

FINLANDIA FOUNDATION
SUOMI CHAPTER

FINNOVATIONS

PROMOTING FINNISH HERITAGE FROM THE
EVERGREEN STATE TO THE GOLDEN STATE



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Cover Photo: Autumn colors near Kilpisjärvi, Lapland. Photo by Niilo Isotalo.



Even the family cat does his duty by wearing a mask during the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

President's Corner

A Pandemic called the Coronavirus has put us in a new situation... Or has it? Communicable diseases such as "Russian Fever," "Spanish Flu," "Asian Flu," "Hong Kong Flu" and "Swine Flu" have been affecting the world for 130 years.

COVID-19 is currently everywhere except in Antarctica. Finland has the situation, at the moment, pretty much under control. Some 350 folks have died and the government has taken many measures to prevent the increase of infections. The border with Sweden is still closed due to the serious epidemic situation there. Travel is discouraged and face masks are recommended, but not yet mandatory. The assembly of more than 10 people is also not recommended.

Pandemics have hit Finland before. In fact, Finland has had five major pandemic situations within the last 200 years. The first classified as a pandemic spread to Finland 130 years ago in November of 1890. Because it spread to Finland from Russia it was called "Russian Fever." Within a month, it spread to the entire Grand Duchy of Finland affecting one third of the population.

The second pandemic was the outbreak of "Spanish Flu" during World War 1. It has been the most devastating pandemic to date. It affected half a billion people around the world and brought death to 50 million. In Finland the disease hit one in four and killed 20,000-40,000 people, depending on the method of calculation.

The first news of the disease came from Spain where the king fell ill with it. It is still uncertain where exactly the flu originated, however it is widely believed that it originated in the United States and then traveled with American troops to Europe. It raged widely, but remained in the dark because of censorship of the war.

This wild disease reached Finland in December 1918, when the country was in a bad state. The country was torn apart by a civil war, prison camps were full of people, there had been a food shortage in the country even before the war, and now many countries were suffering from famine.

Finland did not have any capacity to face an invisible virus. The disease swept Finland in two or three waves. Because the people did not know how deadly and rapidly this disease could spread, interventions were introduced and applied too late. But even when restrictions were put in place, people would not have been able to comply with them because they had to go to work, even when they were sick. There was no social security and no sick pay. The control of the disease was largely left to individuals.

The third epidemic was the "Asian Flu." It was milder than the Spanish Flu, but affected a third of the population killing 1,800 people. The severity was mitigated by better antibiotics and more knowledge about the importance of good hygiene.

The "Hong Kong Virus" of 1968 was the fourth pandemic. Globally, a million people died, a thousand of them in Finland. The virus came to Finland in 1971.

A Kaleva forum reader recalls: "The whole family got sick at the same time. I was out of school for two weeks and almost all the time I was lying in high fever. However, mother and father had to work on the farm despite the fever. I remember that I was scared when mom and dad were sick."

The fifth pandemic, the most recent one before COVID-19, was the "Swine Flu" which spread in 2009.

It sowed fear by hitting severely symptomatic children, young adults, and pregnant women. People over the age of 60 were protected by immunity, which was obtained from previous epidemics. In Finland, the authorities prepared for the disease even before it reached Finland. When that happened in October of 2009, the vaccination program was already underway. 75 percent of those under 15 years of age and more than half of the total population were vaccinated. Those who had not taken the vaccine became ill with the second wave of Swine Flu the following year. Despite the preparedness for swine flu, 44 people were killed in Finland.

In addition, a rapidly developed vaccine caused an unexpected tragedy. The vaccine material produced in Finland for more than 300 children and young people caused narcolepsy - incurable and uncontrollable attacks of deep sleep.

The Swine Flu taught Finns to cough and sneeze on their sleeves and wash their hands thoroughly. These health routines are a lot of help with COVID-19.

By Tapio Holma

PS. Since writing my article Finland informs that they have had some 7,000 cases of the COVID-19 virus. Only 16 people are in the hospital, one is in the ICU, and 335 have died.

