

INTERNATIONAL CLAN CHISHOLM GATHERING Banff/Canmore, 2008

What a party!

Nestled in the Rocky Mountain town of Canmore, the first International Gathering of a Highland clan held in Western Canada was hosted by the Canada Branch of the Clan Chisholm Society on Labour Day weekend.



The Three Sisters looking over the Town of Canmore

One hundred and fifty-five Chisholms from the UK, the US, South Africa, and Canada attended, renewing old friendships, making new ones, and gazing in awe at scenery.

The **MEET AND GREET** was held Friday, August 29th, in the lobby of the Radisson Hotel where participants registered, chatted, enjoyed refreshments and received an assortment of

registration gifts.

The following morning, pleasant weather graced the **TOUR OF KANANASKIS COUNTRY**. A guide in each coach read interesting geographic and historical information and a helper spotted specific landmarks. The scenic route featured the eastern Rockies: dense forests; backside of the Three Sisters; Mt. Alan Ski Hill (1988 Winter Olympics); and the Peter Loughheed Interpretive Centre where a delicious lunch was served and an



Juliette & Ben Chisholm -
Broomfield of Beaulieu,
Scotland

informative video and a wild life museum were viewed. The last lap of the tour was the Smith Dorian Trail, a gravel road that included views of rugged mountains and beautiful lakes culminating with a view high above the town of Canmore and ending with sharp switchbacks down to the hotel.

Upon return to the hotel a brief respite allowed guests to rest and don elegant highland outfits for the **PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION** and the **DINING-IN-THE-CHIEF** dinner. During the reception piper Rob Chisholm entertained while guests were given an opportunity to meet the chief of Clan Chisholm - Hamish Chisholm of Chisholm, his wife Julie and the Clan Chisholm Society's

international president - Val Chisholm Perry, and her husband Jack.

Piped to the head table by Leigh Chisholm were Hamish Chisholm of Chisholm and Julie of the UK, Society President Val Chisholm Perry and her husband Jack of the US, the Honourable Alexander Bruce of the UK, Highland Games Organizer Dr. Jennifer Considine of Canmore, Alberta, Rev. Dr. Francis Chisholm and his granddaughter Heather of Hamilton, Ontario, and Master of Ceremonies Mary Jane Chisholm Pfeifer and her husband Ty of Okotoks, Alberta. A Chisholm tartan centerpiece adorned every circular table and each serviette was encircled with a Chisholm tartan rosette. Behind the head table hung the St. Andrews Cross, the Stars and Stripes, and the Maple Leaf.

The Master of Ceremonies made light of misinformation labelling Alexander Bruce a Scottish lord, but she seriously stressed the pride with which Calgarians view the bronze statue located in that city of Alex's illustrious ancestor - Robert the Bruce. Alex responded with information that the Boar's head appearing on The Chisholm's coat of arms results from a Chisholm saving Robert the Bruce from the attack of a wild boar. After brief speeches by Val and Hamish, Merritt Chisholm followed a Calgary tradition by presenting the Chief with a stunning Stetson. The hat proved a tad small.

The Highwood Highland Dancers, starring Shannon Chisholm, professionally performed many well-loved dances such as the Highland Fling, the Lilt, and the Sailor's Horn Pipe. A traditional pipe tune was played by Leigh Chisholm followed by a medley of modern tunes played by Alec Chisholm that was eagerly recognized and greatly appreciated by younger clan members. The dinner ended with draws for several wonderful door prizes, all of which had been kindly donated. Guests chatted and then slowly departed, looking forward to bright sunshine while attending the Sunday's **CANMORE HIGHLAND GAMES**.

Oops! SNOW! In August!

