



Nordic News

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Nordic Reading Habits

(by Hilde Huus)

One of the initiatives of CNS Council this year was to set up our own Facebook page. My brother Jan (the “techie”) and I sat down together last fall to set it up and start posting events and articles. Gradually, more and more people started viewing and “liking” our page and the items we posted - not only CNS members, but people from across Canada, the USA, the Nordic countries, and scattered here and there around the world.

If you are not on Facebook yourself, you can still access the Canadian Nordic Society Facebook page by typing “Canadian Nordic Society - Facebook” in your search engine. (Please note that all CNS announcements continue to be sent to members and subscribers through our CNS-announce email distribution list.)

A recent article we posted quoted a study that ranked 60 countries based on their “trends in literate behaviour and literacy” https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/03/08/most-literate-nation-in-the-world-not-the-u-s-new-ranking-says/?postshare=2541457508439551&tid=ss_tw-bottom. The country that came out on top was Finland, followed by Norway, Iceland, Sweden, and Denmark. I have heard similar claims about high literacy rates in the Nordic countries in the past and wondered why this would be so. Does it have to do with the historic isolation of many inhabitants in mountainous areas and on small islands? Is it the long, dark winters? The introspective nature of the Nordic character? Or maybe it’s the strong influence of Lutheranism? In the past in Norway, and presumably in the other Nordic countries as well, the state religion required that a person be confirmed in the Church before they could get married or buy land. In order to be confirmed, you had to be able to read.

When Norwegians go to their cabins in the mountains or by the sea over the Easter holiday, it has become a custom to bring along a good juicy crime novel, as we learned in this article: <http://www.visitnorway.com/media/news-from-norway/this-norwegian-easter-tradition-is-a-head-scratcher-for-foreigners/>. But it is not only Norwegians who enjoy Nordic crime novels. They have become very popular all over the world. A BBC article on “Nordic Noir” suggests that their popularity has to do with the mix of social commentary and the beauty of the landscape setting, and

that readers everywhere appreciate the steady unfolding of the plot that is typical of their style (<http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-36106213>).

An article on why Icelanders are among the happiest people in the world suggested that their love of reading might actually contribute to their high contentment levels: <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20160509-the-truth-about-icelandic-happiness?ocid=ww.social.link.facebook>

So besides crime novels, what do Nordic types like to read about, and what does it say about us? I decided to take on a little investigation of my own. I had a look at the CNS Facebook page statistics and ranked the most popular articles. Here are the five articles we've posted on the CNS Facebook that have attracted the most interest to date, in reverse order:

5. "New Evidence of Viking Life in America?" (<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35935725?SThisFB>). The discovery of what appears to be a new Viking site on the southwest corner of Newfoundland excited the interest of many of our Facebook followers. The adventurous lives of the Vikings still calls to Nordic enthusiasts - their hardiness and the romantic idea of setting sail for unknown territories, with all the risks such voyages entailed.

4. "The Icelandic Settlement Disaster in Kinmount, Ontario". Peter Macnaughton's article and photos about this little-known chapter in Icelandic Canadian history, posted on November 27, 2015, drew lots of attention. It tells of 352 Icelanders who, exhausted and weakened by illness, arrived at the immigration sheds in Toronto in 1874 and tried to settle in Kinmount, Ontario. After an extremely tough winter in which about 25 people died, many of the settlers moved on in search of a better life. Such stories of Nordic pioneers in Canada persevering through extreme hardship understandably resonate with us.

3. "The Race to a Norwegian Castle Fortress to Stop a Nazi Atomic Bomb" (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/04/30/the-race-to-a-norwegian-castle-fortress-to-stop-a-nazi-atomic-bomb.html?via=desktop&source=facebook>). Here we have the classic story of nine patriots risking their lives to sabotage the only plant in the world, at the time, that made heavy water, with the survival of whole countries hanging in the balance.

"And they were committed, no matter the price, which would likely include their own lives. From the start, they had known that the odds of their survival were long. They might get inside the plant and complete their mission, but getting out and away would be another story. If necessary, they would try to fight their way out, but escape was unlikely. Resolved not to be captured alive, each of them carried a cyanide pill encased in rubber, stashed in a lapel or waistband."

Who can resist such a gripping story of idealism, determination, and self sacrifice?

