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Ukrainian Canadian Students' Union

## President's Message

Dear Readers,

**З НОВИМ РОКОМ!** As we enter the new year, SUSK and its member USOs continue to express their solidarity with the people of Ukraine. One year following the events that sparked Maidan, we remember those who gave their lives for Ukraine – the Heavenly Hundred as well as many other young men who have died throughout the war in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian Canadian students, together with members of our community, pay their respect this winter to the memory of the fallen and pray for peace in Ukraine.

As the 2014-2015 National SUSK Executive moves into the latter portion of its term, we look forward to several key initiatives for the Ukrainian Canadian student community. Firstly, we'll be wrapping up our National Networking Event Series, which consists of networking events held in major cities across Canada – Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal. Through these events, we hope to actively engage students and help them build professional skills as well as foster relationships with successful Ukrainian Canadians, including SUSK alumni (see our brief video here: <http://youtu.be/2dr9WcJGscE>). Secondly, we intend to launch our National Coordinator position in Ottawa – a significant development that will help SUSK maintain organizational continuity and strengthen youth involvement at the national level in our community. Finally, we are already in the midst of preparations for the 2015 National SUSK Congress, to be held in Montreal May 7-10, 2015. The Congress is an incredible opportunity to meet students from across the country, participate in professional development seminars and workshops, and continue to strengthen and develop SUSK by electing a National Executive and adopting resolutions for the future. I hope that many of you will join us!

З повагою – Regards,

Christine Czoli

SUSK President





## Into Her Eyes

The meaning of life is yet to be discovered and long is the path I shall walk through.

Every past day is just the next step into the unknown, closer to my uncertain future covered in shadows.

Every new day I seek for signs of light, only to find myself stuck between the many paths I can choose. And yet, when the shadows look a little brighter and I see the road I need to take clearing up from the darkness, it seems meaningless, with no soul to share the findings of life.

Again though, I see her, and all these fool thoughts are sucked into this tornado of happiness and fury. My goals matter no more, and as the tornado spins faster, so do my emotions. I feel the happiest sadness, looking into her eyes, so close but so far away.

I'm pushed back into reality, waking up from my twisted dream of desire.

Why can't I have what I want? Why would god allow me to love, if not to be loved?

She goes away, running back to be among the stars where she belongs, leaving only painful memories.

I am screaming, still I am quiet.

My heart beats lonely, still I am part of the crowd., part of this world. I am the world. A world fed by emotions of pure selfishness. Its engines, the hope of looking into the eyes of the universe once again.

She is the star of the stars, and me, just another being, who will never forget how warm is the sun.

I am the forsaken, memories are all I have.

*Bernardo Vilhena*  
*University of Manitoba*





## Students of St. Andrew's College Give Back

Веселою колядою та театралізованим вертепом студенти Колегії Св. Андрея разом із Асоціацією Українських Студентів Університету Манітоби пополяризували традиційну різдвяну історію народження Сина Божого, даруючи святковий настрій та різдвяний дух усім глядачам.

Students from St. Andrew's College and the University of Manitoba Ukrainian Students Association continue the age-old Ukrainian Christmas tradition of carolling, with a *vertep*, so as to share the joyous celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All of the funds collected (\$2,365.) went for medical needs of injured soldiers and volunteer defenders of Ukraine.



Сьогодні Україна переживає надзвичайно складні часи. Байдужими не залишилась й Студентська Рада Колегії Св. Андрея, організувавши у грудні 2014 року збір коштів та зимового одягу для захисників України. Дякуємо всім хто простягнув руку помічі, адже тепле вбрання та листівки із щирими побажаннями допомогли зігріти тіло і душу не одного оборонця свободи України. Разом до перемоги!



This is a most perilous time in the history of Ukraine. Hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed, and many more have been seriously injured or displaced. St. Andrew's College Student Association collected funds and winter clothes for defenders of Ukraine that carry out the most demanding tasks and are in the zone of maximum risk. Winter wear and cards with sincere wishes helped to warm the bodies and souls of defenders who courageously struggle for peace and freedom. Thank you all and may God bless you in all you do. Together we can do more!