Most schools are open with travel outside the country discouraged. Face masks recommended for assemblies, but otherwise voluntary at the moment.

Economy-wise Finland is doing the best in Europe, Denmark the second best, and Great Britain the worst. Unemployment is around 6.9 percent with some big companies like the National Airline, Finnair, furloughing people at the moment.

More Finnish Language & Grammar

Every child in the Finnish School System learns the basics of the Finnish language and its many cases. In our Last Innovations newsletter we described what the word "Sisu" means. All Finns have a pretty good idea what the word means: character and inner power (I call it perseverance without limitations). The origin of the word comes from sisä (meaning inner, inside etc). The word has existed from the time of Agricola (Finnish Alphabet 1542).

Here is the Word Sisu in various cases:

SISU	nominatiivi
SISUN	genetiivi
SISUA	partitiivi
SISUNA	essiivi
SISUKSI	translatiivi
SISUSSA	inessiivi
SISUSTA	elatiivi
SISUUN	illatiivi
SISULLA	adessiivi
SISULTA	ablatiivi
SISULLE	allatiivi
SISUIN	instuktiivi
SISUINEEN	komitatiivi
SISUTTA	abessiivi

Now you understand why the language may seem to be difficult to learn, particularly to those whose native language is something different.

The Finnish language does not use prepositions. We conjugate the words as needed depending on the context.

More on this in our next newsletters!

By Iiro Tainio, Finland

My Finnish Roots

My daughter, Savannah, has a tattoo on the inside of her left lower arm of one of the oldest Scandinavian labyrinths, known only as “Koristus Pronssikaudelta” in an image we discovered. I have the same tattoo in the same spot - we got it together a year ago.

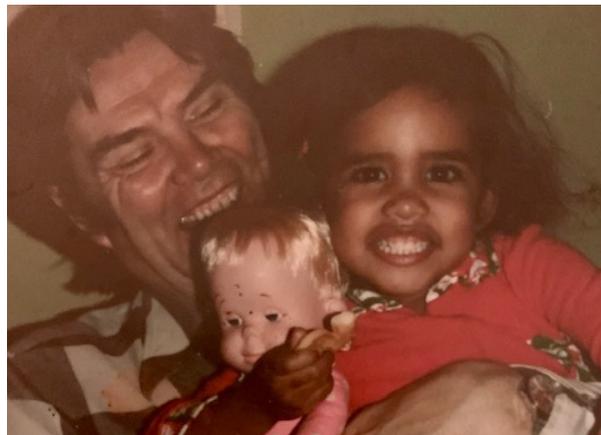


The former FFSC president, Pasi Virta, and his wife Bobbi were having dinner at D’annas where Savannah waits tables. Bobbi has a personal and professional love of labyrinths, and she noticed

Savannah’s tattoo, which is how they met. Savannah recognized their Finnish accent immediately, and before long, I met them and eventually became a member of the board.

I have always felt like the odd one out amongst Finns, with my brown skin, brown curly hair and brown eyes. When I hear people speaking Finnish in public (rare, but it does happen) I’ll approach them to ask a question in conversational Finnish just to see the confused look on their faces. There’s always a fleeting moment of “this doesn’t make sense.”

I have forgotten most of my Finnish because I have rarely had a chance to use it, but I understand it well, and I love to hear it spoken around me.



No one would ever look at me and think, “you know, I think she might be Finnish.” I have a Jamaican father and a Finnish mother. I grew up in Canada, and am now American; I’m black and I’m white. When it comes to my heritage, I’m a Finn.

Growing up with my Finnish family, I was raised on makkara, karjalanpiirakka, and every kind of laattikko there is. I actually disliked them as a child because it seemed like my mom ONLY made kaalilaatikko,

like all the time. Kukkakaalilaatikko was, and remains, my favorite and now I make it regularly for my kids. I loved mummi's pulla, korva puusti, and the best - her mustikkapiirakka. I hated salmiakki and wouldn't go near siili.