2. The second most popular article is from *Business Insider*. A Finn who has been living in the USA for seven years explains "What People Don't Understand About the Nordic Countries" ([http://www.businessinsider.com/what-americans-dont-understand-about-nordic-](http://www.businessinsider.com/what-americans-dont-understand-about-nordic)

countries-2016-3). It is not that the Nordics are more altruistic than the rest of the world, he argues. “Rather, Nordic people have made their decisions out of self-interest. Nordic nations offer their citizens—all of their citizens, but especially the middle class—high-quality services that save people a lot of money, time, and trouble. This is what Americans fail to understand: my taxes in Finland were used to pay for top-notch services for *me*.”

So after all these serious articles about adventure, perseverance, determination, self-sacrifice and political philosophy, which article, you may be wondering, attracted the most interest from our Facebook followers? What single subject really gets to the heart of the Nordic ideal? The article that got the most interest was about... wait for it...

1. Swedish “fika” - the Swedish custom of taking a daily break for coffee and pastry - “Is this the Sweet Secret to Swedish Success? (<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20160112-in-sweden-you-have-to-stop-work-to-chat?ocid=ww.social.link.facebook>).

I guess when all is said and done, the way to a Nordic heart really is through the stomach!



A Gripping Adventure Story by Jack Ives

A few years ago, Jack Ives sat down to write the story of his first sea voyage as a boy in 1946. It was published in the *Grimby Telegraph* in 17 parts in 2006. We know that many of our members will find the story just as interesting and well-written as we did, so we've posted it to the CNS website for all to enjoy. A perfect read for a warm day at the cottage, in the park, or in your backyard! Here is the link: <http://canadiannordicsociety.com/Jack-Ives-story.pdf>

Events of Interest in June

- **Jenny Lind concert - Luskville:** A "Jenny Lind" concert will be held on Sunday, June 5, at 5:00 PM at 440 Cregheur Road, Luskville, Québec (20 minutes from Ottawa.) Festival Pontiac Enchanté has been collaborating with the Swedish Embassy in Ottawa to host the winners of the Jenny Lind Scholarship. The Scholarship is awarded every year by the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in Stockholm to a female singer and a pianist, and is named after the famous Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (nicknamed 'the Swedish Nightingale'), who toured North America in 1850-51.

This year's scholars are Karin Osbeck, soprano and Matilda Lindholm, piano. For ticket information and to purchase online, go to www.venturinghills.ca. Tickets can also be purchased at the door.

- **Juhannus Mid-summer Celebration:** The Canadian Friends of Finland will host a Juhannus celebration on Friday, June 24, at 7:00 PM at Billings Estate, 2100 Cabot Street, Ottawa. Watch for further details via CNS-announce.

Kubb On!

Kubb is a lawn game that is thought to have been around since the time of the Vikings. (Hmmm - did the Vikings have lawns???) It is still played quite a bit in the Nordic countries. The Kubb world championships are held every year in Gotland, Sweden. Kubb Canada would like to get more people playing it here in Canada and they have created a website: kubbcanada.com, that explains how the game is played. According to Kubb Canada co-founder Shane Hultquist, all skill levels can play quite easily.

This year marks the 3rd Annual Canadian National Kubb Championship, and it will be hosted in Ottawa on Saturday, June 4, starting at 10:00 AM in Strathcona Park, off Laurier Street, Ottawa. They are also hoping to hold a separate event this fall to celebrate Leif Eriksson Day (Sunday, October 9). Why not check out kubbcanada.com to find out when and where they will be playing next, then go out and give it a try!

His Excellency Sturla Sigurjónsson Addresses CNS

(by Tim Mark)

On April 20, His Excellency Sturla Sigurjónsson, Ambassador of Iceland to Canada, addressed a large and appreciative CNS audience on “Mutual Interests in the North: Iceland in Canada and the 21st Century”.

Born and educated in Reykjavik, the Ambassador has had a varied and distinguished diplomatic career, including postings to the United States and to Brussels (NATO and the European Union). He has served as Iceland’s Ambassador to Canada for the past fourteen months.

Mr. Sigurjónsson presented a general overview of Iceland’s relations with Canada, dating back to the Vinland sagas and the evidence for Norse settlement at L’Anse-aux-Meadows at the tip of the northern peninsula of Newfoundland. The hostility of the “Skraelings” (the native inhabitants) and the following Little Ice Age amongst other reasons, meant that there was no continuous long term Norse occupation (although there is evidence for trade and exploration into medieval times). Indeed it has apparently been discovered that some Icelanders have genes from North American indigenous people.

