



NORÐURLJÓS

Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton

WINTER-SPRING 2023

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President's Message

Dear members,

Winter is slowly turning to spring as the days get longer. We have made the turn from the winter month of Þorri to the month of Góa in the old Norse calendar. In this month's newsletter, we look ahead to spring and to celebrating the lengthening days with a return to our Thorrablót dinner, which we have not been able to hold since 2020.



We are excited to be offering this very traditional event again, and are hoping that lots of members will join us for this commemoration of our Icelandic heritage and the ingenuity of our forefathers (and foremothers!). You will see lots of historical background on Thorrablót in this newsletter and a sneak preview of our event.

We also have some information on vacant positions on the club's board. Please do consider if you have some time to give to the organization. As with so many organizations, nothing happens without volunteers, and our efforts are well rewarded when we see the good things we can make happen as we celebrate our heritage and keep in touch with our roots.

See you at Thorrablót!

Sæl og blessuð!

Allison Boychuk

Þorrablót

**Saturday, March 18th
Dutch Canadian Centre
International Room**

Activities:

5 p.m.: Icelandic appetizers and cash bar

6 p.m. Welcome and introductions

The Toast to Þorri

Greetings from the Honorary Consul and from the
Ambassador

6:30 p.m. Buffet dinner.
Door prizes!

Presentations:

Natalie Guttormsson, host of The Folklore Forum podcast

Megan Veldhuis, 2022 Snorri Program

2021 and 2022 Fjallkonas

TICKETS: <https://iccedm.org/events/>

OR

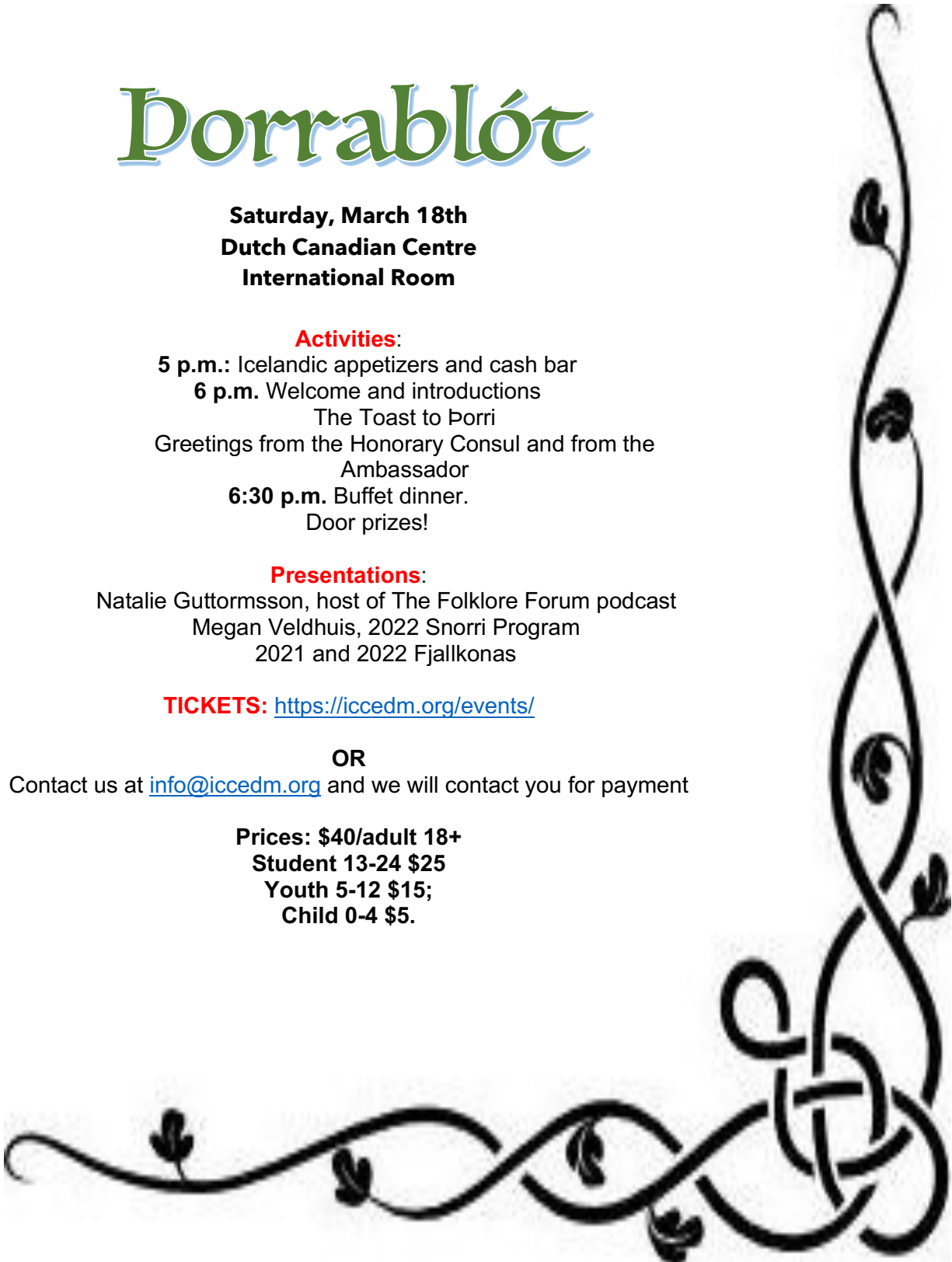
Contact us at info@iccedm.org and we will contact you for payment

