



Finlandia Foundation Seattle Chapter Newsletter

March 2026

FINLANDIA FOUNDATION SEATTLE CHAPTER

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Foundation Seattle Chapter
board through June, 2026.

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Members-at-Large serve two-year, staggered terms. 1st year terms begin July 1. Please send all membership inquiries, payments or changes of address to FFSC, PO Box 5024 Bellevue, WA 98009-5024 or e-mail info@finlandiafoundationseattle.com.

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Letter from the President

Independence Day Dinner and Dance on December 6 at the National Nordic Museum was a great success. The evening began with the traditional social hour, followed by a few songs from the Finnish Choral Society of Seattle to help lift everyone's spirits. Guests then moved into Osberg Hall where the choir led the singing of the national anthems and performed Finlandia.

We were honored to have Matti Suokko deliver his final message as Honorary Consul of Finland for the states of Washington, Idaho, and Montana. After 25 years of service, Matti retired from his position the following day. We are grateful for his commitment to representing Finland and serving our community throughout his tenure.

Kristiina Hiukka guided us through the evening gracefully as master of ceremonies. Our keynote speaker was Mårten Mickos, and Miska Kajanus entertained us with his immigration story. On Safari Foods catered an excellent buffet dinner, after which guests took to the dance floor with music provided by the Pirske band featuring Henrika Ojala and Maria Männistö.

Big thanks to the organizing committee and volunteers for putting together such a memorable event, to the musicians for their amazing performances, and to the guest speakers for their engaging talks. Thanks also to our sponsors whose support makes events like this possible, and to everyone who came to celebrate Finland's Independence Day.

Looking ahead, join us for the spring Nordic Mixer on Friday, April 17 at the National Nordic Museum. This is a low-key gathering – a chance to catch up with old friends and meet new ones from the area's Nordic communities over a drink. Entrance is free and everyone is welcome, so check out the details elsewhere in this newsletter. Thanks to the National Nordic Museum for hosting us!

In April there are several Kalevala Celebration programs at the National Nordic Museum. This year marks a special milestone: the 50th annual Kalevala Day Festival organized by the Finnish Choral Society of Seattle. Events this year celebrate not only the Kalevala itself but also the Finnish Choral Society's five decades of keeping this tradition alive.

The celebration includes several events at the National Nordic Museum: Folk dancing demonstration and workshop on Thursday, April 9; Kantele performance and workshop on Saturday, April 18; and a concert by the Finnish Choral Society of Seattle on Thursday, April 23, which will honor both the epic tradition and the choir community that has carried these stories, songs, and gatherings forward through the years. The Choral Society will also perform at a Concert for Peace on May 17 at the Latvian Center in Seattle.

Mikko Männistö

FFSC BOARD PRESIDENT

Letter from the Editor

Last year, we pulled off a fantastic Independence Day Dinner & Dance, so successful that we were even featured in *The Seattle Times*. Although I supported the event from behind the scenes through marketing, watching the full room, the joyful photos, and the incredible community response unfold was truly rewarding. The energy and enthusiasm of this community never cease to amaze me.



I hope some of you were among the lucky winners of our amazing raffle prizes from Finnair flights to unforgettable sauna experiences and other generous gifts from our sponsors. If you weren't able to attend the event, turn to page 11 to experience the evening through the thoughtful reflections of our Honorary Vice Consul of Finland for Washington State, Kristiina Hiukka.

And the momentum continues. We have many exciting events coming up this spring from Kalevala celebrations and concerts to our Nordic Mixer. You can discover the full lineup in the Local Events section on page 16.

If you have family or friends who have always wanted to learn Finnish, now is the perfect time to share this newsletter with them. Our new Finnish language courses begin in March, an ideal way to kickstart a new skill for the year. You'll find more information on page 9.

We're also thrilled to offer \$1,000 scholarships and grants supporting projects and studies that celebrate Finnish culture (see page 10). You are eligible if you:

- Live in the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, or Idaho) and are pursuing study or a project related to Finland or Finnish culture, or
- Are pursuing a project related to Finnish history, language, or culture in the Pacific Northwest, regardless of residency.

