lessons and personal insights. For instance, she explains Iceland's incredible literary legacy with two observations. One observation is that the country was so impoverished that there were no other materials to create art other than words. Another observation is that the nature of a people who could create a democracy at the turn of the first millennium was such that their wars were generally fought with words and only with weapons as a last resort. Thus word skills were equal in importance to a person's weapons skills.

Sally and her father discover a land that does not quite match the legends. She laments somewhat that the current generations seem to be too busy making money to dwell too much on their past. But, when they scratch the surface, they find the past

is not lost, but blending well into the current landscape and character of the people. It ends up being a worthwhile journey for Sally. She and her father are content in what they see. She falls in love with her ancestral homeland, even though some of the magical scales have fallen off her eyes.

The book is an interesting read for anyone who is of a generation or two away from their family's ancestral homeland. The mythical land does not exist as such, but as Sally discovers, there is a magic that touches her at a special place where her great grandparent had been born and had lived. This story is reminiscent of so many I have heard from my compatriots who have visited Iceland and had felt a special bond to the landscape. The current nationality is irrelevant – British, American, Canadian – the description of the magic is always the same, a fierce sense of home and an overwhelming feeling of belonging.

Contributors

CONSUL GENERAL ATLI ASMUNDSSON has held that post since January 2004. From 1995 he worked in the Office of the Foreign Minister of Iceland as an Advisor and Press Secretary and before that Consul Asmundsson was invoved in politics in Iceland for 30 years,working for the Progressive Party. Among his responsibilities in the Foreign Ministry was overseeing the strengthening of the ties with people of Icelandic descent in North America and he had visited Manitoba several times before being posted here. His wife Thrudur Helgadottir is very active in the different activities of the Consulate.

C. LESLEY BIGGS teaches in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. Her research interests include studies of the body, the history of midwifery in Canada, and alternative healers, particularly chiropractors.

NELSON GERRARD of Eyrarbakki, near Hnausa on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg, now works full time as a writer, historical researcher, and genealogist specializing in Icelandic immigration to North America. His current projects include Silent Flashes: 1870-1910, a book on photography among the Icelandic settlers in Canada and the United States, and Gimlunga Saga I-III, a three-volume history of the pioneers of the Gimli area. He has also spent several summers assisting at the Icelandic Emigration visitor centre at Hofsos in Northern Iceland.

NORMA GUTTORMSSON is the daughter of the late Dr. Pétur Guttormsson and Hérdis Sálin Reykdal. She has a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree and a Master of Education. In April 1991, she went to Inuvik for a year and nursed at the Inuvik, NWT Regional General Hospital. Norma lives in North Vancouver, BC where she is currently teaching English as a Second Language. She has four children and four grandchildren.

GAIL HALLDORSON is a retired high school librarian who lives in Sandy Hook, Manitoba

ELVA SIMUNDSSON holds a graduate degree in library science from the University of British Columbia and is retired from a career as a research librarian with the Government of Canada. She currently resides in Gimli, Manitoba.

STELLA STEPHANSON, along with her husband, Eric Stephanson (now deceased), has had a long-standing interest in the history of Icelanders and other settler communities in Saskatchewan. With her husband, Mrs. Stephanson is a co-founder of the Vatnabyggd Icelandic Club of Saskatchewan. She is the mother of five children and six grandchildren.

GUNNAR THORVALDSON was raised in Oak Point, MB. In 1961 he was transferred to Edmonton, AB. There he attended a meeting of the INL and was elected President of their chapter and has remained active. He has travelled extensively and also had the pleasure of spending an entire year in Iceland (1987).

SARA WESELAKE is a fourth year genetics honours student at the University of Manitoba. Her great grandparents Páll and Susanna Gudmundsson emigrated from Akureyri, Iceland to north of Gimli, Manitoba in 1913. She wrote this paper for a course at the University of Manitoba, taught by Dr. Birna Bjarnadóttir called Contemporary Canadian Icelandic Literature.

The back page

Snowy scene at Arnes Memorial Park: A Tribute to Vilhjalmur Stefansson