

An Open Letter from UMGSA to Our Fellow Graduate Students

I am writing on behalf of the UMGSA Executive to briefly speak about the war in Ukraine.

I am one of the 180,000 people in Manitoba with Ukrainian heritage. I am a product of the typical melting pot nature of Winnipeg: an Irish Protestant boy marries a Ukrainian Catholic girl – a real life Romeo and Juliet / Westside Story. I was raised in a hybrid mix of Byzantine Catholicism and Orthodox traditions. I always joke that being half Ukrainian, I can never throw anything out; I was exposed to strong ethics of a Ukrainian family having spent formative years during The Great Depression and World War Two, so I guess saving money and scrimping on material goods is par for the course.

My international student colleagues might not know how much the Ukrainian spirit has been strongly woven in the great tapestry of multiculturalism that is our province. There were waves of immigrants, starting in the late 1800s, that brought people of Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, into Canada. Many of these new Canadians were hired to be the labourers for the building of the brand-new rail systems throughout Canada. I was lucky enough to have a memorable relationship with my great-grandfather who helped build the railway tracks to Churchill, MB. My grandfather was a foreman servicing the rail system in Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba. My aunt worked within the engineering division of CN Rail. Ukrainian descent is prevalent throughout the Prairies – it is not by accident that the world's largest Ukrainian Easter Egg (Pysanka) is in Vegreville, Alberta.

President Benarroch has recently sent out emails outlining student support available to help all of us deal with this ongoing crisis. War, genocide, and crimes against humanity, at any scale, whether abroad or here in Canada, are unacceptable. We, as well-educated graduate students, must advocate for international norms, democratic principles, and world peace which are paramount for the security and safety of all the countries that we represent. For the sake of your well being, I encourage you to revisit the services (physical, psychological, spiritual) that UManitoba offers. Further, I want to share with you a link on Ukrainian history so that you may gain context and empathy and understand why many of your fellow Manitobans are concerned and distressed at this perilous time.

https://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/prairie_immigration/educational_site/illhist/08.shtml#:~:text=The%20first%20Ukrainians%20came%20to,settle%20on%20the%20western%20prairies

On behalf of the UMGSA Executive,

William (Вільям) Dowie, Senator

Slava Ukraini!



Sunflowers, the national flower of Ukraine, have emerged as a global symbol of solidarity for the country and its resistance against Russia's military invasion ~ *Karen Hiebert, Manitoba Artist / Facebook*