



The Kids' Archaeology Program, Iceland

-Goals and activities-

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Summary

The *Kids Archaeology Program* (Fornleifaskóli barnanna) is an educational and developmental project that started in 2007, based in Þingeyjarsýslur County in North East Iceland. The founders of the project are *Litlulaugaskóli* (local elementary school in North East Iceland) and *Narfastaðir Guesthouse*. The overall goal of the project is to connect different enterprises, institutions, and individuals in the region order to increase the public awareness of cultural remains and their relationship to modern and historic environment and land use practices. At the same time the program seeks to better connect different parts of the community in order to increase the understanding and knowledge of all those involved in the project of the value of cultural remains and pass on this heritage to future generations.

The project is based on a close long term cooperation between the local community and Icelandic and international archaeologists and environmental scientists who have been working in Þingeyjarsýslur since 1996 as part of the interdisciplinary *Landscapes of Settlement* project (now part of the *International Polar Year* (IPY) effort) and several US National Science Foundation Arctic Social Sciences sponsored *Research Experience for Undergraduates* (REU) programs directed by Dr. Sophia Perdikaris. These scholars and their participating home institutions (including *Archaeological Institute Iceland, U Iceland, Mývatn Research Station, City University of New York, U Colorado, Stirling Univ. Edinburgh Univ., U Durham, U. Leeds, U Bradford*) have from the beginning provided the professional basis for the project, working in close cooperation with local educators, heritage institutions, and community organizations. All parties have worked productively together to create and refine a school program integrating hands-on learning, closely supervised student participation in scientific fieldwork, and classroom instruction that is now increasingly incorporating digital technology and map-based learning initiatives.

The Kids' Archaeology program in Þingeyjarsýslur is now participating in the international *Islands of Change Project*, funded by the US NSF and directed by Dr. Perdikaris that works to connect inner city New York students with students and teachers in Iceland and Barbuda in the West Indies. The Islands of Change project seeks to connect local communities (urban and rural) all affected by past and present global change through direct engagement in field science backed by class room instruction and aided by cutting edge digital technology to combine the efforts and expertise of local residents and international scientists in global change research while engaging

and connecting young people in all these diverse communities. The experience of the Kids' Archaeology program in Þingeyjarsýslur has been a key to the expanded Islands of Change effort, and lessons learned in NE Iceland are now being applied much more widely.

Many different activities by The Kids' Archaeology program have been interlaced with the curriculum of Litlulaugaskóli. For the last two summers there has been a summer school, organized by The Kids' Archaeology program. The summer school is meant for teenagers, and there they get the opportunity to expand their knowledge and experience and work in the field with archaeologists. The pupils that have been participating in the field activities of The Kids' Archaeology program have gotten insight to the world of archaeology and gotten training in scientific field methods by direct contact in small groups with instructors and fellow students who span the range from PhD and MA-level instructors to doctoral students to undergraduates closer to their own age. That is a gateway to the world of scientific work for those kids and they get a feeling for the work all those "specialists" (from study of pollen and insects to artifacts and environmental history) are doing when they visit each summer. They also practice many different skills through participating in the activities of the Kids' Archaeology program, drawing conclusions from their own observations of the physical record of the natural heritage around them, while improving drafting, photography, and record keeping skills and practicing English while getting to know people from very different cultures- and discovering that science can be done by people just like themselves.

The activities and experiences of The Kids' Archaeology program are going to be put into formal curriculum, educational material and guidelines for teachers. That will make it possible for other schools in cooperation with archaeologists to use the experience and development done in The Kids' Archaeology program in Þingeyjarsýslur. Archaeological remains are all around and research is being done in very many places, and interest has already been expressed in developing similar programs in South Greenland, Faroes, and the Orkney Islands as well as in other parts of Iceland. So the opportunities for fruitful cooperation are numerous, and the program is only beginning to fulfill its potential.