*Solomia Shavala  
University of Manitoba*



## What 'wave' are you? – A summary of Ukrainian migration to Canada

According to the 2011 Census conducted by Statistics Canada, 1,251,170 Canadians identify with having full or partial Ukrainian ancestry, which makes them Canada's ninth largest ethnic group (Statistics Canada). This is a significant amount of the Canadian population, and begs the question: Why did so many Ukrainians leave their homeland to settle in Canada?

This short essay discusses the four waves of Ukrainian migration to Canada, according to sociologist Vic Satzewich's book *The Ukrainian Diaspora*, published in 2002. Satzewich defines the four waves of migration as follows: the first wave occurred between 1880 and 1914, and consisted mostly of labour migrants; the second wave occurred between the wars from 1920 to 1930, and consisted of a mixture of labour migrants and political refugees; the third wave occurred during and after World War II between 1940 and 1954, and consisted mainly of political refugees; the fourth wave began in the late 1980s with the collapse of the Soviet Union and continues to this day (Satzewich, 23). Satzewich states that the fourth wave consists of mostly economic labour migrants and some political refugees. For each wave of migration, I discuss the reasons why Ukrainians left their home territory, where they went in Canada and why, and their reception by Canadians at the time of their arrival.

The first wave of Ukrainian migration to Canada occurred roughly between 1880 and 1914, when approximately 250,000 Ukrainians immigrated to Canada (Satzewich, 35). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ukrainian territory was controlled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the west, and by the Russian Empire in the east. Many Ukrainians were peasant labourers for foreign landlords, and were "therefore subject to a variety of restrictions on their personal freedom" (28). Serfdom was abolished in 1848 by the revolution in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and in 1861 by the administrative reforms introduced by Tsar Alexander II in Russia. This meant that although the peasants were awarded many freedoms, they were also "free to go hungry, pay taxes to the state, go into debt, and lose their land when their debts became unmanageable" (29).

Coincidentally, right when many Ukrainian peasants were suffering in their homeland, Canada began actively recruiting immigrants to settle the Canadian prairies. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first wave of migration consisted mostly of labour migrants who were trying to escape poor economic conditions and find wage labour or opportunities for farming (26). Most of the migrants came from the western Ukrainian provinces of Galicia and Bukovyna, and settled in the present-day Canadian provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.



During the first wave of migration, Ukrainians tended to settle close to their relatives and/or other Ukrainians, which caused less assimilation into Canadian society. They experienced racism and discriminatory treatment by local populations, and also by Canadian institutions. Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior between 1896 and 1905, exemplified this type of racial discrimination by stating that Ukrainians were like “beasts of burden who were biologically suited to the hard labour needed to homestead the virgin prairie” (38). Generally, there were two reactions to racism by the Ukrainian immigrant community in Canada: assimilation or identity assertion. Satzewich states that “some responded to the racial humiliations by assimilating and trying to shed the visible symbols of their culture and identity as soon as they could” and “others responded by turning inwards and finding comfort and reaffirmation of their identity in a narrow range of activities within the community” (40-41). Overall, the Ukrainians who immigrated to Canada during the first wave of migration settled and cultivated the lands of the Canadian prairies and expanded not only the territory, but also the economy of Canada at the time.

The second wave of Ukrainian migration to Canada occurred between the wars from roughly 1920 to 1930. Despite more restrictive Canadian immigration policies in the 1920s, approximately 67,000 Ukrainians were able to immigrate to Canada during this period (Satzewich, 56). The main reason why Ukrainians left their homeland at this time was because Ukrainian territory was controlled by four external groups - the Soviets, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania - and Ukrainians did not want to live under foreign domination (85). This wave of migration consisted of mostly labour migrants, but also some political refugees.

Canada continued to attract labour migrants to western Canada due to existing Ukrainian communities in the prairies. The political refugees settled in the larger towns and cities of the prairies such as Winnipeg, Manitoba. These refugees were part of the Ukrainian intelligentsia, and were therefore educated and politically aware. They were “political exiles who had left Ukraine in the wake of the various attempts to form a Ukrainian state” (50).

