



# NEWSLETTER

December 2025

## UKRAINIAN WINTER CELEBRATIONS - STEEPED IN CULTURE AND TRADITION

### Didukh - An Ancient Ukrainian Christmas Decoration

#### In this issue:

- Ukrainian Winter Celebrations
- Bring Light to Ukrainians
- Library Book Club and Activities
- Cultural Programs
- Thank you to Our Volunteers
- And more!

A didukh is one of the most cherished symbols of a traditional Ukrainian Christmas, carrying the spirit of the ancestors and the blessings of the year's harvest into the home. Crafted from the first or last ceremonial sheaf of wheat, it is brought into the house on Christmas Eve with reverence as if welcoming a beloved forefather. Its very name—meaning “grandfather’s spirit”—recalls the ancient belief that the souls of one’s lineage gather with the family during the holy winter nights.



The golden wheat stalks are bound with care and often adorned with modest ribbons, fragrant herbs, or dried flowers, forming a sheaf that radiates warmth, fertility, and God’s grace. The didukh is placed in the pokuttia, the honoured corner of the house near the icons where it stands throughout the Christmas season as a guardian of peace, harmony, and plenty. In older times, it connected the family to the rhythms of the land, giving thanks for the harvest and invoking prosperity for the year to come. Even today, the didukh remains a powerful emblem of Ukrainian heritage: a humble sheaf that binds past and present, reminding each generation of its roots, its faith, and the enduring strength of its traditions.

### Upcoming Events

#### Friday Night Suppers—Dine In and Take Out!

- February 20<sup>th</sup>
- March 20<sup>th</sup>
- April 17<sup>th</sup>
- May 15<sup>th</sup>
- June 19<sup>th</sup>

All suppers take place from 4:00-6:30 pm.

#### Saturday Sales

We continue to have Saturday Sales from 10:00 – 2:00 pm. Available for purchase: perogies (varenyky), cabbage rolls (holubsti), borscht, and Ukrainian sausage (kobassa). We will also have beets and horseradish relish (бурик і хрін) available in December. Stock up for the holiday season and for your Christmas Eve dinner / Вечеря напередодні Різдва.

**Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>** is the last day of sales before we close for the holidays. We will reopen again in the New Year on **Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>**.

#### Children's Christmas Party

**On Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup>**, we are pleased to host a Children's Christmas Party from **1:00 pm to 3:00 pm**. Please contact Svitlana Maksymenko for more information and to register at [lana19031501@gmail.com](mailto:lana19031501@gmail.com) or by telephone at: 778-288-2247. Cost is \$15 per child.

#### Malanka 2026

Join us for a very special evening of celebration. We are pleased to host Malanka 2026 on **Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>**. For ticket information, call **604-274-4119** or email us at [info@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:info@ivanfranko.ca).

### Ukrainian Decorations Today



In addition to traditional decorations, there are also many modern Ukrainian Christmas decorations that have become popular in recent years. These include ornaments, wreaths, and lights that incorporate traditional Ukrainian symbols and motifs, such as the trident and the Ukrainian flag.

Many of these decorations are designed to be used in conjunction with traditional decorations and can be used to add a modern twist to traditional Ukrainian Christmas celebrations. For example, a Christmas tree decorated with traditional Ukrainian ornaments can be used to create a festive atmosphere that combines old and new traditions.

Ukrainian Embroidered Balls, often used as Christmas ornaments, are part of a rich tradition of Ukrainian folk art that includes intricate embroidery techniques. These decorative items reflect the cultural heritage of Ukraine, showcasing various regional styles and motifs that have been passed down through generations, particularly during festive celebrations. Each ornament tells a story, connecting the past with the present and celebrating the unique heritage of Ukraine.

Ukrainian Christmas embroidered balls are deeply rooted in the country's rich cultural heritage. These decorations are not just festive items; they symbolize the artistic traditions of Ukraine, particularly in embroidery. The practice of embroidery in Ukraine dates back to ancient times, with evidence of its use in clothing and ceremonial items as early as the 1st century AD.

*Continued on page 2...*



## Ukrainian Decorations Today *(continued from page 1)*

The embroidery techniques used when making Christmas embroidered balls reflect regional styles and motifs. Each area of Ukraine has its unique patterns and color schemes, often inspired by nature and folklore. Common themes include geometric shapes and floral designs, which are integral to

Ukrainian folk art. The vyshyvanka, a traditional embroidered shirt, has influenced the designs seen in Christmas ornaments. Many artisans today create these ornaments by hand, ensuring that traditional methods and designs are passed down through generations.

## Christmas Eve Supper • Sviata Vechera • Свята Вечера

For Ukrainians, the most beloved and joyful festivity is Christmas. Some Ukrainian Christmas customs have historical roots going as far back as the Neolithic era. These customs are connected to the agricultural way of life of our ancestors. Many of these folk customs and rites have been adapted to the spirit of the Christian religion.

