

Celebrating 100 Years & Beyond

MOHYLA INSTITUTE



EST 1916

Saskatoon, SK, Canada

The History of St. Petro Mohyla Institute

The P. Mohyla Ukrainian Institute (now St. Petro Mohyla Institute) of Saskatoon, SK was one of the pivotal Ukrainian organizations around which much of Ukrainian organized life in Canada was formed.

By the year 1910, approximately 150,000 Ukrainian people had immigrated into Canada. Coming from the portion of their traditional homeland that was ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they had a basic level of Ukrainian national consciousness and they entered Canada under various ethnicities such as Austrians, Poles, Russians, or provincial designations such as Bukovynians, Galicians or Ruthenians.

Knowing of the Polish and Russian domination of their homeland, the immigrants soon realized that as Ukrainians they needed to build an independent Ukrainian community in Canada. They observed that the French Catholics in St. Boniface, the Presbyterians in Teulon, MB and Prince Albert, SK, the Methodists and the Baptists, were all opening educational institutions specifically to attract students of Ukrainian origin. Ukrainian leaders and especially the teachers who graduated from the “Ruthenian (Ukrainian) Training School” realized that it was necessary to set the course of the Ukrainian community onto a new path that would lead to the community using its own talents and resources to build its life in Canada.

At the first Convention of Ukrainian teachers in 1908, with teachers and non-teachers present, it was decided to publish an independent Ukrainian newspaper, which would give much needed direction to Ukrainian life in Canada.

Ukrainian Bursa Movement

This independent newspaper became the “Ukrainian Voice” whose first issue appeared March 16, 1910. Three months later an association was founded with the name of “Zaporozhs’ka Sich”. Its goal was to enlighten the Ukrainian community. At one of its first meetings, the association engaged itself with the challenge of founding Ukrainian “bursas” (student residences) and national homes (community halls). In August 1910 the Ukrainian Voice published an appeal for the Ukrainian community to raise funds for the establishment of “bursas”.

The community responded well and became enthused with this idea. Many were familiar with such residences in their home province of “Halychyna” (Galicia) and were aware of the important role they played in the education of youth and instilling in them a Ukrainian ‘nationalistic’ spirit.

Major opposition to the bilingual schools began in 1911. However, it was the liberal party in Manitoba, which had always stood in opposition to the bilingual school system, that provided the biggest threat

when it took the reins of power from the conservatives in May 1915. Ukrainians were worried that the bilingual system would be cancelled.

In the meantime, the Ukrainian community petitioned and lobbied the Government of Manitoba to retain the bilingual system. However, the bill to cancel the system passed its third reading on March 8, 1916. It meant that bilingual systems in other provinces would likely meet the same fate. This was a blow, not only to the Ukrainians of Manitoba, but to all Ukrainians in Canada.

Discussions then turned to how the community might support the teaching of the Ukrainian language. After considering several alternatives, it was decided to pursue the most practical one; the opening of the Adam Kotsko Bursa in Winnipeg. The committee in charge called a meeting in the summer of 1915 with the goal of opening the bursa for the fall. There was great debate on the nature of the bursa. Should it be Greek-Catholic or should it be “narodna”, of a secular Ukrainian nationalistic nature. A members’ meeting on July 3, 1915 voted 82 to 68 to make it secular. By the beginning of September, the bursa opened its doors to 16 students at 117 Juno Street in Winnipeg. A campaign for funds started immediately with campaigning taking place in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Ukrainians continued to believe that they and the country of Canada would be better if the younger generation was raised in a Ukrainian cultural atmosphere and would learn pride in its own ethnic origins. Thus they sought to establish more bursas.

Mohyla Bursa Founded

It was in this atmosphere of cancelling of government support for bilingual schools and the initiation of the Adam Kotsko Bursa, with funds being collected across Canada, that a group of Ukrainian students who were living in various private homes in Saskatoon, formed a Ukrainian Students’ Club in the fall of 1915.

The students had followed the Manitoba bilingual school issue closely. When that matter concluded, they decided to follow the example of Winnipeg’s Ukrainians and found their own bursa in Saskatoon.

The Ukrainian Students’ Club of Saskatoon discussed this issue in the Lypka Home at 819 - 13 Street on March 4, 1916, where they decided to pursue the matter at a larger community meeting to be held at the West Side Theatre the next day. On Sunday, March 5, 1916 a planning committee was formed, headed by J. Bohonis, and the first collection of funds yielded \$7.36.