1. Introduction

For the last decade a group of Icelandic and international archeologists (from US, UK, Denmark, Poland, and Norway) have been working on collaborative projects in Þingeyjarsýsla in north east Iceland. This region has become a recognized center for research into *Historical Ecology* and *Long Term Human Ecodynamics*; investigating human interaction with landscapes and climate over the millennial scale with sustained multi-investigator, multi-disciplinary projects seeking to better understand the complex interactions of people and environment since the first settlement in the Viking Age (Fisher, Hill & Feinman 2009, Crumley 2006). Multi-season excavations have been carried out at the sites of Hofstaðir, Sveigakot, Skútustaðir, and Hrísheimar in Mývatnssveit (McGovern, Vésteinsson et al 2007, Lucas 2010 forthcoming, updates on www.nabohome.org), and research on behalf of *Hið þingeyska fornleifafélag* (Þingeyjarsýsla archaeological association) in Þingey and Skuldaþingey in Skjálfafljót, at Litlu Núpar and Þegjandadalur. There has also been ongoing research on pre-Christian burials, charcoal burning pits, cairns and herding structures, pollen and sediment coring, Nitrogen and Carbon isotope distribution, boundary dykes, and many other smaller projects across the broader district, all tied together by chronological horizons provided by local volcanic ash layers and systematic site survey carried out by Archaeological Institute Iceland teams. Through this sustained multi-year work multiple connections between the local community and a diverse group of Icelandic and international scholars have been established and several projects aimed at incorporating local heritage knowledge and farming experience into the ecodynamics projects have proven very productive and successful. This network and long history of collaboration forms the basis for the Kids' Archaeology project discussed in this report.

Kids' Archeology Program, Iceland (Fornleifaskóli barnanna) was founded in spring 2007. The founders were Unnsteinn Ingason, manager of Narfastaðir guesthouse and Baldur Daníelsson schoolmaster, of Litlulaugaskóli. In Kids Archeology Program the archeology is intertwined systematically with the teaching in the primary school. The founders got archeologists to work with them on developing the idea, and the outcome is this innovative Archeological program for kids. Many parties are involved in the development of the project, each contributing in different areas, including Brooklyn and Hunter Colleges of the City University of New York, Institute of

Archaeology North Iceland, Edinburg University School of GeoSciences, Þingeyskur sagnagarður, Þingeyjarsveit Municipality and Hið þingeyska fornleifafélag. The activities of the Kids Archaeology have up to now and will continue to be a developing project, with continual review and improvement to better serve our community and to make use of new opportunities provided by expanded local, national, and international connections.

2. The objectives of the project

The overall goal of the project is to connect enterprises, institutions and individuals in the community in order to increase the knowledge of cultural remains in our surroundings and to better understand the long term interactions of humans and nature which have created the landscapes we inhabit today and will pass on to our children. The objective of founding this project is to create a favorable setting for the cooperation of different individuals and institutions in the dissemination of history and the cultural heritage, conservation and preservation of sites of archaeological, historical, and environmental importance, and conservation of knowledge and the wisdom of the older generations held in living memory and in preserved writing, maps, paintings, and photography. We intend to use the past to excite and inspire the younger generations and enhance teaching and learning in our schools. We plan to combine local expertise, practical knowledge and our own understanding of the landscape we live in, know well, and love deeply with scientific perspectives provided by Icelandic and international scholars and institutions to promote research, education, environmental awareness, and respect for the cultural heritage.

Objectives:

- Increase knowledge of younger people of the cultural and environmental history of Icelanders, cultural remains and archaeology on a broad base.
- Strengthen the cooperation of young people both on national and international level in the fields of cultural history, natural history, archaeology, and field science research.
- Establish and promote the cooperation of institutions, associations and enterprises on national and international level. To encourage, support, and reinforce young people/children's interest in participating in different projects in knowledge transfer in the cultural history and archaeology.

To attain the goals of the Kids Archaeology program, the program has established an office and hired a program coordinator, Sif Jóhannesdóttir. The project can also cooperate with individuals, enterprises and institutions in order to develop and run different parts of the project.

Introducing the archaeology systematically for children and adolescents is opening a gateway into scientific methods of working and the ideology of social and natural sciences. The goals of the Kids' Archaeology program have many things in common with the *Local Studies* approach in which pupils study different things by first studying them in their nearest environment. In the Kids' Archaeology program pupils learn how to learn about history and archaeology through actual research being done in their home area. They get the opportunity to study the lives of people living in their home area in the past and are encouraged to interact with elders and gain a wider context for the traditions and stories of their own families and communities.

3. Methods

All around Iceland archeological research is being done every year. The outcomes of the research often reveal new facts and knowledge on the history of Iceland and individual places in the country.

