

# REGIONAL NEWS

## CANADA

### Editorial

Dear Readers: You've likely heard about the tragic start to the New Year in a Valais nightclub: sparklers atop champagne bottles ignited highly flammable acoustic ceiling panels, ultimately triggering a blaze that claimed the lives of 40 - mostly young and even underage - partygoers and injured 116 others. As if the human toll of the "inferno of Crans-Montana" wasn't horrendous and traumatic enough, the ensuing political mud-

slinging cast an even darker pall. There were allegations of communication missteps; tone-deaf commentary about the *real* victims; misuse of taxpayer money to hire high-level consultants for public image protection; and a deterioration in fire-safety inspection and enforcement standards (the venue was legally approved yet inadequately inspected). Criminal investigations and lawsuits are ongoing. On January 9, Switzerland observed a day of mourning with an official

ceremony, flags at half-mast, church bells ringing across the country, and an online condolences book. The country is now debating what makes more sense: a ban on indoor pyrotechnics or stricter controls? In any event, we pray for healing for everyone affected. [avs@telus.net](mailto:avs@telus.net)



ANDREW VON STUERMER  
REGIONAL EDITOR

### Swiss Club Toronto Theatre Group

## Theaterraufführung 2026

### „Paket im Aaflug“

Schwank von Martin Weber

The play is in Swiss-German and will be performed by the Toronto Theatre Group at the following locations:

- **Sebringville (NW of Stratford):** Sunday, April 12, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.  
Sebringville Community Centre.  
Contact: Hansueli Sturzenegger at (519) 526 - 7381  
Email: [hanstrudi83@outlook.com](mailto:hanstrudi83@outlook.com)
- **Toronto:** Sunday, April 19, 2026, at 3:00 p.m.  
Humber Valley United Church, 76 Anglesey Blvd, Toronto.  
Contact: Walter Brunner at (647) 966 - 8014  
Email: [walter.brunner@sympatico.ca](mailto:walter.brunner@sympatico.ca)

### Please note:

- In Toronto, we are at the same location as last year (parking is available) and the play starts at 3:00 p.m. We won't be able to serve lunch, but beverages and pastries will be available.
- The Theatre Group is once again looking forward to seeing you at one of the performances. We hope to make it an exciting event!
- For more details, please contact your local Swiss Club representative. For reservations in Toronto, call or email Maggie Hess or Walter Brunner.



Scenes from our 2025 play "Alte Lügen rosten nicht"

WALTER BRUNNER

## Swiss Canadian Mountain Range Association (Metro Vancouver)

Fall is always a fun and busy time at the Swiss Canadian Mountain Range (SCMRA). The 2025 annual fall events began with the **Consul Cup** on September 14, which was attended by Consul General Thomas Schneider who supplied tasty Swiss wine for one of the prizes. We prepared a traditional Ticino dinner enjoyed by all attendees.

Next up, on September 28, we held the annual **Cheese Shoot**. 29 members and 5 guests participated, which made the event very well attended. Three shooters scored perfect 10s.

The **Schützenfest** was held on October 11 and 12. The weekend weather was excellent for welcoming the 52 shooters from near and far (Los Angeles, San Francisco, Manitoba, and Alberta).

The **Sau Shoot** marked the grand finale of the 2025 shooting calendar. René Zollinger won the grand prize, taking home the lion's share of the sau ("cuts of pork"), followed by Robert Best in second place and Roger Grover in third. The remaining cuts were shared among the other participants.

In December, volunteers decorated the Chalet in its Christmas attire in preparation for the **Santa Claus Party** on December 7. This year, Alex Löffler played Santa, putting smiles on the children's faces.

For more information about the SCMRA, visit the club website at [www.scmra.ca](http://www.scmra.ca), where you'll also find pictures and details of the events and shoots held throughout the year. Happy New Year to all!

## Ottawa Valley Swiss Club

What a year we had in 2025! We at the Ottawa Valley Swiss Club (OVSC) wish all our members a wonderful start to the New Year and are thrilled to have been able to share so many of our traditions together.