Satzewich highlights that much of the early Ukrainian community life in Canada was influenced by socialist or social democratic attitudes (70). Ukrainians created organizations that helped improve their wages, and working and living conditions in Canada (71). They also continued to strengthen their Ukrainian identity in response to racism and discrimination, and established vibrant cultural and educational institutions (73). The majority of Ukrainians who immigrated were nationalists who wanted to see “the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the establishment of a truly independent and united Ukrainian state” (84). Generally, the second wave of migration brought more educated Ukrainians to Canada, who became leaders in their communities and organized the activities and institutions of Ukrainian-Canadians.



The third wave of Ukrainian migration to Canada occurred during and after World War II between 1940 and 1954. The majority of these migrants were political refugees displaced by the war. Canada admitted roughly 38,000 Ukrainians during this time because they were sympathetic to their plight as refugees (Satzewich, 89). Another reason why Ukrainians left during the Second World War was because Soviet repression was very severe, and was deporting people “who displayed even the faintest sympathy for Ukrainian nationalism” to Siberia and Kazakhstan (90). Additionally, other Ukrainians arrived in Canada as refugees via German labour camps and managed to avoid repatriation to Soviet Ukraine after the war (96). A reason for this was that the Ukrainian community lobbied the Canadian government to include Ukrainian refugees in the ‘bulk labour scheme’ which attempted to solve the labour shortage Canada was experiencing in 1946 in the lumber, mining, construction, agriculture, and manufacturing sectors (100).

Despite the appearance of unity, Ukrainian-Canadians were divided by religious, political and ideological differences that still exist today. Ukrainians who settled in major urban centres such as Toronto had different priorities compared to rural Ukrainians in western Canada. However, they united in solidarity to expose the human rights violations that occurred in Ukraine under Soviet rule, such as the Ukrainian Holocaust, or the *Holodomor*, which was a famine-genocide, orchestrated by Stalin and the Soviet regime in 1932-1933, and is estimated to have killed as many as 7.5 million people (178). The third wave of Ukrainian migration to Canada ended in 1955, and another wave did not occur until the late 1980s because of Soviet restrictions on emigration (86-87).

The fourth wave of Ukrainian migration to Canada began when the Soviet Union started to collapse in the late 1980s and continues to this day. Many migrants are seeking economic opportunities in Canada due to the deterioration of the Ukrainian economy and the rise of unemployment after independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Satzewich, 191). Economic immigrants to Canada are now being “selected on the basis of their knowledge of English or French and the skills they bring to the labour market” (193). This restricts many people from immigrating to Canada, and has resulted in a yearly movement of approximately 2000 Ukrainians to Canada (193). These fourth wave migrants aim to settle in areas where there are economic opportunities, as well as established Ukrainian communities where they may feel more welcome.

Fourth wave migrants from Ukraine often have an uneasy relationship with the established diaspora because of their different values, customs, and language. Many new immigrants are more comfortable speaking Russian than Ukrainian due to the widespread use of Russian in Ukraine during the Soviet era, and established Ukrainian-Canadians disapprove of this because in the diaspora Russian is “defined as the language of oppression in Ukraine” (196). Additionally, Satzewich states that



“one of the ironies of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain is that separation helped the diaspora to sustain an idealized vision of the homeland and of Ukrainians in Ukraine” (213). This implies that many Ukrainian-Canadians had a romanticized view of Ukraine, which had to be adjusted when the Soviet era ended.

Ukrainian immigrants to Canada have been arriving since the 1880s and have contributed greatly to Canadian culture and society. The first wave brought migrant labourers seeking economic and cultural independence. They settled and cultivated the Canadian prairies and expanded not only the territory of Canada, but also its economy. The second wave saw the arrival of educated and politically aware migrants who mobilized the Ukrainian community in Canada and established successful social and cultural organizations that still exist today. The third wave brought Ukrainians displaced by World War II who became labourers and assisted the Canadian economy in the post-war period. The fourth wave brings well-educated Ukrainians to Canada who contribute to our society in numerous ways, but who have trouble integrating into the existing Ukrainian diaspora. Given the current situation in Ukraine, it will be interesting to see if a fifth wave of migration emerges due to an increase in the number of immigrants and refugee claimants that migrate to Canada from Ukraine - especially from the regions most affected by the conflict. Overall, this cultural group continues to thrive in Canadian society, and brings unique qualities to the Canadian multicultural mosaic.

