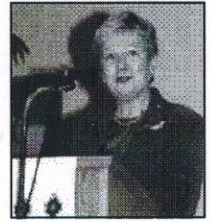




Father of Canada's Multiculturalism

By Victoria (Yuzyk) Karpiak



This year marked the 9th anniversary of the Nation Builders Award project of the UCC Saskatchewan which recognizes the unwavering commitment and immeasurable contributions to the vision, accomplishments and legacy of the Ukrainian Canadian community. The project also presents exemplary role models to inspire us and our children to preserve and enhance the Ukrainian traditions in Canada. The work ethic and community spirit displayed by these early pioneers is evident today as countless Ukrainian Canadians continue to make extraordinary contributions to the greater Canadian good.

Last November, the late Senator Paul Yuzyk, historian and Canadian Senator received posthumously the “Nation Builders Award” from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. This award was given in recognition of his role as the father of multiculturalism and “for many years of service to our commu-

nity.” Other recipients included Bishop Basil Filevich, Wilfred Homenuik, Emilia Panamaroff and Dr. Zenon Pohorecky.

Victoria Karpiak, who received the award on behalf of her father, said,

“My father was guided in his personal and political life by a strong commitment to the principles of Christianity, multiculturalism and ‘service to community.’ As a Canadian Senator he played a leading role in the 1960s and early 70s in articulating a vision of Canada as a multicultural society—where Canadians of diverse cultures and languages could live and work together in respect and harmony.” For his work in championing the cause of multiculturalism (see Yuzyk’s maiden speech in the Senate March 3rd, 1964), which was adopted by the federal government of Pierre Trudeau in 1973, her father became recognized as the father of multiculturalism.

Senator Yuzyk was very proud of his Ukrainian heritage.

“The Ukrainian language and culture were conscientiously preserved within our home. Father and Mother, although both born in Canada, spoke Ukrainian in the home and sent us to Ukrainian school, the Ukrainian Catholic Church and Ukrainian organizations within the community to preserve our language and heritage.”

“As we became older, he also encouraged us to take on leadership roles in Ukrainian organizations, some of which had been founded by my Father.” These include the Ukrainian National Youth Federation and the Ukrainian Canadian University Students Union.

In the Yuzyk home in Winnipeg, Ukrainian traditions were observed by celebrating Ukrainian Christmas on January 6 with all of the meatless dishes and waiting for the first star to appear.

“We enjoyed carolling in the many homes of Winnipeg to seek donations to foster the many Ukrainian projects that required financial support,” Ms. Karpiak reminisces. “Soon after Ukrainian Christmas, Mother would begin writing *pysanky* and would explain in detail the symbolism and history of this Ukrainian art form. Vividly, I remember the Winnipeg Free Press coming to our home to write a story on Ukrainian Easter eggs. My mother, sister and I wore our embroidered Ukrainian blouses and were photographed writing Ukrainian Easter eggs.

The Yuzyk family attended St. Vladimir and Olga Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral in Winnipeg where Ms. Karpiak played the organ during Sun-

day liturgy. In summer, the four children attended courses of higher learning to better understand our Ukrainian history and culture.

“In my university years, I majored in Slavic Languages and culture, belonged to the Ukrainian Students Choir, was the President of Alpha-Omega Society (Ukrainian Students Organization) and the member of Obnova, the Ukrainian Catholic Students Club. We sponsored an art exhibit by the internationally renowned graphic artist, Jacques Hnizdovsky (his art was recently featured on the bags of the Museum of Modern Art—MOMA, in New York and the movie *The Hours — Ed*). Interest in the plight of dissidents in Ukraine in the 60s broadened our perspectives on Ukrainian issues.”

The Yuzyk family home was frequented by Ukrainian leaders, artists, performers and writers, politicians and clergy who today are recognized for their promotion of Ukrainian culture in Canada.

She says, “The words of Lord Tweedsmuir, former Governor General of Canada, were often quoted by my father: ‘You will all be better Canadians for also being good Ukrainians.’”

“We learned in our home, as third generation Ukrainian Canadians, that by preserving the best Ukrainian traditions and culture and by participating actively in organizations devoted to the well-being and progress of Ukrainian Canadians, we would be serving the best interests of Canada and humanity.”

For further information, please visit www.yuzyk.com. The Ukrainian Canadian Professional and Business Assn of Ottawa has proposed Senator Yuzyk for the Globe and Mail’s greatest Canadian Award. — Ed.

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