

# СТУДЕНТ

# STUDENT ETUDIANT

February 2021 | Volume 62 | Issue 3



COVER: UKRAINIAN STUDENTS' CLUB AT RYERSON

# A letter from the “Student” editor

Dear Student,

Is it just me, or did everyone experience serious nostalgia when watching your Snapchat memories these last two months?

January and February are usually our busiest months, and it’s not because we go back to school after winter break. Once Ukrainian Christmas and koliada season are over, the fancy shoes, dresses and drinks come out every weekend in January for all the different Malankas.

I’ve spent the last four years getting ready with my friends for “real” Malankas — the coming-of-age milestone once you’re too old to attend the family Malanka with your parents. Whether it was CYM or PLAST, the energy, good friends and good fun were always the best part of any Ukrainian event.

February usually marks zabava season ahead of Great Lent. Every weekend there’s another event hosted at the Taras Shevchenko Cultural Centre on Horner Avenue — so every weekend there’s another reason to get dressed up and party with your friends. I haven’t gotten dressed up since Feb. 29, 2020, and I’ve been sitting in my pyjamas every day since March. Please, let there be an opportunity in 2021 to get dressed up.

This issue tackles that nostalgic feeling we’ve all felt over the past year and specifically during these last two months. Our contributors are recounting their fondest memories of attending Malankas, zabavas and any other Ukrainian event that featured a live performance (which is basically every Ukrainian event).

We’ll also hear from some of our favourite bands in the GTA



as well as internationally — LUX and Zirka, both based in Toronto. Find out how the pandemic has impacted them and what they’ve done since their last live performances.

Somewhere in the middle of the issue, our alumni will experience some nostalgia of their own — we look back on past *Student* issues that highlighted zabavas of the times back then.

In the meantime, we must continue to stay strong and cope with the ongoing pandemic and restrictions. Since Toronto and Peel region are still in a stay-at-home order at the time of publication, I recommend turning on some Ukrainian music, lay out the shot glasses, dress up in what should’ve been your Malanka get up and enjoy your own zabava from the comfort and safety of your own home. Pretend you’re in those pre-Zoom zabava times.

— Alexandra Holyk

Our “Student” Editor, Alexandra Holyk.



## A special thank you to our contributors featured in this issue:

Roman Grod

Anastasia “Staz” Priadka

Anastasiya Gorodnicha

Aleksa Gobosz

River Hoffos

Ukrainian Students’ Club at Ryerson University

Raya Dzulynsky



# A message from SUSK's president



Our President, Roman Grod.



has accomplished a lot, and I am highly optimistic about our future and the difference that SUSK will be able to make. I look forward in seeing more participation through our various advocacy campaigns and events that we have planned throughout 2021.

When looking forward it is always good to look back and reflect on the past. We hope that you enjoy this issue as we look back to some Zabava's pre-COVID-19.

We are only as strong as our USOs and we hope to continue to see them thrive even in this virtual environment.

All the best!

Всього найкращого!

– Roman Grod

## Вітаю!

Welcome to SUSK's first issue of 2021. SUSK was sure to hit the ground running this year when we brought together clubs from across the country for our first

ever virtual koliada. Our talented executive continues to create more virtual content and bring together clubs and leaders from all over the country to ensure we are working together for the

prosperity of our community.

Thank you to all our members and executives that continue to be successful and forward-thinking even during these difficult times. In the last 67 years, SUSK



**Check us out on YouTube:**  
[youtube.com/user/SUSKNational](https://youtube.com/user/SUSKNational)

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# Looking back on a pre-Zoom zabava

A collection of Malankas, zabavas, stories and memories from Ukrainian events before the pandemic



By Anastasia “Staz” Priadka

The Latin New Year begins in January and with it, many events take place in the Ukrainian-Canadian culture. Most notably is Ukrainian New Year’s, known as Malanka, which is celebrated in many different forms on the eve of Jan. 13.

Some choose to drink champagne at home as the clock strikes twelve. Others host gatherings of family and friends — in the case of 2021, this was likely done virtually.

In the past, most would have attended a zabava where they can dance the night away with many more friends that would fit under the roof of a common dwelling. The atmosphere of any zabava leaves ears ringing from the mu-

sic of the live band, feet throbbing from dancing and spinning on the dance floor, and cheeks aching from all the smiling and laughter.