College undergraduates are especially encouraged to apply, it's a wonderful opportunity to dive deeper into Finnish heritage and bring your ideas to life.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant community. Your energy, passion, and dedication make everything we do possible. Here's to another year of celebrating Finnish culture, together.
Warm wishes,

Laura Galeev

FFSC NEWSLETTER EDITOR

The Three Questions

After moving from Finland to the United States over 50 years ago, Satu Mikkola has dedicated decades to strengthening Finnish culture, music, and community life across the country. Through volunteer leadership, Suomi-koulu work, and especially kantele music, she has helped connect generations of Finnish and Finnish-American communities.



In this column, we interview fascinating Finnish individuals and explore their lives in the Seattle area. We asked Satu Mikkola our Three Questions and are excited to share her insights.

How has your connection to Finland influenced your life and sense of identity while living in the U.S.?

Finland has remained extremely important to me throughout all the years I've spent abroad. I'm proud to say that I am Finnish. My love for my native country has inspired me to participate actively in volunteer work within Finnish and Finnish-American communities across the United States. Working for a Finnish company and making regular visits to Finland have helped me maintain my connections to my homeland and my interest in events there. Over the years, I have

also learned to understand and appreciate not only Finnish culture but also Finnish-American culture.

Which musical or cultural projects have been the most rewarding for you, and why?

Music is a major passion of mine. I have been involved in organizing events by bringing numerous Finnish musicians to perform in the U.S. For over 25 years, I have promoted Finnish culture through kantele music, teaching, and community activities, reaching audiences across the country and organizing reciprocal concert tours to Finland with our kantele players. In addition to kantele music, Finnish choral singing has been and continues to be an important hobby and activity for me.

I have served in numerous volunteer roles supporting Finnish cultural heritage, arts, education, and cultural exchange. As a board member of Finlandia Foundation National, I served for many years in various roles (including treasurer, Performer of the Year coordinator, and fundraiser). I was also involved in founding the Finlandia Foundation Columbia-Pacific Chapter in 2001 before I moved from the Portland area.

I participated in the leadership team organizing FinnFest USA, the nationwide Finnish-American festival in Portland, Oregon, overseeing the programming. After that, I served on the FinnFest USA board. On a smaller scale, we organized the Finlandia Music and Art Festival in Poulsbo, Washington, for a couple of years to help grow Finlandia Foundation National's grant and scholarship funds.

Looking back at your work with Suomi-Koulu, the Finnish Expatriate Parliament, and church communities, what achievement are you most proud of?

I have been actively involved in the Finnish Expatriate Parliament (USP) at every plenary session. I initially served as a delegate representing Finnish-American communities. Later, I served for several years in the USP leadership as Vice Chair for the U.S. and Latin America region and then as regional Chair. I'm proud of all the accomplishments USP has achieved in advocating for the interests of Finns abroad.

Worldwide, the Suomi-Koulu (Finnish School) movement now plays a very important role in preserving the identity and language of Finnish children living abroad. I helped found the first proper Suomi-Koulu in the U.S. in Portland, Oregon, in 1982, and in its early years I served in various roles on the school board. The school celebrated its 40th anniversary three years ago. At the Seattle Suomi-Koulu, which was founded 13 years later, I taught kantele for a time.

The activities of Finnish churches within Finnish-American communities are also an important part of Finnish history, culture, and community life. I have been actively involved with both Messiah Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon, and the Finnish Lutheran Church of Seattle.



Explore the wonders of Finnish culture with Finlandia Foundation National's free monthly newsletter! Sign up for the E-News or dive into our archive to discover past issues. Start your Finnish journey today and start exploring at the Newsletter Archive:
<https://finlandiafoundation.org/e-news-newsletter/>

FINNFO – FACTS ABOUT FINLAND

Contributor: Gary London

2,000

Number of members in Helsinki's Silent Book Club.

2022

Year that Helsinki Silent Book Club established.

127

Number of electric scooter riders given breathalyzer tests during one day in Helsinki.

20

Number of those receiving breathalyzer tests who were cited for exceeding 0.5 BAC limit.

1,700 & 0

Number of weight loss bypass surgeries performed on adults and children respectively in Finland in 2024.

2025

Year in which first weight loss bypass surgeries were performed on Finnish children.

