



Nordic News

240 Sparks Street, PO Box 55023, Ottawa, ON K1P 1A1

Our Shared Stories

by Hilde Huus

Her Excellency Mona Elisabeth Brøther, Norway's ambassador to Canada, has completed her tenure and returned to Norway to enjoy a well-earned retirement. The CNS has benefitted greatly from her support and assistance during her stay. The CNS Council wished to express our appreciation to her, so we invited Ambassador Brøther and her husband, Åsmund Baklien, to lunch at the Signatures Restaurant on January 5. CNS President Tim Mark, Vice President Bruce Miller, and I attended. The ambassador was full of enthusiasm about Norwegian-Canadian relations and we were greatly impressed by the depth of her knowledge on the subject. Her January article in the *Huff Post* entitled "Norway and Canada: An Important and Long-Standing Relationship" (http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/mona-elisabeth-brother/norway-canada-economic-relationship_b_8982868.html) is an eye-opener about the extent of Norway's importance to the Canadian economy. It is well worth a read.

Ambassador Brøther's husband, Åsmund Baklien, is a distinguished marine biologist. In chatting with him, I was delighted to discover that he had spent time doing research at the same marine biology station in Drøbak as had my grandfather, also a marine biologist, many years earlier.

We were privileged to receive from Ambassador Brøther copies of a new booklet published by the Royal Norwegian Embassy. Fresh off the press, it is called "Look North: Maritime History Across the Atlantic Ocean". It contains eight stories about Norway's travels across the Northern Atlantic over the last thousand years, "an important testament to a shared history", as Ambassador Brøther writes in its introduction. The following poem by Norwegian poet Rolf Jacobsen is printed on the inside cover, against a background photo of the northern lights:

North

Look North more often.
Go against the wind,
You will get redder cheeks.
Find the rugged path.
Keep to it. It's shorter.

North is best.
Winter's sky of flames.
Summer nights' sun miracle.
Go against the wind.
Climb mountains.
Look North. More often.
This is a long country.
Most is North.

It was the spirit of hardy adventure articulated in this poem that drove Norwegian men like Roald Amundsen and Supt. Henry A. Larsen to brave the Arctic elements on their quests to navigate through the Northwest Passage. This issue includes a report on the 2015 Roald Amundsen Lectures, which took place in Oslo on December 4th and 5th. Larsen's daughter, Doreen Larsen Riedel, is a CNS member and was invited to lecture at the event - a reminder of the significance that these voyages of exploration still have for us today.

My story in last month's issue about tasting my first lutefisk triggered an important memory for CNS member Eric Järvlepp. A very significant event in his life happened in Finland in early 1945, a few months after he had been badly wounded as a soldier fighting against Russia. It is a heartwarming story, but also a reminder of the sacrifices and hardships that are part of our shared stories too.

Norwegian-born Canadian film director and animator Torill Kove tells a light-hearted story about her family during World War II in her animated film "My Grandmother Ironed the King's Shirts", nominated for an Oscar in 1999. We've posted it on the CNS Facebook page, but you can also view it on the National Film Board's site: https://www.nfb.ca/film/my_grandmother_ironed_the_king_shirts

Our speaker series continues in February when Clifford Savage will speak about Raoul Wallenberg, whose actions to save Jews in Nazi-occupied Hungary still resonate with his fellow Swedes and with all people who continue to fight for justice and human dignity.

Speaker Series

(all take place at the Officers' Mess, 149 Somerset Street West)

Clifford Savage to speak on **The Holocaust in Hungary: Wallenberg in Budapest** on Wednesday, February 17, at 7:30 PM.

Jack Ives to speak on **Climate and Environmental Change in Iceland from Viking times to the present** on Wednesday, March 16, at 7:30 PM.

His Excellency Sturla Sigurjónsson, Ambassador of Iceland to Canada to address the CNS on Wednesday, April 20, at 7:30 PM.