The planning committee proclaimed its objectives, namely that:

“The Saskatoon Bursa will educate Ukrainian sons and daughters to become future leaders and workers among our people. Also, the Bursa will supply devoted teachers, priests, scholars, and intellectuals who will guarantee to guard our national interests, because without this education we will not contribute anything to the national interest of Canada.”

Following the initial meeting a financial campaign was mounted and donations flowed in from many centres in Saskatchewan. It was decided to call the first Convention of Ukrainians in Canada. It took place August 4 and 5, 1916, with 500 participants attending from 60 centres in Saskatchewan as well as several from Alberta and Manitoba. This, first-ever attempt at an interprovincial meeting, was an outstanding success.

The Convention approved the initiatives to establish the Bursa in Saskatoon and that it be non-denominational. A Board of Directors was chosen with O. Magus as President.

The objectives of the institution were also more clearly stated:

1. To establish and promote an institution of higher learning for students of Ukrainian descent, both male and female, of any religious denomination.
2. To provide board and lodging at a moderate charge, or entirely free of charge if need be.

P. Mohyla Ukrainian Institute

It is not clear when the decision was made to name the bursa after Petro Mohyla. The first written references to this name occurred in April 1916. In September 1916 the Mohyla bursa was opened in a rented house at 716 Lansdowne Avenue in Saskatoon. In this first year there were 35 students, 4 of which were girls, and 31 boys. Of these students 23 were Greek Catholics, 6 were Protestant, 4 were Orthodox, and 2 were Roman Catholic. The plan was to make it an all-Ukrainian educational institution.

On January 20, 1917 the Board officially named the bursa as “Ukraiins’kyi Instytut imeny Petra Mohyly” or Peter Mohyla Ukrainian Institute. The Institute was legally incorporated March 5, 1917 under the “Joint Stock Company Act” as a company of shareholders who paid \$25 for each of their non-dividend paying shares. Thus the Institute was owned by its member-shareholders.

Wasył Swystun, the first Rector, expressed the will of the people; that it was necessary for Ukrainians in Canada to destroy all artificial borders created among us in Ukraine by our enemies, so that children of Greek- Catholics, and Orthodox families can live together and get acquainted with each other as children of one Ukrainian nation.

Life at the Institute was strictly structured. Daily activities of students began with the 6:45am wake-up bell, allowing one hour to get ready for breakfast at 7:45am. In the evening students took lessons in Ukrainian language, literature, history, and culture. Students also took part in dancing, singing, and music. Before and after each meal the students prayed under the guidance of the Rector. On Sundays they attended the Church of their denomination.

To facilitate the growing demand for space at the Institute, operations for the 1917 - 1918 school year were conducted in three rented buildings – two for boys and one for girls.

In December 1917, a second Convention of Ukrainians in Canada was held in Saskatoon. This convention was attended by 700 people who represented the 3 prairie provinces and Ontario. It was held in the Daylight Theatre. The spirit and enthusiasm was heightened because of the possibility of a free Ukrainian State resulting from the revolutionary fervour of the time. With this surge of nationalistic feeling the Convention passed a Resolution that: “We wish to concentrate around the Institute our best educated people, and to create it as an educational, scientific, and cultural centre for Ukrainian people in Canada.”

At this Convention, the delegates elected a Board of Directors of the Institute, retaining O. Magus as President. Viewing the Institute as the centre of Ukrainian cultural work in Western Canada, members to the Board were elected from Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba (3 each) and even from Ontario (1). On the 29th of December, the new Board held its official meeting and among other decisions, decided to pay salaries to the Institute’s administrator and the secretary-treasurer (both previously were volunteers).

Kamenari

In 1918, the students organized a Literary Society, naming it “Kamenari” (stone-cutters) based on a poem of the same name by famous Ukrainian author Ivan Franko. This society provided students with the opportunity to express themselves and develop abilities as future leaders. The originator of the “Kamenari” society was Semen W. Sawchuk.

The following views and objectives of the Kamenari were enunciated by William Burianyk, a later Rector of the Institute:

“That Ukrainians in Canada do not want to be considered as perpetual immigrants, they will remain in Canada for all time, and as citizens are ready to take upon themselves the aspects of economic, political, and social life of the country. That Ukrainians are not beggars, they are children of a cultured, historically famous nation, who are willing to enrich the cultural treasury of Canada. Furthermore, that Ukrainians are not seeking favours and donations from others, and are ready to take upon themselves all obligations of Canadian Citizenship.”