Most zabavas are surprising and exciting since moments are experienced with individuals you’ve just met, or with those you’ve reconnected with after a while. Regardless, it’s nice to say hello and catch up with a familiar face or make connections with new faces. No matter how much time has passed, conversations are just as easily continued at the next zabava.

Also, cheers only get better each year, so hang in there until the next zabava — there’s bound to be many great stories from living through the pandemic! Until then, Budmo and keep those dancing shoes nearby!

By Roman Grod

Zabavas now seem like an event of the past. Many look back and don’t even remember the last zabava they attended. It is difficult to believe that the last zabava SUSK hosted was back in 2019, during our annual congress in Winnipeg. It is good that SUSK’s unofficial motto is to make every moment count, and back at the Ukrainian National Federation building in Winnipeg, with Budmo playing for us all night, we were sure to do that!

Although COVID has seen us shift away from the in-person events such as zabavas and congresses, SUSK and all our mem-

ber organizations from across the country has seen a significant national increase in all our local events. With the increased usage and acceptance of virtual events, the issue of being 5,000 km away seems irrelevant.

Do I miss zabavas? Of course I do. Will SUSK host more national zabavas in the future? Of course we will. For the time being, SUSK and all our members, supporters, and friends need to adapt and make the most of the current virtual situation. So that one day, we can go back to complaining about how we have to get on a plane and fly halfway across the country, all for some awesome SUSK zabava.





**By Anastasiya Gorodnicha**

You really can't say you've experienced being Ukrainian if you haven't been to a Ukrainian zabava at least once. Even though I have only started to go to Ukrainian events during my undergraduate degree, I have been to quite a few zabavas and Malankas since then, and there is one that particularly was lots of fun.

It was SUSK Congress 2018, in beautiful Banff, Alta. It was my first SUSK Congress, and this was only a few months after I truly discovered my true Ukrainian heritage. It was also my first ever zabava!

It started off with the election of the new SUSK Board 2018-19, then we were served

a delicious dinner, and unlimited drinks. I was amongst new friends, ready for a good time. I don't know what it is about SUSK Congress, but it's so easy to become close with people you met just a few hours ago. There are people from that congress that I still speak to often to this day. I have to say, SUSK Congress is probably the epitome of friendships and connections, especially at a Saturday night zabava.

The reason for this night to be so memorable for me, was that I've always wanted to dance a polka, but had no idea how. My friend was kind enough to ask me to dance (which has also been a dream of mine, but it doesn't happen in Western

culture!). He taught me how to polka, and at one point we had the dance floor to ourselves. The band was amazing and the music was flowing from one ear to the other — it was magical. We were dancing so fast and so energetically. We ended up dancing for a good 30 minutes until it was time to go back to our hotel.

**SUSK Congress is probably the epitome of friendships...especially at a Saturday night zabava**

That is when the funniest part of the night happened. All of the delegates were in the master room and we were all singing Ukrainian songs and koliadky.

Then we decided it was a good idea to walk around the grounds of the Banff Centre, some of us more drunk than others.

I don't remember what we were doing exactly, but I remember a fellow Ottawa Ukrainian Students' Club (OUSC) member ended up with a ripped suit, and I'm pretty sure someone from the Alberta USO had a swollen ankle. Luckily I had my first aid and helped him to the best of my abilities. I remember the security guard was running after us and we were hiding in the trees and behind buildings...It was a night to remember. I'm so happy I left my comfort zone to not only go to SUSK Congress, but also learn a new dance and make new friends and memories.

**By Raya Dzulynsky**

What do zabavas mean to me? They are a time to get together with many of the people I grew up with in Toronto's Ukrainian community.

Zabavas are also a place to get to know more Ukrainians such as at SUSK zabavas. Every year, I attend PLAST Malanka and sit at the table with the same people, other than this year of course. We go to different universities, live in different cities, and lead separate lives, but we all make sure to come back for a great Ukrainian New Year's zabava, the best night of the year.



