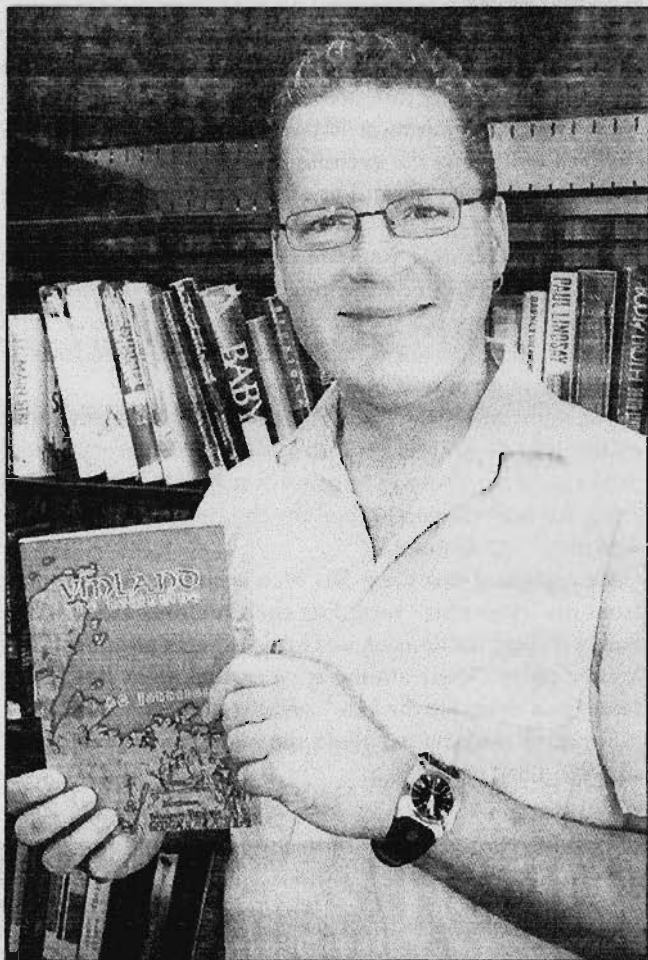


# Belleville author's first book steeped in Viking history



First time author R.G. Johnston holds up a copy of his book, *Vinland: The Beginning*. Photo: Laurie McVicar

By Laurie McVicar

**Belleville** - Vikings, buried treasure and plenty Indiana Jones style adventure. Welcome to the creative imagination of R.G. Johnston.

The Belleville author recently released his first novel, *Vinland: The Beginning*, a fictional story based on actual literary accounts detailing the Viking's discovery of North America.

In his book, Johnston follows the journey of three main characters - Norse merchant Thorfinn Karlsefni, his wife Gudrid and Adam of Bremen, a Christian monk - as they set sail on the Atlantic, all for very different reasons.

"Thorfinn is searching for a permanent settlement in Vinland," explained Johnston, a location set in modern-day Greenland. "I started writing the book mainly about him, but it really turned into a story about Gudrid."

A determined and likeable character, Gudrid secretly plans to return to the burial place of her two former husbands in nearby Markland. There, together with a band of explorers, she

seeks to uncover a secret cavern containing a city of gold.

For Adam of Bremen, his quest lies in discovering a break-away monastic order thought to possess religious relics able to bestow eternal life and incredible power.

"*Vinland: The Beginning* gives readers a glimpse into the lives of North America's earliest explorers, as they navigate not only dangerous seas and unknown lands, but love and betrayal, life and death, and their own ambitions," stated Johnston.

A self-professed history buff, Johnston undertook extensive research in order to bring this story to life, including a trip to the L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site at the tip of Newfoundland's northern peninsula, thought to be the original Vinland.

"In the 1960s and 70s archeologists excavated remnants of a settlement," said Johnston.

Owned by Parks Canada, the site produced a wealth of historical artifacts including ring-headed pins used to fasten the cloaks of Norsemen, a stone oil lamp, a whetstone, used to sharpen needles and small scissors, and the fragment of a bone needle.

Johnston's research also involved examination of the sagas, ancient Norse stories shared by word of mouth and featuring the sea voyages of Erik the Red and Bjarni Herjólfsson.

The legend of Vinland stems from a discovery made during Leif Eiriksson's historic first contact with the continent of North America, five centuries before Columbus. Based on the saga, a member of Leif's crew wanders away from camp one day and discovers grapes growing wild in the forest. It was an exciting discovery and led to Leif's naming of the new land as Vinland, Land of the Wine.

"All my characters are either mentioned in some historical document or based in history," noted Johnston, who has already started work on a second novel, tentatively named "Vinland: The Ragnarök."

Johnston, also a member of the Belleville Theatre Guild, stated he relied on his acting when creating the novel's character, making them as multi-dimensional as possible.

"I think character development is something a writer has, or doesn't have," said Johnston. "Personally, I'm a people watcher. I find people and the way they relate to one another interesting."

To order your copy of *Vinland: The Beginning*, visit [www.vinlandthebeginning.com](http://www.vinlandthebeginning.com) or pick one up at the following locations: Quinte Arts Council Office, 36 Bridge Street E.; Terry Thompson R.M.T., 77 College Street; Jazz Salon, 270 Church Street; Estetika Total Bliss, 270 Church Street; Dr. Dinsmore, 156 Bridge Street E. Unit 2; County Blossoms, 124 Main Street, Picton.

Johnston will also be at the Quinte Mall, in front of Ricki's, on Oct. 20 to sign books.