I grew up taking saunas, celebrating Juhannus, waiting for Joulupukki, and listening to Finnish tango music as mummified fresh rock cod that pappa had just caught from the Sechelt inlet.

In the backdrop of my childhood was the laughter and conversation of the adults in the family speaking "Finglish," which drove us kids crazy because we could understand about 30% of it, and it was nearly impossible to resist the temptation of trying to figure out the rest, so this was a constant distraction to our playtime.

My cousins and I sang "tula tullalla", and sometimes "miljoona ruusua" much to pappa's delight. We didn't really understand what we were singing, but they seemed to love it. We were never taught Finnish, and when I lived in Finland in my late teens, I understood why - Finnish is the most complicated language in the world, and unless you're taught from birth, I've heard it said that no one can ever really speak it properly. I mean, what other language can that be said about, and in such a casual way like it's an obvious fact?

Finns, and Finnish culture, have always fascinated me. I've been to Finland several times. I feel a warm comfort in hearing Finnish spoken everywhere, and in eating lihapiirakka (nakin kanssa) from the kiosk, and even in watching Kaunit ja

Rohkeat even though it's an American soap opera. I was addicted to it when I lived there, and will always think of it as a Finnish show.

When I went to school in the small town of Klaukkala when I was 17, I danced in the Vanhojen Tanssit. I wore a long dark blue satin dress and long black gloves; it was an experience I'll never forget as long as I live. I jumped, nude, in many lakes to cool off from the heat of the lakeside sauna, after beating myself raw with vihta. We had a little kiuas where we roasted makkara, juuston kanssa, and drank cold lonkkero (after I was 18, of course).

I learned conversational Finnish during that year, although I never really understood all of the rules and inflections (talo, talolta, talossa, taloon, taloa, taloja, taloihin...). It was so much work! I was pretty happy with "Terve, minun nimi on Tania, olen puoli Suomalainen ja puoli Jamaikalainen, ja olen Kanadasta". And "haluan enemaan leipaa, please". My favorite candy was Marianne, and my favorite chocolate bar was Tupla. And I learned to like salmiakki.

My immediate roots go back to a spring afternoon in Stockholm, when a dashing young man named Vilho Gunnar Asikainen (Kunu) entered the lobby of a downtown apartment building with a bouquet of flowers for a young woman he was courting. He pressed the button for the elevator, unaware that the hands of fate were orchestrating a different plan for him. Once in the elevator, he held the door open for two young ladies who entered; they were school teachers coming home after work.

One of these ladies was Aila Sinikka Aulanne, my grandmother. They exchanged hellos, and pappa, who had already fallen in love with the sight of her dark curls and hazel eyes, was delighted to discover that she was not only the woman of his dreams, but also a fellow Finn. I think mummi's friend was a bit jealous of their quick connection.

Pappa never made it up to his designated floor, the poor lady (who may have been my grandmother?) never received her flowers; they were given to mummi, and they were married in a Finnish Lutheran church in Stockholm shortly thereafter.



Aila (mummi), was born in a hospital in Töölö in 1926. Her mother, Kerttu, died shortly after she was born. She fell off of a streetcar in the city while she was pregnant. Aila survived, but Kerttu did not. Aila was raised by her Swedish speaking grandparents. They lived on Mannerheimintie in Helsinki, and mummi graduated from the Arkadian Tyttölyseö in Töölö in 1946.

In 1939, at the age of 13, mummi travelled to Germany to visit her pikku aiti and pikku isa, who I still remember although I haven't seen them since I was a child. We wouldn't have understood each other as

they didn't speak English, but I remember pikku aiti's warm smile, she even seemed to smile at me with her eyes. Pikku isa had smaller, darker eyes, and a quietly mirthful nature.

Mummi ended up being stuck there for a year because the war made her return voyage home impossible. Kassel, the town she lived in, was completely bombed, but she made it back home to Helsinki, and to her studies. She became a school teacher in Karelia at the Russian border for a year after she graduated, living alone during the cold winter months, making a fire for warmth each night, and listening to the wolves howl a bit too close for her comfort. This is where she discovered her love of writing.