A collection of Malanka photos featuring Dzulynsky and her friends from 2017-20

# Follow the music: The heart of the zabava

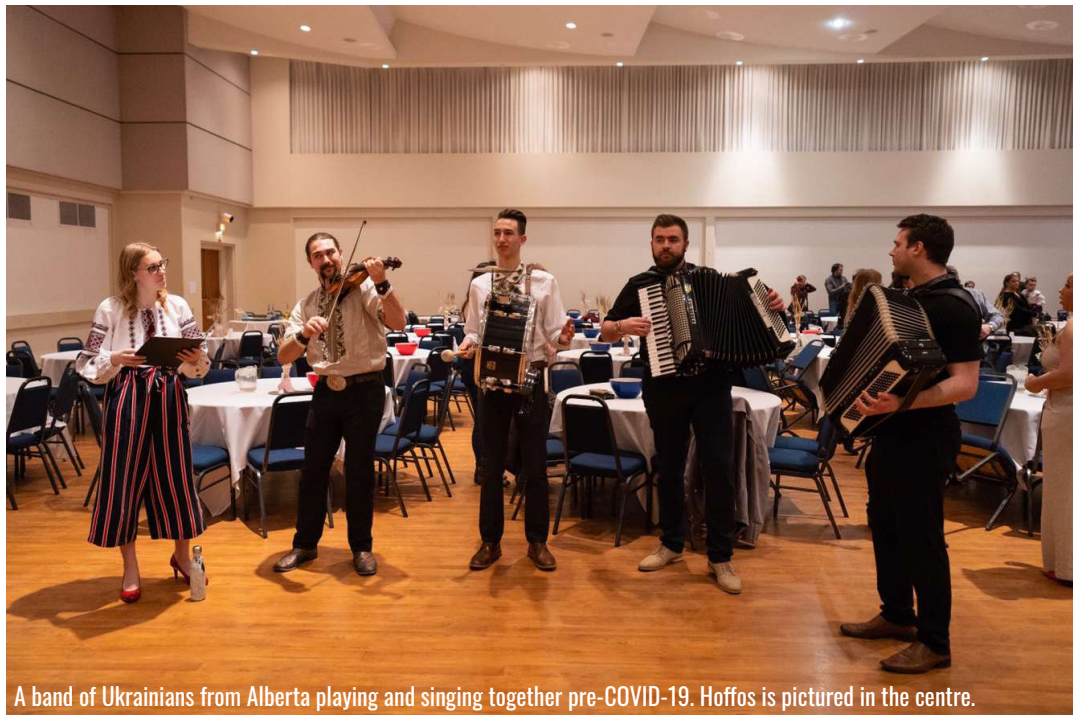
By River Hoffos

A zabava is so much more than a party; it is a time to make new friends and fond memories, a time to dance and sing and a time to celebrate our culture and grow as a community. For me, this means dressing up in an embroidered vyshyvanka and dress pants that are never quite stretchy enough before indulging in a few too many pyrohy. It won't be long before my feet find their way to the dance floor where I will take the hand of a friend, a baba, or even a complete stranger and lead them through a polka, two-step, jive, or waltz.

After many songs worthy of partner dancing and a few casual trips outside to cool off, I often find myself exchanging my dress shoes for a pair of Ukrainian dance boots in preparation for the most exciting dance of the night, the Kolomeyka. This particular time of the night is possibly one of the most iconic celebrations of Ukrainian culture and dance. I could happily share story after story about the Kolomeyka and all of its potentially dangerous, impressive, or even funny moments. But, I am confident that if you've ever attended a proper zabava you will understand the beauty of a Kolomeyka. If, on the other hand, you have never witnessed a Kolomeyka, I assure you that it is certainly worth experiencing first-hand.

**If you've ever attended a proper zabava, you will understand the beauty of a Kolomeyka**

With full confidence that every reader now has plans to participate in a post-Zoom



A band of Ukrainians from Alberta playing and singing together pre-COVID-19. Hoffos is pictured in the centre.

Kolomeyka, I will instead tell a story about the one aspect of a zabava that I have not yet discussed, the music.

**The dance may have ended, but the zabava was definitely not over**

While a hearty meal of pyrohy and kovbasa may play an important role in fueling a zabava, there would be no dance without music.

This musical story takes place long after the Kolomeyka has ended and last call has been called, at the Vegreville Pysanka Festival. After reclaiming my discarded dress shoes, I wandered off into the dark and found myself drawn toward the sound of lively music originating from the campground. The dance may have ended, but the zabava was definitely not over.