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Lara Franko is a Ukrainian-Canadian whose ancestors arrived in the first (1899) and second waves (1920s). Her grandparents and two of her great-grandparents were born in Canada. Lara is a fourth year student at McGill University completing her Bachelor of Arts in International Development and Anthropology.

*Lara Franko*  
*McGill University*







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## "Cossacks" and "Indians"

### The Story of My Family's First Winter in Manitoba

Glory to Jesus Christ!

In 1903 my family arrived in Canada with only the "clothes on their backs" and all they could carry. The long trip from Mamornitsa, Bukovyna had them arriving in Manitoba at a time when winter was fast approaching. This was the first and most difficult winter for a group of illiterate "slaves of the land" fleeing oppression. Oppression was a way to control the "minorities"<sup>2</sup> of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, in Ukraine and elsewhere. My family was looking to break away from this oppression. They were in search of freedom and a new way of life.

The Manitoba winter was harsher and more severe than anything they had been used to back home. These poor people surely did not have the resources to survive. Thank God they did! Thankfully, being poor did not make them poor in spirit! They were spiritually strong and their spirits were strengthened through optimism surrounding the prospects of coming to the "new world." It was understood that people in Canada had more of an "equal opportunity," a chance at a better life. The love my family received from our fellow "brothers and sisters" in North America that winter further strengthen their original optimism. It is unfortunate that a group of people who showed us love that first winter have, and continue to be, treated poorly. It is really unfortunate that the same sort of oppressive power structures that existed in Austria-Hungary seem to have survived in North America today. It seems as though the world our family has made our home is not all that "new" after all. It makes me wonder if my family members would still be optimistic in their hopes for equality if they knew about the power structures, and oppressive views, that continue to prevent true equality from being reached in Canada. If they knew this, I wonder if my family members would have had the hope they needed to survive that first winter.

My family homesteaded in Sirko, Manitoba. An area that the "powers that be" did not believe should be "re- settled."<sup>3</sup> No-one was, or really had been living; on that area of land. That is not to say that the dense area of bush, and swamp, was not being used at all. A few trails used by Native peoples existed in the area. These trails were likely used by the Anishinabe people. The traditional territory of the Anishinabe (or Ojibway) people was around and east of the area. These trails may have also been used by the people of the Great Sioux Nation - the Dakota, Nakota, or Lakota; which historically had territory around, and just south. Following our

<sup>1</sup> Another way to say "serfs"

<sup>2</sup> Austria-Hungary was an Empire composed of "minority" groups

<sup>3</sup> I will not say "settled" in this article because how can you say that a land that already had Indigenous people living on it for many years needed to be "settled"





arrival, because the land was not great and the trails were not often used, relations between Ukrainians and First Nations peoples were not that common. That is except for our family's first winter in Canada. That winter, the relationship between these Ukrainian-Canadian immigrants from Bukovyna, and this other distinct group of Canadians who have also heavily felt our nation's cultural assimilation policies, was incredibly important.

Both of my Baba's Gidas (дідо, grandfather) were friends, and their families came to Canada from the same place, at the same time. For the first winter, one of them lived with both families in a neighbouring Manitoba Ukrainian community<sup>4</sup>. The other lived alone out in the cold of the bush. They wanted to "reserve" a section of land and decided one of them had to brave the bush to get this done. This was a very tough winter for my Baba's Gida who was not staying in a nice, warm, and comfortable, home. It may have also been a tough winter for my Baba's other Gida. Who knows how he would have felt being with another set of wife and kids on top of his own! For my Baba's Gida who stayed out in the bush, he made and stayed in a make-shift mud-hut, more snow than mud. Baba used to say it would have looked something more like an igloo. All day and all night, he spent his entire winter in this hut. Month after month he had to catch his own food and cut his own firewood to keep himself warm. He would not have had much in terms of tools to do these things. The Canadian government did not provide the new "Canadians" with anything. He only had what he brought with him from the "Old Country." Those days and nights were cold and lonely. His family did not know if he was alive or dead.