Prices: \$40/adult 18+

Student 13-24 \$25

Youth 5-12 \$15;

Child 0-4 \$5.



Mark Your Calendars

Thorablót

International Room
Saturday, March 18, 2023

Sumardagurinn Fyrsti

First Day of Icelandic Summer
April 20

INLNA 2023 Convention

May 11-13
Banff, Alberta

Icelandic National Day

Saturday, June 17

ICCE Board Meetings

7:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday
No meetings: July, August, December

Board meeting dates:

April 11, 2023
May 9, 2023
June 13, 2023

Meetings are open to members and held
by Zoom videoconference. To attend,
email info@iccedm.org and we will send
you an invitation.

* Call Gloria to attend by phone. *

To purchase Thorablót tickets:

Tickets for Thorablót are available in two ways:

Pay in advance with through the website, at
<https://iccedm.org/events/>

OR

RSVP to us by email (info@iccedm.org) and we
will get in touch to arrange payment by phone
or in another way.

INLNA 2023 National Convention and Snorri Alumni Sponsorship

This year's Icelandic National League of North America's convention will be held from May 11-13 in Banff at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. It is hosted by the Leifur Eiríksson Icelandic Club of Calgary. The organizers have assembled a stellar line-up of speakers on literature, history, the arts and creativity. For more information and to register, go to <https://inlofna.org/convention>.

We are also offering an exciting opportunity for Snorri alumni! The club will sponsor one Snorri to attend the INLNA convention in Banff. All Snorri alumni supported by The Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton are eligible to apply. Please contact ICCE or check the club's Facebook page for a link to the application form. Deadline to apply is March 10th, 2022.

Sumardagurinn fyrsti

Icelanders will welcome the first day of summer in 2023 on April 20th. Sumardagurinn fyrsti is a national holiday celebrated on the first Thursday after the 18th of April. This day marks the start of the first summer month (Harpa) of the old Icelandic calendar.

The Old Icelandic Calendar

The Old Icelandic Calendar was used as the civil calendar in Iceland for 800 years, from the 10th century to the 18th. It has a year of 364 days or 52 weeks, with 12 months of 30 days each. And while it has been upstaged by our modern calendar, in fact it is still in use, in that many of Iceland's holidays and annual celebrations are calculated from it.