To celebrate **August 1st**, OVSC once again hosted the Swiss National Day celebration at the historic Billings Bridge Estate, complete with delicious grilled sausages, performances by the Montagna Singers choir, a lampion ("lantern") parade at dusk, and games and competitions for children and adults alike on a beautiful summer evening.

For the first time, 2025 saw the Club host several **Jass afternoons** where both experienced and novice members had the opportunity to take part in a friendly - and sometimes a little competitive - round of cards. We also organised an afternoon of hiking in the picturesque Gatineau Park, with a few adventure-loving Swiss friends, aptly dubbed **Wanderfreunde** ("hiking friends").

We were also thrilled that OVSC's own **Brendan Naef** was elected delegate to the Council of the Swiss Abroad and that **Leonie Warkus** was appointed deputy delegate.

To help usher in the 2025 holiday season, in December the Club held its annual **Seniors' Christmas Luncheon** followed by the **Samichlaus Party** for its youngsters that included crafts, festive Christmas carols sung by the choir, and delicious homemade goodies. Children of all ages loved the Gritibänz man pass-the-parcel game after which they all received special presents.

The youngsters crafted beautiful wooden ornaments to take home and adorn many a Christmas tree. At the conclusion of the party, Samichlaus and Schmutzli made much anticipated appearances, greeting everyone and handing out presents. Schmutzli challenged the children, asking whether they had been well behaved all year - and, of course, they all had!



Throughout the year, the Montagna Singers delighted us with several concerts. They are currently gearing up to host the **Sängerfest** ("singer festival") **OTTAWA 2027**, the signature event of the North American Swiss Singing Alliance (NASSA).



Stay tuned for upcoming events in 2026. More Jass and more hiking! If you have any event ideas or simply need more information, please visit [ottawavalleysswissclub.ca](http://ottawavalleysswissclub.ca) and join our mailing list by emailing [info@ottawavalleysswissclub.ca](mailto:info@ottawavalleysswissclub.ca).

OLIVIA CRAFT AND KARIN FREEMAN



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra



**Aline Desarzens**, collaboratrice au Consulat général de Suisse, a remporté le prestigieux Prix du public RTS 2025 avec son roman *Le secret de Thyrcée*.

Originaire de Lausanne, l'auteure a conquis le public avec une enquête littéraire captivante, dans laquelle une jeune chercheuse lève le voile sur un secret de l'Antiquité resté caché pendant des siècles.

Cette distinction ne récompense pas seulement le succès narratif de son premier ouvrage, elle met également en valeur l'engagement multiple de nos collaboratrices et collaborateurs au-delà de leur activité consulaire. Toute l'équipe du Consulat général la félicite chaleureusement pour ce remarquable succès.

Parallèlement, la Suisse se tourne vers l'avenir : pour la première fois, le Conseil fédéral a adopté **une stratégie consulaire autonome** pour les années 2026–2029. Celle-ci définit des priorités dans des domaines tels que la protection, l'assistance, la prévention, la gestion de crise, la numérisation et l'optimisation des processus, afin d'adapter les services consulaires aux besoins évolutifs des Suissesses et Suisses à l'étranger.

La stratégie vise à soutenir l'accessibilité, la fiabilité et la coordination des prestations, afin d'accompagner de manière appropriée les citoyennes et citoyens suisses, tant au quotidien que dans des situations complexes. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site du DFAE.

Le domaine sportif offre également un motif de réjouissance : **Nino Niederreiter**, attaquant des Winnipeg Jets, a disputé son 1 000e match dans la LNH, devenant ainsi le premier joueur né en Suisse à atteindre ce jalon historique. Cette performance souligne sa longue et brillante carrière et illustre la place importante qu'occupent les athlètes suisses sur la scène internationale. Toute l'équipe du Consulat général adresse ses félicitations les plus chaleureuses à Nino Niederreiter pour cet exploit exceptionnel.