Kids' Archaeology program is grounded on the idea of giving pupils in elementary school the opportunity to learn from and work with archaeologists in school and in fieldwork. The project can be divided into two main parts, on one hand the teaching as part of formal schoolwork and on the other participating in fieldwork during the summer.

One of the aims of the project is to prepare educational material for elementary school. The educational material will be based on the work already being done in the Kids' Archeology program. It will be made so that it can be used in different schools all around Iceland focusing on different archaeology research around the country. The idea is that it can also be used in other countries, and initial contacts have been made with institutions in South Greenland, Orkney, and the Faroe Islands as well as Barbuda/Antigua in the Caribbean.

4. Founders and supporting parties

4.1 The board

In the board of Kids Archaeology project are:

Unnsteinn Ingason, manager of Narfastaðir guesthouse and chairman of Þingeyska fornleifafélagið (The Archaeological association of Þingeyjarsýsla county)

Baldur Daníelsson, principal of Litlulaugaskóli (elementary school).

Pétur Ingólfsson, teacher at Litlulaugaskóli.

Professor. Sophia Perdikaris, Brooklyn College, New York.

Professor Tom McGovern, Hunter College, New York.

4.2 The founders

4.2.1 Litlulaugaskóli

Litlulaugaskóli, is the elementary school in Reykjadalur in Suður-Píngeyjarsýsla county. The school is run by the municipality Píngeyjarsveit. It is a small school out in the countryside of North East Iceland, in January 2009 the pupils were 33 in the elementary school and 12 in the kindergarten. The project has been a part of the school curriculum. Developing a project with a small school gives great opportunities because of the logistical flexibility and how easy it is to get a holistic picture of the project while maintaining an individualized teaching and learning program for the pupils.

4.2.2 Narfastaðir guesthouse

The guesthouse has been operating for over two decades now. The operation has expanded and now there are 43 rooms in the guesthouse plus a restaurant operation. Annual number of overnight stays is now 8,000. During the last years the managers of Narfastaðir have gotten more and more interested in using cultural remains in better promoting cultural and environmental tourism in the area. In 2004 all the place names on the farm were recorded, that was both financed and done by the initiative of the managers of the guesthouse. There are 230 place names on the farm that have been documented and mapped with GPS. Because of all that work the farm is one of the best documented farms in Iceland regarding cultural remains. Archaeological research has also been done on the farm in cooperation with Hið þíngseyska fornleifafélag, The Institute of Archaeology Iceland and Mývatn Research Station. The managers have also been working on a “Local food and heritage trail”. The aim of that project is to intertwine food culture, cultural remains and tourism, in recreation and innovation in tourism.

4.3 Supporting parties

4.3.1 CUNY Hunter College & Brooklyn College

The City University of New York is a public institution comprising ten colleges in the New York City metropolitan area. Its mission since the early 20th century has been to provide top quality education to New York residents normally unable to afford higher education, and CUNY is

proud of its tradition of providing opportunities and upward mobility to generations of ethnically diverse working class New Yorkers. Sophia Perdikaris and Thomas McGovern are both professors with appointments to the CUNY PhD program in Anthropology as well as supervising laboratories in zooarchaeology at the Brooklyn and Hunter College campuses. They have worked on archaeological research in Iceland since 1984 in close cooperation with Icelandic and international teams of archaeologists. CUNY researchers and students have been working with Institute of Archaeology Iceland (FSÍ), U Iceland, U Oslo, and the international NABO cooperative (North Atlantic Biocultural Organization, www.nabohome.org) in offering an international field school initially based in Mývatnssveit aimed at students pursuing post-graduate (doctoral and master's degree) programs since 1996. In 2005, the field school shifted venue to Vatnsfjörður in West Fjords. Since then the school has been run by Dr. Karen Milek (U Aberdeen) and Gardar Gudmundsson (FSI) with the active participation of Christian Keller (U Oslo) and a full range of NABO collaborating specialists. The Vatnsfjord Field School in North Atlantic Archaeology is now a collaboration involving the Icelandic Ministry for Education, the Archaeological Institute Iceland (FSI), the University Centre of the West Fjords, the Medieval Westfjords Society, University of Iceland, University of Aberdeen, University of Oslo, and CUNY (<http://www.nabohome.org/fieldschools/fieldschools.html>). The NABO/ FSI field school has trained students from 31 nations, and many have gone on to pursue highly productive careers in North Atlantic archaeology (Dr. Milek herself was a graduate of the now-legendary class of 1997). Since 1999, a series of science education grants from the US NSF under the Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) Program has allowed Sophia Perdikaris to bring groups of inner city CUNY students to Iceland as part of a combined laboratory, classroom and fieldwork experience that has changed many lives and inspired many CUNY students to take up scientific careers. The success of the REU program in broadening the horizons and expanding educational potential for urban undergraduate and high school students has provided some inspiration and very useful practical experience relevant to the Kids' Archaeology cooperation. The current *Islands of Change* project includes more REU support, and a major topic for the CUNY REU students will be learning about community involvement through cooperation with the Kids' Archaeology program. CUNY students will thus be learning from the Þingeyjarsýsla community as they engage with the Icelandic Kids' Archaeology program and will work closely

