

Dear BNN members,

In accordance with the rules of the Belief Narrative Network, it is the duty of the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, to submit an annual report on the activities of the BNN over the previous year to the other members of the BNN.

Before presenting the report, however, I would like to draw your attention to the forthcoming election of the new Committee members and the new Chairperson of the Committee. Due to the cancellation of the ISFNR congress in 2020, when the meeting of the BNN Committee was supposed to take place (and at which a new Chair, and possibly some new members were expected to be elected), the election of the new Chair and members of the BNN Committee has been postponed until this present ISFNR congress. This means that the old BNN team, like that of the ISFNR Executive Committee, continued to serve on the board a year longer than expected.

For the forthcoming election, you were recently asked to propose candidates for the new BNN Committee members. The following BNN members have been proposed:

“OLD” COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Mare Koiva, ESTONIA

Kaarina Koski, FINLAND

Maria Ines Palleiro, ARGENTINA

Tok Thompson, USA

NEW CANDIDATES:

Eva Þórdís Ebenzersdóttir, ICELAND

Petr Janeček, CZECH REPUBLIC

Judit Kis-Halas, HUNGARY

Kristel Kivari, ESTONIA

Margaret Lyngdoh, ESTONIA (INDIA)

Bela Mosia, GEORGIA

Sonja Petrović, SERBIA

Nemanja Radulović, SERBIA

The election of new Committee members will run from the 20th to the 31st of August 2021, via emails. Those candidates that receive more than 50% negative votes (there are currently 139 BNN members, which means they should be rejected by at least 70 members), will not be elected as the new Committee members. The official confirmation of those candidates who do not receive more than 70 negative votes as the new members of the BNN Committee will take place at the BNN meeting during the ISFNR congress on **Sunday, 5 September 2021, at 2-3.30 p.m.** (CEST). According to the Statutes, the new Committee members will then elect a Chair among themselves during the course of the conference.

Following is the **report for 2020-21**.

While we have continued with most of the activities that we have established in the previous years, the main novelty that we have initiated since the last annual report which I would like to draw your attention to, is the new series of monthly ISFNR BNN online lectures on the topic of belief narratives which was launched in September 2020 (see no. 8 below).

1. Membership

After having had many new BNN members in the previous years, this year, like the year before, has seen a much smaller increase in the number of new members. This is certainly due to the pandemic and its consequences, in other words the number of cancelled conferences in which people interested in belief narratives could get to know about our activities, meet us and possibly join the Network. Nonetheless, **seven new members** have asked to join the BNN this year, meaning that there are now **140 members** in our network. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to welcome all our new members!

2. Publications

The publication of papers presented at the BNN conference on *Belief Narratives in Folklore Studies: Narrating the Supernatural*, which was run by the Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art and Culture in Guwahati and the BNN, and held in Guwahati, Assam, India, on 6-8 February 2019, was published in January 2021. The book, entitled *Belief Narratives in Folklore Studies: Narrating the Supernatural*, and edited by Dilip Kumar Kalita, can be purchased at www.abilac.org for 18 USD. You can get a glimpse of the cover of the book and its description at the same website www.abilac.org. I would like to thank Dilip for all his work with the organisation of the conference as well as with the volume.

3. BNN Conferences

The BNN conference entitled *Fear of the Other*, which was supposed to be held within the framework of the 18th ISFNR congress in Zagreb, Croatia, on 21-26 June 2020, was postponed due to the pandemic and will now take place during the ISFNR congress on 5-8 September 2021. We have received 33 submissions and have structured the conference into 8 panels: *Fear of the Supernatural* (BNN 1); *Fear of the Supernatural & Other* (BNN 2); *Fear of the Nightmares & Dreams* (BNN 3); *Fear of the Dead* (BNN 4); *Fear of Disease* (BNN 5); *Children and Fear* (BNN 6); *Fear of Animals and Shapeshifters* (BNN 7); and *Contemporary Fears* (BNN 8). I would like to thank Terry Gunnell for his valuable work, as well as Ülo Valk for his occasional help in the decision-making!