## Consulat général de Suisse à Montréal Consulate General of Switzerland in Montreal

**Aline Desarzens**, a staff member at the Swiss Consulate General, has won the prestigious Prix du public RTS 2025 award for her novel *Le secret de Thyrcée*.

The Lausanne-born author impressed the public with a captivating literary investigation in which a young researcher uncovers a secret from antiquity that has remained hidden for centuries.

This award not only recognises the narrative success of her debut, it also highlights the diverse commitments of our staff beyond their consular duties. The entire team at the Consulate General warmly congratulates Aline on this remarkable achievement.

At the same time, Switzerland is looking ahead: for the first time, the Federal Council has adopted an **independent consular strategy** for the years 2026 – 2029. It sets out priorities in areas such as protection, assistance, prevention, crisis management, digitalisation, and process optimisation, with the aim of continuing to adapt consular services to the evolving needs of Swiss citizens abroad.

The strategy further seeks to support accessibility, reliability, and coordination of services, helping to ensure that Swiss citizens abroad receive appropriate assistance in both everyday situations and demanding circumstances. Further information can be found on the DFAE website.

There is also reason to celebrate in the world of sports: **Nino Niederreiter**, forward for the Winnipeg Jets, has played his 1,000th NHL game, becoming the first Swiss-born player ever to reach this impressive milestone. This achievement honours his long and successful career and underlines the strong international presence of Swiss athletes. All of us at the Consulate General extend our heartfelt congratulations to Nino Niederreiter on this exceptional achievement.

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## Echoes of the Prairies: A Filmmaker's Quest to Rebuild a Swiss Sod House

My name is Ryan McLay, a Canadian filmmaker with Bernese family roots. I'm currently developing a **heritage film project** titled *The Journey of the Melody*, which explores the story of Swiss immigrants settling in Alberta in the early 1910s. The project draws inspiration from my own Kobi family lineage and reflects the history of Swiss homesteaders on the Canadian Prairies.

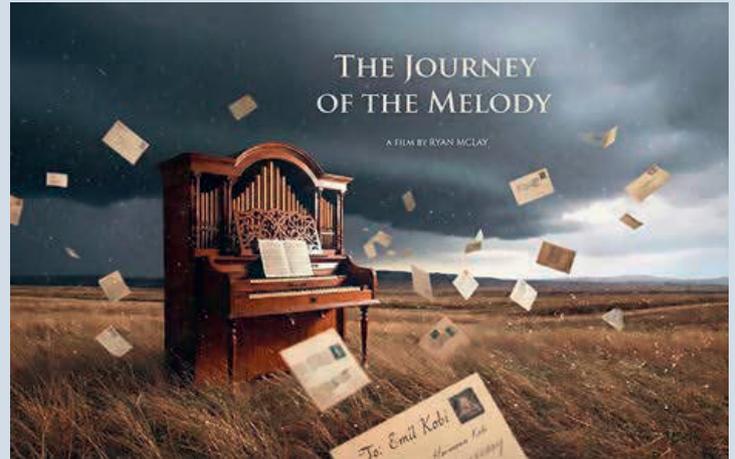
**A "Living History" Reconstruction:** Together with the Stettler Town and Country Museum, I'm working on a proposal to build a period-accurate sod house from 1910. Designed to weather an Alberta winter, this structure will serve as the historical foundation for both the narrative film and a companion documentary series. Once completed, the structure will be donated permanently to the museum as a new heritage exhibit.

The project is also being developed in collaboration with a Chilean film production team. Their fresh, outsider perspective offers a unique way to capture the visceral experience of Swiss immigrants arriving on the prairies and seeing this vast, unfamiliar landscape for the first time.