The man sat high upon his horse. One sunset of early winter, at a time when daylight is starting to leave days shorter, high upon a ridge of the trail in the distance he sat. The way the sun shined presented an intimidating looking figure in the distance for my Baba's Gida. Baba used to say that at this first sight her Gida was scared. Especially when the rider approached him and her Gida could see it was a full-blown "Indian," bow, arrow, and all! Since my family came at a time long after the English (and French) had already begun to colonize the country, the Indigenous people had already been forced into changing their way of life. My family did not know much about the Indigenous people during this time, but Baba's Gida knew enough to be scared. Although our family did not understand much about Indigenous peoples, we knew enough to understand that "Indians" had a place on the "margins" in a country that had always been their home. The negative propaganda towards Indigenous peoples had even led to a fear within my own family in those early years. First-wave Ukrainian-Canadian immigrants had heard enough gossip to fear "Indians." As Baba's Gida soon found, his fears were not only completely unnecessary, but totally unwarranted. When the man did not go for his

<sup>4</sup> Gardenton, MB.





“bow and arrow,” but instead waved his open-hand in a greeting of a friend – my Baba’s Gida could do nothing but wave back feeling like a fool.

The Indigenous man routinely checked-up on Baba’s Gida that winter. He proved to be a friend. Why was this Indigenous man so friendly to his new neighbour? The “Indian” clearly knew more about the “Cossack” than what my Baba’s Gida knew about him. Although he might not have recognized Baba’s Gida as a Ukrainian, he knew he was a “Slav,” or “Ruthenian.” He probably thought my Baba’s Gida was some “crazy Slav” camping out in the bush all winter by himself! The man may have even known that things had been pretty bad for us back home. The Indigenous man and Baba’s Gida saw each other almost every day that winter. Although they had no way of verbally communicating, it was clear that the man cared about the well-being of Baba’s Gida. If anything was needed, it was clear that the Indigenous man was there to help. Although these men never understood a word which the other spoke, and never saw each other after that winter, their friendship endured. The man was there for Baba’s Gida at a time of need. Since that first winter, not only did Baba’s Gida act out of appreciation for the love shown by this man, our whole family has been taught to try to. Baba’s Gida knew that in this “new world” character should be the measure of a person. He spread that message to his family. This message has been passed down through the generations. Although they could not verbally communicate with each other, these two men communicated and passed on a message of love. Treating people the right way (which is often the way you want to be treated yourself).

The kindness displayed by this brother, has become an example to learn from in our family. As I sit here today, I wonder why this man showed such compassion to my Baba’s Gida when he really didn’t have to. Another person might have said “who cares if this man freezes to death,”<sup>5</sup> and done nothing. An Indigenous person who did nothing in that situation could have justified their decision solely on the belief that “you reap what you sow.” It could be argued that Baba’s Gida, was a stranger, and shouldn’t have been there in the first place. But, this good man had too good of a heart to think this way. I like to think that this man may have had a bit of rough knowledge of our families struggle and therefore a sense of empathy over our reasoning for being in Canada. It cannot be proven, but it isn’t important. The man showed love and compassion when he did not have to. He showed love, compassion, and empathy, when those same traits were not being demonstrated toward people in his community (and continue not to be). The story of our family’s first winter in Canada is the epitome of one of our nation’s greatest issues – how it has and continues to treat its Indigenous peoples. “The powers that be,” instead of treating the community with the same love the Indigenous man

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<sup>5</sup> Galatians 6:7





showed my Baba's Gida, have exploited and oppressed the community and the land they have always called home. In doing so, a "new world" was created that became a lot like the old one my family was trying to escape.