Due to the postponement of this BNN conference, the next BNN conference will have to be postponed too. We have nonetheless been in contact with Tommy Kuusela who has kindly offered to organize this next conference in the Folklore Archives in Uppsala, Sweden. A Call for Papers for the conference will be issued soon, presumably in the early fall of 2021.

4. The BNN e-Newsletter (see no. 5 at: <http://www.isfnr.org/belief-narrative-network.php>)

The BNN e-Newsletter continues to be issued four times a year. We would like to express our thanks to Kristel Kivari who is kindly taking care of the distribution of the Newsletter, and to Nidhi Mathur for uploading it to the ISFNR website! As before, we would also like to encourage everyone to send us information on their personal research, new publications, calls for papers, conferences and other events (also local!) related to belief narratives, as well as any other news that might be of interest to belief narrative scholars. Information should be sent in good time to Kristel Kivari (kristel.kivari@ut.ee; kristelkivari@hotmail.com)

At the BNN Committee meeting in Guwahati, we decided to launch a special section of the BNN Newsletter which would be dedicated to belief narrative research in particular countries. In the previous BNN newsletters, you have thus been able to read about the state of belief narrative scholarship in Meghalaya (India), Belarus and Assam. This section has lately, unfortunately, halted due to the lack of contributions. Nonetheless, as before, we would like to encourage all of you to send in contributions about the state-of-the-art in belief narrative scholarship in your own country.

5. The Student Award for the Best Paper in the Field of Belief Narratives

In 2018, the Committee decided to make some slight changes to the rules for the next competition for the best student paper award. Every second year (at the ISFNR congress and at the ISFNR interim conference) two awards (rather than one) will now be granted: one for the best paper written by a PhD student, and one for the best paper written by an undergraduate (BA) or graduate (MA) student. Due to the postponement of the ISFNR congress, the deadline for submissions was postponed until 15 December 2020. By that deadline, we had received three submissions for the best paper written by a PhD student. The commission (Tok Thompson, Mare Kõiva, and Kaarina Koski) unanimously decided to grant the award for the best paper to Alevtina Solovyeva, a PhD candidate in Folklore studies from the Folklore Department at the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu (Estonia), for her paper "*A Miracle Walking tree": The Supernatural in the Landscape Mythology and Social Space of Contemporary Mongolia*". As a part of the reward, the paper will be published in the *Electronic Journal of Folklore* 84, in December 2021. I would like to congratulate to Alevtina Solovyeva on receiving the prize and thank to the members of the commission for their invaluable work with the evaluation process!

6. The BNN Web Site (<http://www.isfnr.org/belief-narrative-network.php>)

As always, we encourage all those who still have not yet sent in data to send us their CVs (including names and surnames; degrees; present professional status and affiliations; e-mail addresses and contact details – as long as you are happy for these to be published on the Internet), along with a list of main research interests (in the form of key words – please add such information at the end of your CV) and a personal bibliography, including works related to belief narratives (that is books written in one of the major languages or with a summary in one of these

languages; and papers written in one of the major languages). The information should be sent to Kaarina Koski (kaakos@utu.fi) before the end of October for her to send it to the ISFNR admin Nidhi Mathur to put it on the website later this year (see no. 10 at: <http://www.isfnr.org/belief-narrative-network.php>). Kaarina up-dates the list of belief narrative scholars' CVs annually. We would once again like to thank Nidhi Mathur for her assistance in this matter, and Sadhana Naithani for her support.

7. BNN Facebook group

During the first wave of pandemic, in April 2020, the BNN Committee decided to open a BNN Facebook account which Tommy Kuusela kindly offered to make and administer. Bearing the situation in mind, the aim of BNN Facebook account was, and continues to be, to gather and share Corona/ Covid folklore of all kinds (jokes, memes, conspiracy theories, “myths” about wonder cures, (personal) experience narratives and so on), contextual information, observations (for instance, on attitudes towards foreigners on the streets), photos, links to other Facebook accounts, conferences and relevant web sites dealing with the same topic. As we hoped, the Facebook page has become a hub for the international material on corona, allowing both comparison and further research. There are currently 483 members of the BNN FB group. Everyone is welcome to use the data that is available here for their own research.