Later in Canada, mummi wrote a monthly column for a Finnish-Canadian newspaper called *Lansirannikon Uutiset* for at least 20 years. It was based on recipes, but mainly about our family. She inspired the love for writing that I later developed. And I became a school teacher, just like her.

Kunu, (pappa) was born in Kesälahti in 1928. He spent his youth in Kotka, where he later joined the army. He grew up a country boy, selling wooden spoons his father, Juho, had made in destitute years.

For most of his youth he lived in Kotka, where he got his nickname, Kotkan Poika. He became a dentist's apprentice at the age of 15 (and was a dentist as a profession all his life). Juho owned the first gramophone in town which he played regularly, and proudly, in his coffee shop.

The Asikainens were apparently known to be a loud lot. And that makes a lot of sense to me, because I turned out to be very similar in character to Pappa. We had many debates over the years (we're both really stubborn) and our voices, and laughter, were always the loudest in the family. Now, my family says I'm the loudest of us all.

Pappa died in October, 2018. Mummi, who is living, and under my mother's care in Helsinki, still calls out his name sometimes. She always called him pappa, and he always called her mummi. I thought that was so odd; I can't imagine being called "grandma" by my husband.

When Finland was attacked by Russia, many Finns fled to Sweden for work, and that's where the elevator of love was that brought them together. After they married, they moved back to Finland, to Toijala just outside of Tampere, where two of their daughters were born (their eldest, my aunt Annele, was born in Stockholm). Annele, Kristiina and Paula were three striking Finnish beauties, and are Finnish beauties today, only older.



The middle daughter, Tuula Kristiina Asikainen (Tina) is my mother. In the early 60s, when the girls were between the ages of 8-13, they set off on a traveling adventure, and moved first (by ship) to Rio de Janeiro, then to New York City, and finally to Toronto, Canada where the girls completed high school. Annele's first daughter - Satu Aila - and I, were later born in Toronto, four years apart.



I was born Katja Tania Milana Asikainen. Mummi and Pappa moved back to Finland for a while, but then rejoined us in Vancouver, BC., where I grew up. Pappa was a denturist, a fisherman, and an inventor. He was charming, charismatic, loud, and funny (he really thought he was, anyway). Mummi was a homemaker, an incredible cook, a speaker of four languages, and a writer.

She was razor sharp, and always seemed to be laughing. She would laugh herself into tears sometimes. I can still see her rosy cheeks, and her laughing so hard that no sound emerged.

Mummi and pappa always encouraged diversity, thus, our family is multicultural - we often joke that our family photos resemble the UN. But we're all Finns at heart.

Now we are all a bit separated; my mother moved back to Finland in 1995 and has lived in Helsinki with her husband ever since. Annele and her daughters are in Vancouver, BC, and Paula and her family are in Seattle. I'm in the middle, with my two children, in Bellingham.

Mummi and Pappa moved back to Helsinki in 2016, where my mother dotingly took care of them. Mummi now lives in a nursing home in Helsinki and my mother has cared for her daily, which is challenging now due to the Coronavirus. Mummi is strong, still sharp, and full of love for her West Coast family, who all miss her dearly. She'll be 100 years old in just over 5 years.

By Tania Asikainen

Nordic American Voices

The National Nordic Museum has attracted great popular and media attention in recent years, as the new Museum building was opened in May of 2018, and, within a year, earned national status by act of Congress. What is less well-known is that one of the Museum programs – Nordic American Voices – celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2019.

