



# OUR STORY

## NAŠA ZGODOVINA



Canadian Slovenian Historical Society ~ Vol. 13 ~ Autumn 2023

### LIFE IN THE CAMPS

V nedeljo, 16. aprila 2023 je Slovensko kanadsko zgodovinsko društvo obeležilo 20. obletnico svojega obstoja v cerkveni dvorani na Browns Line v Torontu. Slavnostna akademija se je pričela s kosilom in zaključila s premiero dokumentarnega filma “Življenje v taboriščih po izgonu leta 1945” kot nadaljevanje predhodnega z naslovom “Slovenski exodus 1945”. Na ogledu je bila tudi razstava slik, artefaktov, raznih dokumentov in spominskih artiklov iz tega obdobja. Predsednik društva g. Marjan Ulčar je za uvod pozdravil vse navzoče in nato besedo predal g. Blažu Slamiču, predstavniku slovenske ambasade v Ottawi. Ta je v imenu Republike Slovenije - Urada Vlade Republike Slovenije za Slovence v zamejstvu in po svetu društvu izrekel priznanje in zahvalo ter mu izročil plaketo za dolgoletno in neutrudno prizadevanje za ohranitev zgodovine kanadskih Slovencev ter za neprecenljiv prispevek k povezovanju rojakov v Kanadi. V nadaljevanju je ga. Anne Urbančič v svojem nagovoru orisala nastanek društva. Osredotočila se je na njegovega ustanovitelja g. Staneta Kranjca, ki jo he pred dvajsetimi leti povabil k sodelovanju. Za njegovo vizijo in pionirsko delo mu je društvo poklonilo zahvalno plaketo.

Po okusnem kosilu se je program nadaljeval s prikazom filma, ki mu je bilo možno slediti na dveh zaslonih. V njem zdaj še živeči rojaki pričujejo svoja doživetja in izkušnje. Profesionalna izvedba in odlično podani komentarji so mnogim gledalcem dali začutiti utrip življenja v tistem času in prostoru.

Za prihodnje leto je v načrtu tretji del, ki se bo osredotočil na osnutke in začetke novega življenja v kanadski multikulturni družbi.

*Milena Sorsak*



As mentioned above, on Sunday April 16, 2023, the CSHS presented part two of our trilogy titled Slovenian Exodus: Life in the Camps. This video focused on the everyday life of Slovenian displaced persons who had been placed into the various refugee camps throughout Austria. The camps where most of the interviewees had been placed were Spittal, Lienz, and Judenburg. The afternoon was well attended and the response to the documentary was overwhelmingly positive. At this time CSHS also celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well we honored Stane Kranjc who was a founding member of CSHS.



#### Comments by people who viewed the documentary:

- ◆ *Congratulations to all of you who work tirelessly, give of your 'free' time and share your talents generously.*
- ◆ *I want you to know how impressed and thankful I am to all of you who had any part in this presentation of Life in the DP Camps. It was wonderfully done. So thoughtful – brought tears to my eyes several times. Thank you!*
- ◆ *Moya Financial continues to be a proud sponsor of CSHS. It has been a privilege to witness their dedication and achievements in preserving Slovenian heritage in Canada over the past to decades.*
- ◆ *Congratulations to the CSHS on the 20 years of meaningful, compassionate work and dedication.*

## What should we do with all this stuff?

Anne Urbančič

In the end, my beloved aunt's life fit into 5 or 6 bulky brown grocery cartons. We called her Tetateta because my children could not understand the relationship between them and a "great aunt". When I explained that "great aunt" was akin to being aunt twice over, my daughters coped with the information by deciding she was like a doubled aunt and so they began to call her Tetateta. The name stuck. And she liked it as well.

Tetateta moved into Dom Lipa in the spring of 1988, not all that elderly but clearly suffering from dementia and in need of assistance. The best years of her life were then spent in Dom Lipa, free from the worries and distress that had made all her previous years scarring, traumatic. She had no children of her own, had never married. Her possessions reflected her frugal nature. Dishes and kitchen utensils. Linens. Books. Clothes. Letters and pictures. Only the last two boxes came with her to Dom Lipa.

She died in the spring of 2001. After her passing, we packed up her photos and letters, now silenced memories, and wondered what to do with them. Her life, so vital to us, was not that of a famous person whose death would attract major national archives.

Her letters traced her years in Canada, from the aftermath of World War 2 until her forgetfulness became an impediment for her. They should have gone to an archive, but in 2001, in the absence of an appropriate place for them, many got scattered and lost.

Only two years later the idea of preserving the Canadian Slovenian experience came into existence through the CSHS.

You may have had similar experiences. A family member has gone to a nursing home or has passed away,

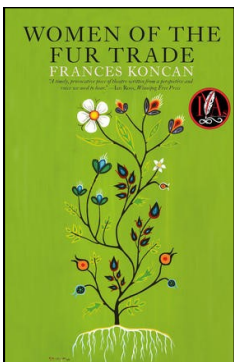
leaving behind photos, letters, cards, recipe books, tapes, movies, diaries. All of these are valuable documents because they tell several stories. First, they describe the life of that person. But secondly, they tell the story of the whole family, of how they came to Canada and how they made a life here, through thick and thin. There was no going back. And thirdly, these documents tell the story of an entire community, the Canadian Slovenians. They name the community, making it stand out from among all the other ethnic groups who have established themselves in Canada. Slovenians are a small group and quickly disappear in the Canadian ethnographic picture. Just how quickly can be seen in my recent discovery that the University of Toronto libraries have listed the journal *Ljubljanski zvon* as being written in Slovak. (I wrote to the librarian to have this changed and after many months, the correct information was added).

