



Finlandia Foundation[®] National

Inspiring, celebrating and connecting the Finnish-American community since 1953

CENTENARY LECTURERS

**Sharon Franklin-
Rahkonen:**
“The History of Finnish
Independence”



(Clockwise) Thomas A. DuBois: “Finland and the *Kalevala*”

**K. Marianne Wargelin: “Beyond the Atlantic: Finland’s Independence
Viewed from Across the Sea”**

Börje Vähämäki: “Film, Literature and Finnish Identities”

Peter MacKeith: “A House of Finland”

A once-in-a-lifetime event like 100 years of Finnish independence deserves to be celebrated, but it should also spur reflection on a remarkable story. In recognition of the centennial of Finland’s declaration of independence, Finlandia Foundation National is pleased to present an expanded Lecturer of the Year program featuring scholars who are experts on topics related to Finland’s national independence and identity.

The Centenary Lecturers are available for FFN chapter programs between June 2016 and May 2018.

The History of Finnish Independence

How was a small, backward country in a remote corner of the Russian empire able to gain independence without being crushed? And more importantly, how was Finland able to remain independent in spite of many challenges?

In 1809, as part of the Napoleonic War, Finland's status changed from being an outlying part of the Swedish realm to a Grand Duchy of Russia. For about 80 years Finland enjoyed a relatively stable period, during which time Finnish culture flourished and modern nationalism took root. During the 1890's the Russian tsars implemented a policy of "Russification," which ran contrary to the previous progress Finland had made toward nationhood.

As Finns debated their future, a revolution broke out in Russia in 1905. Nicholas II was compelled to make concessions in order to keep the peace. Much

to the world's surprise, these concessions included granting Finns a democratic government, something Russian subjects did not have.

By 1906 Finland had a unicameral parliament with members chosen by universal and equal suffrage. But Nicholas II was still autocratic, and with the outbreak of World War I the Finns finally accepted that they must secede from the Russian empire. Finland declared independence in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution and endured a destructive civil war.

As we approach the centennial of Finnish independence, historians in Finland and elsewhere have been reconsidering the ways in which these events have often been portrayed in 20th century history.

Besides analyzing the pathway to independence, this lecture will discuss several factors which led to Finland's subsequent success as an independent nation.

About Sharon Franklin-Rahkonen

Sharon Franklin-Rahkonen received her Ph.D. from Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, where she specialized in Finnish history. Her dissertation was entitled "Jewish Identity in Finland." During this research, she and her husband lived in Finland as Fulbright Scholars for two years. In addition to studying minority identity in Finland, especially the Jewish community, her research includes women's suffrage and the development of Finnish education. She has made several trips to Finland to visit schools, the National Board of Education and the Ministry of Education.

In 2014 Sharon presented "Teaching History, Why and How: The Finnish Model and its Global Influence, a Summary" at the Conference for Teaching World History at Hubei University, China. The article was recently published in Chinese.



She is an Associate Professor of History at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where she teaches Russian history, secondary social studies education, general European history and a senior capstone course on the Nordic countries. In addition to teaching, she also supervises student teachers.

Sharon serves on the board of FinnFest USA and on the Finlandia University (Hancock, Michigan) Finnish Council in America.

PAST LECTURERS OF THE YEAR:

2015 Taina Elg with Heli Sirviö

2014 Suzanne Jurva and Erin Smith, filmmakers of the documentary *Yoopera!*

2013 Yvonne Lockwood, “Traditional Material Culture in Modern Finnish America”

2012 Glenda Dawn Goss, “Sibelius: A Composer’s Life and the Awakening of Finland”

2011 Carl Rahkonen, “The Finnish-American Musical Journey”

2010 Arnold Alanen, “From Finland to North America: Buildings, Landscapes and Cultural Change”

2007-09 Mark Coir and Susan Saarinen, “The Saarinen Architectural Legacy”

2006 Ben Stout and *Fire and Ice*, a documentary about The Winter War between Finland and Russia

Find more information on their programs at FinlandiaFoundation.org

Finlandia Foundation National is the premier network of Finnish-American organizations in the United States.

Founded in Pasadena, California in 1953, FFN administers grants, scholarships and programs supporting and celebrating Finnish heritage and Finnish-American culture and traditions, and contemporary Finnish America.

FFN is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information: FinlandiaFoundation.org



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