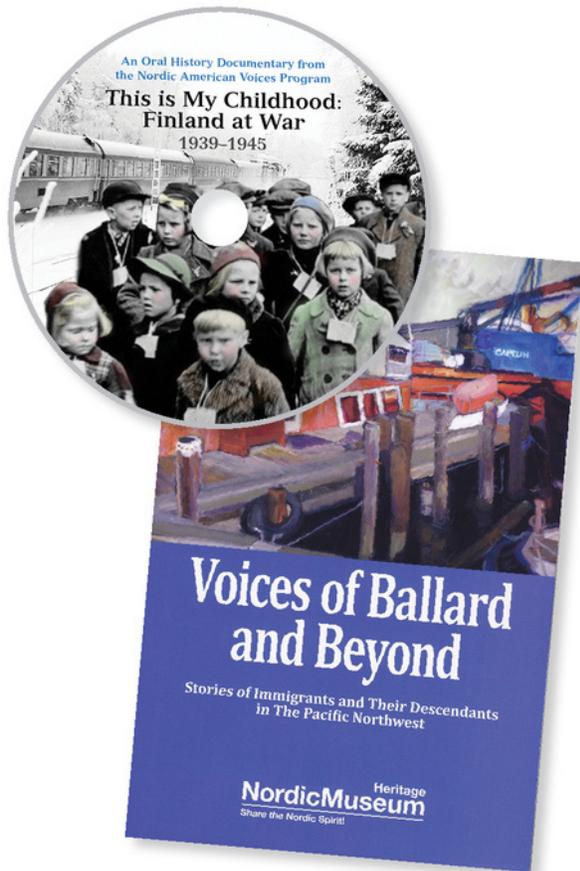
Nordic American Voices is an oral history project the purpose of which is the record and archive the stories of as many people with roots in the five Nordic countries as possible. Over the past decade, the number of interviews has reached nearly 800, with 155 of them with narrators who have links to Finland. Interviews are conducted in English.

The forerunner of Nordic American Voices was an earlier oral history project, The Vanishing Generation: Voices of Ballard.

As its name suggests, this effort focused on Nordic immigrants in the Ballard neighborhood of Seattle. Its work culminated with the publication of Voices of Ballard. Some of those who had participated in this project saw the value of expanding beyond Ballard, giving rise to the formation of Nordic American Voices in 2009.

True to its purpose, Nordic American Voices volunteers have now travelled the length and breadth of Washington State to listen to and record life stories – from

Pasco to Poulsbo, from the Puget Sound city of Everett to the Columbia River village of Naselle, from Stanwood in the northwest part of the State to Aberdeen in the southwest. These interviews have taken place in lodge halls, churches, libraries, museums and homes.



Out of the interviews already conducted, there have been the publication of a book, *Voices of Ballard and Beyond*, and the release of two DVDs. One of those, *This Is My Childhood: Finland at War*, is drawn from childhood memories of the Winter and Continuation Wars and their aftermath. It is available for purchase at the Museum or by calling the Museum Shop at 206.789.5707.

Regrettably, like so many other organizations, NAV (as it is often referred

to) has been adversely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Plans to conduct interviews in Centralia in March and in Bellingham in April had to be scrapped, much to the disappointment of the dozen or so trained volunteers, a number of whom have been enthusiastic participants of the project since its inception. They look forward to conditions that will allow for the resumption of interviews both and the Museum and on the road.

When interviews resume, one of the first NAV destinations will be Bellingham, where volunteers hope for a large turnout of Nordics. Characteristic of many of those approached about being interviewed is the response that their lives are so ordinary that no one would be interested in hearing about them. The fact is, that in 800 interviews, no two stories are the same and no life is ordinary. This has given rise to the unofficial motto of Nordic American Voices: "Everyone has a story to tell." If you want to be sure yours is heard, contact the Museum at the number above.

By Gary London, Seattle



**Nordic
Museum**

Culinary Corner

Summer doesn't feel like summer without at least one evening of eating lettu (Finnish crepes or thin pancakes) for dessert or a snack. You might also know them as lätty or ohukainen. Topped with fresh strawberries and whipped cream, jam, or just a spread of butter and rolled up, lettu always remind me of summers spent with family in Finland.