It is just for all of our hearts, thoughts, prayers and actions, to be with our brothers and sisters fighting injustice in Ukraine. However, we should also be aware of the interconnectedness of all communities. I cannot bring myself to only focus on what is happening in Ukraine, when so much is also happening to people here in Canada. It is said that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."<sup>6</sup> When we have so much poverty in the midst of a "rich" society, how can we forget about our brothers and sisters at home? When looking at the situation of the Indigenous community (a community that has so much in common with the Ukrainian-Canadian community) the actions of the man who helped my Baba's Gida that first winter prevent me from staying silent (even if this is against my best interest as a "white" person). Why do we in the Ukrainian-Canadian community (a marginalized white community) not want to realize that we have more in common with marginalized communities of colour? A large part of that is the cultural assimilation policies implemented in Canada for over a hundred years. The Residential School system was devastating to the Indigenous community for it did everything it could to accomplish the goal of "killing the Indian, and saving the man."<sup>7</sup> Children were separated from parents and eventually what happened was a loss of identity. At this same time in many Ukrainian-Canadian communities, the "powers that be" felt it would be best to beat the Ukrainian out of you (physically or mentally). If you spoke a word of Ukrainian at school student would get the "strap," or some form of physical punishment. The Indian Act created a society, where an Indigenous person would lose the right to live within their community if they married out or went to University. Urban society made it nearly impossible for Indigenous people to find work because of the colour of their skin. For men in my family's Ukrainian-Canadian community, if they left the community they could at least find work. But at this work they would be forced to sleep in the chicken coup or out in the barn like an animal. With such similar treatment in the past, why would a Ukrainian-Canadian even try to deny our similarities to a fellow group of marginalized brothers and sisters? The worst effect of the Ukrainian-Canadian assimilation process may have been how it has taught us to feel about "other" people, and how we have become so eager to "fit," and find a place in.

Maybe my Baba's Gida and his Indigenous friend knew they were more like brothers after all. Maybe they also knew the secret to changing things for the better. They are definitely an example of how great the "new world" can be. Maybe all it

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. Letter from the Birmingham Jail to fellow Clergymen. April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1963.

<sup>7</sup> Ward Churchill. On the Justice of Roosting Chickens. 2001





would take for this country to become the optimistic place of my families dream, is to learn from the example set by the Indigenous man (as my Baba's Gida did). A man cared about people, and saw them as brothers and sisters regardless of colour, culture or creed.

*John Kiesman*

*Bachelor of Arts - Native Studies Major, University of Manitoba*

### Representing Ukrainian Culture

What might seem like a regular Friday night on McGill campus was a night of cultural experiences, delicious food and fascinating performances, more commonly known to McGill students as International Food Festival. The festival is an annual fundraiser organized by and for Borderless World Volunteers. Each cultural club is invited to prepare and serve their traditional dish to represent their culture. McGill Ukrainian Students' Association is one of most dedicated clubs taking part in the festival. Not only we have been participating in the festival for the past 5 year, but we also invest a lot of time and efforts into hand-making the food and entertaining our guests with cultural stories. On the table, there is large plate of potato-cheese varenyky and kutia 'for the taste', Ukrainian flag, a wood-carved picture of Easter eggs and a table cloth with traditional ornament 'for the eye'. But before the guests get the food, we share with them the traditions associated with each dish... Varenyky is one of the most famous Ukrainian national dishes. It used to be a symbolic dish for Ukrainian family, as a good wheat harvest would make good dough and, thus, the quality of your varenyky would represent how well you did that particular year. Stuffed with potatoes, cheese, meat, mushrooms or berries, varenyky is a truly diverse and beloved dish in Ukrainian culture. Less famous, but equal important, is kutia, a traditional Ukrainian Christmas Eve dish. A sweet wheat and poppy seeds pudding, it is associated with fruitfulness of the New Year. The richer the taste of the kutia, the more cattle you will have in the coming year and the wealthier you will be. Kutia is always the first and the last meal to be eaten at the Christmas Eve. If you wanted to try out your luck for the New Year, you would take a spoon full of kutia and launch it to the ceiling. If it sticks, the year will be prosperous and prolific for you. If it does not ... well, then you might choose to not believe in these superstitions! Each time a student stops by our table we make sure to not only feed them with great food, but also educate them about our traditions. After all, at our universities, schools and in our communities, we are the ambassadors of the Ukrainian culture and it is our responsibility (and pleasure) to show others the great customs of our culture.