At the heart of the music, I found a group of people chat-

ting, dancing, singing and playing all sorts of instruments. I recognized a few of the revelers to be members of the bands that had been performing all night. The rest were strangers to me, but in my experience strangers often turn out to be new friends, so I joined the singers and dancers. I was quickly lost in the passion of the music. Before I knew it I had the strap of a bukhalo, a traditional Ukrainian drum that often has an attached cymbal and tambourine, across my shoulder. I had been swept up into the current of the music.

I cannot tell you how long I beat that drum, but eventually the party grew smaller as people wandered off to find a place to sleep until only a handful of members remained. At this point, I heard one of the remaining musicians suggest: "Let's walk to the Egg." Hence, as the sun began to rise, the sound of a few singing voices, a violin, an accordion and a drum propelled

a small group of strangers-become-friends down the street from the festival grounds to the world's largest pysanka, where we played, sang, and celebrated in the spirit of Ukrainian music.

**I encourage you to seek out the source and meet the musicians. They are... the heart of the zabava**

Since that night, I have played a bukhalo in time with a violin and accordion across western Ukraine and back to my home in Alberta, spreading the spirit of Ukrainian song and dance with the help of many inspired voices. So, if you ever hear the passionate song of Ukrainian minstrels echoing in the night, I encourage you to seek out the source and meet the musicians. They are, in many ways, the heart of the zabava and you never know where their music will take you.



# A blast from the past zabavas

10-тй

Конгрес

October 1969



*Dr. Kalba addressing the banquet guests.*



February-April 1976



MACMASTER CLUB HOLDS 'UKRAINIAN WINTERFEST'

The MacMaster Ukrainian Club in conjunction with the MacMaster Students' Union Winter Caravan presented "UKRAINIAN WINTERFEST" which was held Feb. 4th, 1976. Included in the Winterfest were displays of Ukrainian artifacts, handicrafts and traditional dress. The highlight of the evening was a special floor show featuring the colourful and lively Ukrainian dance

ensemble "DUNAI" from St. Catharines along with the contemporary folk singing trio "OSIN". It seems that everybody (Ukrainian and not) polka'd away to the lively sounds of the Ukrainian polka band "YASENY" which played until early morning. The event was an overwhelming success and hopefully will become an annual event at MacMaster University.

## STUDENT...IN THE 60s AND 70s...

For more archival content, go to [susk.ca/student/archives](http://susk.ca/student/archives)

October 1969



*That's how it all ended...*

October 1969



*A convert to the movement...*

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# How the pandemic affected our bands: LUX



LUX; from left to right: Orest Benko, Roman Kus, Michael Wankewycz, Aleksa Gobosz, Victor Fik, Nazar Kostiv.

## By Aleksa Gobosz, lead singer of LUX

Last year, on Feb. 16, Lux performed at their first official event — Chas’ “Around the World zabava.”

After countless hours of practicing and learning new songs, we were ready to be another up and coming Zabava band. Already having five events planned for the rest of the year, we had the motivation, excitement and desire to practice. Once COVID-19 came around, this all changed.

At first it was easy to meet up in someone’s backyard and have socially distanced practices with the rest of the band knowing that we were all in each other’s “bubble.” Lucky enough, we only have six members in the band, meaning the 10-person gathering laws at the time were easy to follow.

As restrictions grew tighter, our ability to have weekly practices “ceased to exist,” said accordionist Nazar Kostiv. Due to COVID-19, no zabavas were allowed to take place, which in turn meant the excitement to practice at home was and continues to be at an all time low. Strong restrictions and winter weather means no more parking lot meet-ups for practices, as well as a Malanka-less January. Who knows when the next Zabava will be? How about Malanka or Ivana Kupala?

Roman Kus, the lead saxophonist and pianist in our band, said, “No zabavas make Aleksa very angry,” and I’m sure the rest of us are all in the same boat. Our lack of motivation to practice alone at home even led our members to picking up some new hobbies aside from their instruments. Orest

Benko, lead guitarist and singer began writing poetry! His most recent work:

“Boo. Lockdowns. Suck. Ruin. Zabava. Season.”

He should probably stick with singing and playing the guitar. However, he’s not wrong about lockdowns ruining zabava seasons. Zabavas allowed students to take some time off school and work, meet up with friends, sing “One Way Ticket” by Eruption at the top of their lungs and just boost their social batteries.

