



## **NEWS RELEASE – After COVID Pause, Thousands Attend Babas and Borshch & Ukrainian Day Festival in Lamont County (Aug. 27-28)!**

**September 1, 2022 – LAMONT, AB:** Everything Ukrainian was celebrated in person and with exuberance at the annual Babas and Borshch Festival held in Lamont, AB. This year's festival, held in conjunction with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress – Alberta Provincial Council (UCC-APC) to celebrate Ukrainian Day, also saw a multitude of energetic Ukrainian dances, singing, choir and choral performances, as well as recognition of the 130th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada and Lamont County.

It was a time for recognition, sombre celebration and support for those with Ukrainian heritage in Alberta, in Ukraine, and those displaced by the war. An excellent opportunity for many to show off their culture and tell their stories, and people were also struck by the graciousness & curiosity of Their Honours, as Alberta's Lieutenant Governor attended and presented descendants of eight of the original families during the festival.

"With Lamont County being the Cradle of Ukrainian Settlement in Canada, this was the perfect location to host these two events combined this year," said UCC-APC Vice President Lydia Migus. "And having the Lieutenant Governor, Her Honour, Salma Lakhani, along with her husband, His Honour, Dr. Zaheed Lakhani, come to the festival on Saturday and recognize the descendants of the first families who settled in what is now Lamont County, made it even more meaningful."

This meant August 27-28 saw record crowds (estimated to be over 4,000 attendees), celebrating everything Ukrainian in the *Cradle of Ukrainian Settlement in Canada* (Lamont County).

"We were gratified by the attendance of new & returning visitors to Babas & Borshch Ukrainian Festival and (UCC-APC's) Ukrainian Day, despite the heavy rain on Saturday," said Hazel Anaka, Babas and Borshch Festival Coordinator. "I had hoped the decision to proceed with a live festival would be viewed as a blessing to Ukrainians and those who love Ukrainians, rather than being insensitive given the war in Ukraine. Based on the feedback I received about the event & the number of people moved to tears, clearly, we made the right decision to go ahead. We had also bet on the pent-up demand for 'all things Ukrainian' after the COVID-19 restrictions."

There were many opportunities to celebrate and recognize the significance Ukrainian heritage continues to have across Alberta and Canada. The festival saw Ukrainian culture, customs, and traditions that are alive and well 130 years after the original settlers came to Lamont County.

"We were treated to some fabulous performances of song, dance, and music with all performers dressed in very intricate traditional Ukrainian dress. The original settlers would be very happy to see the extent to which Ukrainian heritage has been maintained," said Lamont County Reeve, David Diduck. "Thank you to Ukrainian Canadian Congress – Alberta Provincial Council for having its Ukrainian Day celebration as part of the Babas and Borshch Festival; the combination of these two occasions resulted in a very successful weekend as evidenced by the number of people in attendance and the good time had by all."



Even rain on Saturday could not dampen the spirits of those who came out; and, with a slight wind on Sunday, the sunny afternoon provided a perfect backdrop for outdoor performances.

“It was wonderful to see the crowds come out for the Ukrainian Canadian Congress – Alberta Provincial Council’s Ukrainian Day, Babas and Borshch Ukrainian Festival and to commemorate the 130 Anniversary of Ukrainian Settlement in Alberta, this past weekend,” said Migus. “Even with the events in Ukraine taking away focus, it is important to still celebrate Ukrainian heritage, history, and culture and support our friends and family impacted by the war.”

It is a challenging time, as new waves of immigrants are coming to the region as a result of the war, but this also helps those impacted see a supportive community that embraces Ukrainian culture.

Many litres of borshch were served this weekend, with free samples of one of Ukraine’s staple dishes provided to all festival visitors. There were multiple events, performances and displays. Many government officials from Alberta and representatives to Ukraine and Poland brought greetings, with people attending from as far as the United States and across Canada.

“During these challenging times, it is important for us to support and recognize Ukrainians and our culture and history as we hope and pray for an end to the war. This was eloquently shared by the attending dignitaries from all levels of government, as well the Polish Canadian Congress, Ukraine’s Consul General, along with greetings sent from the Governor of Ivano-Frankivsk, the oblast (province) of Lamont County’s twin community in Ukraine, who were to have attended the event if circumstances allowed,” said Migus. “The energy and emotions felt throughout the two days of these combined Ukrainian festivals – from all the participants who traveled from across Alberta and Canada, during the various presentations, activities, and concerts - was exhilarating, humbling, and awesome, and we are proud to have been able to create this special experience.”

With the tragic war in Ukraine, it is important to gather, support and comfort those impacted, as well as recognizing the historical significance Ukraine has across the region. This annual festival highlighted the importance of Ukraine to Lamont County, with a Saturday night Zabava to allow the community to gather and recognize, and concert performances to highlight the energy and brilliance of Ukraine dance and choirs.



