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# REGIONAL NEWS

## CANADA

### Editorial

I will be passing on the baton as Regional News Canada editor after completion of the next Swiss Review issue in June.

It has been a privilege and a wonderful experience to get to know you and work together with so many in our diverse Swiss Community. The spirit of *Swissness* is strong and vibrant across Canada! In small, rural clubs—without formal association, yet very cohesive and long-standing—or larger ones with many sub-clubs and official status. Jass can be played from east to

west across 5,000 miles, and the Swiss National Day is celebrated with pride everywhere with delicious and authentic Swiss Bratwurst.

The featured portraits of outstanding Swiss lives in business, academia, the arts and entrepreneurship attest to the spirit of determination, innovation and hard work. Paired with a practical, down-to-earth approach this evidently continues to lead to great success in our often fleeting and quickly changing, globalized world.

The Regional Pages are an effective

tool to reflect this diversity, to maintain connectivity among the Swiss in Canada and with our Swiss homeland, and to augment the experience and voices of expatriate Swiss to the benefit of the Swiss at home and abroad.

It is an inevitable reality in the world of publishing that one day, this magazine will only be available online. It is my great hope that you will continue to be strong participants and contributors to your Swiss Review and the Regional News Canada. It will be to the benefit of all of us. Thank you!



SILVIA SCHOCH, EDITOR  
AND OSA DELEGATE  
FOR WESTERN CANADA

### Swiss-Canadian Rykka represents Switzerland at Eurovision Contest

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, in front of 400,000 television viewers during the Swiss Television “Entscheidungsshow”, Rykka was selected to represent Switzerland at the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest. “I was shocked,” Rykka recalls her reaction when she learned she had won from among the six finalists during the live tv show. “But then it was slowly sinking in and later that evening we all got together backstage and had a great party!” Two months earlier, the singer had qualified for the finalists’ round from over three hundred entries.

Rykka grew up Christina Maria Rieder in Surrey, BC. The second generation Swiss-Canadian family actively participated in the Vancouver Swiss Society. She recalls: “Mom taught us all to sing and I remember many Swiss National day celebrations singing together.” Rykka also sang in high school Jazz choirs and the Swiss choir with her father. When 16, she

bought a guitar from her first paycheck. Performances at community festivals followed with songs she had written herself. After completing music school in Vancouver, Rykka toured Canada, eventually taking the big step to Europe. She now divides her time between Canada and Switzerland. The versatile artist published several albums through *Little Jig Records* in Luzern and just signed a contract with *Corrado Bay Records* in Victoria, BC.

Her newest album, “Beatitudes,” will be released in the fall of 2016. It includes the Eurovision song “The Last of our Kind” which Rykka wrote in one day at a Vancouver studio together with friends Mike James, Jeff Dawson and Warne Livesey. “The song is about love and what you believe in.” After composing it, she pressed the button to auto-record and video tape herself while performing the song in her bedroom, then entered the tape electronically to SRF1 for the Swiss



National Eurovision competition.

“Writing and performing is a way of expressing myself,” says the artist. She also designs and sews many of her own costumes.

The versatile singer/composer lives in a farm house close to Zürich, together with husband and fellow musician Timothy Jaromir, five other housemates, cat Charlie and a flock of sheep. She’s pretty “chill” about the contest, presently organizing everything and fine-tuning her vocals.

Eurovision begins in Stockholm, Sweden, May 12<sup>th</sup>. The contest with forty-three country participants is broadcast in sixty different countries to more than one hundred million viewers.

We are very proud of you, Rykka, and are wishing you the best of success at the Eurovision Contest!