We never thought that a year without a zabava or Malanka was even possible! It’s difficult to look forward to practicing and learning new songs through video calls and socially distanced parking lot meetups knowing that our next event may not happen for another year.

A big part of being in a band is the crowd and performances.

Without either, our lead drummer boy Michael Wankewycz said he feels that the “morale is very low.” Posting event pictures and even requesting input from our friends on what songs we should learn keeps us motivated to consistently improve.

We try our best to send videos and Snapchats into our band group chats to share our improvements and even potential songs we can learn. Sharing voice recordings and videos of our past performances also helps us remember that a life without COVID-19 does exist and that life shall one day return!

Performing traditional songs, dancing polka and screaming our hearts out on the dance floor are only a few of the things we miss. But most importantly, as bass player Victor Fik put it, “We miss moving our hips and making hips move.”



# A conversation with Zirka

By Alexandra Holyk

Zirka, a Toronto-based Ukrainian band that has performed at weddings, festivals and zabavas for decades, found new ways of connecting with its audience amidst the pandemic.

Through virtual events and live-streamed performances, band members Morris Hucal, Karen Aniol, Kateryna Hucal, John Hucal, Yurko Mychaluk and Bill Hawryschuk deliver a positive energy to their fans in the comfort of their own homes.

Zirka's last in-person performance took place on Feb. 29, 2020. "We never thought that would be the last time we were gonna get together — all six of us — to perform because everything after that got shut down," said Morris.

other organizers to include in their respective events.

"We were trying to stay in touch with a lot of our fans and they really appreciated it," Morris said. "It was a really lonely time to be in lockdown — no zabavas, no weddings, no parties — so it was one way of reaching out."

Following the virtual festivals, which included Canada's National Ukrainian Festival in Dauphin, Man. and the Bloor West Village Toronto Ukrainian Festival, Zirka was able to perform in-person once again, in a much different environment than they were previously used to.

In August, when the restrictions were partially lifted in Ontario, Zirka had the opportunity to play at a wedding in Hamilton, Ont. for the first time since February 2020.

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**"If there's one thing for certain, Zirka loves connecting with our friends and our fans and we're always gonna find opportunities to do that"**

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Since the start of the pandemic, the band has been looking for ways to perform again safely. Its first pandemic performance was a virtual zabava for the Capital Ukrainian Festival in Ottawa.

"We have been the house band since [the festival's] inception," said Aniol. Morris added that although the festival wouldn't be in-person, the organizers still hoped Zirka would play a virtual zabava.

While adhering to the public health guidelines at the time, the band managed to record a couple of songs in Loud Mouse Studios in Toronto as well as film videos to include in the festival's virtual zabava. Following the event, the videos were shared online with

"This was the time when we were limited to 50 people indoors and all of the measures were in place with the social distancing [and] the masking," Aniol said, adding that social distancing at Ukrainian gathering in particular "would be very challenging to adhere to."

"What didn't change was the love that was in the room, the band's energy, the excitement of the guests and the happiness of the bride and groom at the end of it all," she said.

On Sept. 12, Zirka played a live show at The Rockpile club in Toronto for a limited audience. The performance was streamed live on Facebook alongside performances



Zirka; from left to right: Morris Hucal, John Hucal, Karen Aniol, Kateryna Hucal, Bill Hawryschuk, Yurko Mychaluk.

by the Kubasonics from St. John's, N.L. and Sloohai from Winnipeg.

Mychaluk emphasized the band took careful precautions to ensure members' and the audience's safety.

"We have to [contact trace], everyone's wearing a mask, on stage, we had plexiglass in front of our microphone set-ups," Mychaluk said. "We followed all the protocol."

"As much as people were tentative to come out...to an event in the time of a pandemic and social distancing, we still were able to connect with fans which is really amazing," Aniol added, referring to the small crowd of "die-hard" Zirka fans that were able to attend the zabava in-person.

However, not long after that, the provincial government increased restrictions due to the growing number of positive COVID-19 cases in Ontario. Before the province went into lockdown, Zirka was able to record and release a handful of new songs as part of a three-stage album series called, "Live in Isolation."

Morris mentioned that if there's one positive thing that came out of the COVID-19 pandemic for Zirka, it's that it allowed for a new recording.