The most important Christmas tradition is the Christmas Eve Dinner (Sviata Vechera). Twelve different and special dishes are traditional for this meal which begins only after the first star of the evening appears. The twelve dishes are to remind us of the twelve Apostles. After a day of fasting, in remembrance of the hardships that Mary endured as she and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, preparations of a spiritual and physical nature set the mood for the Holy Night.

Food for the Holy Supper is prepared with no meat or dairy products. Hay is put under the table and under the tablecloth as a reminder of the humble



place of Christ's birth. On top of a white or embroidered tablecloth is placed a Kolach. The word "kolach" derives from "kolo" meaning round or circular and it is a symbol of the sun. In the middle of the Kolach, a candle is placed which is left burning all night. A lit candle is also placed in the window, to welcome any homeless people. There is always an extra table setting for the souls of the deceased. As dusk approaches, the head of the house brings in a Didukh and places it near the Icons. As the star appears, the father carries a bowl of kutya around the home three times, reciting prayers. When all the family is at the table, prayers are recited and the Nativity Tropar is sung, "Boh Predvichny".

Family and friends are now ready to enjoy their **Traditional Christmas Eve Dinner** made up of the following 12 dishes:

1. **Kutya** (ritual first dish)
2. **Kolach** (braided ring-shaped bread)
3. **Borsch** (meatless beet soup)
4. **Stuffed Salmon or Fried Fillets**
5. **Pickled Herring**
6. **Holubtsi** (meatless cabbage rolls)
7. **Varenyky** (potato, sauerkraut or prune pyrohy)
8. **Kapusta** (sauerkraut and peas)
9. **Kolasheny Fasoli** (mashed beans)
10. **Pidpenky** (mushrooms with gravy)
11. **Yzbap** (compote)
12. **(Pampushky, Makiwnyk** (doughnuts, poppy seed roll)



### Kutya Recipe (from the Ukrainian's Daughter's Cookbook) - Serves 6

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups wheat
- 3 quarts water
- 1 cup poppy seed
- 2/3 cup of sugar
- 1/3 cup honey, dissolved in 3/4 cup hot water
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, almonds or pecans

#### Method:

1. Dry the wheat in an oven at 250 F for one hour, stirring occasionally. Wash and soak in cold water overnight.
2. Next morning, bring wheat to the boiling point, simmer for 3 to 4 hours until the kernels burst open.
3. Scald the poppy seed and simmer 3 to 5 mintues. Drain and grind with either a mortar and pestle or a food processor using the finest setting. Set aside.
4. Combine honey and sugar in hot water. Set aside.
5. Before serving, add the sweetened mixture, poppy seed and the nuts to cooled, boiled wheat

### Ukrainian Christmas for children

Craft, music, games, dance, Vertep, delicious treats and presents.

15 cad per child  
December, 21, 1-3 p.m.

5311 FRANCIS RD, RICHMOND

UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY SOCIETY OF IVAN FRANKO

registration is required:  
lana19031501@gmail.com  
778-288-2247



### 3rd Annual Children's Ukrainian Christmas

The Ukrainian Community Society of Ivan Franko is very excited to celebrate its third annual Ukrainian Christmas Party for Children on **Sunday, December 21st from 1-3 pm at our Centre** (5311 Francis Rd, Richmond). Svitlana Maksymenko is the organizer of this special event and also the founder of "Ukrainian Nest" – a Ukrainian children's class that started at our centre in April 2023.

Two years ago, Svitlana had a vision to bring Ukrainian children new to Canada together to experience a traditional

Ukrainian Christmas. Svitlana organized her first Ukrainian Christmas party for children that included entertainment, activities and refreshments. It embodied the true spirit of Christmas!

This year Svitlana is again organizing a Ukrainian Christmas party for Children that will feature music, dance, games, crafts, Vertep, delicious treats and a gift bag for the children. The cost for this event is **\$15 per child and registration is required: lana19031501@gmail.com or 778-288-2247**



## Malanka Traditions • Маланка • Щедрий Вечір

A week after Christmas Eve, Ukrainians celebrate "Malanka" or New Year's Eve, a cheerful festival that includes delicious food, entertainment, merrymaking, caroling and fortune telling. Malanka is the name of a Ukrainian mythological figure dating back to Ukraine's pre-Christian pagan days. Malanka is celebrated during the winter solstice cycle on a night called Щедрий Вечір "Shchedry Vechir" (Generous Eve). Traditionally, Malanka was represented as a maiden wreathed in blossoms and fruit and accompanied by her consort, Vasil.