with students close to their own age range to maximize the potential for peer-learning and forming international friendships.

4.3.2 Hið þingeyska fornleifafélag

Hið þingeyska fornleifafélag was founded the 2nd of October 2004. The founders were individuals, companies and institutions in Þingeyjasýsla county. The goal of the association is to reinforce research on Icelandic medieval history, prepare and perform recording and research of archaeological remains in Þingeyjarsýsla county. The association has worked with The Institute of Archaeology Iceland, which has been the scientific counselor of the association and been conducted recording and research on behalf of “Hið þingeyksa fornleifafélag”. The operation of “Hið þingeyska fornleifafélag” is the basis of The Kids Archaeology program.

4.3.3 Fornleifastofnun Norðurlands

Fornleifastofnun Íslands (Institute of archaeology, Iceland) is an independent charity governed by statutes (Stj.tíð. 1995, B 62-65, nr. 396) in accordance with the Funds and Institutions Act nr. 19/1988. The statutes were confirmed by the Ministry of Justice on 7 July 1995. That year, activities started formally, but the Institute took over various researches run by the founders of the institute ever since 1989. The aim of the Institute is to increase research and publication in archaeology and related fields. Particular emphasis has been put on development and improvement and members of the Institute have participated in various activities: the revision of the antiquities legislation and the reorganization of the heritage management; development and improvement of methods of archaeological survey, excavation, environmental assessment and data management. The Institute runs a database of research data and information on Icelandic sites (ISLEIF) and publishes an international journal on Icelandic archaeology and related subjects: **Archaeologia Islandica** (ArchIs). The Institute has participated in various educational programmes, provided educational grants and opportunities for practical studies and it runs an international **field school**, giving field training to young scholars. (<http://instarch.is>). Fornleifastofnun Íslands has been one of the main cooperatives in The Kids Archaeology program from the beginning. Archaeologists working at the institute have taken part in the organizing and teaching within the project and will continue to provide expertise and support.

4.3.4 Þingeyskur sagnagarður

Þingeyskur sagnagarður is an association that was founded in 2006. The association has been working on an idea of an outdoor landscape cultural area with history as its theme. Within the landscape of the district there are number of places important in the history of Christianity and parliament in Iceland (Þorgeirskirkja, Goðafoss and Þingey). The aim of the association is to gather new information, collect and share the knowledge on local history. The main goals are: to contribute to the conservation of historical remains, folktales and other cultural remains in the area, to reinforce research on Icelandic medieval history and the history of Christianity. Emphasis is upon promoting practical use and dissemination of historical knowledge based on the landscape of the district and thereby strengthening cultural tourism in the area.

4.3.5 Þingeyjarsveit

Þingeyjarsveit municipality extends an area of 5,000 km² It stretches from Vaðlaheiði in the west to Mývatnsheiði in the east, and from Flatey in the north to Grímsvötn in Vatnajökull glacier in the south. Þingeyjarsveit municipality runs Litlulaugaskóli which is one of the founders and main partner of The Kids Archaeology program. During the summer when the school is not operating, children from 13-16 years old working for the municipality have gotten the opportunity to participate in the Kids' Archaeology program while still getting their summer working salaries. The good will of the municipality is very important for the continued success of the Kids' Archaeology project.