Building Purchase

The Board of Directors set to work immediately after the Convention. The first was the matter of an appropriate building. It became apparent, that to build an appropriate building would cost more than the \$100,000.00 figure that was discussed at the Convention. In the meantime, the building formerly occupied by the Empress Hotel, was vacant in a residential part of Nutana at the corner of Main Street and Victoria Avenue. The Board of Directors decided to attempt to purchase it. After a month of negotiation an agreement was reached with the owners in early April, 1918 to purchase it for \$32,000.

The renovations that were required to the newly purchased building cost \$20,000 and the Institute was ready to house students in October 1918. Of the 60 students that enrolled, 40 returned to their homes expecting that the influenza epidemic of that time would be less severe in the country than in the city. The Institute was fortunate that it did not lose any students to the epidemic. When the winter frosts stopped the spread of the influenza, 70 students occupied the Institute and participated in a full cultural program for the balance of the school year.

This new refurbished building provided 30 rooms for boys, and 16 rooms for girls. There was a large dining hall, which also served well as an activity room for dancing, concerts, singing, and various other functions. There also was a residential suite for the Rector. This building housed approximately 70 students, and in times of extreme need - 120 students, with as many as 8 sharing one of the large rooms.

Ukrainian Greek-Orthodox Church

It is said that the Institute was a catalyst for the formation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada. The strong criticism of the Institute by the Ukrainian Catholic clergy finally caused some of the Institute's leaders to leave that Church in the summer of 1918. Determined not to be churchless or Godless, these leaders promptly organized a 30 person committee, which in turn organized a confidential meeting of more than a hundred people from the three Prairie Provinces that took place on July 18 & 19. There it was decided to form a Ukrainian Orthodox Brotherhood which would concern itself with the organizing of the Ukrainian Greek-Orthodox Church of Canada by calling the first Council of the Church.

Mohylianky Society

Although the female residents at Mohyla Institute were active members of Kameniar, and took a keen interest in the Institute's cultural and educational program, they felt the need for an organization of their own. The girl's organization, the "Mohylianky Society", was formed by Savella Stechishin and senior girls, in 1923. This organization promoted good public speaking and debates through their oratory program. They also included studies about Ukrainian writers, music and singing, and held discussion groups. Thus the girls too were trained for leadership, and studied many aspects of Ukrainian culture.

In 1923, the leaders of the Mohylianky Society, played a leading role in the founding of the first Ukrainian Women's Association – Olha Kobylanska Branch in Saskatoon. After other Ukrainian Women's branches were formed, the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada was founded in Saskatoon in 1926.

First Mortgage Burning

The year 1925 started with a massive carolling campaign to benefit the Institute. Thirty-three groups covered the province and carolling donations totalled a record \$1,455.30.

The ninth national convention of Ukrainians in Canada was held at the Institute on December 30 and 31, 1925. Times were buoyant and the mood near euphoric. The mortgage was to be retired at this convention. After the business session, an appeal was made, and a collection of donations for the Institute was made at the assembly. As the donations were collected, the needed balance was attained and the mortgage document was passed from hand to hand for everyone to see. After two more speeches, two of the oldest members held the document while Wasyl Swystun and Julian Stechishin lit it on fire from two sides and it quickly turned to ash. The students chanted the burstskyi klych to conclude the ceremony.

БУРСАЦЬКИЙ КЛИЧ

Пу-гу козаки!

Саска – саска – бурсаки!

Для народу ростуть сили

В славній Бурсі Петра Могили!

Бурса – бурса – бурс – бурсун!

Саска – Саска – Саскатун!

Cultural Exchange

In 1926 the first student cultural exchange took place in the form of a debate between the students of Saskatoon and Winnipeg.

Ukrainian Dance Summer School

In May 1927, the Institute invited ballet master Vasyly Avramenko, who had recently arrived in eastern Canada from Ukraine, to conduct dance classes at the Institute for students and the community at large. Nearly 100 enrolled and the courses ended with a concert in one of the larger halls in Saskatoon.

On the effect of Ukrainian dance on youth, Julian Stechishin wrote, "... Avramenko's schools awakened Ukrainian youth, enthused them and handed them something concrete, with which they were able to step forward and be proud of in front of their non-Ukrainian neighbours."

National Conventions

The national conventions convened by the Institute every year from 1918 on were like Ukrainian Canadians' parliament where issues concerning the Ukrainian community were discussed. The leadership of the Institute was central to these discussions. The students, for their part, sacrificed a portion of their Christmas holiday and presented a play and a concert for the delegates in support of the work and life in the Institute.

