



# OUR STORY

## NAŠA ZGODOVINA

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## SLOVENSKO KANADSKO DRUŠTVO – CALGARY praznuje 50. obletnico!

## SLOVENIAN CANADIAN CLUB OF CALGARY celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

Over fifty years ago, a small group of Slovenians living in Calgary, having embraced their new country as home, felt there was something missing in their lives. A search for Slovenians living in Calgary led them to organize a meeting place in their homes. As the group grew in numbers, the original group of friends from Slovenia started to look for a more permanent solution. They wanted a gathering place where they could not only share the stories and culture of their home country, but also to support each other as they began their journey to becoming proud Canadians, without losing the benefits of the rich culture they left behind.

In 1966, the club was born and officially registered under the name of the Slovenian Canadian Club of Calgary. The void, felt since arriving in the great city of Calgary, began to diminish. This group of Slovenians had a vision and rose to the challenge of establishing a permanent place where they could meet and continue with their Slovenian culture, language and traditions. A two-room surplus school was purchased and with hard work and dedication, the doors of the Slovensko Kanadsko Društvo – Calgary was officially opened on June 3, 1972. Throughout the years, the building was transformed into a beautiful community hall of which we are so proud.



Organizing Committee

The 50th anniversary organizing committee was formed with a goal to make this celebration an event to remember. The committee consisted of Mary Terenta-Donnelly, Robert Horvat (as co-chairs), Russel Donnelly, Joe Horvat, Olga Metez, Steven Terenta and Walter Staric.

The 50th celebration took place on June 4 and 5, 2016 at the community hall. The two-day celebration was well attended by government officials from Slovenia and Canada: Slovenian ambassador, Dr. Marjan Cencen; Minister for Slovenians Abroad, Mr. Gorazd Žmavc; Secretary from the Office for Slovenians Abroad, Zvone Žigon; Slovenian Representative for Canada at the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Mr. Marjan Kolarič and Honorary Consul of Slovenia in Alberta, Mr. Alan L. Ross. Alberta's Minister of Finance, Honorable Joe Ceci who is no stranger to our community and has been a strong supporter of our goals to continue

celebrating the Slovenian culture, also attended. We received video messages from the Calgary mayor, Naheed Nenshi and the federal Minister of Veteran Affairs, Kent Hehr. The president of CSCS of Winnipeg, Stan Majowski and Barbara Jerebic from the Slovenian Canadian Association of Edmonton greeted our audience with warm wishes. The hall was filled to maximum capacity with our members and friends who came to celebrate with us.

A great program included not only speeches but also folklore performances. The children's dance group from Calgary under the direction of Melanie Horvat performed in national costumes and they were a great hit. The Slovenian choir under the direction of Mr. Marjan Pavlica sang not only the national anthems of Slovenia and Canada but also 'Pod rožnato planino', 'Vse mine' and 'Mami oj mami'. The audience was moved to tears by the heart-felt melodies. The Slovenian dance ensemble Triglav from Winnipeg, under the direction of Kristina

Majowski, performed dances from different regions of Slovenia. It was wonderful to watch this great group of young people in their various national costumes, singing and dancing. It is said that ‘a picture is worth a thousand words’, and so, a power point presentation by Steven Terenta brought back wonderful memories of the way we were and what we have accomplished. Ensemble POGUM, from Slovenia, entertained us with music and songs for our two-day celebration. And finally, lest we forget, our glasses were raised to honour Slovenia’s twenty-fifth anniversary of independence.

A lot of work, preparation and organization went into this 50th celebration. The children’s dance group from Calgary, as well as the Slovenian choir, started practicing at the beginning of the year. It is our hope and wish that both groups will continue to entertain us on different occasions for many more years to come. As for the ensemble POGUM, it is releasing a new video ‘Lahko noč prijatelji’ promoting Calgary as well as different parts of Alberta.



Childrens Dance Group



Slovenian Choir

## Congratulations to the Slovenian Canadian Club of Calgary

The Canadian Slovenian Historical Society would like to join you in celebrating your 50th year and congratulates you on all your great accomplishments over the past decades. It is so encouraging to see that the Slovenian heritage, culture and language are so firmly established and preserved in Calgary.

Thank you for the informative, historical details of your club’s growth.

Živijo! Še na mnoga leta!

## Congratulations to the St. Joseph's Society

The Društvo sv. Jožefa Slovenian Society celebrated its 80th anniversary and the 25th anniversary of Villa Slovenia on March 19. As chair, I acknowledged the past members and priests who assisted in developing and building St. Gregory parish into what it is today. The društvo, from the very beginning, has been a benevolent and cultural society grounded in deep faith, and a major participant in the development of the parish. Dr. Cencen made a special presentation to honour this 80th celebration with a citation from the Republic of Slovenia. Special guests included Dr. Marjan Cencen, Ambassador; Honourary Consul, John Doma; Marjan Kolarič, representative for Slovenians in Canada and Milan Vinčec, All Slovenian Cultural Committee.

Jerry Ponikvar

# Marija Škerbec Hutchinson

Anne Urbančič

The middle of March in Toronto brought the sad news that Mrs. Marija Škerbec Hutchinson passed away. Marija had lived to 92 years of age, a long and fascinating life with friends scattered across the globe to remember her and recall her kindness, her generosity and her luminous smile. She was a nurse, and naturally drawn to helping people. And this is how I will remember her.

I met Marija only once, on the occasion of my interview with her as I prepared an article for Glasilo Magazine. She had been in touch with the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society because she was intrigued by the archives and wanted to help. Over the phone, she told me she had something to donate.

