

Hey! It's Viking Day!

Forget Columbus Day! It's Viking Day!...Well, it *should* be, anyway. It was in October, 999 or 1000 AD, that Leif Ericson and his trusty band of followers landed in New Foundland searching for badly needed timber resources and, thus, discovered N. America some 500 years before Columbus! *[Actually, Biarni Heriulfson, another Viking, had sighted N. America previously.* It was because of Heriulfson's report of forested land to the south (of Greenland) that Leif Ericson had organized his expedition to investigate]*

Soon, Ericson had even founded a colony on New Foundland, and it looked as if the Vikings were on their way to colonizing the New World. In fact, in 1009, the very first European born in the New World was born right here in this Viking colony....Snorri, a nephew to Leif Ericson. But, all was not to end well...There were the Skraelings! The Skraelings were what the Vikings called the Indians, and, although relations between the two groups were OK to start with, things went downhill fairly rapidly. Anyhow, the Vikings were eventually chased out. They never came back to the New World, and, since they had no writing at the time, the knowledge of all that land to the south of Greenland was not passed on to the rest of the world, at least not until quite recently.

Hence, 500 years later, Columbus sails out of Spain, heading for Asia, and he has no idea that there are two new continents in his way....which is why, when he landed in the Caribbean, he thought he was in the Indies. Thus, he named the natives 'Indians'...which explains why we have two very different groups of people referred to by the same term...very confusing! So, actually, we should have an Ericson or Heriulfuson Day!...Which would make the Scandinavians ecstatic, but would no doubt raise an unbelievable amount of ire from our Italian brethren. Personally, I vote for 'Heriulfuson Day'! Hey, if there were an sense of justice in the world, we'd all be living in the United States of Heriulfuson!

