

CELEBRATING OUR HISTORY

Ukrainians have established firm roots in Canada



Peter Manastyrsky, active member of the Winnipeg community

■ In 1891 Ivan Pylypiw and Vasyl Elyniak stepped off a ship onto Canadian soil and became the first two officially recorded Ukrainian immigrants in Canada. These first two men were the pioneers of the dynamic Ukrainian Canadian community that settled in the West.

Why did the Ukrainians immigrate to Canada at the turn of the century? What influenced Pylypiw and Elyniak and many other Ukrainians to make Canada their land of choice? There are

several major reasons why Ukrainians left the land of their ancestry for the New World. Although Ukraine is a land of great natural resources and rich agriculture, the country was then partitioned and under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. Also poverty in Ukraine was huge, escaping poverty by seeking a new homeland with now economic conditions was the only way to improve their lifestyle. Canada offered "free land" of 160 acres for \$10 had a powerful appeal for Ukrainian peasants.

Although Pylypiw and Elyniak are honoured as the first Ukrainians in Canada there is evidence that shows individual Ukrainians were in Canada much earlier. These two pioneers were considered as founders of the Ukrainian Canadian community, they were directly responsible for founding the first settlement in Alberta and Manitoba by bringing their own families and inspiring other families to come.

Historically the first days of settlement in Manitoba was a struggle to survive, freezing cold prairie winds, temperature dropping down to unexperienced circumstances. Then the summer heat, mosquitoes, poor soil and loneliness were obstacles the first Ukrainian immigrants had to overcome in order to survive. There was very little money for necessities and less still to establish a farm. Ukrainian settlers received virtually no financial assistance and no special consideration from the government of Canada. Life for the first Ukrainian immigrants from 1891-1914 was extremely difficult. One positive note that came out of the first wave of Ukrainian immigrants was that every new wave of Ukrainians found the task of integrating into Canadian life easier because the existing community was able to provide the basic needs of the newcomers until they could survive on their own.

The first migration of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada was disrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. Despite this war, Ukrainian Canadians played a distinguished role in the war effort. Among the thousands of Ukrainian Canadians who joined the Canadian Army was Sgt. Filip Konowal VC, who was assigned to the 4th Infantry Brigade and soon found himself in France, in the front line trenches on Vimy Ridge, where many Ukrainian Canadians died.

The history of the Ukrainian settlement in Canada is not merely a compilation of historical events and statistics. It is the drama of a people, of their dynamism, their love of life and freedom, their desperate need to forge a new life while maintaining their national identity. The first immigration of Ukrainians to Canada going back to 1891 and even earlier, it is a story of happiness and sorrow, of joy and laughter, of setbacks and successes. Ukrainian pioneers have played a significant role in building an inclusive Canada. The dedication and self-discipline of those first settlers should serve as a living example and an inspiration not only to their descendants, but to every Canadian who loves this beautiful and rich country.

The 125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Ukrainians to Canada has become a landmark in Canadian history.

—Peter J. Manastyrsky, *Special to the Sun The Winnipeg Sun, Sunday, October 1, 2017*

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Ambassador Andriy Shevchenko meets Ukraine's Interns

■ Ukraine's 9th Ambassador to Canada welcomed the fifteen Ukrainian university students participating in the 27th Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Program, in the Canadian Parliament. The meeting on September 27th in the Embassy of Ukraine began with the introduction of the 15 students, their universities and Members of Parliament in whose offices their internship

was underway. Ambassador Shevchenko described the history and place, which Ukrainian-Canadians have earned in Canada's society and political life. The students engaged in a discussion of the recently signed Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement, the strategic cooperation between Ukraine and Canada in the defence sector, and Canada's support of reforms in

the police force and health-care systems. An interesting discussion followed about the ways that CUPP Interns and the Embassy can work and cooperate during the two-month internship. A valuable brainstorming session was dedicated to the plans for CUPP's UKRAINIAN DAY ON PARLIAMENT HILL and PRAYER FOR PEACE IN UKRAINE, which will take place on October 31 with the sup-

port of the Embassy. In his closing remarks Ambassador Shevchenko led the students on a tour of the Embassy and described the various sectors of the Embassy and its operations. It was an honour for all Interns to have been so warmly welcomed to our Embassy. Our small fragment of Ukraine in Canada.

—By Liliya Makhynko

