

Our History:

The **SWISS CULTURAL SOCIETY**, formerly the **SWISS CLUB MATTERHORN**, Calgary was founded on March 17, 1960 at the "Isle of Capri" which was the Italian Club by:



Frank X. Wagner (President)
Arnold Bohni (Vice President)
Arnold Rutzer (Treasurer)
Paul Küng (Secretary)
Elisabeth Küng (Assistant Secretary)

Over 40 years ago, a number of Swiss citizens living in Calgary decided that instead of their traditional get-together for a Jass at the Calgary Press Club near the old Herald building downtown, the formation of a Club to represent the Swiss community as a whole should be studied and acted upon. According to the records, their first meeting took place on Thursday March 17, 1960 at the "Isle of Capri". 31 people attended and elected an executive consisting of Frank Wagner as President, Arnold Bohni as Vice-President, Arnold Rutzer as Treasurer, Paul Kueng as Secretary and Elizabeth Kueng as Assistant Secretary. A representative of the Calgary herald took a picture of the Executive for publication in that newspaper.

The minutes of the second meeting indicate that the name "Matterhorn" was chosen and the annual membership was established at \$ 5.00 per couple, \$ 3.00 for singles.

Recruitment for membership and participation of Swiss community activities was as difficult a task then as it is now.

In the 1960's, there was a reasonable influx of new young Swiss immigrants into the Calgary area. A lonely immigrant would often find his way to the Noble Hotel and was bound to run into a few Swiss compatriots there. One of these established old-timers was a gentleman by the name of Ernie Brunner, who was one of the foremost gardeners for Calgary's elite. Ernie Brunner was known to initiate these young Swiss newcomers with a carefully established dose of whiskey, the potency of which unfortunately was unknown to these greenhorns. Once the poor newbie got over the next few days of "Canada sickness", Ernie would open his heart in true Swiss fashion and offer the newcomer a good job at fair wages. Starting in the late 1950's, the house of Arnold and Rosa Rutzer was always open to new boarders. Most Swiss newcomers were welcome to stay at their place and over the years, they had approximately 35 boarders.

In March of 1964 a curling team from Switzerland visited Calgary and was welcomed by our club.

In July of 1964 under the presidency of Arnold Rutzer a fairly momentous decision was made, namely to organize a charter flight from Calgary to Zurich for the price of \$ 370.00 Canadian.

Unfortunately, the minutes do not indicate the exact number of people who participated, however, this project could be termed a full success.

In 1965 the club had the honor of entertaining the Swiss Ambassador to Canada and the Swiss Consul from Winnipeg. A cocktail party was arranged at the Summit Hotel and about 100 people attended.

In 1967, Canada's Centennial Year, another substantial project was undertaken. Our club was asked by the Calgary Stampede Board to enter a float into the annual Stampede Parade. Indeed the momentous task was tackled with typical Swiss tenacity and we proudly entered our float depicting the Matterhorn, alphorn players, musical groups etc. During Stampede in 1967 there were also Air Balloon races and two teams from Switzerland entered the competition and did very well. It must have been some sight for the Swiss to watch a

balloon with the name of the Circus Knie over the skies of Calgary.

In the in-between years, the club stayed active with bowling, curling, August 1st, Landsgemeinde, socials with tea and Swiss cookies, attendance of the annual food fair, showing of films and slides and many more activities.

The next big highlight was the 1988 Winter Olympics. For the first time, the Winter Olympics were extended to 16 days, including three weekends. The Alpine events were expanded from three to five with the inclusion of the super giant slalom and the Alpine combined. Team events were added in Nordic combined and ski jumping. We were extremely proud to celebrate our athletes. The Swiss netted 5 gold, 5 silver & 5 bronze and beat out the Canadians who earned 2 silver & 2 bronze. Gold: Pirmin Zurbriggen for men's downhill, Vreni Schneider for women's GS & slalom, Switzerland 1 for 4-man bobsleigh & Hippolyt Kempf for individual men's Nordic combined. Silver: Brigitte Oertli for women's alpine combined & women's downhill, Peter Müller for men's downhill, Michela Figini for women's super-G and men's team Switzerland for nordic combined. Bronze: Paul Accola for men's alpine combined, Maria Walliser for women's alpine combined & women's GS, Pirmin Zurbriggen for men's GS and Andi Grünenfelder for men's 50 km cross-country skiing. The SCM hosted a Gala Evening with the athletes and we even had a Swiss Restaurant during and for a while after the Olympics, called "Taste of Switzerland".

In June/July 1997, the SCM also supported competitors in the World Police & Fire Games. R. Bertschi, P. Burkhard and D. Stoeckli were our medal winners.

Our involvement with the Spruce Meadows Festival of Nations came to an end in 2007 when the event took a more corporate approach. In the preceding years, we hosted a pavilion at the event and showed off some Swiss culture and cuisine.

We continue to stay active with numerous events, like August 1st celebrations, dance, yodel and theater performances, volleyball etc. and are always pleased to welcome new members into our fold.

The spirit of volunteerism displayed by the Swiss community during the Olympic Games in February 1988 was extended all the way to the summer months, when members of the SCM were front and center, pitching in wherever they were needed during Festival 88, the song festival of the North American Swiss Singing Alliance. The JK Heimattreu, as a member society of NASSA, was chosen 3 years earlier, to be the first Canadian host of this tri-annual event. At the last Sängerkonvent held in Toledo in 2006, the alliance delegates once again bestowed the same mandate to the JK Heimattreu for the 39th Sängerkonvent. The festival will be known as "swissfest09" and all events are scheduled to take place in Banff.
www.swissfest09.com

The SCM could not exist without the incredible amount of time and financial support from our members and business partners. We truly appreciate everyone's involvement and ask that our members and visitors support our partners with patronage at their businesses and referrals.