As it is exactly 52 weeks, extra days must be added to keep up with the solar year. Four extra days (*aukanætur*, extra nights) are added between the third and fourth months of summer, and in some years a full "leap" week (*sumarauki*) is added in order to catch up. Thus every year is a whole number of weeks, and so every year and every month always start on the same day of the week. Thorri starts on a Friday, and Harpa, the first summer month, will start on a Thursday, so that the first day of summer is always on a Thursday.

The 12 months are broken down into two groups of six: the winter months, called Skammdegi (short days) and the summer months, called Náttleysi (nightless days). Depression during the short days of the six months of winter is reflected in the concept of *skammdegispunglyndi*. Thus the old calendar only considers the seasons of winter and summer.

Thorrablót is usually held during the month of Thorri. Thorrablót itself has no assigned date: for example, our 2023 Thorrablót will be held during the month of Góa, which follows Thorri. Perhaps we can take this liberty given our longer winter in Canada! It is now the month of Góa and the next month will be Harpa: the first month of summer.



Icelanders watch for the return of the Heiðlóa as it brings the promise of spring.



LÖGBERG
HEIMSKRINGLA
The Icelandic Community Newspaper • Since 1886

Lögberg-Heimskringla: our Icelandic-Canadian newspaper

As most members know, the Alberta Gaming Commission has ruled that ICCE may not purchase Lögberg-Heimskringla subscriptions for members from casino funds. As a result, members now need to purchase their own subscriptions. You can stay connected with the national Icelandic community by renewing at lh-inc.ca, by phoning 204-284-5686, or by writing to 835 Marion Street, Winnipeg, MB, R2J 0K6.

Special Days

In addition to *Sumardagurinn fyrsti*, some other first days of months also have special meanings. The first days of the months of Thorri and Góa are commemorated much as we do Valentine's Day. The first day of Thorri is *Bóndadagur*, or Men's Day, and men are meant to be treated extra well on this day, and perhaps given hangikjöt for dinner. The first day of Thorri is *Konudagur*, or Women's Day, and on this day women may expect flowers, a small gift, or dinner out. If you missed these days this year, it's never too late and never a bad time to go ahead anyway and celebrate the significant other in your life.

Layered on the pre-Christian traditions are preparations for Lent. *Bolludagur* is on the Monday before the start of Lent – and that's Bun Day! Cream and jam filled *bollur* are served up, often topped with chocolate. The day after Bun Day, Tuesday, is *Sprengidagur* – Bursting Day. Salted meat is served with vegetables and split pea soup and you are expected to load up. Finally, *Öskudagur* – Ashes Day – is Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Children may try to pin little bags of ashes to the adults in their lives. This custom emigrated to the Icelandic settlements in Manitoba as well.

THE TRADITION OF THORRABLOT (ÞORRABLÓT)

Þorrablót is an Icelandic midwinter festival, named for the month of *Þorri* of the historical Icelandic calendar (January 20 – February 19, 2023).

The ancient month of Thorri is the time for Thorrablót, or Thorri feast. Traditional foods, preserved in the traditional manner, are consumed and most Icelanders attend at least one Thorrablót feast, where there is much merriment and drink. The first known celebration is said to have been organized by students in Copenhagen in 1873 as an expression of Icelandic nationalism.

Þorrablót gained wide publicity starting in 1958, when a Reykjavík restaurant, called *Naustið*, began offering a platter of foods that were once common in the Icelandic countryside, but had become rare. The restaurant advertised this platter as *Þorramatur*. The serving of *Þorramatur* as a tribute to the old culture has become a defining feature of *Þorrablót*.

Our ancestors had limited means of preserving food through the winters in medieval times. Salt was not easily produced in Iceland and was expensive to import. As Icelanders kept dairy animals, meat was pickled in fermented whey – lactic acid. This leads to strong and unique flavours that are now rare but are celebrated at Þorrablót.

The word *blót* means a feast held in honor of a god in the old Norse religion. Today Icelanders everywhere enjoy *Þorrablót* and toast Þorri as

they celebrate the culinary ingenuity of our forefathers and foremothers.