In 1927 it became apparent to the Institute's leaders, that the Institute, as an Ukrainian cultural-educational institution, would not be able to rise to the position of engaging in all general Ukrainian issues be they economic, political or religious. It was decided that it was necessary to form a new body with a clearly stated ideology, which could attract and retain people who were not members of the Institute.

Ukrainian Self-Reliance League

The leaders of the Institute met in Winnipeg in October 1927 and discussed the proposed new organization, especially the issue of what it was to be called. Finally, the name *Soiuz Ukraiintsvi Samostiinykiv* was selected. In English: Ukrainian Self-Reliance League (USRL).

At the 11th annual national convention of Ukrainians in Canada held in late December 1927, a resolution was passed bringing the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League (USRL) into being and another resolution officially named the "Ukrainian Voice" as the CYC/USRL publication organ.

Shortly after the Convention, even though the Institute's cultural and educational work were flourishing, rumours were circulating that the Institute was the source of much anti-Canadian propaganda. In the late summer of 1928, an article in the *Yorkton Enterprise* and a full-page story in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, about the positive work in the community and the excellent training the Institute was providing its students, put an end to such negative rumours. This publicity was most effective in informing the community at large about the purpose and work of the Institute.

The last National Convention organized by the Institute was in 1928. Interestingly it took place in three centres - Edmonton, Saskatoon and Winnipeg, with three days in each city, between December 22 and January 1. The convention was co-hosted by the USRL. The Convention played a large role in spreading the ideology of the newly founded organization.

The 1929 convention was the first organized by the USRL and the Institute participated only as a component organization.

Hard Times

In 1930, the economy collapsed and the student numbers decreased. During the next ten or eleven year's operation of the Institute was maintained with great difficulty and effort.

With the outbreak of the war and the end of the prairie drought, the economic situation eased. Many Institute alumni joined the armed forces. Student numbers remained small. The building was in a run-down condition and taxes were several years in arrears. Substantial amounts were owed for fuel and services.

A concerted drive to put the financial affairs in order was conducted in 1941-42, the Institute's jubilee year. An appeal for donations was conducted across the country. The generosity of the Institute's supporters and success of other procedures yielded sufficient funds to clear the financial burden of the past and carry out some much needed renovations in the building.

Museum

In December 1941, the Ukrainian Arts & Crafts Museum of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada opened a gallery in a room provided by the Institute. The women's organization had been collecting artifacts, primarily textiles of Ukrainian pioneers, since the early 1930's. The Institute provided space for the Museum gallery, free of charge, until 1979 when the Museum moved into its own quarters as the Ukrainian Museum of Canada of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada (UMC).

Yearbooks

After World War II, the students began publishing an annual yearbook documenting their activities and included some literary efforts by the students. These yearbooks were published, under the title "Kamenari", through the 1950's. When a year was missed, it was made up with a double issue the following year. The last yearbook was published in the 1970's.

Cultural Exchanges 1950's

In the 1950's, some cultural exchanges took place between Kamenari and students of St. Andrew's College in Winnipeg and St. John's Institute in Edmonton. This primarily took the form of debating teams competing for a trophy presented annually.

40th Anniversary

In 1956, at the 40th anniversary reunion banquet, the Mohylianky Society donated \$250 towards the building of a new Institute facility.

Radio Program

In 1957, Kamenari presented a radio program of Ukrainian Christmas carols. Preparing this radio program became an annual practice. The student choir recorded Christmas carols each fall and combined the carols with messages of good will from the administration and the students and arranged for broadcast on several stations in the province. This Christmas radio program continued until the early 1980's.

Need For a New Building

Also in the 1950's, "the mechanization of agriculture and increase in industrial activity set in motion the great shift of population from the countryside to the city. Thus, the rural population, which was the mainstay of support for the Institute, began to decrease", wrote Prof. Andrew Michalenko in 1976. He went on to say, "with economic conditions much improved, the standard of accommodation provided by the old building was no longer satisfactory. To put it simply, the physical plant was worn out. It became apparent that the Institute must have a new building or sink into oblivion."

Once again, the need for an improved facility was urgent and the interest of the people was high. Everyone saw the effective educational and cultural achievements of the Ukrainians in Canada made possible by the excellent work done by the Institute. In response to this need, in 1958 plans were developing to relocate and construct a new building closer to the University. The first public meeting was held in Yorkton and discussed the need for a new building. The program included some Ukrainian dancing performed by students. A 16mm coloured home movie recorded this event.

