

Icelandic Memorial Society Newsletter

FALL 2025

'Where oh where' has our beautiful summer gone? Hopefully into our beautiful autumn. This has been a different and challenging summer with the drought, fires, and heat but at the same time some absolutely perfect summer weather.

It is hard to believe that it has been 27 years since the Icelandic Society of Nova Scotia was founded. Here is an excerpt from some of Glenda's previous research. It was on a sunny afternoon in July of 1998, a small group of people, Marshall Burgess, Dave Dwyer, Harley and Bev Redden and Glenda met at Dolly's house in Caribou Gold Mines where Dolly was living. Marshall has done extensive research on the Icelanders of Nova Scotia. Marshall is of Icelandic descent through the Huskilson family in Lockport. Dolly who was in her 80s at the time recalled her young days as a teacher in nearby Caribou in the 30's, taking her students to Markland to see the fallen remains of the old Icelandic cabins. Her curiosity continued as years went by. She wondered who these people were, where did they go, why did they all leave and why did not anybody know anything about them? Dolly was determined to find out. It would be 60 years later that she began to uncover the mystery of Markland.

Today at Markland one will find a memorial cairn at the entrance with a large map of the settlement, brochures, guest book and a new gazebo with interpretative signs. Along the Fairbanks Lake Road through the settlement, the family lots are marked with names in Icelandic and English, many with interpretative signs. On lot 3, the log cabin replica commemorates the first Icelandic child born in Markland in the fall of 1875.

This 2025 version of the Newsletter will be very different this year without Glenda's input and oversight. I am sure she is watching and hopefully we can somewhat fill her shoes.

Our newsletter this year will contain some communication letters between the Society and Hofsos. There will also be a report from the

membership chair, the treasurer's report, summary of the Spring annual meeting, the annual walk and various other topics.

The 2025 annual general meeting held at the Legion In Upper Musquodoboit covered many interesting topics. The Society was honored to have Dr. Marcos Zentilli as our guest speaker. He gave a very interesting talk about his work in Iceland and a history of the many volcanic eruptions. Many of these eruptions continue to this very day. The eruptions were one of the many reasons Icelanders left in the 1870s and afterwards. One explanation for the eruptions is the fact that the North American plate and the European plate separate in Iceland. The two plates separate about 4 centimeters each year and can be seen just outside Reykjavik. These eruptions and other factors led to about 30 families moving from Iceland to Markland around 1875. The Nova Scotia government provided log cabins and provisions for a year. As Dr. Zentilli pointed out the soil was not conducive to farming and the Icelanders struggled to raise any kind of crops. The finding of gold in the Markland area did provide employment for the settlers but by 1881 and 1882 that was ended and most moved on to Gimli and North Dakota. Dr. Zentilli was very enlightening and interesting. We were delighted to have this internationally renowned speaker present his story.

Elections were held and Marcy Tilford, Glenda's daughter, and Ken Burrows were elected as co-chairs of the Society. Marshall stayed on as Vice-president- secretary, and Bonnie reoffered as treasurer and membership chair. We have two members at large, Wayne Scott and Julie Battist.

Marshall has contributed the following story about the Lockeport settlement. Nine Icelandic families moved to Lockport, Nova Scotia, in the 1870s. They settled in East Green Harbour which is located near the town of Lockport. The government purchased several homes for the immigrants. Marshall's great grandfather, Erlendur Huskilson, lived there with his wife and three children. Erlendur worked as a carpenter for the Lockeport families who were merchants in the community. He built houses and caskets. The Huskilson family have been in the undertaking

business for five generations. The Icelandic Society has erected a monument in the town of Lockeport to remember these families. At East Green Harbour there is an historical sign listing the names of the Icelandic families who lived there. Marshall maintains the property at the site of which we are grateful.

Our membership continues to grow. We have presently 87 members and thank you to our members for their continuing support. Included in this newsletter is a membership form. Please renew your membership and encourage friends and family to join our worthwhile society. A special thanks goes out to all our Board members for the contribution they make to the Society. Bev and Harley Redden go above and beyond for providing the care and upkeep of our Cairn and log cabin each year.

On a sad note we have lost one of our valued members. Birgitta Wallace Ferguson was born on May 1, 1934 and passed on May 20, 2025. Birgitta was a dedicated researcher and life-long educator. She was a pioneer in the Swedish-Canadian field of archaeology and conducted groundbreaking work in Norse archaeology. One of Birgitta's passion was unraveling the story of the Norse at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland. Her research proved that L'Anse aux Meadows was the site of Leif Eriksson's base in Vinland in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In addition to her many significant contributions to archaeology she was also a member of our Icelandic society. She gave us interesting and informative stories of her adventures and her research. She will be missed.