*Darya Naumova  
McGill University*



## My Ukrainian Cultural Identity

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "I do not wish my house to be walled on all sides and my windows stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible". I myself, an immigrant who is experiencing a new life far away from home, am opening windows of my house for a new diverse experience. I have been living in "the linchpin of the English-speaking world" (Winston Churchill), Canada, for over two years; nevertheless, my ethnic identity has become stronger since. I was born and raised in Ukraine, my beautiful country, and before coming to the country of the maple leaf, I did not think about my ethnic identity as much as I do now. Canada is a very lovely and inviting country and has always been multicultural. However, I base my cultural identity on history, nationality, and language.

Everyone has his or her own cultural history. Ukrainian history is old and rich in historical events. As well as national history, Ukraine has Canadian immigration history beginning from 1895, which makes me feel at home and not a stranger in this Canadian society. To illustrate, because of the Immigration Act in 1923, many Ukrainians settled as farmers in the Prairie Provinces. This explains the Ukrainian background of many Canadians. Meeting and knowing so many Canadians with Ukrainian backgrounds has made me feel more welcome in Canada.

Although I feel at home in Canada, my nationality as a Ukrainian, which might not be on my papers but in my heart, will always belong to me. I like this ethnically diverse country a lot, and I can see the possibility of staying here, in Canada, for a long time; moreover, I will definitely stay Ukrainian from my head to my toes for all my past and future generations and be proud to be known as Ukrainian.

Beautiful words of O.W. Holmes that "Language is the blood of the soul into which thoughts run and out of which they grow" reflect my beliefs of a language as a cultural identity. I already speak three languages and am very open to learning more. However, my national language and my Ukrainian accent are the free land of my soul. My first language is something that identifies myself and helps me fully express my feelings, thoughts and beliefs. Every day I speak in a different language, English, and not always do I get identified from my appearance as a non-native speaker until the first word I say. Seldom do I feel frustrated when somebody does not understand





my Ukrainian accent; on the other hand, my accent reminds me of my cultural identity.

I am one of many million different ethnic residents of Canada. Despite that, I do not feel I have a mixed identity from living in a country that is not where I was born and raised. The three most important aspects of my cultural identity, history, nationality and my native tongue are the main ways in which, no matter the location, I belong to Ukraine.

*Liliia Ravnyshyn  
British Columbia*

### I Do Believe

I do believe this not just happened,  
There must be reasons from the sky  
I met this guy who wasn't thankful,  
Would put me down, but I survived.  
From the abuse, and poverty, and hunger  
I raised my hands to pray to God:  
"Please help me God!" I asked and cried.  
Do you believe? I have survived.  
I'm still alive and fight, fight, fight.  
I fight at work to get paid all pennies  
Because I after go and buy some food.  
I fight at school to keep myself awakened  
Because at night I have to study hard.  
I do believe there must be a reason  
That I can't see my parents and my twin,  
And have to live with those who think I'm a stranger  
Because they speak English and I don't.  
I do believe there must be a reason  
For all those difficulties I've been going through...  
And I just dream I'll see a lovely orphan  
And then she'll say me: "Mommy, let's go home."  
I do believe!

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## Euromaidan. Rough Cut: A Politically Charged Film Screening

On Feb 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015, Concordia's well-known *Cinema Politica* hosted a screening of the film, "Euromaidan. Rough Cut"— a collection of short clips from various different filmmakers depicting some of the key events and tensions that occurred on Ukraine's Independence Square from November 2013 until February 2014. The clips showed stunning, cinematic footages from the Maidan's events and were artistically compiled into a coherent story of the Ukrainian people's revolution of dignity. The events depicted spanned from the peaceful protests of the first three months— including the bringing down of the Lenin monument and the closing down of the metro in Kyiv— to the violent clashes that ended with the death of over 100 protesters, now known as the Heavenly Hundred.