65

Percentage increase in sales of non-alcoholic beverages in Finland from July 2024 to July 2025.

51,000

Estimated number of children starting school in Finland in 2025.

60,000

Number of children starting school in Finland in 2020.

2.27

Value in billions of euros of Finnish medical and pharmaceutical imports in 2024.

2.26

Value in billions of euros of Finnish medical and pharmaceutical exports in 2024.

110

Percentage increase in coffee prices in Finland from 2015 to 2025.

FINNFO – FACTS ABOUT FINLAND

Contributor: Gary London

22

Percentage increase in overall consumer price index in Finland from 2015 to 2025.

14.1

Average age in years of automobile in Finland.

2018

Year during which average age of automobile in Finland increased and new car registrations declined.

94.88

Amount in euros of monthly subsidy for first child in Finland.

192.69

Amount in euros of monthly subsidy for fifth child or more in Finland.

2

Rank of Finns among other Europeans who own two residences.

1/3

Fraction of Finnish men called up for military or civilian service who ask for an extension.

1

Rank of non-interruption of education as a basis for requesting an extension.

Sources: All from Helsingin Sanomat. 1 and 2, 8/24/25, A20; 3 and 4, 8/24/25, A19; 5 and 6, 8/15/25, A15; 7, 8/14/25, A30; 8 and 9, 8/8/25, A15; 10 and 11, 7/16/25, A24; 12 and 13, 7/16/25, A26; 14 and 15, 7/16/25, A10; 16 and 17, 7/18/25, A12; 18, 7/19/25, A28; 19 and 20 7/8/25, A13.

FINLANDIA FOUNDATION OF SEATTLE

SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS 2026

UP TO
\$1,000

The Seattle Chapter of the Finlandia Foundation offers two scholarships or grants of up to \$1,000 each for projects related to Finland or Finnish culture.

Application deadline: April 1, 2026 **Notification of awards:** By April 15, 2026

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. Be a resident of the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, or Idaho) pursuing study or a project related to Finland or Finnish culture, OR
 2. Be pursuing a project that relates to Finnish history, language, or culture in the Pacific Northwest, regardless of residency.
- College undergraduates are especially encouraged to apply.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Submit the following materials by the deadline:

- Project description letter — Include a summary of the proposed project, start and expected completion dates, and a budget explaining how the award funds will be used.
- Statement of merit — Evidence of the project's Finnish or Finnish American cultural, educational, or scientific significance.
- Letter of recommendation — From someone qualified to evaluate the proposed Finland-related project.
- Academic transcript (college students only) — An official transcript of all college-level coursework.
- Contact information — Name, mailing address, email address, and phone number.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Applications should be submitted in electronic form by email to:

scholarships@finlandiafoundationseattle.com.

Applications may also be sent by regular mail to:

Finlandia Foundation Seattle Chapter

P.O. Box 5024

Bellevue, WA 98009-5024

Applicants are advised to use registered mail or some other form of mailing that provides a receipt with the date of mailing when sending applications through regular mail. Applications sent by email must be received no later than April 1, 2026. Applications sent by regular mail must be postmarked no later than April 1, 2026. For more information see <https://www.finlandiafoundationseattle.com> or email scholarships@finlandiafoundationseattle.com.

FINLANDIA FOUNDATION SEATTLE CHAPTER FINNISH LANGUAGE COURSES SPRING 2026

MONDAYS/THURSDAYS ONLINE VIA ZOOM

MARCH 30/APRIL 4 – JUNE 15/18, 2026 (10 SESSIONS)

Starting March 30: Sanasto/Vocabulary Class – Monday evenings 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. PST

This class is for all levels, but it is not a beginner's class. Themes include:

- Home, rooms, household items, kitchen utensils; professions and verbs related to them

The course includes 10 sessions. No class on April 27 and Memorial Day.

Starting April 9: Paikka/Locations – Thursday evenings: 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. PST

This class is for advanced beginners and intermediate students. Themes include:

- Locations: Where, where from, where to, etc.
- How to know which ending to use for location expressions

The course includes 10 sessions. No class on April 30.

About our classes:

• Tuition for winter is \$150 per course (= 10 sessions) and is due at the start of the semester.