If you are wondering what to do with the letters and documents left after a relative has moved or has passed away, consider the Archives of the CSHS. We are here with the sole purpose of ensuring that Canadian Slovenians are remembered as a community of vital contributors to Canadian history and that their history is available to genealogists and ethnographic researchers of the future. We follow established archiving regulations and practices for Canada. We are rather proud of our achievements especially since other ethnic groups have come to us for advice as they begin similar work in documenting their own histories in Canada.

Get in touch with our archivist. She will be happy to help you establish a permanent record of your family in Canada. You will find her contact information in this Bulletin.

### PROMINENT CANADIAN SLOVENIANS

Many of us were pleasantly surprised this past year when we read about a new play that was to be presented at the Stratford Festival and that the author has a Slovenian connection. The play was Women of the Fur Trade authored by Frances Koncan. The play is historical in nature occurring at the time of the Riel Rebellion. It involves, *"three very different women with a preference for 21<sup>st</sup> century slang sharing their views on life, love, and the hot nerd Louis Riel."* It is written with much wit, irony and humour and casts a satirical view of this period in Canadian history.



**Frances Koncan** is Anishinaabe and Slovenian. Her father is Slovenian, and her mother is from Couchiching First Nation. Frances Koncan is a playwright, theatre director and sometime journalist. Frances received her BA in psychology from the University of Manitoba and an MA in fine arts/playwriting from City University of New York. She is an arts reporter for the Winnipeg Free Press and has worked as an assistant director in Manitoba. She has lectured at the University of British Columbia and is an author in residence at the Winnipeg Library.

Frances has won several awards including REVEAL, Indigenous Arts Award, the Winnipeg Arts Council 2017 RBC On the Rise Award and was shortlisted for the Tarragon Emerging Playwrights Award.

The play *Women of the fur Trade* was well received and well attended at the Stratford Festival. We hope to have more detailed information about Frances Koncan in the future.





## RECENT EVENT SUMMARIES

**June 24, 2023** - reported by *Mary Rozmanc and Mary Desanti*

Bled Slovenian Cultural Club is part of the Slovenian Coordination Committee of Niagara (SCCN, Slovenski koordinejski odbor, Niagara). This year it was their turn to host Slovenski dan on Saturday June 24. The masters of ceremony were Ivan Kusic and Silvia Stankovic with welcoming remarks made by Bled president Frank Sampl and Mary Anne Demsar. Greetings were expressed by Slovenia's Ambassador to Canada Andrej Rode, Slovenian Representative for Canada of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Marjan Kolaric, and Honorary Consul General, John Doma. Dance groups Nagelj and Mladi glas dressed in "narodne nose" performed. Ansamble Prava Stvar from Slovenia provided music for the afternoon and evening.

The CSHS held a display in the Bled Hall featuring Building Community Far and Wide: The Life of Canadian Slovenian Farmers and their Families in the Niagara Region. This had been selected for a display at the Ontario legislature in 2016 and published in Our Story Volume 6, Summer #2. There was much interest in the display as well as in the CSHS archival activities.

The CSHS would like to increase its archival collection of Canadian Slovenians in the Niagara Region. If you would like to be interviewed to tell your story for the archival collection of "Povejte nam kaj" or provide archival material, contact CSHS [www.slovenianhistorical.ca](http://www.slovenianhistorical.ca)



**July 2, 2023**

Slovenski dan was celebrated on Sunday, July 2nd at Bolton "Slovenska farma". CSHS exhibition included a section from our display Life in the Camps as well as a selection of books and artifacts from that period.

Our President, Marjan Ulcar as well as his wife Mili Ulcar were honoured for their work in the Slovenian community and were presented with a plaque. Congratulations! We at CSHS, also appreciate all that Mario has done for our organization. He has inspired us with his work ethic and his innovative ideas. We are truly thankful for all that he has contributed to CSHS and foresee an optimistic future.



*Mrs. Rode, Ms. Rozmanc,  
Mrs. Sorsak & Ambassador Rode*



*M. Ferkul, A. Žagar, M. Ulčar, M. Rozmanc, M. Soršak*

**October 15, 2023**

CSHS hosted coffee, "vinski čaj" and "krofe" on Sunday October 15<sup>th</sup> following the masses at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church. This was our first scanning venture. We had asked Slovenian community members to bring photographs of their early life experiences following their immigration to Canada. These photographs may then be used in our next documentary and will be placed into our archives. There were three "busy" scanning stations throughout the morning. Several individuals brought their cherished photographs for scanning. These were then immediately returned to the owners, if requested, or were kept for our archival collection. Ridley Funeral Home generously provided us with the use of one of their scanners

We thank all those who brought their photographs and those who joined us for the treats. We hope to host more of these scanning sessions later in the year.



## UP COMING EVENTS:

### Winter/Spring

We will be hosting another PHOTO SCANNING SESSION during the next months. PLEASE search through your family photo albums for photographs of your family's immigration to Canada and of building a new life in Canada. Bring these cherished memories to the photo scanning session so that they can also be added to our archives. If you have photographs that you are willing to share but don't want to part with, we will scan them and give them right back. Thank you to those who have already shared their family photos with us.

### Saturday, February 10, 2024

Join us for our General Annual Meeting. Everyone is welcome.  
More details will be provided later.

### Sunday, April 28, 2024

This spring we will be hosting Part Three of our Video Documentary: **Slovenian Exodus: Coming to Canada**

Be sure to check our website to view the previous two documentaries:  
**Slovenian Exodus 1945** and **Slovenian Exodus: Life in the Camps**  
[www.slovenianhistorical.ca](http://www.slovenianhistorical.ca)

## SURVIVORS OF THE SLOVENIAN EXODUS 1945



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**HVALA ~ THANK YOU**  
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