Canadians were appalled. Visitors from other countries were not. An American from the deep-south raved about the beautiful white world; another, wearing maple leaf socks on her hands, stroked a sparkling icicle. A resident of Scotland said, "*I've heard of snow in the Rockies, and now I'm seeing it.*"

At 7 AM, undeterred by snow and cold, four fellows of hardy Scottish ancestry erected the Clan Chisholm tent at the field. The tent was manned by volunteers who were sporadically warmed by a wee dram and the heater in a nearby Range Rover. Their efforts did however prove successful in recruiting new members for the Canada Branch of the Clan Chisholm Society. Hamish Chisholm of Chisholm and the Honourable Alexander Bruce, half frozen in kilts and day jackets, performed their duties as

Co-Chiefs of the Games. Highland dancers competed inside a nearby school; outside in the snow Chisholms paraded, athletes tossed cabers, and Pipe bands marched. A huge tent provided beer, food, whisky, entertainment, camaraderie, and warmth; it later became the venue for the evening Ceilidh.



The downer of the weekend was an accident. Shirley Sutherland of Ottawa later wrote: "Wouldn't you know it would be a native Canadian who slipped and broke her ankle, and we had 15 feet of snow in Ottawa last winter! Go figure!"

On Monday, Sept 1st, Chisholms watched the snow melt as two coaches took them to beautiful Lake Minnewaka en route to the gondola lift at the base of **SULPHUR MOUNTAIN** located near the town of Banff. As they proceeded up the lift, as if on cue, the mists swirled to reveal white peaks basking in beautiful sunshine. While riding down the mountain, Chisholms watched the mists dissipate to allow views of the town site as well as a herd of mountain goats.

It was a short coach trip from Sulphur Mountain to the magnificent **BANFF SPRINGS HOTEL** where the amicable group enjoyed high tea. Again as if on cue, sunshine beamed down making the snow on the surrounding mountain tops and the waters of the nearby Bow River sparkle.

In the Western Shop in Banff, The Chisholm's Stetson was exchanged for a larger one. A Golf Tournament had been cancelled due to snow, but as the weather warmed and the grass dried a group of Chisholms ventured out on the links.

Last but not least was the Monday evening **BBQ** at the **RAFTER SIX GUEST RANCH**. The rustic atmosphere of the dude ranch enhanced the casual joy of associating with fellow clans-folk. A real Chisholm cowboy played the pipes prior to dinner and a get-well card for Shirley was circulated for everyone to sign. (The next day it was delivered to the patient in Calgary's Foothills Hospital). The honoured guests - Hamish Chisholm of Chisholm (looking handsome in his now well-fitting Stetson) and his wife Julie, Susan Chisholm of Chisholm (Hamish's sister) and her husband



The Chisholm

Michael - led the way to the large log dining room where everyone tucked into

Alberta beef steak, baked potato, ranch beans, buns, and salads. An artistic wall-hanging - epitomizing Alberta's grain elevators, oil pump jacks, and wild roses, all bordered with Chisholm tartan - had been quilted by a clan member. It was raffled and won by, surprise, a Chisholm.



92 Year old Jim Chisholm
and wife, Irene

Following dinner, the kilted members of the St. James Gate Celtic band appeared on stage. The minute their rhythmic music started, Chisholms like a flock of starlings flew to the dance floor. They proceeded to jump-jive, polka, two-step, fox trot, and do some good old fashioned stompin'- with or without a partner. Lively dancers ranged in age from twelve to ninety-two.

The popular band overwhelmed the Ceilidh. The exceptions were a Chisholm who, during a band break, gave us a fiddle tune and two female clan members who stood on stage with the band and sang "Wasn't That a Party". The first coach left the ranch for the hotel at ten-thirty and the last one departed at midnight.

Merritt Chisholm who organized the four day event and Mary Jane Chisholm Pfeifer and Douglas Chisholm who tied up untold details deserve great credit. Volunteers who gave their time and talent as well as those who generously donated gifts and money also deserve kudos for the event's success.

Yes, the Clan Gathering really was a party! Chisholms from around the world made it that way.

Bennie Chisholm