She welcomed me to her Toronto apartment near the lakeshore on a hot sunny afternoon of early summer. I was eager to see what documents and letters she might offer the archives, what story she would tell. Marija received me in her friendly and charming way and led me to a bright room filled with plants and comfortable furniture. But there were no documents or letters. Instead, she offered three items that, in essence, began the important material culture section of the CSHS archives.

What is material culture? As an academic field, it studies “things”; they could be big items or small. Museums all over the world are repositories of the material culture of a group, a nation, or a time period. They display items that once were used, held, and valued for whatever reason by their owners. These could be letters, but they could also be accordions, as in the Slovenian Archives in Trieste, which conserves a number of the old instruments from the Slovenian community there. Our archives rooms in Toronto are small, but now we do have a compelling collection of artefacts to help tell the story of Canadian Slovenians. And Marija started us off with the first three items.

The earthenware bowl and the straw basket tell the story of a Slovenia now gone. The first was used in poor families to serve their dinner, when individual place settings were not available. The food was put



Glazed bowl

in a single big bowl in the center of the table, and the family ate together from it, using their individual spoons. I can still hear Marija laughing as she described the dribbles that marked the path from dinner to diner; the always

famished children made especially messy trails as their spoon raced between mouth and bowl. The basket is a tightly woven pehar, with no handles. In



Woven basket

times past, it was the perfect cushion for eggs; it was the ideal resting place for dough as it rose, or for storing dried fruit. Even St. Nicholas made use of such baskets when he brought treats to children on December 6, placing fruit and sweets in them for the children to find. Both bowl and basket have also become iconic markers of Slovenian culture, Marija told me. The first was remembered in a poem by Srečko Kosovel (1904-1926) in his verses entitled *Starka za vasjo* (The Old Woman Beyond the Village); the latter was the focus of an autobiographical and bittersweet anecdote by Ivan Cankar (1876-1918), often regarded as Slovenia’s greatest author, in his story *Pehar suhih hrušk* (The Basket of Dried Pears).

The doily, on the other hand, was more personal. It had belonged to Marija herself who, at age 7 or 8, had painstakingly embroidered the white cloth with religious symbols, concentrating on each stitch and hoping the mistakes would not be too obvious. Once finished, she had eagerly placed it in her Easter basket as a protection and cover for the food taken to church to be blessed on Holy Saturday. In the confusion of the war and the devastating events that followed in Slovenia, events that eventually brought Marija to Canada, the doily was lost. Years and years later, when she returned to her town, she was invited to her former home, now with new owners. One of them had found the doily among the carefully ironed and folded bedsheets that the family had abandoned in the house. Marija did not want to risk losing the doily again, and on her return to Toronto, had it framed, a reminder of her childhood. Through her gift of these items, Marija offered a poignant history of two cultures, Slovenian and Canadian, both rich in the stories their artefacts recount. The items meant a lot to her but she donated them because, as she told me, she sincerely felt that her Slovenian heritage deserved to be preserved in Canada, that it deserved to have a new audience to see it and listen to the story. Her magnanimity in this is much appreciated by the CSHS. From all of us at the Archives, thank you for your generosity, Marija. Thank you for supporting our work.

# EASTER TRADITIONS

Miriam Čekuta

Easter, “Velika noč” is the most celebrated holy day in Slovenia. It begins with “pepelnica”, Ash Wednesday, the forty days of fasting and penitence in preparation for the feast of the Resurrection. These days, these rituals have become much more lenient.



For Palm Sunday, “cvetna nedelja”, the celebrations begin with the construction of “butare” which are then carried into church for the Sunday celebration. “Butara” replaces the palm leaves that we now receive. It is made of a specific number of twigs and greenery plaited together into bundles along with colourful wood shavings, flowers and such. Young men competed with each other to construct the tallest, the most abundant and most colourful one.

On Good Friday, “veliki petek” when bells are not rung, wooden rattles “raglje” are used in church during the service.

Holy Saturday, “velika sobota,” appears to be the busiest day with the preparation of foods. “Pirhi, pisanice or remeni” eggs are boiled and dyed.



Traditionally the Pirhi eggs were coloured with natural dyes such as red onion skins, dandelions, beets, spinach, teran wine and such. The geometrical stylized designs or forms that are then etched on the eggs vary from one local area to another.

Later in the day, the blessing of the Easter foods, which is a tradition from centuries ago, takes place at church. This is called “žegen.” Foods are brought to church in baskets covered with specially embroidered cloths which symbolize the Holy Sepulcher. All other foods in the basket are also symbolic. These include five red eggs “pirhi” for the five wounds of Jesus, ham “šunka”, the body of Christ, horseradish “hren”, nails used to crucify Christ, potica, the crown of thorns, and bread, the symbol of life. During the Easter Vigil, water and fire are also blessed.

On Sunday morning, following the Easter mass, all the family members gather around the table to enjoy the special “žegen” foods. Many games are played with “pirhi” such as hiding them or egg duels when people hit their eggs together in the hope of cracking the eggs of their opponents.

## First CSHS Fundraiser

The first annual Canadian Slovenian Historical Society (CSHS) fundraiser was held in the auditorium of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal on Sunday January 22, 2017 after all masses. The CSHS is grateful to chef Mrs. Marija Soršak and her sous chefs who prepared over three hundred meals for this luncheon. The chicken schnitzel with potatoes and salad, vampi and polenta, and golaž with dumplings were a hit. Thank you also to the volunteers who assisted with the coffee/donuts and the bar. Marija Soršak, her sister Francka Urbanc, Marija Hozjan, Irena Flisar, Sylvia Erjavec and Marica Kumavli



*Happy Easter!  
Želimo vam vsele  
Velikonočne praznike!*

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