



FULBRIGHT BREAKOUT SESSION AT THE ARCTIC CIRCLE CONFERENCE, OCTOBER 2015

# Newsletter Iceland-US Fulbright Commission



JANUARY 2016

## Be a buddy

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Fulbrighters and friends of Fulbright,

I am using this message to call on Icelandic alumni to help us with an initiative we started last fall, the Fulbright buddy system. Becoming a Fulbright buddy is a great way to give back to the Fulbright Program. Volunteers for this initiative will be put on a roster of potential buddies for US grantees who come to Iceland, both students and scholars. Buddies are expected to offer support, advice and a sympathetic ear. They should also provide their buddy with some authentic Icelandic experiences, like an occasional home-cooked meal or invitations to social events.

This is also an enrichment opportunity for the Icelandic participants. As a buddy, you will broaden your horizons with a brand new American friend. We hope that many of our



Icelandic alumni will remember what it was like to be alone in a new country and step up to the plate. It does not matter when or what type of grant you received from the Fulbright Commission. We want to hear from all of you!

**If you are interested in putting your name on our list of potential buddies, please send your name, phone number and e-mail to [fulbright@fulbright.is](mailto:fulbright@fulbright.is). Please also note what year you received your grant and please also mention if you have a particular hobby or interest, outside of your professional field, as well as your current position.**

Best wishes for a happy New Year!

## US FULBRIGHT GRANTEE NOMINATED FOR A GRAMMY AWARD

In December, Folklorist Dr. Jim Leary, who was a Fulbright scholar in Iceland in 2012, was nominated for a Grammy award for his project, "Folksongs of Another America: Field Recordings from the Upper Midwest, 1937-1946" in the category for Best Album Notes. The project consists of five CDs with the original recordings and a 422 page book by Leary that includes translations of the lyrics to all the songs in more than 25 languages.

We are extremely proud and wish Dr. Leary great success at the Grammy awards ceremony in February. His competition is, amongst others, Joni Mitchell. We will be watching.

## ALUMNI THANKSGIVING

The Alumni Association hosted its annual Thanksgiving dinner on November 21<sup>st</sup>. It was such a lovely event, with fabulous food and even better company. Fulbright fellow 1992, PhD from Princeton and CEO Margrét Jónsdóttir Njarðvík gave the keynote address.

The annual "Quizbright" competition resulted in a resounding win by those who studied West of the Mississippi, but we expect that the East of the Mississippi team will come back strong next year. The raffle was, as always, full of fabulous prizes, with proceeds going towards future Fulbright grants.

Our deep appreciation goes to the Board of the Alumni Association (FFSI), and especially Chairperson Elinóra Sigurðardóttir, Fulbright fellow 1992 at the University of Minnesota, for all the hard work in putting this great evening together. Below she is pictured with treasurer Mummi Guðbrandsson, Fulbright fellow 2004 at Yale University.



## Strong Fulbright Presence at Arctic Circle in Reykjavik

The annual Arctic Circle conference in Reykjavik is becoming a major event for those involved in the Arctic. It has a unique position in terms of fostering dialogue between a wide variety of stakeholders, including academia, business, governments and inhabitants of the Arctic, and provides important networking opportunities across different stakeholder groups.

Fulbright's commitment to the Arctic was clearly showcased at the third annual conference in October 2015, where the important work being done by Fulbright scholars was highlighted. Not only did Arctic Fulbright scholars in Iceland take part, but a number of Arctic Initiative scholars made the trip to Reykjavik to participate. The Fulbright Commission organized a 2-hour breakout session with 10 Fulbright scholars, giving



them the opportunity to present the research they are currently conducting, both

through the Fulbright Arctic Initiative and through individual Fulbright projects. Following their impressive presentations, scholars engaged in a lively discussion with



the audience. The session no doubt sparked an interest by many in the audience to look into Fulbright grant opportunities in the Arctic. The following scholars participated:

Fulbright core scholars:

- Dr. Rebecca Pincus
- Dr. Robert Patrick Wheelersburg
- Ms. Em Jackson, PhD student

Fulbright Arctic Initiative scholar:

- Lead Scholar Dr. Ross Virginia
- Dr. Niels Vestergaard
- Dr. Gunnhild Gjörv
- Dr. Bjarni Magnússon
- Dr. Anne Hansen
- Ms. Susan Chatwood
- Ms. Gwen Holdmann

Fulbright also hosted an elegant reception for approximately 70 guests, honoring Fulbright Arctic scholars. Guests included US Ambassador Rob Barber, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Benjamin Ziff, Rear Admiral Mathias Winter, Director of the Office of Academic Exchange Programs at the US State Department Mary Kirk and many Icelandic and US scholars. Finally, the Commission hosted a working dinner for Fulbright Arctic scholars, with special guest Mark Brzezinski, Executive Director of the U.S. Government's Arctic Executive Steering Committee.

Mary Kirk also used the trip to visit the Commission and meet with various stakeholders in Iceland, including officials at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture, emphasizing the important role of Fulbright in the relationship between Iceland and the US.



### FULBRIGHT SPECIALIST PROVIDES ASSISTANCE IN ICELAND ON WELCOMING REFUGEES

As part of a larger initiative, the US State Department generously offered last fall to provide a Fulbright Specialist on refugee issues to Iceland. This is a great example of Fulbright's relevance in terms of sharing knowledge to address immediate challenges facing the world today. The US receives more quota refugees than any other country in the world and undeniably has vast experience in integrating refugees into local communities. The Specialist initiative provides an opportunity to learn from US expertise in this area.

Working with the Ministry of Welfare and its Refugee Committee, the Commission co-hosted Fulbright Specialist Dr. Nicole Dubus, who holds a PhD in social work. Her vast experience in working with refugees and service providers in the US was extremely relevant as Iceland prepares to receive groups of Syrian refugees. During her time in Iceland, Nicole worked with the Ministry, the Refugee Committee, the Red Cross and universities, but the majority of her time was spent working with the municipalities that will host Syrian refugees. Nicole worked with a variety of service providers in the towns of Akureyri, Hafnarfjörður and Kópavogur. Further, an open meeting was held where Nicole discussed best practices for receiving refugees. She also did multiple TV interviews. First feedback suggests that Dr. Dubus's visit was of great value to stakeholders and a big help in terms of current preparations. She departed Iceland on December 16th after a busy three weeks. Her visit came at the perfect time, as the first Syrian refugee group is expected to arrive in January. We are proud that Fulbright in Iceland has made a contribution to this worthy effort. Nicole's blog can be found at <https://ndubus.wordpress.com/>.



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