Illustrated lecture and tour of the Viking exhibition for CNS members

The Canadian Museum of History and the Canadian Nordic Society are pleased to present an illustrated lecture by Dr. Karen Ryan, Curator, Northern Canada, Canadian Museum of History, on the current exhibition *Vikings*, followed by an opportunity to visit the exhibition.

The lecture will be given at the Douglas Cardinal Salon at the Canadian Museum of History, 100 Laurier Street, Gatineau, Québec. The cost is \$10 per person. Refreshments will be served. This event is for Canadian Nordic Society members only. Additional information, including how to register, to follow.

Monthly Lunches

Canadian Nordic Society members meet for lunch once a month from September until June at the historic and beautiful Officers' Mess at 149 Somerset Street West (just east of Elgin Street), Ottawa. Lunch tickets are purchased at the bar, on the left as you come in to the building. Please do join us! These are the dates of the lunches for the rest of this season:

- February 1
- March 7
- April 4
- May 2
- June 6

Events of Interest to CNS Members

- **Bright Nights: The 6th Baltic-Nordic Film Festival** runs from February 12 until 21 at Carleton University's River Building Theatre. This year's festival brings eight films — never before seen in Ottawa — from the Baltic and Nordic countries across the Atlantic: Lithuania, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Iceland, and Norway. Tickets are \$9 each for Canadian Film Institute members, students, and seniors, free for Carleton students, and \$13 for everyone else.

This year's event kicks off with a **Launch Party** on February 3rd at Arts Court, when local band Orienteers performs a live soundtrack for a classic Danish silent film. For additional details, including the schedule of films, see the Canadian Film Institute's website (http://www.cfi-icf.ca/index.php?option=com_cfi&task=showevent&id=154&Itemid=1525).

- Finnish a capella ensemble **Rajaton** will perform the hits of **Queen**, including “Bohemian Rhapsody”, “Under Pressure” and “We are the Champions”, with the **NAC Orchestra** on February 25, 26, and 27 at 8:00 PM. To order tickets, go to <http://nac-cna.ca/en/event/11279>.
- Finnish director **Aki Kaurismäki's** 1987 comedy “**Hamlet Goes Business**” will be shown on Sunday, February 28 at 2:00 PM and Monday, February 29 at 8:40 PM at the ByTowne Cinema, 325 Rideau St. Ottawa (Info Line: (613) 789-FILM).

This is part of the Bytowne's Shakespeare 400 series, marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. In the film Hamlet's uncle has murdered his father and married his mother in order to gain control of the family's Finnish paper company, which he intends to use as a vehicle to corner the market in rubber ducks. (Some of Shakespeare's language and plot apparently survives this transposition into modern Finland.)

- The two spring 2016 sessions of Carleton University's Learning in Retirement series will each include a course by history professor and medievalist **Dr. Teva Vidal**, whose recent research focuses on the domestic history of the Viking Age.

His course in the early spring session (Feb. 29 to April 15) is about “**Raiders, Traders, and Explorers: A History of Viking Expansion.**” The late spring session course (April 18 to May 30) is called “**Finding the Kingdom of the Spear-Danes: The History and Archaeology of Beowulf**”. For more information and to register, please see Carleton University's Learning in Retirement web page <http://carleton.ca/linr/registration/>

Report on the Roald Amundsen Memorial Lecture of 2015

Doreen (Larsen) Riedel, a member of the Canadian Nordic Society, was an invited speaker during The Roald Amundsen Memorial Lectures for 2015 which were held 4/5 December at the Fram Museum in Oslo. Included in the program was a formal dinner held on the deck of the *Fram*.

On December 4, the Honorable Alexandra Shackleton, granddaughter of Ernest Shackleton, opened a very detailed and interesting exhibition entitled “Exploring Shackleton”. This exhibition was developed by the staff of the Fram Museum and will eventually be traveling to a number of countries around the world, including Japan. A film, “Frank Hurley’s South”, consisting of a large amount of original footage, was also shown. Four presentations were held on December 5.