This newsletter also contains two communications between our executives and members, also communication to the Immigration Centre in Hofsos. Our Society continues to acknowledge the important work of the Immigration Centre by exchanging information and announcements of events in Nova Scotia. In turn, they promote the Nova Scotia experience at their museum. Here are the two letters.

July 29, 2025

Dear Valgeir and Gistihusid,

Hope you are all well and the museum continues to be well attended. It was a pleasure for my daughter, Marcy (Co-Chair), Bonnie (treasurer), Marcy's husband (Scott) and myself, Ken, Co-Chair) to meet some of your fine staff. David was very inspirational as were the two young ladies on the desk. Of course, the discussion with Valgeir and Gona was our highlight. We were very happy to have your insight and enlightenment of the wonderful work the museum is doing.

Kindly accept our gift which contains articles of information pertaining to the Icelandic settlers in Nova Scotia. We hope you have a chance to play the thumb drive which contains a wealth of information. You are welcome to copy it and any literature we send as you wish.

It is our hope that you can set up a Nova Scotia display area and showcase this information. We think there would be many visitors to the museum that would have a genuine interest in the Nova Scotia immigration experience. We can send additional copies if you should need them. It is our desire that someday you can come to Nova Scotia and see firsthand all we have done to commemorate the Icelandic settlers. Our society, the Icelandic Memorial Society of Nova Scotia, is active and well supported here in Nova Scotia. We endeavor to continue with the society's purpose of ensuring these courageous and hearty souls will not be forgotten. Their story will live on through our work.

Wishing you all the very best in health and happiness,

Ken Burrows, Co-Chair

July 29, 2025

To : Icelandic Society members

Dear member,

Sending everyone a summer update of recent activities of the Society. In early July my daughter Marcy (co-chair), and her husband Scott, Bonnie our

treasurer and myself went to Iceland. One of the goals of our trip was to visit the museum in Hofso. We were fortunate enough to meet with the founders, Valgeir and his wife Gona. We had excellent talks with them regarding the Nova Scotia immigration experience. We informed them of our endeavors by the society in keeping the stories of the immigration to Nova Scotia and their settlement alive. I think they have a renewed appreciation for our commitment to this worthy goal.

Recently we sent the museum an information package. The package contained pamphlets of Markland and the building of the log cabin, a thumb drive which contained these stories, an Icelandic book pertaining to Nova Scotia and a picture of our new gazebo with the monument in the background. In the parcel we expressed a desire that these items be put on a Nova Scotia display area. I think they will gladly comply.

Visiting Iceland is a bucket-list experience. We flew into Keflavik and drove to Hofso, where the museum is located. The scenery was amazing. There are snow capped volcanic mountains and wide green valleys. There are sheep and horses grazing everywhere on the abundant grass. The villages and towns are tidy and neat with no litter on any of the roadways. The people are very kind; there is no language barrier and the accommodations are excellent. After meeting and talking with some of the Icelanders one can see where their independence and determination comes from. They are a proud people with a resilient culture.

If any of our members are considering traveling to Iceland you can contact us for some travel tips. Our society is growing and we endeavor to continue to do so. If you have any friends who may be interested in our society, ask them to join. Markland is now in the history books thanks to Dolly, Glenda and the other founding members. It is our mission to keep the stories of these courageous settlers in Nova Scotia alive. We will be sending more information to our members in the fall. If anyone has any questions or comments, please contact us. I hope everyone is enjoying our nice but brief summer.

All the very best.

Ken (Co-chair)

Hope everyone enjoys are Fall newsletter. Wishing all our members a nice Fall and winter and looking forward to meeting again in the New Year. If any member has Icelandic news please get it to our executive and we will send it out. All the very best in health and happiness.

Ken and Marcy, Co-Chairs

Log Cabin at Markland





Gazebo and Cairn - Markland

Birgitta Wallace Ferguson
May 1, 1934 - May 20, 2025



INTERNATIONAL TRAILS DAY WALK
7 JUNE 2025 - 10 A.M.

The Icelandic Memorial Society of Nova Scotia invites you to join us for our annual walk through Markland. Come and discover the spirit of the hardy Icelandic pioneers who made Markland their home from 1875 -1882

Pack your lunch and meet at 10 a.m. at the Markland Cairn for the 8 km hike through the old settlement to Lot 23 where we will enjoy a social time. Drives will be provided for those wishing to walk only a short distance. For more information contact Julie at iamjib2@gmail.com