Rykka's semi-final performance is scheduled for Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. For more information and to preview her song, click on *Switzerland* under: <http://www.eurovision.tv/>

SILVIA SCHOCH



## Edmonton: Edmonton Swiss Men's Choir Events 2016

**Edmonton Swiss Society participates at Run for Music Fundraising and Advocacy Project of Choir Alberta**  
 Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 9:30 am,  
 Louise McKinney Riverfront  
 Park, Edmonton, Alberta  
<http://www.albertachoralfederation.ca/runformusic.asp>

**Under the Baton**  
 Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 pm  
 Concert with the Edmonton  
 Schoolboys' Alumni Band,  
 St. Albert United Church, 20  
 Green Grove Drive, St. Albert,  
 Alberta. Tickets available from  
 ESAB Band members, St. Albert  
 United Church Office, or at the  
 door

**Edmonton Swiss Society  
 Landsgemeinde**  
 Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, all day at  
 the Ol' MacDonald's Resort  
 near Stettler, Alberta

**Concert Tour through  
 Switzerland and Tyrol**  
**Thurs., June 16<sup>th</sup> - Sat., July 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
 with the following concerts:

**Friday, June 17<sup>th</sup>**  
 Performance at the  
 opening of the Inner-  
 Schweizer Gesangsfest  
 in Cham, Zug

**Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup>**  
 Competition Singing  
 in Cham  
**Sunday, June 19, 7<sup>th</sup> pm**  
 Concert with Männerchor  
 Engelburg  
**Tuesday, June 21<sup>th</sup>**  
 Concert with Cor viril  
 Engiadina Bassa  
**Wednesday, June 22<sup>nd</sup> -**  
**Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>**  
 Alta Pusteria, see:  
[www.festivalpusteria.org/en](http://www.festivalpusteria.org/en)  
**Tuesday, June 28<sup>th</sup>**  
 Informal concert with  
 Jodlerklub Seerose, Flüelen  
**Friday, July 1<sup>st</sup> - 8:00 pm**  
 Canada Day Concert with  
 Männerchor Rieden,  
 Wallisellen (see poster)

**Edmonton Swiss Society  
 National Day Celebration**  
 August 1<sup>st</sup> at Mettler's Farm in  
 Tomahawk, Alberta

**Edmonton Swiss Society  
 Winzerfest 2016**  
 St. Basil's Cultural Center,  
 Edmonton, Alberta

If you would like more infor-  
 mation on the above events or  
 are interested in joining our  
 choir, please check our website  
 at <http://www.esmca.ca>.

PETER THUT



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 Weitere Informationen  
 maennerchor-rieden.ch | esmca.ca

## Guelph: Swiss-Canadian Club Guelph

*Are you in the Guelph area?*

*Do you have an interest in Swiss activities and Swiss culture?*

Join us at the following events taking place during the first half of the year: Games/Jass afternoon, Annual Wine and Cheese Party, Soaking up the Sun with a Game of Mini Golf, and Splashing the Summer away at the Annual Summer Barbeque.

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events! For details regarding dates and locations, please email Sonja Bosshard at <http://guelphswisscanadianclub.webs.com/>. Also check us out on our Facebook group *Swiss Canadian Club Guelph*.

RINA THOMA

## Jugendparlament der Fünften Schweiz:

Die neue Community für junge Auslandschweizer

*Sie haben gemeinsame Anliegen, sind aber über die ganze Welt verstreut. Um dieses Hindernis zu überwinden, hat eine Gruppe junger, motivierter Auslandschweizer das erste Auslandschweizer Jugendparlament am 28. Oktober 2015 gegründet.*

Es ist ein "virtuelles Parlament", denn es funktioniert über soziale Netzwerke wie Facebook und nutzt Skype und Internet für Abstimmungen. Der erste Entscheid des Auslandschweizer Jugendparlaments (ASJUPA) war die Wahl eines Vorstands, der die Interessen und Beschlüsse dieses Gremiums vertritt und die Aktivitäten koordiniert.

SONJA FENAZZI



## California: Sangerfest of the Pacific Coast 2017

Dear Singer Families and Friends,  
Greetings from the San Joaquin Valley!

By the time this goes to publication, Sangerfest 2017 will be just a little over twelve months away!

It is our pleasure as the San Joaquin Valley Swiss Echoes to host the 29<sup>th</sup> United Swiss Singing Societies of the Pacific Coast (USSSPC) Sangerfest, June 22-25, 2017.

We are very much looking forward to greeting and performing together with all of our Canadian singing friends once again in our beautiful San Joaquin Valley in 2017. We are committed to ensuring and are working hard already that all will have a great time!

