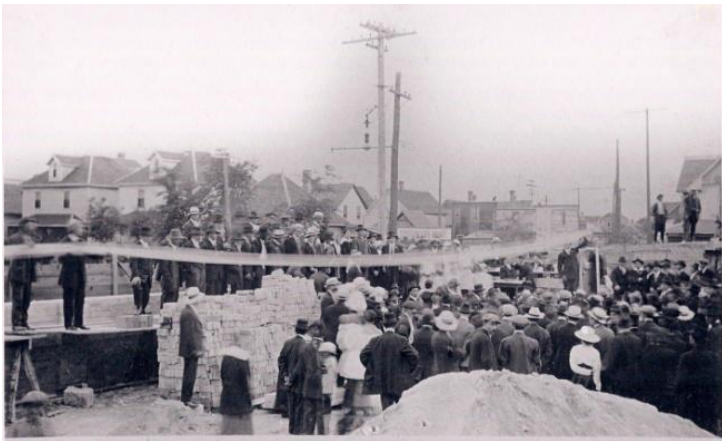


## The Ukrainian Labour Temple Association

### AUUC@100: 100 years of our contribution to Canada

At a meeting in the Winnipeg Royal Theatre in March 1918, members of the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, the Volodymyr Vynnychenko Drama Circle, and the staff of the weekly newspaper *Robochyi narod* agreed it was important to build a meeting space for their community. They represented a collective of political, dramatic and publishing organizations all oriented to serving the Ukrainian immigrant community in Manitoba. They knew there was a need for a central space for Ukrainian immigrants, where political and educational events, meetings, concerts and plays could be held.

To coordinate the construction of the building, the Ukrainian Labour Temple Association (ULTA) was formally created on May 14, 1918. Over the next year the labour temple was built at the corner of Pritchard Avenue and McGregor Street and opened in February the next year. Writing about the opening, Myron Shatulsky noted that “the event was greeted that evening with ‘speeches and dramatic productions, and was witnessed by a huge gathering of working men and women who packed the hall and by an equivalent amount who had to remain outside. The seating capacity of the main hall as completed and including the balcony was 1,000.”



Laying the corner stone of the ULT, 1918.

Over the next 100 years the ULTA provided a dynamic organizational resource for the social, political and educational development of the Ukrainian community in Canada. Very quickly ULTA branches were formed in East Kildonan, Point Douglas, St. Boniface, and Transcona. At one time there were 300 branches across Canada. Today there are nine branches of the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC), which the ULTFA became in 1940. The various branches built Ukrainian Labour Temples, though only a few are left today. The National Office of the AUUC is located in Winnipeg. The membership has collaborated on culture events and tours, taken important positions on national issues,

created summer camps for youth and raised funds for helping Ukrainians in need, both in Canada and Ukraine.

The history of the AUUC is written in the organization’s contribution to the social, cultural and economic needs of the Ukrainian community in Canada. A major need of the immigrants was support to settle into Canada. There were education sessions, language training in Ukrainian and English. Fundraising events were held to support the material needs of families. And because of the complex legal requirements of citizenship, there was help provided in their applications or to defend them if threatened by deportation.



Original ULTA Executive, May 1918

In the first decades of the organization it fostered the creativity of young musicians, dancers, writers and actors. A girls mandolin orchestra started in 1920. There were drama and poetry groups and huge choirs who entertained and gave expression to Ukrainian history and culture. These groups performed regularly at the Ukrainian Labour Temple (ULT) and often toured Canada or the USA. The youth orchestra entertained soldiers based in Manitoba during the second world war. There were wedding celebrations and the extremely popular Christmas party.

From 1972 to 2010 the ULT was the location for the Lviv Pavilion for the Winnipeg Folkorama. The Festival Choir, Mandolin Orchestra and Yunist Dancers are a major feature of social and cultural events held today.

As the youth were so important to the Ukrainian community, there were also sports activities organized at the ULT. For a number of years there were gymnastic lessons, competitions, basket ball teams and a bowling league. The AUUC nationally also organized summer camps for youth in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario.

The ULT was built by volunteer labour and the AUUC has been managed by dedicated people who were independent and idealistic. The ideal of self-reliance and collective responsibility has been a characteristic of the AUUC. Therefore, a number of organizations and activities were started to directly benefit Ukrainian workers, farmers and their families.

The Workers Benevolent Association was set up in 1922 as a rudimentary form of life and health insurance. Dr. Norman Bethune spoke at a WBA convention, saying “The best form of providing health protection would be to change the economic system which produces ill health,

and to liquidate ignorance, poverty and unemployment,” all of which the WBA and AUUC were attempting.

In 1929 the AUUC helped start the Workers and Farmers Cooperative Association which started supplying the north end residents with wood and coal. In 1931 the People’s Co-op bought a creamery and delivered milk in Winnipeg, then started a lumber yard and grocery store. For over 60 years the creamery produced award winning butter, milk and ice cream, all consistently delivered to residents. The Members of the AUUC also helped create the book store *Ukrainska Knyha*, and later Globe Tours, a travel agency. A lunch counter in the basement of the ULT provided inexpensive meals to workers for over 30 years

The benevolence of the Ukrainian community in Winnipeg was extended to people in Ukraine. At different times, AUUC has provided funding or moral support to Ukrainians who were facing famine or conflict. In recent years, the AUUC has educated other Canadians about the Russian presence in Ukraine and how peace can be returned to that part of Europe. An equitable relationship with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people remains an objective of the AUUC.

The AUUC has promoted international peace consistently for the last century, for example. In both wars, the AUUC promoted peace rather than war. It was openly against conscription though this position incurred the animosity of other Canadians who believed in war. Today, the AUUC is actively promoting open relationships with other ethnic groups in society, especially with Indigenous citizens, to maintain a peaceful and equitable community and country.

Because of the political ideals and independent nature of the people, it was often seen as a threat to the Canadian state. In 1918 the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party was banned during the first world war. *Robochyi narod* was banned in October 1918 but replaced with *The Ukrainian Labour News* that the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council helped print. In June 1919 the ULT was raided by police during the Winnipeg Sympathetic Strike, men were arrested, documents seized and printing equipment destroyed. And in 1940 the AUUC was banned during the second world war – this time the ULT was confiscated and it took four years for the AUUC to get the Canadian courts to return the ULT with compensation.

The political foundation and profile of the organization has set the AUUC apart from other Ukrainian and ethnic organizations. While there is a social democratic, socialist and communist foundation to the purpose of the organization, it has adapted and contributed to Canadian democratic traditions. The AUUC commitment to the working class has also provoked

discrimination and hardship for Ukrainian-Canadians associated with the ULT and AUUC. Members of the AUUC have been deported, interned and denied



AUUC Annual Convention 2017 at the ULT.

citizenship. Children have been bullied in school and workers have been denied jobs because of their political ideals.

Over a century, the Ukrainian Diaspora has changed and the organization has changed with it. Today, the ULT is becoming more of a broad community centre. There are numerous events held here monthly put on by a variety of individuals and organizations. Over the last few years there have been wedding socials, fundraising events, birthday dinners, school events, concerts, plays and many other community activities. From the beginning, the ULT has been a safe and nurturing place for workers, youth, women and seniors as they have created their just place in Canadian society.

This account does not name all the people who dedicated themselves to the ULT and the AUUC. There were hundreds of people over the years who contributed their time, money and passion to serving Ukrainian immigrants and now the local community. It was their desire to see a Canada that respected all people, shared wealth fairly, played a role in promoting global peace and created equity and equality. Essentially the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration is a commemoration of them, their constant efforts and their ideals and principles.

May 2018

