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Finlandia Foundation National: Saving Finland in America
A Video Statement from FFN President Anne-Mari Paster

Hello:
I am Anne-Mari Paster, president of Finlandia Foundation National. And I am pleased to share the very good news that we have completed the first, critical step in “Saving Finland in America.”

In mid-June, Finlandia Foundation succeeded in securing the Finnish American Heritage Center and the largest collection of archives and artifacts telling the history of Finnish America.

With the recent closing of Finlandia University in Hancock, Michigan, these and other cultural and historical assets were in jeopardy.

Our agreement ensures that the collection will not be dispersed and sold in pieces, or even worse, discarded. The artwork and folk school are secure. The Finnish American Reporter will continue publication. It is good news.

However, this is just the beginning of our multi-phased plan to preserve and protect the “Smithsonian of Finnish America.” We are working now to secure the physical location of the extensive inventory, which consists of more than 40,000 artifacts. We see the need and benefit of digitizing records and making them accessible to researchers across the globe.

We must create an endowment to ensure that these entities will thrive in the years to come. And, we have salaries to pay and lights to keep on.

We take these responsibilities quite seriously, and we intend to fulfill our new duties. They are compatible with our 70-year-old mission as the largest, independent champion of Finnish culture and heritage and contemporary Finland in America.

Our strength is due to the support of thousands of donors, decades of sound decision-making and the fortitude of our leaders, and good old Finnish frugality.
When Finlandia University announced its closure, we made the quick---but carefully considered---decision to assume the responsibility of saving its irreplaceable treasures.

These treasures include Bibles from 1640—the first ever published in the Finnish language. They include the records from the American humanitarian effort to “Help Finland,” which was led by former President Herbert Hoover during World War Two.

They include copies of Finnish-American newspapers from all over the United States, going as far back as the late 1800’s. They include the oral histories of Finnish-Americans---like ourselves---telling the stories of our lives and how we came to this country. They include the largest collection of Finnish ryijys in the United States. They include the largest collection of Finnish glass in the United States. They include a large collection of original Marimekko dresses.

This is our history. Our culture. We had to preserve it! We needed to move quickly, but we made the right decision to save these treasures. At the same time, we have continued to fund Finlandia Foundation’s grants, scholarships and cultural programs, which are so important to the Finnish community.

To complete this mission of “Saving Finland in America” we will need your help. There is still much more work to be done. In this next phase, we will work with Finlandia University’s court-appointed receiver to find a permanent home for our cultural treasures.

We will then determine costs to digitize them and sustain them for generations to come. As these costs become clear, we promise to keep you informed, and ask for your help.

Now, we have crossed the first hurdle. We are on our way. We look forward to updating you again soon. Please continue to follow our social media and website, where we will share information as we move forward.

Kiitos. Thank you.

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About Finlandia Foundation National, Inc.

Fiercely Finnish since 1953, we champion our culture and heritage across the United States by supporting educational opportunities and promoting diverse, relevant, and enriching programs.

Finlandia Foundation National aims to connect, inspire and strengthen the Finnish-American community in the United States through a network of chapters. The Foundation raises funds to strengthen its endowment and ensure the continuation of its programs, which highlight outstanding contributions and achievements from Finnish-American artists and academics.

Finlandia Foundation National, Inc. awards dozens of grants each year, providing critical funding to maintain cultural traditions that represent the heritage of Finlandia and the diverse interests of Finnish America.

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