

## **CANADIAN UKRAINIAN MEN'S CLUB HISTORY**

The idea of forming such an organization was originated by three members of the Brandon Parish, Steve Lestition, Peter Moroz and Peter Romanik. This idea was influenced by an earlier organization called the "Young People's Club" within the Parish. It became the desire to follow up with a similar organization.

A preliminary meeting of males within the Parish was organized in 1949 and from this meeting, a steering committee was struck to study the feasibility of forming a Men's Club within the Parish. The above mentioned people were part of that committee.

Many hours of meetings of discussion and planning resulted in the drafting of a constitution. A legal representative was hired to put in place all legalities within the city and province and thusly the organization "Canadian Ukrainian Men's Club" was established and officially was affiliated with the "Ukrainian Reading Association" in Brandon, Province of Manitoba.

With the support and encouragement of the Pioneer Parish Members, the first meeting was held in 1950 and the first Executive and Committee Chairmen and assistants were elected. This event was newsworthy and the list of members and executive was published in the Brandon Sun.

The first elected Executive and Committee Chairmen and assistants for the year 1950 – 1951 was a newsworthy event in the Brandon Sun.

It was never the intention of the original founders to form an exclusive "social club of good times". Rather, it was to become an organization where the prime objective would be to work for the good of the Parish, support the Ukrainian Reading Association Hall and in general support other worthwhile projects within the community. It was anticipated that the members would take an active part in the Club projects, obtain a knowledge of the Ukrainian Culture, and to prepare themselves for greater responsibilities in the Parish and beyond.

Today we can report that many of these objectives have been achieved by virtue of the fact that many members of the organization through the years, have accepted responsibilities of serving on executive positions within the parish organizations and in the community of Brandon.

The original constitution guidelines are still there with a few amendments over the years but the club endeavors to live within the original intent.

The club is affiliated with the Ukrainian Catholic Brotherhood of Manitoba. It also supports the Knights of Columbus in Brandon and a few of Men's Club members are members of the Knights as well.

The Club ran Richo bingo for many years and the funds it raised were used to completely renovate the Ukrainian Catholic Church costing over a half million dollars, renovate and extend the hall which cost in excess of two hundred thousand dollars over the years, and donated tens of thousands to Brandon General Hospital for equipment. The Club showed its patriotism by its financial support of Ukrainian causes and projects such as St. Vlads College in Roblin, Ukrainian Seminary in Ottawa, Taras Shevchenko Foundation, Ukrainian Cultural & Education Center of Winnipeg, National Ukrainian Festival in Dauphin, Troyanda School of Dance of Brandon and many others including St. Augustine School.

Charitable donations were made to minor sports in Brandon, "Health

Associations” such as (cancer, diabetes, heart & stroke, C.N.I.B., , multiple schlerosis, Crohns & Colitis Foundation, Ronald McDonald House, Wesman Hospice), Christmas Cheer Fund, Sun Fund for Kids. Funds were specially raised for families in need including the 9-11 disaster. Good health and children’s programs are some themes of financial support.

The Club meets every two months with its annual meeting in January.

Visiting the sick and Mass offerings for members is very important. Helping with Seniors for Seniors meals-on-wheels is also a worthwhile function.

Whenever a member passes away, an impressive Honor Guard is assembled at the Prayer Service (Panakhyda). A plant and card are always sent to a members home in the event of a death of an immediate family member.

The Club socializes by having its annual membership social in April, Christmas parties, annual banquet & dances, drop-in-center every Wednesday afternoon open to all parishioners and their friends, annual golf tournament, etc. For many years the Club participated in the League of Nations bowling league in Brandon, Also, it entered floats in the Brandon fair parade and the Ukrainian Festival parade in Dauphin.

The latest exciting activity is participation at the popular Ukrainian Pavilion in the annual Lieutenant Governor’s Winter Festival in Brandon.

Membership has fluctuated over the years from 60 to the present 35 members. Many members passed away including 5 in the last year, some moved away, some never bothered to continue their membership and some chose to revoke their membership. Four new members were recruited in the past year. Hopefully with some new blood, the Men’s Club will continue to function for a long time to come. The future looks promising and hopefully the younger Ukrainian immigrants who choose to make Brandon their home can be an integral part of the Men’s Club.

*A community is only as good as the people in it, choose to contribute.*