The four day event will take place in Modesto and Ripon, California, with venues at the Modesto Double Tree Hotel and Convention Center and the Gallo Center for the Arts. Saturday's festival will be held at the Ripon Swiss Hall.

A sponsorship donation (personal or business) program has been set up for those who wish to participate. Sponsorship donations can be made payable to "Swiss Song Festival 2017." Thank you in advance for your consideration. All donations will be acknowledged in our Souvenir Program Book.

Please look for updated information on the 29<sup>th</sup> USSSP Sangerfest in the months to come. Mark your calendars for June 22-25, 2017, and join us for a memorable and song-filled Festival. For more information, please email [h.betschart@aol.com](mailto:h.betschart@aol.com) or go online at: <http://www.swissongfest2017.com/>.

HEIDI BETSCHART, USSSPC PRESIDENT  
SWISS SONG FESTIVAL 2017, PO BOX 583001, MODESTO CA 95358



## Festival Program

### Thursday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

Badge Registration and Welcome Reception at the Modesto Convention Center

### Friday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017

Grand Concert Program  
Gallo Center for the Arts  
Mary Stuart Rogers Theater  
After Concert Ball/Dance  
Modesto Convention Center

### Saturday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Jodel Festival, San Joaquin Valley  
Swiss Hall, Ripon, California

### Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Ecumenical Church Service,  
Modesto Center Plaza  
Grand Banquet/Closing Ceremonies,  
Modesto Convention Center

The San Joaquin Valley Swiss Echoes, the hosts of the 29<sup>th</sup> United Swiss Singing Societies of the Pacific Coast Sangerfest in June 2017



**Government of Canada:** Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) required for Swiss Visitors to Canada

*Effective as of March 15, 2016, Swiss visitors and all visa-exempt foreign nationals who fly to or transit through Canada will need an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA).*

Exceptions include U.S. citizens and travellers who hold a valid visa.

Entry requirements for other methods of travel (land and sea), have not changed.

To find out which visitors from which country need an eTA, how to apply and what other documents are needed to come to Canada, go to <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp>.

## HOCKEY IN SWITZERLAND

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Back row: Murten/Fribourg, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Bern, Oberengadin/Graubünden, Waadtland, St. Gallen/Toggenburg, Basel. Middle row: Bern, Ober Wallis, Front row: Appenzell Innerrhoden, Glarus, Bern

### Calgary: Swiss Folk Dance Club Alpenrösli

In 1981, eight women from the Calgary Swiss community came together to learn and practice Swiss folk dances. We had choreography and music scores to work with, and no experience at all, but lots of enthusiasm! We managed the dancing part quickly and quite well and moved on to find out all about the history and development of the "Tracht", our Swiss national dress.

The Tracht was born out of the desire of the peasantry to copy the clothing of the rich and beautiful of both home and abroad. The Trachten constantly evolved, influenced by the fashion of the knight hood, courts and the urban centers.

Country people could not afford changing the fashion as often as the upper classes did. They retained some of the fashion elements, added or changed to new ones throughout the centuries:

a bit of Baroque or Empire fashion here, a bit of Marie Antoinette's fashion there and so created the Trachten of today.

There is no continuous history of the Tracht. Political and social circumstances changed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and interest for the Tracht disappeared. Tourism became popular and foreign workers immigrated to Switzerland. Swiss country people adapted their clothing to that of their wealthy guests and foreign workers. A revival, born of the renewed need for identity, happened after World War I. Costumes were researched and recreated and are now updated continuously. The Trachten of today are authentic reproductions brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the use of contemporary construction techniques and fabrics.