Þorramatur

Hákarl, fermented shark.

Hrútspungar, the testicles of rams pressed in blocks, boiled and cured in lactic acid.

Svið, singed and boiled sheep heads, sometimes cured in lactic acid.

Sviðasulta, head cheese or brawn made from svið, sometimes cured in lactic acid.

Lifrarpylsa (liver sausage), a pudding made from liver and suet of sheep kneaded with rye flour and oats.

Blóðmör (blood-suet; also known as *slátur* lit. 'slaughter'), a type of blood pudding made from lamb's blood and suet kneaded with rye flour

Harðfiskur, -dried fish (often cod, haddock or sea wolf), served with butter.

Rúgbrauð (rye bread), traditional Icelandic rye bread.

Hangikjöt, (hung meat), smoked and boiled lamb or mutton, sometimes also eaten raw.

Selshreifar, seal's flippers cured in lactic acid.

Hvalur, whale blubber pickled in sour milk.

Rófustappa, mashed turnips



Þór: Possible Canadian immigrant to Iceland?

The Eastfjords town of Breiðdalsvík had an unexpected, rather grumpy, visitor, a walrus nicknamed Þór. He had a short rest after having swum from the UK, a distance of 1360 kms. Last year he was in the Netherlands and Dieppe in France, and is thought to have originally come from the Canadian Arctic. He has resumed his journey and is expected to be heading north.

Preparing for Þorablót

Most Þorramatur is difficult, if not impossible, to find in Canada. So ICCE's traditional Thorrablót foods are provided the traditional way: someone makes them! Thanks to club members who bake Icelandic brown bread, and make rullupýlsa, vinarterta, pönnukökkur, and skýr! Donna Crozier led a work bee to make rullupýlsa and tells us here how it is made.

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, Icelandic Canadian Club of Edmonton members were once again able to gather and make our much-loved rullupýlsa ahead of Þorablót. There were many tears, (which I suspect were from the thirty-some cups of onions), and lots of hugs, as we gathered to make a record thirty-one rullupýlsur. The kitchen at the Dutch Canadian Club was humming with laughter, chatter and ... orchestra music. It seems an orchestra "practices" on the morning we chose to run our workshop. So, with something that might have been Beethoven playing in the background, we chatted, laughed, and worked.

We started with fresh lamb flanks from Hanks Farm Fresh Lamb, which had been delivered the day before from their farm four hours north of Edmonton, Alberta. Participants chose their flanks and got right to work. Flanks were spread out, then membrane and fat were removed, as per each person's preference. (Note: the fat can be saved and made into great suet for the birds.) I had prepared the spice mix ahead of time (one bag for two flanks) and cut the elastic netting into 15-inch lengths.

Club members came with bags of chopped onions. We also had several 680 ml cans that

had been cleaned and inspected to insure there were no sharp pieces sticking out. Once the flanks were stripped of fat and membranes, spices were sprinkled over them and carefully rubbed in. Next, the onions were liberally applied. The flanks are then rolled up – lengthwise or widthwise, as each one preferred.

Now the tricky part – getting the flanks into the mesh. One of our very clever members had previously discovered that you stretch the elastic mesh over the can, being sure to tie one end, slide the flank into the can and push it through. As you push the flank, it comes out the other end covered in mesh! Tie the loose end and you have completed the most difficult part of making rullupýlsa. The

next step is to cure the rullupýlsa, which is done at home. Place your rullupýlsa in the fridge with a weight on top and turn it once daily for 5 to 7 days. I made a rullupýlsa press last year and find it does a great job.

Rullupýlsa is usually served, thinly sliced, on Icelandic brown bread with butter.

- Contributed by Donna Crozier



Rullupýlsa crew from Thorrablót 2020



Donna Crozier, Lorraine Ilnicki and a perfect rullupýlsa!

Special Thorrablót presentation: Natalie Guttormsson and the Folklore Forum



Escape into the magical realm of folklore and fairytales.

