



OUR STORY NAŠA ZGODOVINA



Vol. 6 No. 1 Spring 2016

Message from the President



Mario Ulčar

As a volunteer, I was asked to develop a website for Canadian Slovenian Historical Society. In this role I realized how much work has been accomplished but at the same time realize how much still needs to be done in order to preserve the history of the Canadian Slovenians.

I have always been interested in maintaining Slovenian traditions, however, the deeper I delve into the history of our immigrant parents, the more fascinated I become with their journey to survive the war and then establish themselves in a new country. We are grateful to them for instilling in us the sense of pride of being Slovenian. My only regret is that I did not appreciate enough the stories my father told us as we were growing up.

Most of our parents did not have much formal education. However, once they settled in Canada, they had the courage, the will and the determination to build a new future for their families. Their objective was to have their children embrace the Slovenian culture while being accomplished Canadians. Our parents' drive and dedication has resulted in the establishment of Slovenian churches, halls, theatrical groups, dancing groups, Slovenian heritage schools, senior centers, summer recreational facilities, sports clubs, cultural organizations and many other clubs.

Going forward, as president, I realize that I have some big shoes to fill as Jožica Vegelj and Stane Kranjc were very effective and passionate in this role. Thank you Jožica and Stane as well as all of the other committee members for all your hard work, dedication and commitment in preserving the lives of our predecessors. With the help of all the industrious Slovenian people, my goal is to continue to build on the foundation to provide a rich resource so others can research and study our heritage.

We Have a Web Site!

The CSHS website is up and running. There is a considerable amount of information on the website already, however, it is still in its infancy. It is written mainly in English so as to capture the younger generation. The main purpose of the website is to show the struggles of the Slovenian people back home and highlighting their achievements in Canada.

The URL is www.slovenianhistorical.ca and the tabs are self-explanatory. The two biggest sections are: PUBLICATIONS and GALLERY. In the PUBLICATIONS section, you can view all the editions of 'Our Story', the 'Povejte Nam' interviews, biographies, various articles written about Canadian Slovenian issues, as well as Slovenian periodicals which have been published over the years.

The GALLERY section is subdivided by different eras. There is a short introduction with a slide show and captions depicting content of the picture.

We welcome contributions of pictures, memoirs and documentation to capture our Slovenian Canadian roots. (Because of privacy laws, your written permission is requested before anything can be published.)

We wish to hear from Slovenians all across Canada to ensure that all Slovenian Canadians are represented on the website. We hope you enjoy the website, and look forward to your participation/input.

*Želimo vam vsele
Velikonočne praznike!*



Happy Easter!

Reflections on the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society

Jožica Vegelj, past President

The Canadian Slovenian Historical Society was established in the spring of 2002 by a group of Canadian Slovenians who, inspired by the leadership of Stane Kranjc, realized the importance of collecting, documenting and preserving the history of their community for the benefit of future generations. At their inaugural meeting, held in June 2002, ten board members were elected to take on the task of organizing this newly formed society. Stane Kranjc, as the founding president was ably assisted by; Frank Brence, Jerry Ponikvar, Dr. France Habjan, Dorothy Lenarčič, Ema Pogačar, Jože Slobodnik, Dr. Anne Urbančič, Jožica Vegelj and Dr. Janez Vintar. The members met regularly on the first Friday of each month,



the meetings being timed to accommodate individual work commitments. It is a testimony to the dedication of these founding members that they all continue to serve the society in some capacity fourteen years later. On July 23rd, 2003, the Province of Ontario issued a charter to the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society, granting non-profit status. This official recognition encouraged board members to expand the scope of their work and to accept the accompanying logistical and financial challenges.

As with any group of determined individuals, these challenges were gradually overcome. The society was able to increase its presence with financial support from the Republic of Slovenia, through the Office for Slovenians Abroad and with generous donations from supportive community members. Storage and meeting space was provided free of charge by the management team at Dom Lipa. The Republic of Slovenia also held a seminar to educate members about correct archival procedures. With these important items in place, the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society was able to plan events and programmes to ensure country-wide recognition.

Throughout the years of its existence, the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society has expanded its collection of archival material and has added several programmes that involve the Canadian Slovenian community at large. Dr. Anne Urbančič introduced Nichole Vonk, the first

archivist, to the society. Nichole established appropriate archival policies and procedures following the mandate of the Archives Association of Ontario. She also held seminars on taking oral histories, enabling members to participate in “Povejte nam kaj,” a project initiated by Dr. Anne Urbančič. The staff at Dom Lipa supported this work by providing names of residents who wished to share their stories. This project continues to be popular with members of the Canadian Slovenian community across the country and the resulting histories are carefully preserved and documented in the archives of the society.