- Courses are first-come, first-served. Please complete this registration form, scan it, and email it to languageclasses@finlandiafoundationseattle.com. OR mail it with your payment check made to Finlandia Foundation Seattle Chapter to:

Finlandia Foundation Seattle Chapter
PO Box 5024 Bellevue, WA 98009

Online payment can be done at <https://www.finlandiafoundationseattle.com/language-classes/>

■ STUDENT INFORMATION

Full Name Phone Number
Email Mailing Address
City ZIP/Postal Code

■ CLASS LEVEL **Vocabulary Class** **Locations Class**

■ ARE YOU A FFSC MEMBER YET? MEMBERSHIP IS BY THE CALENDAR YEAR.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single \$25/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior \$20/yr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couple/Family \$30/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Couple \$25/yr |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting \$55/yr | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime \$350 |

■ PAYMENT DETAILS

Payment amount: tuition \$ Membership \$ Total \$
Check # Payment date Class Level



STRONGER TOGETHER – JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

The Finlandia Foundation of Seattle Chapter membership is by the calendar year.

- Single \$25/yr
- Couple/Family \$30/yr
- Supporting \$55/yr
- Senior \$20/yr
- Senior Couple \$25/yr
- Lifetime \$350

Full Name

Phone Number

Email Address

Mailing Address

City

ZIP/Postal Code

■ PAYMENT DETAILS (CHECK & ONLINE)

Membership \$ Donation \$ Total \$

Check # Payment date

Online payment: <https://www.finlandiafoundationseattle.com/join/>

■ VOLUNTEERING

I want to contribute by volunteering at FFSC

Cut this out and mail it with your payment check made to Finlandia Foundation Seattle Chapter to: Finlandia Foundation Seattle Chapter, PO Box 5024, Bellevue, WA 98009.

Dues and donations are tax deductible. We are a 501(c)3 corporation.

By Kristiina Hiukka
Honorary Vice Consul of Finland for Washington State

SEATTLE'S FINNISH INDEPENDENCE DAY DINNER AND DANCE 2025 BROKE THE RECORD ATTENDANCE

Just like millions of Finns, Finnish Americans, and Friends of Finns and Finland around the world, on December 6, 2025, more than 200 Washingtonians gathered to celebrate 108 years of Finnish independence. The annual Finnish Independence Day Dinner and Dance, lovingly organized by the Finlandia Foundation Seattle Chapter, was held at the iconic National Nordic Museum in Seattle. This cherished tradition has now grown into the largest Finnish community celebration in Washington State.

The evening opened in the museum's Fjord Hall with a "sparkling hour" where sparkling wine was accompanied with rye bread and herring, warm embraces, animated conversations, and joyful reunions. Portraits captured by photographer Olli Tumelius preserved the joy on people's faces, while the Finnish Choral Society, led by Maria Männistö, set a reverent and celebratory tone for the night ahead.

Candlelight guided us into Osberg Hall, beautifully transformed with blue hues and elegant table settings. After I welcomed our guests and wished everyone *sisukasta itsenäisyyttä*—independence with *sisu*, we joined in singing the national anthems of Finland and the United States watched the President Stubbs' annual video greeting for Finns abroad. The choir sang Sibelius's *Finlandia* as a tribute to the sacrifices of our veterans and Lottas.



A highlight of the program was the keynote address by global tech leader and author Mårten Mickos, whose reflections on independence resonated deeply. He described independence as both standing on one's own feet and holding hands with trusted partners—a living, evolving state rather than a completed achievement. His words connected Finland's history of resilience with contemporary realities: security rooted not only in defense, but in education, sustainability, equality, and the thoughtful development of artificial intelligence. By linking Finland's experience with that of Ukraine, Mickos reminded us that independence is never abstract; it is defended daily through courage, collaboration, and care for both people and planet.

The evening also marked a meaningful transition as we honored Honorary Consul Matti Suokko for his 25 years of dedicated service. In his annual Honorary Consul's Toast Matti reminisced about the many unforgettable events he spear-headed during his service. A message of appreciation from Washington Governor Bob Ferguson underscored the

strong ties between Finland and Washington State. We were also delighted by the Finnish School of Seattle students, whose reflections on independence—often involving sauna, irtokarkit, and cousins—offered a charming, intergenerational reminder of what makes Finland feel like home. Laughter filled the room during comedian and actor Miska Kajanus's performance, perfectly preparing us for an exuberant evening of dancing. Music by the beloved band Pirske brought everyone to their feet, beginning—appropriately—with ABBA's "Dancing Queen." The dance floor became a joyful expression of spirited, inclusive, and very Finnish in its warmth.