As a kid, I spent many summers at my grandparents' house in the countryside outside Iisalmi in the Northern Savonia region. My grandmother would make lettu for what felt like hours while my brother, cousins, and I lined up for the next lettu hot out of the pan. I wonder now if she ever even had a chance to eat any herself! Now I make lettu for my toddler at home here in Bellingham. They are not nearly as good as my grandmother's, but topped with jam and eaten with family and friends, they are still a treat.



My personal favorite type of lettu is the muurinpohjalettu (large griddle crepe). These are large, thin lettu cooked outdoors on a slightly curved cast iron pan. Muurinpohjalettu are a traditional food from the Ylä-Savo sub-region of Finland (the northern portion of Northern Savonia), where my family is from and where several of my relatives still live today.



These lettu are so large, a common method of flipping them involves cutting the 18-inch lettu in half first. The batter is spread out thin so that the ends are lacy and crisp. There is no sugar in the batter, so the lettu are almost savory. I don't have much of a sweet tooth so I even enjoy eating muurinpohjalettu rolled up plain, but just like other lettu, they are good with berries, jam, butter, or whipped cream.

Muurinpohjalettu are so named because they were cooked in large cast iron cauldrons (muuripata) typically used to

heat water for washing. Anyone who doubts this can talk to my mom – her mother made muurinpohjalettu in the bottom of the water cauldron in the sauna. Since it had to be cleaned really well after the lettu cookout, this was a rare and special treat!

My family continues the special tradition of cooking muurinpohjalettu; during family gatherings in Finland, my cousins and I practice pouring and spreading the batter just right and compete for the best lettu flipper (they are so big they are hard to turn!), and my sister-in-law here in Washington is our local muurinpohjalettu expert.

Muurinpohjalettu Recipe

There are variations of the recipe. I'm providing my family's "secret" recipe here and the general range. American flour tends to be finer than Finnish flour, so how much you need depends on how long you let the batter rest and the coarseness of the flour. You can find barley flour at the Bellingham Food Co-op.

General recipe:

2-2.5 dl barley flour (about 0.85-1 cup)

2-2.5 dl wheat flour (about 0.85-1 cup)

0.5-2 tsp salt

1-2 eggs

1 L milk (usually whole milk)

Winter recipe:

2 dl barley flour (~0.85 cups)

2 dl wheat flour (~0.85 cups)

1.5 tsp salt

2 eggs

1 L milk

Gently whisk the eggs. Add milk and remaining ingredients. Let sit for at least one hour up to overnight in the refrigerator. Some recipes recommend leaving the egg out until just before frying. Heat a slightly curved castiron skillet (Muurikka brand is the classic) over gas heat, preferably outside (we use a propane outdoor burner). Melt 1 teaspoon butter in hot skillet and spread across full surface of the pan using a birch whisk (koivuvispilä) or silicone pastry brush. Pour batter around edges of the pan, spreading the batter thinly to cover the skillet with a spatula. Let the edges crisp and become lacy (small holes from bubbles). Cut in half to flip, or flip whole if able. Serve with berries, jam, whipped cream, or butter. Roll up and enjoy!



Lettu/Lätty/Ohukainen Recipe



Lettu recipes also have a lot of variety. Some include barley flour in addition to wheat flour, while others are wheat flour only. Some also include a tablespoon of sugar to sweeten it up a bit.

2 eggs
5 dl milk (2 cups)
1 tablespoon sugar (optional)
3/4-1 teaspoon salt
2.5 dl wheat flour (1 cup) OR
1.5 dl (2/3 cup) wheat flour
1 dl (~1/3 cup) barley flour
2-4 tablespoons butter

Gently whisk the eggs. Add milk and remaining ingredients and whisk or stir until smooth. Let sit for at least 5-10 minutes, but best after 30 minutes. Fry over medium heat in buttered skillet or frying pan.

Top with berries, jam, whipped cream, or butter. Roll up and enjoy!

By Hanna Winter

Moomin 75th Anniversary Film

Watch the trailer for "TOVE," the first feature film about the Moomin creator!