Another important function is the collection and preservation of photographs depicting the life of Canadian Slovenian immigrants. This programme, known as “Kdo smo,” has resulted in a large collection of photographs, many of which have formed the basis for displays at Canadian Slovenian community events and have acted as a catalyst for increased archival donations. In addition to these more local displays, in 2013 the society organized material from the collection for a bilingual display in Ljubljana. Dr. Anne Urbančič, Mary Rožmanc and Frank Majzelj developed this project, in cooperation with Dr. Urška Strle of Slovenia. Following the exhibition in Ljubljana, the display then moved to Toronto City Hall for a week, to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Society. This display brought the country of Slovenia and Slovenian Canadians to the attention of the public at large. Since that time, both Dorothy Lenarčič and Dr. Anne Urbančič have organized similar biennial exhibitions illustrating different aspects of Canadian Slovenian culture (the most recent one describing the life of immigrants to the fruit growing region around Niagara) will open in the spring of 2016 at the Ontario Legislative Building in Toronto.

In 2008, order to increase national visibility, Dr. Anne Urbančič and Mary Rožmanc developed a two-day seminar, “Pridružite se nam,” on archival procedures. This information was presented in Vancouver, Winnipeg and Montreal. Some locations could not be visited due to time constraints. As a result, Canadian Slovenian communities in other parts of Canada were invited to send delegates to Toronto to attend the same seminar on November 12th, 2011: groups from British Columbia, Alberta and many parts of Ontario attended, increasing the scope for archival collecting.



Pridružite se nam - Seminar

To connect with community members in Canada and throughout the world, in 2011 the society began to issue a quarterly newsletter, "Naša Zgodovina – Our Story." Frank Brence became the publisher and continues in this role to the present time. Not only the newsletter publisher, but also the treasurer, Frank applied to the Trillium Foundation and Canadian Government agencies on several occasions for grant money to support the work of the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society.

In order to reach younger community members, the society established a Student Award Project, targeting university and college students. The students were asked to complete family research projects that could be donated to the archives. Lack of response caused the committee to re-evaluate the project and in 2015, the focus was changed to students involved in the Heritage Language programmes - initially in Toronto and Hamilton with a view to future expansion across Canada. The team of Jerry Ponikvar, Mary Desanti Ponikvar, and Dr. Janez Vintar, led by Miriam Čekuta has been pleased with the response and will hold the first display of student projects at an Open House to be held on April 23rd, 2016 at Dom Lipa.

The project that was the impetus for the founding of the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society in 2002, the publication of a book documenting the Canadian-Slovenian experience in Canada, collated by Stane Kranjc, has recently been revitalized. The material has been updated where necessary and some changes to the structure of the text have been made. The Book Committee of Peter Čekuta, Frank Majzelj, Janez Vintar, Jerry Ponikvar, Milena Soršak and Jožica Vegelj under the direction of Frank Brence and editor in chief Cvetka Kocjančič is hopeful that this book, "From Atlantic to

Pacific," will be published in 2017, in time for Canada's 150th anniversary. Financing this project continues to be a challenge.

As with any volunteer organization, changes in circumstances bring changes to the group. In 2006, the founding president, Stane Kranjc accepted the position of Representative of Canadian Slovenians with the Slovenian Government. As a result, he resigned his position with the society and Jožica Vegelj was appointed as the new president - a role she maintained until recently. In 2015, Frank Majzelj left the society to pursue his interest in genealogy. At a display held at Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church, on Brown's Line, we were fortunate to meet Mrs. Levstik, who provided information about her daughter, Emily Chicorli, a recent graduate seeking work in the archival field. She agreed to become our archivist and has updated our archival policies and procedures and is working with volunteers to update the catalogue of archival holdings originally prepared by Frank Majzelj in 2013, and showing 25,000 documents.

The Canadian Slovenian Historical Society has worked tirelessly to preserve the history of community members wherever they reside in Canada. Invitations are issued Canada wide to the Annual General Meeting, normally held in February. Members attending this meeting in 2016 were pleased to receive compliments and words encouragement from organizations in Calgary and the Maritimes. New members and volunteers are always welcome: they bring new life and new ideas to the society. As past president, I have enjoyed my work with the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society and would like to thank all board members past and present for their dedication and support.