In 1875 volcanic eruptions plus the search for a better life led to a mass emigration to North America over thirty years, much of it to Manitoba where the New Iceland colony was established. There remains a strong Icelandic community which celebrates *Islendingadagurinn* (‘Icelandic Days’) every year.

During the Second World War the British Army occupied Iceland (including troops from the Royal Regiment of Canada); in July 1941 they were relieved by American soldiers. Iceland played a crucial role in the Battle of the Atlantic. It gained its independence from Denmark in 1944.

Nowadays Canada and Iceland share many political, defence and cultural ties, and work together in such forums as the United Nations, NATO, and the Arctic Council. The two countries share common interests in maritime issues, and especially over matters such as Arctic sovereignty and the exploitation of Arctic resources. There is steadily increasing trade with Canada, notably in seafood and its associated technology, such as seafood processing. Tourism is strong and is increasing rapidly.

Following a lively questions and answer period the Ambassador was presented with the unique CNS mug by the CNS President, Tim Mark and he and Mme Elín Jónsdóttir remained to socialize with the audience.



His Excellency Sturla Sigurjónsson, right, pictured with Tim Mark, President of the Canadian Nordic Society (photo Ulle Baum, Ottawa Citizen)

Don't Miss the Last Monthly Lunch of this Season on June 6!

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. Lunch is served at 12:00 p.m. You may want to arrive a little earlier to meet and chat with other CNS members.

To be or not to be...

Simon Snow was inadvertently omitted in our April issue of *Nordic News*, as one of the five Nordic speakers who contributed to the multilingual reading of “Hamlet”. This was part of the University of Ottawa’s celebrations to commemorate the 400th year of Shakespeare’s death. Our apologies. Full information and more photos are still available at <http://artsites.uottawa.ca/shakespeare-celebrations/en/a-reading-of-hamlet/>



Simon reading from Hamlet in Swedish - “Detta framför allt: till ditt eget själv vara sant”¹

¹ This above all: to thine own self be true.

A New CNS Year Starts on September 1

The CNS annual general meeting was held on May 18 and next year's council was approved. Your Council next year will consist of Tim Mark (President), Karin Birnbaum (Vice President), Lennart Nylund (Treasurer), Hanna Sjoeborg (Secretary), and Councillors Bruce Miller and Hilde Huus.

The CNS membership year runs from September 1 to August 31. Many of our members pay in advance for the coming year. It's very easy to pay online now that you can use Paypal on the Membership page of our website (<http://www.canadiannordicsociety.com/join-cns.html>). At \$30 for an individual, \$45 for a family, and \$20 for a student, membership in the Nordic Society is a bargain. You can also pay in person at one of our lunches or speaker events. The form you need is attached below and is also available on our website.



Secretary Hanna Sjoeborg wearing traditional Norwegian "bunad"

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





Workforce Solutions

Volt is currently hiring Nordic localization testers/Proofreaders for a game testing company in Downtown Montreal.

The localization testers will be presented with translated scripts and documents and must proofread to ensure there are no errors.

We are looking for people who can read/write Swedish, Danish, Norwegian or Finish with Native fluency and are available for 24 hours or more a week. Fluent in English is also a must. The position is contractual and on-call.

Benefits of the localization tester role:

- Working with a team of international testers;
- Offices accessible by public transport;
- Unique experience to proofread unreleased games.

Nordic localization tester role:

- Read through the on-screen text to detect errors;
- Write error reports;
- Communicate with clients via email;
- All related tasks.

Requirements:

- Native fluency in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian or Finish;
- Excellent level in English;
- Computer Literate;
- Valid work permit or Canadian residency/citizenship;
- Interest in Video Games, apps is a good bonus.

If you are interested in this role, please send your resume directly to:

montrealgametesting@volt.com

Thank you!

Join CNS

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

Online

To join online, go to the CNS website (<http://www.canadiannordicsociety.com/join-cns.html>) and complete the membership form . Payment may be made through PayPal.

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

By mail

Please print and complete the membership form below, enclose a cheque payable to the Canadian Nordic Society and mail to:

Canadian Nordic Society

240 Sparks Street

Box 55023

Ottawa, ON

K1P 1A1

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



Canadian Nordic Society

Box 55023, 240 Sparks St.
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 1A1
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.

September 2015