TOVE is a captivating drama about the creative energy of an iconic talent and her search for identity, desire and freedom.

The sea is a vital part of the Moomin universe. 2020 marks the 75-year anniversary of Tove Jansson publishing her first Moomin novel. To celebrate this Moomin Characters is launching the campaign #OURSEA, to save the Baltic Sea and its heritage for future generations.



To watch the film trailer, please visit:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw_JrV8HYHE&feature=youtu.be

By Brend Hunt-Holma



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FFSC Survey

Dear Members, Past Members, Future Members and Friends,

This year the Finlandia Foundation Suomi Chapter (FFSC) begins its eleventh year. Yes, that's right we have been an active and productive chapter for ten years - established in 2010. There are three of the founding members still on the board.

These have been challenging years, productive years, fun years and wonderful years. We have had our ups and downs but we are still here. Our board has changed, evolved and worked ever so diligently to support our small organization and keep us going.

Be ever so proud of what WE have accomplished these past ten years!!!

As we look forward to our next ten years we want to continue our work, our chapter and our connection to our Finnish heritage. You are a critical part of that vision and goal. Sustaining an idea and dream is not only admirable but imperative that we do this together. All members and input counts and it matters that you let your voices be heard. What you want is what we want - bring on the SISU!!!

Please complete this survey so that we can get started on a successful next ten years.

What is your geographical connection to Finland? For example, which part of Finland are you from, is your family from, or do you connect with Finland through a Finnish-American community? Do you have family members in Finland, and if so, where?

In which ways do you feel connected to your Finnish roots? For example, speaking or learning Finnish language, meeting other Finns, Finnish movies/games/media, listening to Finnish music, reading Finnish news/current events, Finnish culture, etc.

Have you ever attended an FFSC event? If yes, which one and what did you enjoy most? If not, why not?

Which format of the newsletter would you prefer?

Hard Copy __

Emailed __

On the Website __

Other (please explain) _____

Which Finnovations newsletter article(s) were the most interesting to you? Which did you most enjoy reading? Which did you forward to another person?

What kind of FFSC events do you like to attend or would like to see? Please select all that apply:

Formal Events __

Informal Events __

Catered Dinners __

Potlucks __

Speakers/Lectures __

Gatherings to Speak Finnish __

Concerts/Music Events __

Movies __

Coffee/Tea Hours __

Bazaars __

Other: _____

What kind of articles would you like to read about in Finnovations (newsletter)? For example, food, sports, education, family histories, politics, trends, upcoming events, collaboration with Nordic communities in the area, etc.

Do you read the newsletter Finnovations?

Yes __ How often? _____

No __ Why not? _____

Do you have any other suggestions for Finnovations (newsletter)?

Would you like to volunteer for FFSC or serve on the board? If yes, please provide name and contact information (email or phone number).

Do you speak Finnish?

Yes __ (Would you be interested in meeting with other Finnish speakers?)

Yes __ No __

No, I do not speak Finnish __

Please identify any ideas for improving our membership:

Do you pay FFSC dues? If so, why? If not, why not? What would you like to see your dues go toward? What would encourage you to pay dues annually?