LI ZAHND

### Did you know that...

...up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, dresses were flowing robes? It was the Italians and Spaniards who introduced the blouse, bodice and full skirt, known as a "dirndl construction"? All Trachten have this construction but are not called dirndls

..."Kleider" or clothing mandates were laws with fines that limited the use of materials used to make Trachten? For example certain kinds of button, lace, or fabric, in order to improve the economy or exert political pressure. They were seldom effective. People gladly paid the fine or beautiful, creative solutions were found to circumvent the law

...until far into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, married women covered their hair with a white cap? Hence the term: "unter die Haube kommen". Throughout the centuries, there were many different ways to identify marital status for men and women: crossed fichu, red or white socks, showing colorful hankies hanging from the pant pockets

...the "Göller", the part of the Tracht around the neck area, is a collar or what is left of it? It went through tremendous transformations throughout the centuries from a stiff collar to protection of the Tracht from hair, to covering up a no longer appropriate and too revealing cleavage.

Trachten are neither historical nor theatrical costumes. They are authentic dresses worn today for special festivities, occasions and functions by people who have a connection to their culture. The dancers of the Swiss Folk Dance Club Alpenrösli wear the Trachten with pride and respect.

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## Saskatoon: Swiss Club Saskatoon

*Started on the 'neutral grounds' of a hotel room by subsequent long-term President Louise Grassmann, the Swiss Club Saskatoon was founded in 1979. Many of the founding members continue to be part of the club today.*

In the early days, members were 'collected' by bumping into them, hearing them speak Swiss in the grocery store or seeing a Swiss flag on the back of a car. Before widely available email, the Swiss Consulate's assistance was instrumental in recruiting new members by inviting the area Swiss to wine and cheese receptions. During the eighties, quite a number of Swiss farmers moved to the area and joined the club with their families.

With current membership at 120, the club continues to go strong with about half the membership families with children. Many of these second generation Swiss families are very active participants. Every year, new members join the club through referrals by the Consulate General or they read about us in the Swiss Review. Most members live in Saskatoon or in a near-by radius of fifty kilometers, but some dedicated members live as far away as Regina, a three hour drive.

The club hosts five specific events throughout the year. The spring Raclette was hosted at the beginning of March and is always a popular event. The club finds creative ways to determine mostly member-sponsored locations for our events. This year, the Raclette



took place at a member's multi-purpose room in their condo building. Bad snow storms have been known to cut participation in half in the past.

The Jass Tournament is hosted this year on Saturday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> by another member. The winning Jass pair each get a small plaque to commemorate their win and have their

name put on a large trophy which each winner gets to keep for six months.

The traditional June outdoor picnic is cancelled this year due to increasingly severe rain problems in the prairies. Currently, an alternative event independent of weather is being planned.

The popular National Day celebrations are held closest to the Saturday of August first in a beautiful park with a children's spray park and gazebo shelter. The Bratwurst and Cervelats are picked up by a member from a Swiss butcher in Canmore.

In late October, the AGM with elections takes place, usually at a restaurant. This is also a popular event.

On the Friday closest to Samichlaus day, the local church hall is rented for a cold potluck/pizza/dessert gathering. Samichlaus distributes goodie bags to the children. Santa always knows his Saskatoon Swiss Club children extremely well, spending lots of time talking to each child in detail!

We also have a well-attended restaurant group which meets monthly.

All of our events are a community affair with everyone giving a hand, chipping in with food and drink and whatever is needed since we allow new members a one year free membership. We welcome any inquiries. For information about our club and events, please contact [swissclubsaskatoon@hotmail.com](mailto:swissclubsaskatoon@hotmail.com) or call Elisabeth Eilinger at (306) 665-6039.

ELISABETH EILINGER

## Montreal: Matterhorn Swiss Club

Our Annual General Meeting was held at Terra Mare Restaurant where we enjoyed another delicious dinner. Approximately forty members attended. Our committee for 2016 remains unchanged: President Walter Spirig, Vice-President Christian Walz, Treasurer Gilbert Berthoud, Secretary Joanne Spirig, Member-at-large Annelise Oppliger.

A special presentation was made to long time member Urs Pfund. Urs was a past president and organizer of the club's car rallies back in the 1960ies and 70ies. He also held other positions over the years. The old rally trophy was brought out of storage, cleaned up and modified and was presented to Urs in appreciation of his many years of dedication to the Matterhorn Club.

We are currently planning a spring or early summer outing to Upper Canada Village in Morrisburg, ON. We are sure to spend a very enjoyable day together, visiting this lovely spot.