When the pandemic is over, we hope that the Facebook page will continue to serve as a site in which immediate exchange can take place among BNN scholars on other subjects as well. Perhaps themes can also be taken up for collection. Everyone is most welcome to actively participate in the discussions, and in uploading and sharing any information that might be of interest to belief narratives scholars. If you would like to be connected to this Facebook account in order to upload information or simply follow what is going on, please visit – and join – the following page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/625573241323757/about/>
I would like to express my thanks to Tommy for his work with regard to the FB group!

8. ISFNR Belief Narrative Network Online Lectures

Since September 2020, online events, entitled “The ISFNR Belief Narrative Network Online Lectures”, have been taking place via zoom on the first Friday of each month at 5 p.m. CET (except in July and August). As of now, BNN members, and others interested, have been able to watch **nine** pre-recorded lectures, followed by live on-line discussions with the following

lecturers: Tim Tangherlini, USA; Kaarina Koski, Finland; Ülo Valk, Estonia; Tok Thompson, USA; Ines Maria Palleiro, Argentina; Terry Gunnell, Iceland; Willem de Blécourt, Netherlands; Tulika Chandra, India; and Judit Kis-Halas, Hungary/Slovenia. On 3 September 2021 we will be listening to Carl Lindahl's lecture and we have already scheduled other lecturers to give lectures until February 2022. All lectures are, and will continue to be, available on the ISFNR/BNN website: <http://www.isfnr.org/belief-narrative-network.php>.

Should any of you be interested in giving a lecture in the future, please send the Committee Chair a title and a short abstract of the lecture for evaluation. The BNN Committee will announce a list of further lectures in due course.

I would like to express my gratitude to Eva Þórdís Ebenezersdóttir for kindly assisting us with technical issues! We would also like to thank Nidhi Mathur and Sadhana Naithani for their support in arranging this too.

9. Other Information

As usual, we would like to encourage all members to continue sharing information about the BNN with their colleagues. Everyone interested in belief narratives of any kind is welcome to join the Network! If you are aware of any scholar who is interested in belief narratives and wishes to become a member of BNN, please remind them that all they need to do is contact the chairperson in order to receive information about all future BNN activities. Potential members should nonetheless be informed that they need to join both the ISFNR and the BNN. If any of you has not yet become a member of the ISFNR, please bear in mind that, in accordance with our statute, the BNN forms part of the ISFNR and official membership is only open and free to those who are members of the ISFNR. If you are not yet a member of ISFNR, you can nonetheless receive information about our activities, and participate in our conferences and meetings. However, you will not have the right to vote for members of the BNN Committee or be able to become a BNN Committee member yourself. Everyone is therefore encouraged to join the ISFNR (see: <http://www.isfnr.org/becoming-a-member.php>; <http://www.isfnr.org/ISFNR-membership.php>); please contact the Chairperson of the Membership Committee, Prof. Kimberly J. Lau (lau@ucsc.edu), if you have any questions regarding the ISFNR membership.

Should anyone wish to cease being a BNN member, and receive no further information about our activities, please let us know and we will delete you from our list.

As always, all BNN members are also most welcome to suggest their own ideas about the future activities of the BNN and to comment on the decisions taken by the BNN Committee members. We will be happy to hear from you!

Keep safe, best wishes,

Mirjam, on behalf of the BNN Committee (2016-2021):

Willem de Blécourt, Terry Gunnell, Anders Gustavsson, Desmond Kharmawphlang, Fumihiko Kobayashi, Mare Kõiva, Kaarina Koski, Dilip Kumar Kalita, Mirjam Mencej (*chair*), Maria Ines Palleiro, Tok Thompson and Ülo Valk.