Mohyla Institute (1958)

A membership corporation was registered with the provincial government. It was entitled, "Mohyla Institute (1958)". Its purpose was to provide and operate the new building. The corporation Mohyla Institute (1958) co-existed with the old shareholder corporation until the mid-1970's, by which time most shareholders had redeemed (actually donated) their shares to the new corporation. Lifetime memberships in the "new" Institute were, and still are, sold at \$25 each. The 1960's saw a cultural "revival" as the Institute prepared to move into new quarters.

New Building

The new Institute was built on the present site, 1240 Temperance Street, and the Official Opening took place on August 13 - 15, 1965. The event was a great success and was celebrated in three locations. At the new Institute at 1240 Temperance Street, tours were conducted of the building with new furnishings. The ribbon-cutting took place on a platform in front of the Institute and featured distinguished guests including the mayor of Saskatoon.

A banquet was held at the Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral Auditorium. An outdoor church service, picnic lunch and an afternoon concert were held on the grounds of the Saskatoon Exhibition Park. The occasion was well attended, with representation from all parts of Canada.

Inter-Institute Exchanges

The first mass participation inter-institute exchange took place in 1962 when more than 20 students from St. John's Institute, Edmonton travelled by train and visited Mohyla Institute for a cultural weekend. The program included sports activities, a dance, and on Sunday after the church service at the Holy Trinity Ukrainian Orthodox Church (now Cathedral) a public concert, which included songs, skits, dancing and, according to tradition, a debating competition. This took place in the new auditorium (1960) located next to the church.

The debate was particularly memorable. The topic was "Resolved that the Ukrainian Greek-Orthodox Church of Canada allow the English language to be used in the liturgy in its parishes." The St. John's Institute team of two debaters took the affirmative side and the Mohyla debaters the negative, in the Ukrainian language debate. It turned out to be a sensitive and emotional topic.

The debate continued as a discussion among all the students in the Institute common room prior to supper that same afternoon. It became apparent that the views held for debating purposes were actually the views of the students from each centre. It became an emotional Edmonton vs. Saskatoon discussion in which even the Institutes' rectors becoming involved. Even though some tears were shed during the discussion, the two groups parted on friendly terms. The visitors had to board the train later that evening to travel home. Much was learned and shared. New friends were made. The following year the Mohyla Institute students visited St. John's Institute in Edmonton.

The exchanges continued to be held each year, usually in February. St. Andrew's College students joined the exchanges and in the 1970's St. Vladimir's Institute in Toronto was included and took turns hosting. These annual exchanges, though modified in programming, continue to take place to this day.

Carolling

In the early 1960's, the custom of carolling was promoted among the students. Volunteer drivers from the Board of Directors took groups of students carolling to members' homes during the Christmas season. Customary gifts of money went toward the building fund. This practice grew, culminating in the mid-1970's with 11 groups of students going out, in rented cars, to communities all over Saskatchewan on the weekend following Julian Calendar Christmas (January 7). In addition, student carollers visited homes in Saskatoon. Proceeds from this endeavour were shared between the Institute and Kamenari.

Concert Tours

It was also in 1963, with the support of the administration, that the students directed and produced an operetta entitled "Na Sinozhati" (On the Hay Meadow) with a cast of about 15 students. This involved considerable effort considering the players were full time students which necessitated that some of the rehearsals be held at 7:00am!

The students were driven by volunteer Board members to perform the operetta in Moose Jaw and Regina and at a different time in Canora and Yorkton. The host communities billeted the students in their homes when an overnight stay was involved.

This activity evolved through the 1960's into what became an annual event in the 1970's referred to as the annual concert tour where two or three communities were visited in one weekend with a two-hour concert consisting of drama (sourced from the collection of drama scripts in the Mohyla Institute library), choir, and dancing presentations. Although the concerts were largely student directed, preparations sometimes involved volunteer choir and dance instructors from the broader community. Travel was by bus and overnights were in motels. The tour took place near the end of November in order to allow time for the annual Christmas radio program to be recorded prior to the Christmas break. The Institute chose concert destinations in response to invitations from USRL affiliated organizations, particularly branches of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada, who usually hosted the students with a reception. Communities visited with concerts, in addition to those already mentioned, included Prince Albert, Nipawin, Gronlid, Hudson Bay, Meadow Lake, Kamsack, Kindersley, Ituna and Stenen. Each concert was also presented in Saskatoon the weekend following the tour. The concert ended with the singing of the Ukrainian National Anthem and the bursatskyi klych chant. Every student was introduced individually at each concert, by name and community of origin. Audience numbers ranged from 50 to 300. The language used for all the concerts was exclusively Ukrainian. The last concert tour took place in 1978.