We hold five to six events or outings each year and we are pleased to say these are always well attended. We continue to welcome new members to our club.

WALTER SPIRIG

**LETTE**  
LAWYERS – AVOCATS – RECHTSANWÄLTE

Depuis plus de 50 ans, certains des plus grands groupes européens, de même que de nombreuses PME, ont compté sur Lette au Canada pour leur offrir des compétences du plus haut niveau et une approche pratique à la résolution de leurs problèmes.

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## Montreal Swiss Jass Club

*Members meet between September and April on the last Friday of the month at the Haus der Heimat in Dorval. We always have a lot of fun and there is a steady good turnout. At the playoffs each May, prizes are awarded to the top scorers, along with a 'Wanderpreis' that is presented to the winner in each Club category of our games.*

The last Jass of the 2015/'16 season on April 29<sup>th</sup>, is followed by the Playoff on May 13<sup>th</sup> and the AGM on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

In the picture are (l. to r.) Leo Hadorn, Dorli Wicki and Henry Stark, getting

ready for the next Jass.

A reminder: The 'Säulijass' on April 2<sup>nd</sup> is followed by the 'Chääsjass' on July 3<sup>rd</sup> at Sepp Speck.

To join the next Jass or for more information, please call Herbert Stoll (514) 453-  
HERBERT STOLL



## Montréal: La Société Suisse Romande

La Société Suisse Romande (SSR) a pour habitude d'organiser cinq activités chaque année, en plus d'apporter son soutien à la Fête nationale suisse. Au moment où vous lirez ces lignes, l'assemblée générale annuelle de la SSR aura déjà eu lieu le 27 février dernier et nous pouvons d'ores et déjà vous annoncer les dates de nos diverses activités pour 2016. Nous vous recommandons toutefois de visiter le site internet de la Société Suisse Romande ([www.societesuisseromande.org/](http://www.societesuisseromande.org/)) pour vous assurer de la validité des dates ainsi que des lieux :

Pique-nique familial: samedi le 11 juin 2016, Upton.

Fête Nationale Suisse: samedi 30 juillet 2016, Sutton.

Journée Raclette : dimanche 11 septembre 2016, Bellefeuille.

Choucroute: samedi 12 novembre 2016, Ste-Brigite-d'Iberville.

Saint-Nicolas: dimanche 4 décembre 2016, Otterburn Park.

Comme mentionné précédemment, la SSR soutient l'organisation de la Fête nationale suisse à Sutton en proposant des bénévoles à la Fédération des Sociétés Suisses de l'Est du Canada. Si vous êtes

intéressé, n'hésitez surtout pas à communiquer votre nom ainsi que votre numéro de téléphone auprès de Raphaël Delacombaz, président de la SSR.

L'utilisation des technologies de l'information fait en sorte que la SSR tente de plus en plus d'atteindre ses membres et amis par courrier électronique (courriel) pour toutes les communications et invitations. Nous sommes conscients qu'un certain nombre d'entre vous ne possède pas d'ordinateur. Dans ce cas de figure, nous vous serions reconnaissants, dans la mesure du possible, de bien vouloir nous fournir l'adresse courriel d'un membre de la famille ou d'un ami qui pourra vous faire parvenir nos communications. Nous vous en remercions d'avance.

Nous espérons vous voir toujours en grand nombre lors de nos activités. N'hésitez surtout pas à recommander notre société aux Suisses romands, aux nouveaux arrivants au Québec, ainsi qu'aux ami(e)s de la Suisse romande. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer.

RAPHAËL DELACOMBAZ





## Nick and Irina Siegenthaler-Smirnova

Nick was on a study break from Edmonton, AB, and Irina on vacation from her work in Khabarovsk, Eastern Russia, when they met at the beach in Saipan, one of the Northern Mariana Islands of the US commonwealth in the Western Pacific, in 2008.

After a long-distance courtship involving much travel to Russia and China for Nick since Irina was unable to get a Canadian travel visa, and a lengthy and difficult immigration process even after they had been married for two years, Irina was finally given the green light to enter Canada. In 2011, the couple started their lives together in Edmonton.