We are delighted to introduce our guest speaker for Thorrablót. Author and podcast host Natalie Guttormsson will be at Thorrablót on March 18th will talk to us about her writing, podcast and website, called *The Folklore Forum*.

Iceland's folklore is arguably equally as rich as its literary history, with hundreds of years of folk tales and stories for nearly every farm and landscape feature. Natalie is fascinated by folklore and finding the common threads between cultures throughout history. Her exploration of her heritage - a Canadian blend of Icelandic, Scottish, English, and German - led her to notice the similarities between her ancestors' culture and lore. After several conversations about stories with friends from other parts of the world, the idea to start *The Folklore Forum* podcast began to take shape and she now hosts [The Folklore Forum podcast](#). Episodes feature discussions of folktales, conversations with story lovers, and interviews with authors, researchers, scholars, and everyone in between.

Natalie is related to the poet Guttormur J. Guttormsson: her great-great grandfather, Vigfús, was Guttormur's older brother. She participated in the Snorri Program in 2014 and was the first Canadian Snorri Alumni to be an intern at the museum in Hofsós, in the summer of 2015. She lived in Reykjavík for two years (2019-2021) while her husband started his Masters in Medieval Icelandic Studies (he's nearly finished!).

Natalie currently sits on the Board of Directors for the INLNA as the Membership Director. She was born and grew up in the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia and currently lives in Camrose. She is an author, copywriter, and mom, and is writing her first novel.



*You can easily see
how Iceland's
otherworldly
landscape could
inspire legends and
tales of other, non-
human, beings.*



Natalie has created a web link expressly for our Thorrablót event, to her podcasts with specifically Icelandic content. To listen, go to <https://www.folkloreforum.org/edmonton-thorrablot>. And enjoy! We look forward to hearing more from Natalie about this fascinating work.

Thorablót Presentation: Snorri



The Snorri Program is a unique summer program in Iceland for Canadians and Americans of Icelandic descent between the ages of 20 and 30. Successful applicants to the program apply to ICCE for sponsorship. Each year we sponsor one or two Snorri program participants.

Our 2022 participants, Megan and Sydney Veldhuis, who are cousins, teamed up to prepare a presentation on their experience. Megan will show their presentation at Thorablót. We are looking forward to a great vicarious experience and a good intro to the Snorri program.

Do you have some time to give to the Icelandic Canadian Club?

The aims of ICCE are to promote and celebrate Icelandic heritage and connections with Iceland. We offer four events a year, sponsor people to attend Snorri and Snorri Plus in Iceland, and take opportunities to present our Icelandic heritage. We uphold the Icelandic values of education and literacy, by providing bursaries each year to post-secondary students. We have three vacant board positions. We would warmly welcome new directors in these positions! If you are an “Icelandophile” like the rest of the board, you will enjoy this chance to learn more about Iceland’s unique contributions to the world in like-minded company. Duties include attending nine board meetings per year, held over Zoom.

Descriptions of these roles are as follows. Contact us at info@iccedm.org if you have questions or are intrigued by this opportunity!

Position	Description	Notes	Approx time commitment
Casino Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Manages club’s participation in casinos, a key fundraising activity. Funds earned by volunteering at casinos enable us to deliver our main cultural programs such as Snorri and the bursary programs, and many aspects of our events as well.	We apply to the Alberta Gaming Commission for casino opportunities and then must abide by AGLC’s regulations for the expenditure of casino funds.	We normally have a casino every other year and activity is quiet between casinos.
Social Events Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Works with the board to coordinate annual events, typically by working with a committee that shares the tasks.	This is a busy position and the board is considering different ways to split this role up. If this role is of interest to you in whole or in part, please let us know of your interest.	Four events per year
Edmonton Scandinavian Centre Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Represents the club on the board of ESCA, the group of Scandinavian clubs which use the Dutch Canadian Centre.	Attends ESCA meetings, becomes familiar with policies and insurance of using the DCC.	ESCA meetings