"[The new album] was something that was never planned for," he said, adding that in preparation for the Capital Ukrainian Festival, the band was able to record eight songs.

Since the eight songs weren't enough for a new album, the band had to go back to the studio to record five more songs in between restriction periods. Though the physical CD is expected to be released this summer, the band decided to release songs from the album on all streaming platforms in three stages — one at the end of October, another in December and the final and most recent stage released mid-February 2021.

"We were trying to put a little funny spin on it because as the stages open up, it's different levels of protocols," Mychaluk said.

Looking ahead, Zirka's band members aren't sure when they'll be able to play in-person once again but they plan on maintaining a positive energy for their audience through virtual performances.

"I think if there's one thing for certain, Zirka loves connecting with our friends and our fans and we're always gonna find opportunities to do that," said Aniol.

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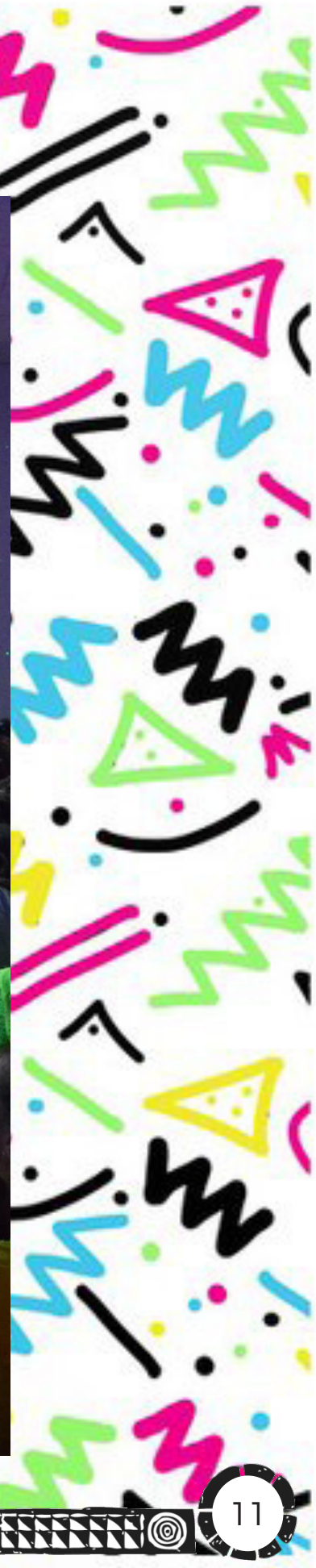
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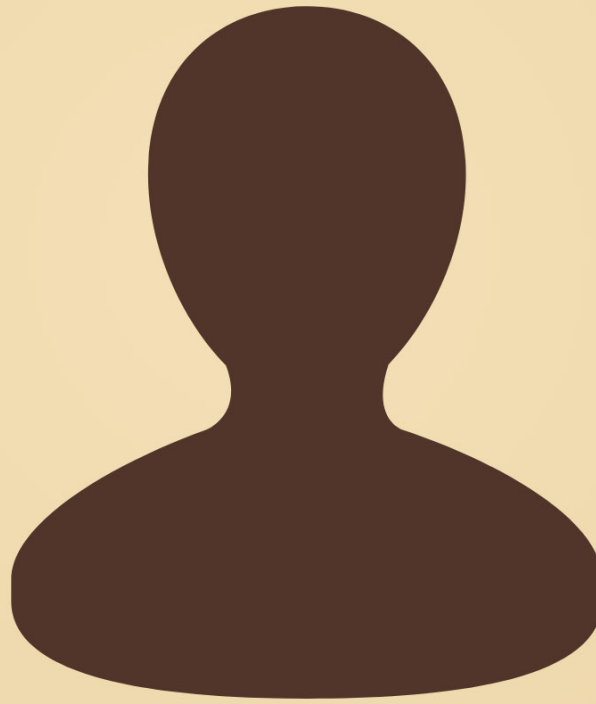


CREDIT: Ukrainian Students' Club at Ryerson, February 2020





# WANTED



SUSK is looking for contributors for its  
Student issues! Whether you want to  
write, share photos or design/illustrate,

reach out to our Student Editor

Alexandra Holyk by email:

[student@susk.ca](mailto:student@susk.ca)