Doreen described the alterations the *St Roch* had undergone from the time of launching and during its Arctic career. She also provided little known information about the background of members of the crew who sailed her during the two historic voyages. Doreen is the daughter of the late Norwegian-born, Supt. Henry A Larsen, RCMP FRGS LLD, who in 1940-42 commanded the RCMP Vessel *St Roch* through the Northwest Passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and in 1944 westward from the Atlantic to the Pacific through the more northerly route.

Beau Riffenburgh, a historian, polar author and past editor of the *Polar Record*, spoke about the Nimrod expedition (British Antarctic Expedition) of 1907–09, the first of Shackleton’s three expeditions to the Antarctic. Riffenburgh’s publication entitled “Nimrod, Shackleton’s Forgotten Expedition”, is very well written, and gives a clear picture of Shackleton’s egalitarian character and his persistence in achieving his goals.

Of great interest was a presentation by Per Skarung: The Significance of Petroleum during Amundsen’s and Scott’s South Pole Expeditions. Per is responsible for the ExxonMobil historical Archives in the Nordic countries and has researched the Norwegian petroleum history. His presentation demonstrated the role of the *Fram*’s diesel engine in the development of early ship engines in ocean going vessels, and also reminded us of Amundsen’s extraordinary attention to detail in the planning of his expeditions which contributed to his outstanding successes.

Susan Barr, a historical archeologist, who is currently Senior Advisor on Polar matters at the Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, as well as President of International Arctic Science Committee, gave the audience an informative look at the generally little known Japanese Shirase Expedition to the Antarctic from Japan 1910-12.

The 9 course dinner following the presentations was a recreation of the dinner served at the Norwegian Royal Palace on 20 August 1912 to Roald Amundsen and his men to welcome them home from the South Pole. The re-creation included all the speeches, songs, jokes and merriment of the original occasion.

Eric Järvillepp's Lutfisk Experience

On New Year's eve 1944 I was a patient in a military hospital in Tampere, Finland. I had been severely wounded in June, 1944 on the Karelian Isthmus during the great offensive of the Russian army. It started on June 9th and lasted for 10 days, when they were stopped.

I was invited to a Finnish family to celebrate the arrival of 1945. For over six months, I had not been outside of the hospital. A medical student, Liisa, walked me over half a kilometre to her home. I was exhausted and perspired profusely. Upon arrival I laid down on a sofa.

The festive dinner included lutfisk. It is cod, cut into strips, air dried and preserved in lye or caustic soda (NaOH). That makes it look white. The strips are hard like wood. To prepare them for baking, the strips are soaked in water.

After a year of war-time army food, my stomach could not digest lutfisk, which may have contained traces of lye. So I threw up. This is how I was introduced to my future wife Leena, her parents and siblings. Needless to say, I was never again exposed to lutfisk*.

* Swedish spelling.

Contributions to Nordic News

We appreciate receiving your articles and news to include in the *Nordic News*! Please email them to the editor, Hilde Huus, at hildehuu@gmail.com

www.canadiannordicsociety.com
email: info@canadiannordicsociety.com

<https://www.facebook.com/canadiannordicsociety>



Join the Canadian Nordic Society

You can join online, by mail, or in person.

Online

Click to complete the [membership form](#) . Payment may be made through PayPal.

Note: it is not necessary to have a PayPal account.

In person

You can join in person when you attend one of our luncheons or speaker events. Please speak to any one of our [Council members](#)

By mail

Print and complete the [membership form](#) below, enclose a cheque payable to the Canadian Nordic Society and mail to the address shown on the form.



Canadian Nordic Society

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www.canadiannordicsociety.com

Membership Application/Renewal

(membership year 1 September - 31 August)

Name(s) _____
Mailing address _____
Phone(s) _____
Email _____

Category of membership (check box)

- individual \$30.00
- family \$45.00
- student \$20.00

You will receive a receipt for your payment.