Celebrating Finnish Independence Day in U.S. reflects Finland's enduring commitment to partnership—Nordic, transatlantic, and global. As Mårten Mickos so eloquently reminded us, independence lives through small, determined acts taken every day. On this December night in Seattle, those acts took the form of music, remembrance, dialogue, laughter, and dancing—together. Kiitos to everyone who made this evening unforgettable. Until next year.



LOCAL ART NOTES

Contributor: Gary London

It's rare that a Finnish film has a first run in Seattle theaters, but **Jalmari Helander's "Sisu: Road to Revenge"** managed to do just that in the pre-holiday season. Following the success of the original "Sisu" in 2022, it is no surprise that the sequel should get wide distribution. In the first film, the aging protagonist, Aatami Korpi (Jorma Tommila) takes on the remnants of the German army in Lapland who attempt to rob him of the gold he has prospected, while his foe in the latter film is the Soviet army occupying Karelia where he has gone to deconstruct and carry away his family home. His Russian nemesis is a particularly vicious officer (Stephen Lang) who has been responsible for the death of his wife and children. There is blood, gore and violence a plenty in both films, but they have not only enjoyed a measure of popular success, they have also earned raves from critics. For example, writing of "Sisu: Road to Revenge," The Guardian's reviewer calls the film "terrific" and praises its "punchy, old-school stunt work, crisply uncluttered editing, and varied, inventive baddie splattering."

What most critics seem to have missed is what may be a more subtle, yet significant, geo-political relevance to "Road to Revenge." In the wake of the Russian attack on Ukraine, Finnish-Russian relations have deteriorated significantly, with Finns casting a wary eye to the neighbor across their 830 mile border. Could Helander be sending a message to Moscow? "Don't mess with Finland. You may have a larger and more powerful military, but we have people like Aatami Korpi, who single-handedly, ingeniously and perseveringly dispatches a sizable chunk of the Red army. Your Russia may not be Soviet, but it is clearly expansionist. It would be a mistake to miscalculate the degree to which Finnish sisu would bedevil you if you were to invade again." The final scene in "Road to Revenge" has the solitary protagonist reconstructing his house in Finland. As he does so, his neighbors come out with their tools to assist him. "Make no mistake," it seems to be saying, "Finns know when to come together in common cause. Take on sisu multiplied at your own peril."

Beast in Black, another Finnish metal band founded in 2015, will be part of the Halloween 40th Anniversary Tour, with a stop at the Paramount Theater on April 28 at 7:30. Helsinki-based Beast in Black has released three albums since its origin. Its breakout video, "Blind and Frozen," is said to have 50 million YouTube views. Ticketmaster is the source of tickets for this concert.

Congratulations to the **Finnish Choral Society of Seattle** on their invitation to sing in the lobby of McCaw Hall in advance of the December 28 performance of "The Nutcracker." The choir, always busy during the holiday season, will also be singing at the annual Kalevala Day Festival at the National Nordic Museum on April 23. With roots back to 1963, this venerable group of singers has brought pleasure to thousands over the years, both locally and in Finland.

DISCOVER LOCAL EVENTS

Date & Time	Event	Location	Details
March 30/April 4	Finnish language classes	Via Zoom	More details on page 10
April 9 at 6 PM	Folkdancing Demo & Workshop	National Nordic Museum	Kalevala Program
April 17 at 6-9PM	Nordic Mixer	National Nordic Museum, Osberg Hall	Free social gathering
April 18 1 PM	Kantele Performance & Workshop	National Nordic Museum	Kalevala Program
April 23 6 PM	Finnish Choral Society Concert	National Nordic Museum	Kalevala Program
April 28 7:30 PM	Beast in Black Concert	Paramount Theatre	Ticketed event
May 17	Concert for Peace	Latvian Center Seattle	Choir performance



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