Thinking About Envelopes

Anne Urbančič

Many of the letters donated to the Archives of the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society come tucked into their original envelope. In this issue, I would like to tell you a little more about the importance of these 'message covers'. They give us clues to the movements of their writers and receivers, and much more. Think about what is written on an envelope: prominent on the front are the name and address of the recipient, then, in the upper left corner, or more commonly in letters sent from Europe, on the back flap, we'll find the name or initials and address of the sender. As the archivists look through a collection of letters, they can see how people have moved to other areas of a town or city, or to completely new cities or countries; archivists can also deduce how long people have stayed in one place. From the post office imprint on the envelope archivists can see where and when the letter was mailed, and when it arrived at its destination. Sometimes, there are last minute messages on the envelope, written after it was sealed. The stories an envelope tells is a sad one sometimes: letters returned with a stamped message informing the sender that the receiver has moved and left no forwarding address, or has died. Some envelopes

have mysterious markings, or decontextualized words or numbers, indicating that they have been used for other purposes before being sent to the archives. In my family, all of my late father's envelopes have a date under the word "odgovoril" so that we know that the recipient received an answer from my dad. Some envelopes in the Archives have been torn apart, hastily, eagerly; others have been cut open very carefully. Many are missing stamps: the mark of a collector perhaps, or of someone who donated the stamp to various missionary groups to resell. Some envelopes are light in weight, intended for airmail. Even the colour of envelopes tells a story: light brown envelopes mean business, as do envelopes with plasticized oval address windows that allow the address on the letter inside to be seen. Coloured envelopes often indicate special occasions, like birthdays or Christmas. Envelopes with a black band around the perimeter announce the passing of a friend or family member, while heavy cream coloured envelopes, especially those with a lining on the inner section, usually announce weddings. Sometimes letter and envelope are one and the same; folded carefully, the letter contents remain on the inside

and the information about addressee and sender on the outside.

Books and studies have been written about envelopes. They tell us that envelopes started as wet clay wrappers which dried around the message to seal it safely inside. Only by breaking the hardened clay could the receiver read the message. At first, paper envelopes were simply the folded letter sealed and stamped with wax. The first mass produced envelopes were cut in factories using a metal template, but then they had to be folded by hand to create the envelope. The process was laborious and expensive, and soon the volume of letters mailed made it impossible to continue the manufacture of envelopes in this way. These envelopes were not gummed: wax seals continued to be used to close them from prying eyes. Consequently, they could be unfolded, and then refolded on the unused side and sent away with another letter. By 1857, after the process had gone through substantial mechanization including the invention of the envelope folding machine in England, some companies like the Berlin and Jones Company of New York, were producing more than half a million envelopes daily.

Slovenian Schools and CSHS

Jerry Ponikvar

In the Fall of 2015, Miriam Čekuta and I met with the principal: Sandy Ferletič and instructors: Lorie Mramor and Mateja Mihelčič at the Hamilton Slovenian School.

The purpose of our visit was to outline the Student CSHS project whereby, they would become involved in interviewing their parents and grandparents to learn more about their Slovenian roots and heritage. This project would also serve as another strategy to motivate the students in their Slovenian Heritage Language program. The instructors were very excited about the project and during the course of the winter, this enthusiasm has been passed on to the students.

In Hamilton, there are at least fourteen different projects in process. The children have been involved with forming a list of interview questions, interviewing their parents, grandparents as well as their pastor, Father Drago Gačnik about their “story”. They have been provided with bristol and project boards which they will fill with pictures and write-ups about what they have learned. Some of the students have expressed an interest in multi media, and have filmed their interviews and may do a power point type of presentation of their interview. From feedback she received, Sandy Ferletič said “the interviewees enjoyed telling their grandchildren their story of what life was like in Slovenia, leaving under difficult circumstances, coming to a new country, no English language and

with very little”. In her Level 6-8 class, she also talked about empathy and told the students that some of the stories that they may hear may be difficult for their interviewees to share with them. Sandy indicated that the project was a great learning experience for all of the students involved in the project.

As a motivation for their involvement and project submissions, financial awards and certificates will be presented to the students and the schools for their participation.

A similar invitation was extended to the Toronto Slovenian School. The projects will be on display at the CSHS Open House to be held at Dom Lipa on Saturday, April 23 from 2 to 4 PM. All are invited to attend to see the student projects, as well as the CSHS Archives and displays.



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