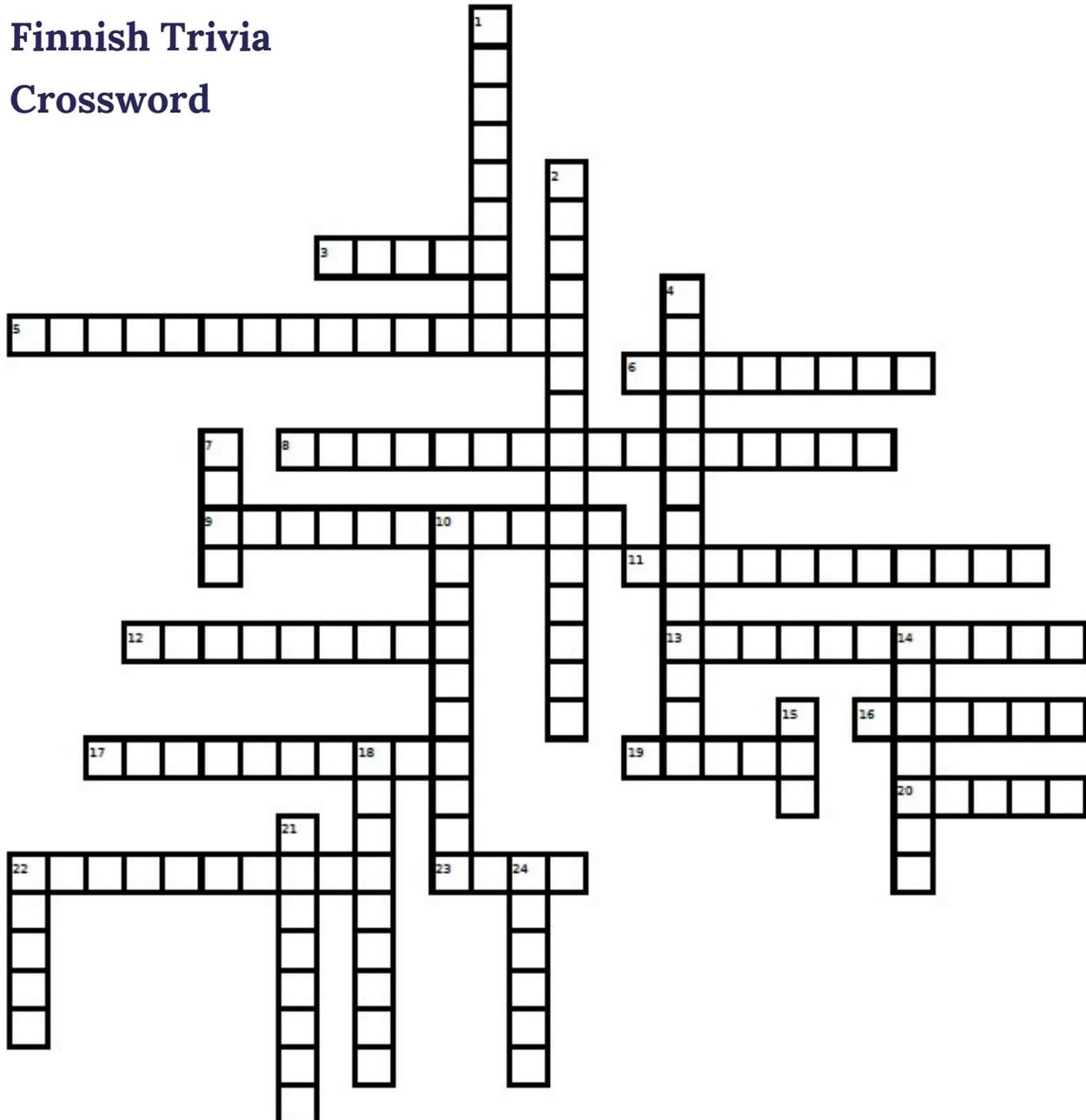
Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We look forward to hearing from you and working together!

Do you have any other suggestions for FFSC?



Finnish Trivia

Crossword



Down:

1. Unique holiday in Finland (and other Scandinavian countries)
2. Martti Ahtesaari is famous for
4. Separates Finland from Sweden
7. Enemy of Winter War
10. Finns invented this popular game
14. European country roughly same size as Finland
15. You can find one at Korkeasaari Island
18. Boulevard that leads to Market Square
21. Finland's national sport
22. Holiday of white (sometimes yellow) caps

Across:

3. Highest point of Finland
5. Weapon invented by Finns
6. Event 1952 is known for
8. Well-known Finnish music group
9. Finnish people
11. Pastry that hears well
12. Finland's national animal
13. Swedish name for Helsinki
16. Finnish-invented internet browser
17. Official home of Joulupukki
19. Music Finns love
20. Finland and Sweden share it

Finlandia Foundation Suomi Chapter



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