**A Call to the Community:** As I look to develop this project with the participation of the Swiss-Canadian community, I'm currently seeking:

✳️ **Talent & Language:** The script is written in English but serves as a guide. I'm pursuing collaboration with the Swiss Embassy to engage professional actors directly from Switzerland to capture authentic Bernese dialect. However, being realistic about independent film logistics, should international casting not be feasible, I would be eager to connect with the German-speaking community in Alberta. Whether you speak Swiss-German or Standard German, if you have an interest in acting and helping to bring these pioneer roles to life, I would love to hear from you;

✳️ **Heritage Construction:** I invite volunteers to participate in a "sod bee" — a community build event planned for late 2026. Whether you're a tradesperson or simply interested in history, I'm looking for hands to help physically reconstruct this piece of the past.



**A Grassroots Vision:** By launching this project as a grassroots initiative, my hope is that as the Patreon community grows, I will connect with individuals who are as passionate about this history as I am. Your support will not only help advance this project, but will also allow me to expand the production team and allocate more professional roles to make this film even better.

**Follow the Journey:** A behind-the-scenes documentary series will accompany the project. During its first year, the focus will be on the research process, the search for actors, and the planning required to build the sod house in late 2026. Updates will begin appearing on my Patreon page, launching January 15, 2026.

To watch the project preview and follow the build, visit:

**Patreon:** [www.patreon.com/TheJourneyoftheMelody](http://www.patreon.com/TheJourneyoftheMelody)

**Concept Sizzle Reel:**  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=YomvP7eooOA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YomvP7eooOA)

**Note:** This video is not a trailer but rather a conceptual mood piece designed to illustrate the visual tone, pacing, and emotional struggles of the pioneer experience, as intended to be captured in the final film.



RYAN MCLAY

## Swiss Club Thames Valley

Hello Friends:

Happy New Year! I'm probably not the only one who got snowed in over the holidays – it looks like it's not going to be over soon. For me, this is the perfect time to sit down and write a short note.

Since the year has just started and the Club does not have much planned, I don't have much to tell you.

We were able to hold all our December events, though not many people attended due to the weather. A big thank-you to those who made it!

In February and March, we'll put on Spielnachmittage ("afternoons of games"), but we don't yet have the dates set.

One date I know for sure is our annual Metzgete with the Jassfinale, which will take place on February 28, with a snow date set for March 1. The various groups are already playing cards to determine who will get to participate in the Jassfinale.

That's it for the moment. Until next time!

MARIANNE TRACHSEL

## Matterhorn Swiss Club (Montreal)

Greetings from the Matterhorn Swiss Club in Montreal!

Our most recent event was a lunch get-together at the Piazza Romana restaurant in Pointe-Claire. We're pleased to say we had a good turnout of members and guests and enjoyed lively conversations and delicious food.

In the winter or spring, we will hold our AGM which, at the very least, will include a good lunch at a nice restaurant, or perhaps something a little more special, such as an outing that includes a tasty meal.

Members will be advised of our upcoming events once plans have been finalised. Guests are welcome!

WALTER SPIRIG, PRESIDENT  
514 - 694 - 3718

## Swiss Society of Vancouver

Over the past two months, the Swiss Society of Vancouver has hosted a number of celebrations, promoting Swiss culture, song, and traditions.

Our AGM is scheduled for March 22 at 4 p.m. at the Edmonds Community Centre in Burnaby. At the AGM, the Board will present an amendment to its dissolution bylaw to ensure compliance with the current requirements of the BC Societies Act.

On June 6, we will host an afternoon choir concert.

THERESA WELTZIN

## HOCKEY IN SWITZERLAND

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## FÉDÉRATION DES SOCIÉTÉS SUISSES DE L'EST DU CANADA FEDERATION OF SWISS SOCIETIES IN EASTERN CANADA

**Nous espérons que vous avez passé de belles Fêtes de fin d'année!**

Merci de tout cœur à toutes les personnes présentes à la Fête Nationale Suisse au Mont Sutton cet été, ce fut une belle fête! Vous trouverez quelques photos et vidéos de la Fête 2025 sur notre site web [www.fedesuisse.com](http://www.fedesuisse.com) et sur notre page Facebook : [www.facebook.com/Fedesuisse](http://www.facebook.com/Fedesuisse). La prochaine fête suisse aura lieu le samedi 1er août 2026 à Sutton.