## Snippets from the Festival:

- A visit from Their Honours, **Alberta's Lieutenant Governor**; Her Honour, the Honourable Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD (hon), and her husband, His Honour Dr. Zaheer Lakhani CM MBChB FACP FACC FRCP (London):
  - o Descendants from the original settlers recognized included: Chichak, Eleniak, Feniak, Melnyk, Paich, Pullishy, Pylypow and Tychkowsky families (families were invited to register for this event by the UCC-APC).
- **Zabava** celebration on Saturday night featuring many Ukrainian dancers and musical performances and a dance featuring The Diamonds featuring Alfie Meyhre for the approximately 180 people who attended. The Korinnya Ukrainian Folk Ensemble & Calgary Bandurysty wowed the audience, including a cappella performances. People attended from all over Alberta, other provinces & even the US.
  - o There were energetic performances by Tryzub Dancers, Korinnya Folk Ensemble, Bandurysty and a kolomyika. The event was catered by Ironwood Catering.
- **Ukrainian Day** celebrations, including messages from multiple government officials:
  - o Attendees included Oleksandr Danyleiko, Consul General of Ukraine in Edmonton (bringing greetings from Ukraine and the significance of this festival), Canadian Polish Congress Alberta Society VP – Jadwiga Skovronski (bringing greetings from Poland and to recognize the significant support Poland has offered Ukraine during the war), UCC-National VP – Olesia Luciw-Andrijowych (UCC also brought greetings from Ivano-Frankivsk and Lamont County's twin communities, the Town of Nebyliv and Perehinske Community Village in Ukraine; representatives from Ukraine would have attended the festival if times were different), Bishop David Motiuk, Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate, Zaid Aboultaif – MP for Edmonton Manning, MLA Honourable Kaycee Madu – Minister of Labour and Immigration, MLA Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk – Associate Minister of the Status of Women, MLA Lorne Dach, MLA Travis Toews, MLA David Eggen, Lamont County Reeve David Diduck, Lamont Mayor Kirk Perrin, and a majority of Ukrainian Canadian Congress member organization presidents and committee leads.
- Dancers, choirs, choral and music **performances** provided energy and support of all things Ukrainian during the outdoor stage on Sunday featuring:
  - o Sim'ya, Cheremosh, Natalia Grytsiv & Liliya Pantelyuk-Sokha, Viter Dancers and Folk Choir, Dunai, Dnipro, Korinnya, Bandurusty and Tryzub.
- **Presentations** by George Paleniuk, Mark Minenko, Kule Forklore Centre, a Vytynanka Workshop, and Musical jam (and open mic) performances and artwork in the main hall:
  - o Featuring Kobzari, Chaika, Hutscal Family Trio, Marango Pie, Olivia Slusarchuk, Ralph Lange, Dwayne Kushniruk and Tom Gargus.
- **Displays** including museum artifacts and art from the Mundare Museum, a Genealogical display and education bilingual program display. Demonstrations of Pysanka, Kapusta making, wheat weaving, Ukrainian dance lessons and painting a Sunflower. As well as a beer garden featuring special Ukrainian beer, Babas and Borshch's signature beet-based drink, Na Zdorovlia and a shooter mix representing Ukraine's flag.
  - o **Food** vendors including Elk Island Catering, Ironwood Catering (Zabava), Yo Baba! and Ukrainian House Food Truck, offered Ukrainian fare and borsch samples.



- There was also a **bazaar** featuring many Ukrainian items, snacks and clothing, as well as a 50/50 (~\$1,200 pot), raffles and donation locations (and a considerable amount of cash, cheque and eTransfer donations were received throughout the festival).
- **Borshch Cookoff** winners: First place: Linda Goodsir (Edmonton); Second place: Lily Luszczek; Third place: Carol Cherkas (Vegreville). Featuring judges Natalia Shevchenko, Chef Brad Smoliak and Comedian Donovan Workun.

A **special shoutout** to our sponsors, vendors, performers and volunteers, as the festival could not proceed with out the special efforts and supports. Alberta KONTAKT TV (Ukrainian ethnic media) also attended the festival and will be completing a feature in the near future:

- o Sponsors included: Platinum sponsor Lamont County, Gold sponsors 840CFCW, Alberta Midland Rail Terminal, ATCO, Cenovus Energy, Enbridge, Town of Lamont, Northern Plains Rail Services, the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko, Silver sponsor MCSNet and Bronze sponsors Graymont, Park Memorial Funeral Home, Yo Baba! And activity sponsor Volya!

We (Lamont County) #StandwithUkraine and hope for an expedited end to the war.

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[Enclosure: Photos from the festival and Ukrainian Day.]

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Photos from the Babas and Borshch Festival and Ukrainian Day in Lamont, Alberta:

1. PHOTO ONE: An Arkan ends the festival with the public invited to partake.
2. PHOTO TWO: Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, Her Honour, the Honourable Salma Lakhani, welcomes descendants from eight of the original settlers to Lamont County.
3. PHOTOS THREE: Sim'ya Ukrainian Dancers perform on Saturday.
4. PHOTO FOUR: Sim'ya Ukrainian Dancers greet the Lieutenant Governor, Her Honour with traditional bread and salt.
5. PHOTOS 5-7: Musical performers at the music jam.
6. PHOTOS 8-10: Food from the festival including Borshch, Pyrohy and the Zabava meal.
7. PHOTOS 11-12: Cheremosh Dancers and Bandurysty perform at the Festival and Zabava.
8. PHOTO 13: Descendants from the original settlers in a group photo with Their Hounours, Alberta's Lieutenant Governor.



