

On April 12, 2008 members of Ukrainian Youth Association (UYA) Mississauga gathered at their headquarters to achieve one common goal; to commemorate those who passed away during the Great Famine of Ukraine from 1932-33. Although it is deemed one of the largest national catastrophes in modern history, many people around the world are ignorant to its existence. We as Ukrainian students learn about this tragic event every year, but no matter how much we are educated, few of us will ever experience the true pain and hardships endured by the people of Ukraine. Although the lowest estimate of fatalities at the hands of the cruel antics of the Kremlin is just over 8 million, this event has never been officially declared a genocide. The reasons this famine occurred are presently under intense scholarly scrutiny. Many historians claim the famine was purposely devised by the Soviet authorities to dehumanize Ukrainians and their rich culture and traditions. However, there are those who will tell you that the famine was mere coincidence associated with radical economic changes introduced during Soviet industrialization. It is also stipulated among historians to blame this tragic event on natural causes. In accordance with countless eye witness reports and documentation, it would be contradictory to proclaim that the famine was anything but man made.

As a principle force in the Ukrainian population worldwide, it is not only our duty as members of UYA to commemorate those who passed, but to also educate those around the world who are blind to these heartbreaking historic events. The older members (ages 13-17) of UYA Mississauga began fasting bright and early in the morning at 9 am. At 4:30 p.m, they gathered at their headquarters to sleep over and pay their respects to the martyrs of Ukraine. Various activities and games were organized to keep the youths' minds off their hunger. The hunger pains that began after a few mere hours lead them to come to a greater understanding of the pain and suffering endured by those who starved for months. It was understood that their experiences were a minute fraction compared to their ancestors 75 years prior. A candle-vigil, recounting facts and eye-witness reports from the famine was held, followed by 2 minutes of silence. Also, the youth had the privilege to view the critically acclaimed documentary/film "Famine 33". To complete the ceremony, local Ukrainian band, SKOPA, played somber Ukrainian melodies and dedicated a rendition of "Spalena Pisnya" to the victims.

Ultimately, through the youth's efforts, \$2,251 was collected from 109 loyal contributors; contributors who may have been oblivious to the events in an unfamiliar European country many years ago. The monies were donated to the Ukrainian International Remembrance Torch fund, which will be traveling throughout the continents to 33 countries in hopes to raise awareness. We as Canadian-Ukrainians can only hope that our efforts will ultimately assist in obtaining global recognition of this catastrophic attack on our ancestors.

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