5. Islands of Change Project

Islands of Change project is funded by the Arctic Social Sciences program of the Office of Polar Programs of the US National Science Foundation to fund graduate and undergraduate students to participate in original research in Iceland, Barbuda and New York and to work in outreach through the Kids' Archaeology program. The idea is to take the Icelandic interdisciplinary collaborative model of the last three decades (the work in Iceland has been in the forefront of research and is seen as one of the most important contributions to scientific discourse in the region) and apply it to Barbuda and form timeline comparisons of people/environment interactions in areas that are connected by the Atlantic (circum Atlantic comparisons) but represent climatic and ecological extremes. The Obama administration's stimulus funding (ARRA) made this project possible and enables us to contribute funds to both get project

equipment for the Kids Archaeology and enable travel for the participants. Participating in this international project is very important for The Kids' Archaeology program. Archaeologists and students studying archaeology at Hunter Collage and Brooklyn Collage take a major part in the teaching scientific counseling. "Islands of change" has brought the project a great gift of GPS equipment and cameras as part of the *GPS+ Camera=Empowerment* initiative. This initiative seeks to enhance active local participation in global science and heritage conservation by providing kits of hand held GPS units and

digital cameras that can allow student groups supervised by their teachers and other professionals to systematically collect place-based information about environment, heritage, and archaeology and geo-reference photos and other information collected. Garmin GPS units are used for collection of the locational information, with mapping software kindly donated to the project by Ríkarður



Sigmundsson of Garmin Iceland. Improved place name locations and additional place name information collected by the Kids' Archaeology project will be used to update and improve the Garmin base maps for Iceland, providing a better long term resource for all. The information collected will be uploaded to the NABO projects reporting system based on *Google Maps/Google Earth* via a user friendly interface developed by the NABO webmaster Dr. Anthony Newton of U Edinburgh School of GeoSciences for reporting the other science data collected as part of the *International Polar Year* effort. Classes will be able to see and access their information as it is posted and also see information posted by their friends in Barbuda and in other North Atlantic areas participating in the initiative. A wide range of digital materials (photos, interviews with elders, place based school projects, significant landscape points) can be shared and disseminated through this map based interface system (already familiar to most Icelanders through their use of *Google Earth*). International cooperation and shared expertise provide a good basis for partnership in both science and education, and by combining the Islands of Change project with the Kids' Archaeology program we plan to work together to go beyond community outreach to have genuine community involvement in real cutting edge global change

science. The Kid's Archaeology project will be contributing valuable information in the same format and location as the professional science projects: kids will be making a real contribution to international science and local heritage while also learning new skills and making new friends.

6. Activities

The Kids' Archaeology program formally began with the visit and lecture of Adolf Friðriksson the manager of Institute of Archaeology, Iceland. Though only a short time has passed since, a lot has happened. The pupils that have participated in the project have gotten the opportunity to try various things in archaeology,

2007

In May 2007 Litlulaugaskóli had a theme week dedicated to archaeological research and cultural remains in Reykjadalur. During the summer 2007 Icelandic and international archaeologists were visited by Litlulaugaskóli at Hrísheimar and Hofstaðir in Mývatnssveit. The archaeologists told the pupils about the work of archaeologists, especially fieldwork. In the autumn the school went on an excursion to Litlu Núpar í Aðaldal, where a ship burial had been found.

2008

The Kids Archaeology program operated a summer school in archaeology in 2008. Þingeyjarsveit municipality cooperated in the summer school by letting kids from 13-16 who were working for the municipality participate in the summer school and still get their wages. Those were the same kids as had been participating in the activities of the project during the winter. The summer school began with an introduction and Dr. Thomas McGovern from Hunter College gave an lecture on the fieldwork of archaeologists. Then the participants worked on field for 5 days, at Skútustaðir in Mývatnssveit, under the supervision of site director Ágústa Edwald, archaeologist at The Archaeological Institute Iceland now completing doctoral research at Aberdeen University. Besides



working in the field the participants went on an excursion to the excavated inland site of Sveigarkot in Mývatnssveit. At the summer school the participants got the opportunity to learn how to prepare for research, how to conduct a dig, how to handle objects, how to use volcanic tephra to date sites and layers, and the first steps of conservation, and about recording data. They also got some insight to the theoretical part of archaeology and environmental science and how social science and natural science increasingly cooperate on joint field and laboratory projects investigating human interactions with environment.