In the 1970's, as a public relations gesture and a cultural experience, small groups of students, forming a singing group, would go out to country parishes to sing the liturgy for them. In particular, Vonda and Kindersley were the beneficiaries of such excursions.

Library

The Institute assembled a significant library over the years. In particular, a significant acquisition was made when Julian Stechishin was in Lviv and “bought many very valuable books for the Institute.” A room in both Institute buildings was dedicated to the library collection. In the 1970’s, thanks to available grant monies, the entire collection was catalogued and card file prepared by student workers over five summers. This was the start of a career for one of the students, Zenon Zuzak, who today is the Director of the Francis Morrison Library in Saskatoon.

Before anyone was able to imagine microfilm and electronic digitalization, it was deemed important to save the copies of the “Ukrainian Voice”. This was done diligently by the Institute beginning with the first issue printed in March 1910. Volunteers assembled and sewed the newspapers into annual “books”, bound in hard cover and labelled with embossed print. One of the most dedicated volunteers was John Rubashewsky, of Calder/Yorkton, a retired teacher who spent hundreds of hours in the 1960’s and 1970’s as a live-in book-binder. He was the last person to work on this project. This collection is still housed at the Institute.

Newsletter

An important link with the community was the establishment of the Mohyla newsletter that was a cooperative effort between the Institute office, which provided the copy, and Walter Mysak, Canora, SK, alumnus, who edited and published the newsletter four to six times a year on a volunteer basis. The newsletter, printed on newsprint, was a source of information regarding the preparations for the new building, its construction and the subsequent paying down of the mortgage, originally about \$350,000. The progress reports, community and student news and appeals for funds were done through that newsletter. The mortgage was dispensed with in 1976. Walter Mysak served as editor from 1958 to approximately 1980. After that, the newsletter format was changed and it was published from the Institute office.

In order to maintain contact with the community and to raise much needed funds for the Institute the province was divided into districts and a board member was elected from each district’s annual general meeting of Institute members. When funding was needed board members were encouraged to go door to door in the Ukrainian community soliciting funds for the Institute. It was common at Board meetings for Board members to turn over receipts from their most recent collection to management. Donations and donors’ names were printed in the newsletter listed by district and by town in recognition and encouragement for others to join in the campaign.

Summer School

In 1970, the Ukrainian School Council (Rada Ukrains'koi Shkoly) organized, in cooperation with Mohyla Institute, a Ukrainian Summer School for High School Students to be held at the Institute. This was a five-week live-in program, where the students studied Ukrainian language courses accredited by the Saskatchewan Department of Education (Grades 9 to 12), for one-half a day and then participated in a Ukrainian cultural and sports program for the other half day. Fully qualified teachers taught the language program and the cultural portion was conducted by a staff of monitors supplemented with volunteers. The summer program was held annually.

In 1975, it was decided to convert the program to a total immersion experience based on the methodology of the French immersion summer program held at the University of Saskatchewan. This meant hiring a staff of teachers and monitors fully fluent in Ukrainian. The first director of the total immersion program was Dr. Andriy Hornjatkevyč, a university professor from Edmonton. Monitors were post-high school youth. Sufficiently fluent candidates were difficult to find in Saskatchewan, so some monitors were recruited (through USRL contacts) and brought in from Ontario and Alberta. A week-long preparatory program was instituted so monitors could learn the methodology and practice the instructional techniques they would use. Upon arrival, students were provided with an orientation in English. After that, they were expected to speak Ukrainian at all times, within their range of ability. Beginners were quickly taught questions they could ask in Ukrainian which they could use to build their Ukrainian vocabulary.

To enhance the Ukrainian language learning experience, it was decided to pay all expenses to bring 2 (a boy and a girl) non-English speaking Ukrainian fluent speaking students, age 16, from other countries to encourage the Canadian students to speak Ukrainian in their daily activities. This program ran five summers with students coming from Germany, France, Switzerland and Argentina. Ukraine was closed to this opportunity at the time.

Student residents benefitted from personal time on Saturday. Sunday involved going to Ukrainian language Church services, Orthodox or Catholic and then a bus excursion for recreational activities at a lake, camp or festival.

The summer school program concluded with a public concert performed by the students, attended by parents, family, friends, and institute supporters.

Over the 37 years that the summer program ran, program modifications developed and the program switched from language immersion to cultural immersion with a strong language component.

The summer program was last held in 2006.