However, as beautiful and heart wrenching as the scenes were, little background and context were provided for those who are not particularly tuned-in to the events occurring in Ukraine. Indeed, there was very little text or dialogue and no narration, leaving many of the non-Ukrainian attendees confused about what was even happening. For instance, during the post-film discussion, someone in the audience hadn't understood that it was the government's own special police force, known as the *Berkut*, who fired on civilians and were responsible for nearly all the civilian deaths. In another scene, a resident of Viktor Yanukovich's (the ousted ex-president of Ukraine) home village provided a glimpse into his humble upbringings, although they did not explain why Yanukovich was corrupt and therefore ousted in the first place. There was never a mention of the approximately \$40 billion USD that Yanukovich embezzled during his term as president between 2010 and 2014. They also did not show or mention his ridiculous \$10.3 million private residence set on 140 hectares of forest, which includes extravagancies ranging from a gold-plated pirate ship, private zoo, garage filled with expensive sports cars, helicopter pad, among many others— which has since become a museum and a symbol of corruption in Ukraine.

Despite there being a crowd of *Cinema Politica* "regulars" who attended this event and legitimately wanted to learn more about the situation in Ukraine, there were also people in attendance with Russian-propaganda-clouded views of the events. One person even asked a question blaming the Ukrainian government and falsely claiming



it was “rightist”, at which point we corrected him from the audience, stating that October’s parliamentary elections show the exact opposite— Ukraine’s far-right parties make up 6.5% of Ukraine’s voting public whereas the European parliamentary elections of the same year showed that France, Austria, Hungary and the Netherlands, among others, all have significantly greater far-right support. Another woman in attendance tried to ask “who the good guys” were in all of this— again regurgitating Russian propaganda that the situation is anything other than that of: 1) civilians successfully overtaking a corrupt government; and 2) following those events, a fairly-elected and new Ukrainian government defending its sovereignty from an aggressive neighbor threatened by the prospect of a pro-human rights movement spreading to its own territory.

In attendance at the film screening was guest speaker Marusya Bociurkiw, who also screened her new short film, “The Women Stayed: The Untold Story of the Euromaidan”. I appreciated her work, especially for the insight that it provided us about how the women participated in the Euromaidan. For instance, it showed an underlying feminist movement in which many women felt like they too could fight in the protests, often refusing to stay back to make sandwiches for the men. However, in the post-film discussions, in which questions about the current situation were addressed, Ms. Bociurkiw did not make mention of some of the most prominent feminist figures of modern Ukraine. How about Nadiya Savchenko— the first woman to train as an air-force pilot and to date, the only female aviator of the Sukhoi Su-24 bomber and Mil Mi-24 helicopter? Savchenko was captured and illegally detailed in Russian prisons under false accusation of crimes she has not committed and has been on hunger strike for about 70 days in brave defiance against these injustices. We tried to direct questions about Savchenko to Ms. Bociurkiw, but she brushed her off, saying that it did not really have anything to do with what she was talking about. It became clear that she was missing the bigger picture of the feminist movement in modern Ukraine.

Finally, to finish off a politically charged night, we managed to find ourselves in conversation with Russian propagandists. The mother and daughter duo remained eerily composed and detached throughout the entire conversation, asking seemingly innocent questions like, “who is ultimately responsible for the deaths of over 5,000 civilians in the war of eastern Ukraine?” They would repeat themselves, and then



continue with questions like— “so you don’t think that the government of Ukraine has harmed civilians?” Finally, they spewed pro-peace platitudes that they don’t like the ongoing fighting in eastern Ukraine. They claimed that the Ukrainian government should be the ones to stop the war by just not defending their sovereign state, arguing that the protection of civilians are solely their responsibility, never mind getting at the actual root cause of this violence— that is, Putin’s provocations and direct war aggressions.

Although I had a lot of interesting conversations with people all too eager to expand their knowledge about the situation in Ukraine, I thought I would highlight some of the challenging aspects of the evening to show that there is still much work to be done here at home. Indeed, let it be a reminder that Ukraine is still fighting in an information war and that we can have a role in it. Putin’s trolls are everywhere, consuming conventional media, social media, blog spaces, and public events all around the world, and it is important to understand some of the tactics they are using, as exemplified at this public film screening. Let’s not forget to step outside of the boundaries of our usual community events in order to better understand the trolling happening right under our noses and to spread awareness and truths about Ukraine.

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Hope & Perseverance



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