For the theme days at Litlulaugaskóli for the autumn 2009 the theme was archaeology. Dr. Sophia Perdikaris from Brooklyn College led a workshop in October 2009 where students learned about the osteology of humans and animals. A “pagan burial” was made on the school premises complete with plastic skeleton and modern replica artifacts, where the pupils could practice what they had learned in digging techniques. They measured the area and defined it, researched the tephra, and everything was recorded on drawings, photographs and in writing. When the digging was finished all that had been recorded was studied and the information interpreted. The kids wrote their own story of the experience and their own interpretation of the burial and its context. To widen the pupils’ insight into the methodology of archaeology, Þóra Pétursdóttir, an archaeologist at The Institute of Archaeology Iceland, prepared a “garbology-project”, where the pupils learned how to read information about individuals from their garbage.

In December 2009 The Kids’ Archaeology program organized a museum tour for pupils in 5th-10th (10-15 years) in Litlulaugaskóli. Museums visited: The Air Transport Museum, The Industry Museum, The Akureyri Museum and Smámunasafnið (museum of small things). The younger pupils 6-9 years old visited the Whale Museum and The Museum House at Húsavík.

2009

The Kids Archaeology program organized and held a summer school in a similar form as the year before. In 2009 15 pupils participated in a 4 days program, 1 day introduction and learning how to act on field, 3 days of fieldwork and 1 day excursion. Ágústa Edwald was again in charge of the work on field. The pupils worked on different tasks and they got the opportunity to dig, float, sieve, make profile and horizontal plan drawings, take digital photos and do other recording. The work was done in sessions, where one or two pupils worked under the guidance

of each group of archaeologists at different work stations (sieving, coring, taking elevations with a level, flotation, excavation, drawing and stratigraphic interpretation). Thomas McGovern guided the excursion to Hofstaðir and Hrísheimar field trips as in the 2008 season. Later in the season the students and staff enjoyed participation in an experimental archaeology project led by Dr.



Mike Church (U Durham) and Drs. Katy Roucoux and Ian Lawson (U Leeds) in which a Viking age charcoal pit was reconstructed and ignited with spectacular results. A barbeque dinner hosted by Hafrolaekjarskóli for all the Kids' Archaeology students and their families, Icelandic teaching staff, IPY scientists and NYC REU students was memorable fun and a great occasion to view photos of the teams in action over the season and to enjoy some good times together.

In October 2009 The Kids' Archaeology program held another school workshop. During that workshop we had teachers from USA and Antigua/Barbuda, Dr. Sophia Perdikaris, Dr. Edith Gonzalez de Scollard (educational assessment director for the Islands of Change project) and Dr. Reginald Murphy (director of the Nelson's Dockyard Museum in Antigua and our major scientific collaborator for the Barbuda end of the Kid's Archaeology). In this workshop students learned about how archaeologists get information from the objects they find, bones, tools etc. They got the opportunity to research and sort bones and other things found in stratified midden deposits. They also tried to make stone tools from obsidian and learned some prehistoric technology first hand. One session was on oral history and how to collect it, led by Dr. Gonzalez de Scollard based on her experience at the *American Museum of Natural History* in New York and her extensive field and archival experience in the Caribbean. Then the students tried to write with goose feathers, and they even wrote a letter to pupils in America with the feathers. Dr. Reginald Murphy introduced his work on the Island of Antigua in the Caribbean, providing some background for the developing Icelandic- Caribbean connection. Dr. Sophia Perdikaris also delivered 6 Garmin GPS and 6 digital cameras, as part of the GPS+ Camera IPY project. In November Unnsteinn Ingason gave lessons in how to use the GPS's, and how they can be used to collect and map place names. After the workshop the Kids' Archaeology Icelandic team

attended the ICOM /CECA 2009 Annual Conference in Reykjavik on *Museum Education in a Global Context - Priorities and Processes*, and participated in a range of lectures and activities along with Drs. Perdikaris, Murphy, and Gonzalez de Scollard which provided some useful international contacts and ideas for further involvement of museums in the Kid's Archaeology initiative. In January 2010, Unnsteinn Ingason will participate in the winter field school and Barbuda Kid's Archaeology program in Barbuda West Indies to continue and expand the connections established by the October 2009 meetings.

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