Originally from Hägendorf, SO, Nick grew up in a 'railroad family'. Father Gottlieb worked at SBB in nearby railroad town Olten, and Nick and his older brother Hansueli followed in his footsteps, completing railroad apprenticeships.

Nick quickly moved on to reach high degrees of accomplishment. "Flying was always one of my dreams", says Nick. He wanted to make it a career, but training costs in Switzerland were prohibitive. Backpacking in Australia, he met a Canadian travel writer whose brother was a helicopter pilot in Alberta. "I returned to Switzerland and worked like crazy including every weekend to raise the money as quickly as possible to pursue my dream," laughs Nick at the memory of it.

Eight months later, Nick took off on his first training flight at a heli school in northern Alberta. It was the moment he knew this was his career and the country to do it in. "The foothill forests in northern Alberta aren't quite mountains but definitely the image I had about what it is really like to be out in the wilderness, working as a bush pilot." It captivated him.

After obtaining his license, the freshly certified pilot looked for employment. It was the early nineties and jobs were scarce even for Canadian pilots. Nick decided to start his own helicopter business, together with two Canadian partners. During this time, the aviator's other great passion—sport—continued to play a big



role in his life. Nick's track and field/decathlete results ensured him a place in the Canadian National Team. Some years later in Switzerland, Nick's track results attracted the attention of Nagano Olympic bobsleigh silver medalist Marcel Rohner and multiple world champion Reto Goetschi. A few weeks after being recruited, Nick was part of the Swiss team that finished the World Cup season with the overall World Cup win. In 2002, he missed qualification to the Olympic Games in Park City, Utah just by the width of a hair.

A severe car accident the night before his final exam for the pilot instructor's license in Switzerland ended Nick's flying career. It took months to recover and years to get back in shape. Of this severe trial Nick says "It was something I had to do for myself. I had to become physically able again and find a new career path. It was all part of the recovery, but I knew I wanted to return to Canada."

He upgraded his education at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and was immediately hired by a leading business in the oil industry, but then decided to take on the Canadian distributorship for a new, innovative and natural CO2 fertilizer by an Austrian manufacturer. The product proved phenomenal and Nick has since not only successfully developed and grown his Greenfield Fertilizer corporation with farmers and wholesale distributors in Canada, but is now

actively pursuing R&D with successful lab and soil trials for a second generation fertilizer product which Greenfield Fertilizer plans to launch for the 2017 season.

Irina's hometown Khabarovsk is the 700,000 population capital of Eastern Russia, six hundred kilometers north of Vladivostok, two flight hours distant from Japan and only a short bus or boat ride to the Chinese border. "After the fall of the Soviet Union, shopping on the other side of the Amur river in China became a favorite past time for us," explains Irina, who has a younger brother currently finishing at university Khabarovsk. Irina completed a teaching degree in Russian language and literature, and subsequently became partner in a successful lumber export company.

Saipan is a popular vacation spot for Eastern Russians as it is only a few flight hours distant. On Irina's second visit she met Nick. During their long distance courtship, Nick visited Irina and her family several times before they tied the knot in Khabarovsk two years later. Immigrating to Canada in 2011 was a memorable occasion for Irina, who has assimilated quickly and easily. Four months after arriving in Edmonton and completing a language course, Irina started to work downtown.

Asked how she would assess her husband's Russian, Irina laughs gaily and responds "Nick doesn't think his Russian is very good, but he's actually very funny and smart." Her mother Tatiana has visited twice, but the big family get-together took place in Switzerland last year when Irina's Russian family met Nick's. During Irina's first visit to Switzerland, she became interested in the all natural and organic cosmetic line *Suissessences* for which Irina now holds exclusive distributor rights to Canada. Through her company, *Kolibry Esthetics*, Irina wholesales the product line in Canada through retailers and an online shop. For more information on both Nick and Irina's business, go to [www.suissessences.ca](http://www.suissessences.ca) and [www.greenfield-fertilizer.com](http://www.greenfield-fertilizer.com).

SILVIA SCHOCH

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