Pour assurer la réussite de la prochaine édition, qui marquera le 50e anniversaire de notre fête au Mont Sutton en 2026, nous recherchons des personnes dynamiques, motivées et passionnées pour rejoindre notre **équipe de bénévoles**. C'est une occasion unique de s'impliquer dans la communauté, de partager ses compétences et de contribuer à préserver notre patrimoine.

### Profils des bénévoles recherchés:

- Connaissances en comptabilité, en gestion administrative et informatique (Excel, Word, QB, graphisme, création et administration d'un site web)
- Passionnées par la communication, la rédaction ou la relation avec la communauté
- Organiser, coordonner ou soutenir la tombola, la logistique et la gestion des bénévoles

Aussi, chaque année, nous sommes toujours à la recherche de groupes musicaux suisses (duo ou trio), de musique traditionnelle et dansante. Passez le mot, s'il vous plaît.

Écrivez-nous à cette adresse pour vous inscrire en tant que bénévole ou pour toute information : [fedesuisse@gmail.com](mailto:fedesuisse@gmail.com).

Ensemble, faisons en sorte que notre Fête Nationale Suisse continue de briller et de rassembler nos amis, nos familles et nos racines. **Au plaisir de vous revoir le 1er août prochain!**

VALÉRIE MARTINEZ, PRÉSIDENTE  
COMITÉ ORGANISATEUR DE LA FÉDÉRATION DES SOCIÉTÉS SUISSES DE L'EST DU CANADA



© Valérie Martinez

**We hope you had a wonderful holiday season!**

Our heartfelt gratitude to all who attended the Swiss National Day celebrations at Mont Sutton last summer - it was a great event! You'll find photos and videos of the 2025 festivities on our website [www.fedesuisse.com](http://www.fedesuisse.com) and on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/Fedesuisse](http://www.facebook.com/Fedesuisse). Our next Swiss National Day celebrations are on Saturday, August 1, 2026 in Sutton.

To ensure the success of the 2026 event, which will mark the 50th anniversary of our celebrations at Mont Sutton, we are looking for dynamic, motivated, and passionate individuals to join our **group of volunteers**. This is a unique opportunity to get involved in the community, share your skills, and help preserve our heritage.

### Our ideal volunteer candidates:

- Individuals with knowledge of accounting, administrative management, and information technology (Excel, Word, QB, graphic design, website creation and administration);
- Passionate about communication, writing, or community relations;
- Able to organise, coordinate, or support the raffle, logistics, and volunteer management.

Each year, we're also looking for Swiss musical groups (duos or trios) that play traditional, danceable music. Please spread the word!

If you have any questions, or wish to apply to volunteer, email us at [fedesuisse@gmail.com](mailto:fedesuisse@gmail.com).

Together, let's ensure that the Swiss National Day continues to shine and brings together our friends, families, and shared heritage. **Looking forward to seeing you on August 1!**

VALÉRIE MARTINEZ, PRESIDENT  
ORGANISING COMMITTEE OF THE FEDERATION OF SWISS SOCIETIES IN EASTERN CANADA



## Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir Association

Happy New Year to everyone from the  
Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir (ESMC)!

### ■ ESMC Recap December 2025:

🎵 December 7: St. Vital Catholic Church in Beaumont, AB.

To the delight of our guests, friends, and families, the ESMC once again had the opportunity to bring some vocal Christmas cheer.



A big thank-you to the Social Committee for providing delicious snacks, coffee, and cold drinks in the basement after the concert. Our thanks also go to Irena Tarnawsky for her piano interlude and to Michelle Naef - spouse of our singer Thomas Naef - for playing the alphorn together with Nial Gorman, our second tenor soloist.