Compulsory Cultural Program Participation

In the mid-1970's a system of compulsory participation during the school year was instituted. Students all signed an agreement to participate in a minimum of 8 hours of cultural programming per semester or 16 hours for the year. Students could choose from choir, drama, dancing, Ukrainian language classes or lectures given by visiting guest lecturers. Those who failed to meet the requirement were not accepted for residence the following year. The compulsory participation program ran for about five years.

Kameniari Elections

In the 1970's, Kameniari elections were lively affairs with at least two candidates for each position. A campaign evening featured speeches by the candidates. Some years, each candidate for president sponsored his own evening of campaigning featuring entertainment. In the fall of 1975, Sonia Hawrysh was the first-ever female elected president of Kameniari.

Scholarships

John Fedan of Arnold, Pennsylvania, USA established the first scholarship with the gift of an endowment of \$3,000 in 1941 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Institute.

Between 1970 and 2000, the number of scholarships grew substantially. The Mohyla Institute website lists 21 scholarships all established by donors of endowments to the Institute. Annual awards from each scholarship vary between \$100 to \$800.

As the Institute raised funds by various means in the community to support the summer school and its winter programming, and conducted its affairs, some unique experiences did occur.

Community Liaison

In the early 1970's, as the elimination of the building's mortgage came into sight and enthusiasm mounted in anticipation, two students decided to dedicate themselves to this cause. John Gramiak of Hafford and Terry Martinuk of Calder, devoted one whole summer to travelling the province promoting the Institute and collecting donations for it. They did this on a volunteer basis, in return for expenses only.

Western Canada Lottery

At the same time, gaming laws were relaxed and the Western Canada Lottery came into existence. The lottery used paper tickets in booklets. Charitable organizations were allowed to sell the tickets. Mohyla Institute took advantage of the opportunity. It became apparent that some other organizations were using mass mailings to sell the tickets. The Institute began to do the same and quickly became one of the top three sellers in the province along with the Saskatchewan Foresters and the Saskatoon Hilltops. The rewards were significant. This new-found prosperity enabled the Institute to fund an ambitious 60th anniversary celebration, bringing students from Europe and South America for the summer schools and sending a couple dozen students to the first student exchange to be held in Toronto in 1975. When the lottery converted to a ball system, which no longer involved ticket stubs for the draws, charitable organizations' participation dropped off. However, the Institute had accumulated a lottery proceeds reserve fund of \$350,000 by 1979.

In the 1980's and 1990's the reserve fund enabled the Institute to bring summer school monitors from Ukraine and endure the deficits that the summer school and regular Institute operations experienced from time to time.

The Name

For most of the Institute's history, it was named the "P. Mohyla Ukrainian Institute" When the new building was opened in 1965, the name was streamlined to "Mohyla Institute". After Metropolitan Petro Mohyla was canonized in Ukraine in 1996 by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The Board of Directors renamed it the "St. Petro Mohyla Institute".

Celebrations & Reunions

The first mortgage was ceremoniously burned at the 9th Convention in 1925.

In 1956 a 40th anniversary banquet was held.

In 1973, a banquet honouring the 50th anniversary of the Mohylianky Society was held in the Ukrainian Orthodox Auditorium in Saskatoon. It featured a display of all the original composite layouts of student photographs for the 50 years allowing guests to admire the photographs and reminisce.

Former prime minister of Canada, John G. Diefenbaker, was the head table guest at the banquet honouring the 60th anniversary of Kamenari held at the Institute in February 1978 in conjunction with the inter-institute exchange that was held in Saskatoon. A black and white videotape was made of the event. A reunion was held in October of that year and a group photograph was taken of more than 20 Kamenari presidents in attendance, including the first president, the Very Rev. Semen W. Sawchuk.

Planning for the 60th anniversary of the Institute began in 1974. The celebration took place July 1 - 4, 1976. Approximately 300 people registered for the event. It featured a live stage production in Saskatoon's main auditorium, telling the story of the Institute. Over 700 were in the audience. It featured a 16 piece orchestra, a 45 member cast starring Cecil Semchyshyn of Winnipeg and the 60th anniversary choir. A special feature was the first Saskatchewan visit of the then famous Ukrainian dance band Rushnychok of Montreal. Alumni from all six decades attended. At the Saturday night banquet the mortgage for the new building was ceremonially burned.

The 75th anniversary reunion celebration took place the summer of 1991 at the Saskatoon Inn in conjunction with the USRL Convention. It featured a banquet and dance. Decade photos of alumni were taken. The 1991 reunion was the first of 21 consecutive annual reunions by student residents of the 1960's decade.