The ESMC would also like to acknowledge Ann Huwiler for her warm and generous hospitality at her lovely home following the Christmas concert. This was the 11th time at her current house after the many afterglows we had enjoyed at her acreage before. We realise that putting on this event is a lot of work. As always, the food was excellent, and everyone appreciated the schnapps. Thank you!

🎵 December 9, 14, and 16: Concerts at The Good Samaritan Dr. Gerald Zetter Care Centre, The Renaissance at Meadowlark, and Rosedale Seniors' Living. The residents at all three locations were very appreciative of our choir's presentation of selected Christmas music.



## Yodel Club Heimmattreu (Calgary)

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### ■ ESMC Events Planned for 2026:

🎵 Thursday, March 5: A joint evening concert with the Grande Prairie Boys' Choir ([www.gpboyschoir.org](http://www.gpboyschoir.org)) at the Trinity Lutheran Church, 10014 81 Ave NW, in Edmonton, AB;

🎵 Tuesday, May 19, at 6:30 p.m.: Spring Concert for The Good Samaritan George Hennig Place, 4808 - 57 Ave, in Stony Plain;

🎵 June 2 - 16: CH'26 Concert Tour # 7 to Switzerland.

For more information about our choir, please check our website [www.esmca.ca](http://www.esmca.ca) or like us on Facebook under "Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir".

PETER THUT

## Winter Prize Giveaway

It's time for another prize giveaway - the last one was all the way back in 2023! Enter a draw for a chance to win a Canadian commemorative silver dollar from 1976, a coin issued by the Royal Canadian Mint to mark the centennial of the completion of the Library of Parliament in Ottawa in 1876. Notably, 2026 marks the sesquicentennial (the 150th anniversary) of this event.



Learn more about the history and significance of the Library of Parliament from the article below by Brendan Naef, delegate to the Council of the Swiss Abroad.

## Notes on the History and Significance of the Library of Parliament in Ottawa

Compared with Switzerland, Canada has relatively few heritage buildings. As a result, many Canadians immediately recognise the Library of Parliament when they see it: the cone-shaped structure perched atop a cliff overlooking the Ottawa River. It is one of Canada's most distinctive buildings and a special place to visit, although it is currently closed while Centre Block undergoes major renovations.

With its spiral staircases and soaring walls of books, it rivals many European counterparts. There is a common misconception that the Library is simply a collection of books. In reality, it is the intellectual backbone of Canada's democracy. Much like Switzerland's Parlamentsdienste / Services du Parlement, it's a non-partisan service that provides legislators with independent research, ensuring that parliamentarians do not have to rely solely on information from the government of the day when making decisions. Incidentally, over the past two years, members of the Canadian and Swiss organisations have met twice virtually to exchange best practices.

The Library's analysts work behind the scenes in the legislative process. Adapting an old saying: laws are like cervelats - sometimes, we would rather not see them being made! The process can be messy, but by providing impartial support to committees, analysts help produce more carefully considered legislation. They also prepare objective summaries of new laws so the public can better understand them, a role that is especially important in today's media environment, where opinion often overshadows fact.



★ To participate in the draw, simply email [avs@telus.net](mailto:avs@telus.net) and indicate your interest.

Only one entry per person. **Entries must be received no later than midnight on February 28, 2026.** Using a random name picker app, one winner will be chosen by the luck of the draw on March 1, 2026. Good luck! The coin will be shipped using Canada Post (only to mailing addresses in Canada) at no charge to the winner.

A.V. STUERMER

In 1916, a fire destroyed much of Parliament, but the Library was saved when a quick-thinking clerk closed the heavy iron fire doors. The survival of the building has since become a fitting symbol of the institution itself. The 1976 silver dollar commemorates more than an iconic structure; it honours an institution that has remained independent and impartial for 150 years, helping Canadian democracy endure challenging times – a role that is arguably more important today than ever before.

BRENDAN NAEF



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### Regional News Canada

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For information on content submission deadlines, publishing dates, and advertising opportunities, visit the following link:

<https://www.swisscommunity.org/en/news-media/swiss-revue/news-from-your-region/canada>