A 90th anniversary celebration took place in Saskatoon in 2007 with a banquet and renewal of acquaintances.

The 95th anniversary celebration was held in Saskatoon and featured the unveiling of the National Historic Event plaque. The evening banquet featured a performance of the grandson of Julian Stechishin, John Stech an accomplished jazz pianist from New York. John is also a Mohyla Summer School alumnus. At the banquet, the organizing committee honoured the alumni who stayed at the Institute in the 1930's and 1940's by presenting them with a Certificate of Honourary Membership in the Mohyla Institute.

Impact On Residents' Lives

It is difficult to describe the influence that the Institute has had on its students. Everyone's experience is different. Perhaps one can gain a measure of appreciation of the Institute's effect by perusing these sample testimonials from former students.

"I know that if I ever had the chance to make this decision again, I would always come back to the Institute. It's fantastic!"

Judy Pidskalny, Prince Albert, SK

"The relationships I have developed with people here and my culture have been more important to me and my own personal development than any other living situation I have had or will have."

Terry Martinuk, Calder, SK

"Thanks to the Institute, I have had the opportunity to meet sincere people of good will, many of them have become my close friends, and have thus enriched my life. For this, I am grateful to the Institute."

Dmytro Maksymiuk, Saskatoon, SK

“To be a resident of the Mohyla Institute is one of the greatest privileges that our parents could give us.”

Dobr. Mary Hupka, Saskatoon, SK

“Back home our friends don’t understand why we keep coming back for more every year and what we have here, together. The Ukrainian culture and language is a part of us and it is the special thing that brings us close. We can never have friends like this back home who are so close and who know us and feel the same way we do.”

Maria Feloniuk, Windsor, ON

“The quality and amount of information that I gained about the language and the culture was amazing, I feel like a better person having gone through it all. ...I didn’t want to go home, everything about the Mohyla program was so wonderful to me.”

Mark Trischuk, Saskatoon, SK

“We were all so proud of what we accomplished together...at the end we were like a family. We all left the building as strong, proud Ukrainian Canadians. Memories and friends last a lifetime!”

Stephania Makarenko, Toronto, ON

“It is impossible to put into words the impact Mohyla has had on my life. Because of my two summers there, I know that I have learned what it means to be Ukrainian. Mohyla has given me a true understanding of my heritage and has deepened my pride of my culture into a great and undying love.”

Natalia Kushnir, Minneapolis, MN

A National Historic Event

The Government of Canada, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, hosted a ceremonial unveiling of an official bronze plaque recognizing St. Petro Mohyla Institute as a National Historic Event. By virtue of this designation, the Institute was welcomed to Canada’s family of National Historic Sites, which includes places, people and events of national historic importance. The public unveiling ceremony took place in conjunction with 95th anniversary celebrations on September 24, 2011.

The plaque is inscribed in three languages, English, French, and Ukrainian.

The English-language plaque inscription reads as follows:

“PETRO MOHYLA INSTITUTE

In 1916, the activities of a dynamic group of Ukrainian immigrants culminated in the founding of the Mohyla Institute at the first Ukrainian national convention in Saskatoon.

The Institute, operating as a student residence, supported higher education for Ukrainian youth while also serving as a centre for cultural and religious events. In 1916, following a fractious debate, it spearheaded the formation of the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada. In the ensuing decades, the Institute instilled a sense of community leadership in young men and women who would go on to found a range of Ukrainian organizations.”

Centenary

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary, Prof. Andrew Michalenko wrote: “A brilliant centenary celebration in 2016 is assured if we do our part now.”

In 2016, on the eve of the 100th anniversary, Mohyla Institute Board Chair Steve Senyk stated:

“Just imagine the excitement that was in the air on Sunday, March 5, 1916, during a meeting at West Side Theatre in Saskatoon when a group of students collected \$7.36 in support of their decision to form a ‘bursa’. Few people had any money to spare but that did not stop them. Our founders actualized their imagination on that historic day. They took action. They worked together and because of them Mohyla Institute was created. And here we are, 100 years later getting ready to celebrate Mohyla’s 100th anniversary in Saskatoon on June 24 - 26, 2016.”

Regardless of how the 100th anniversary is celebrated, it is undeniable that, in its first century, Mohyla Institute left an indelible positive impact on the lives of thousands of people, on the organized Ukrainian Canadian communities they lived in, the province of Saskatchewan and the nation of Canada.

Compiled by Albert Kachkowski

Sources

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