At our Ivan Franko Society, Malanka will be celebrated on January 10th this year including many of the traditions of the Canadian New Year's Eve celebrations. This event typically occurs a week after Christmas Eve

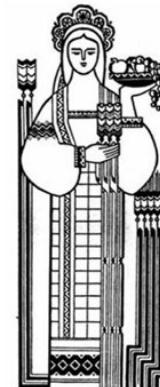
according to the Julian calendar on a Friday or Saturday closest to January 13 or 14. The event will begin with a delicious dinner including many Ukrainian dishes, entertainment by singers, musicians and dancers. Our evening will continue with a zabava featuring the Mike Sanyshyn Band playing a wide variety music including a коломийка "kolomeyka". At midnight, the New Year will be brought in with singing, toasting with champagne and wishes of good health and prosperity. For more information and tickets, please email us at [info@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:info@ivanfranko.ca) or call us at 604 274-4119. We look forward to hosting you at this very special event.



### Malanka 2026 Маланка

#### Ukrainian New Year's Celebration

*Food, music, dancing and more!*



Saturday, January 10, 2026  
Ukrainian Community Centre of Ivan Franko  
5311 Francis Road, Richmond  
6pm - 12:30am

- ◆ Doors and bar open at 6:00pm
- ◆ Semi-formal attire
- ◆ Live Ukrainian music & traditional dance performances
- ◆ Deluxe buffet dinner
- ◆ Dancing to a live band
- ◆ Lots of door prizes, lots of fun!
- ◆ Tickets for this limited seating event are \$100 per person (non-refundable) and must be purchased in advance:

By calling: 604-274-4119 or  
Emailing: [info@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:info@ivanfranko.ca)



## Bring Light To Ukrainians This Holiday Season



As Canadians ready their homes for the holidays, surrounded by warmth and comfort, millions of Ukrainians are facing

their fourth winter under Russia's full-scale invasion. Cold and darkness have become deliberate tools in a campaign to break Ukraine's resilience. Systematic attacks are destroying the country's critical electrical infrastructure, leaving families to endure prolonged power cuts that last most of the day and night.

Four years of communities refusing to give up despite relentless airstrikes. Four years of families doing everything they can to create moments of normalcy for their children.

This holiday season, as you reflect on what you're grateful for, extend some warmth to those still fighting for their tomorrow. The Canada-Ukraine Foundation launches its **2025 Holiday Campaign** which runs until January 12. A donation through the **CUF-UCC Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal (UHA)** will bring

light this holiday season and some tangible relief for Ukrainian families in need. Donations will help provide emergency power for hospitals, support water systems that function during outages, establish warming centres, distribute heating equipment, and deliver food and essentials.

If you are able to donate, go to the Canada Ukraine Foundation website at [cufoundation.ca](http://cufoundation.ca) and click on the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal project to make your donation.

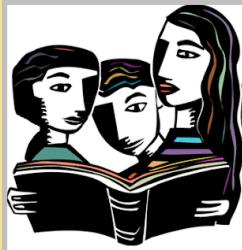
## Thank You to Our Volunteers and Employees

A **big thank you** to all our volunteers for their generous gift of time. Our Volunteers are much appreciated for all their contributions. We couldn't do it without all their help in our kitchen, hall, library and outdoors.

We also very grateful to our employees for all they do for our Society. Thank you to Elsa Marquez, our office Manager, Catherine Duda, our Rental Coordinator, Inna Smachna, our Cook and Mario Velazquez Avila, our Custodian.



# Ivan Franko



## Library

For information about our Library and Book Club contact

Theresa at [books@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:books@ivanfranko.ca) or call our Society at 604-274-4119 to leave a message.

## Activities in our Library

English Language classes are offered to the new immigrants on Saturdays from 10:30 am to 12 pm. This is an opportunity to learn basic English and socialize with new friends.

Заняття з англійської мови тривають по суботах з 10:30 до 12. Це можливість вивчити базову англійську мову, а також поспілкуватися з новими друзями.

REMINDERS



WISHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A SAFE AND HEALTHY HOLIDAY SEASON!  
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!  
3 Новим роком та Різдвом Христовим!



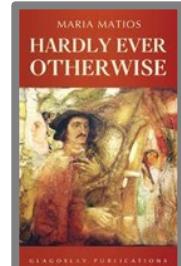
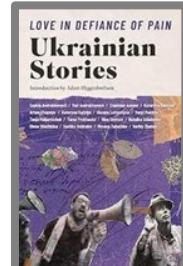
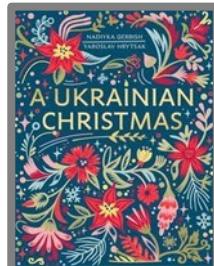
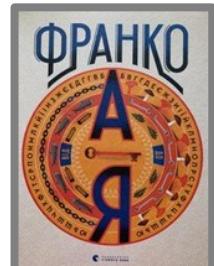
NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT SUPPER IS FEBRUARY 21, 2025 — NO SUPPER IN DECEMBER OR JANUARY.

This newsletter is produced by the Ukrainian Community Centre of Ivan Franko, 5311 Francis Road Richmond, B.C. V7C 1K2  
Office: 604-274-4119 || Website: [www.ivanfranko.ca](http://www.ivanfranko.ca) || General info: [info@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:info@ivanfranko.ca) || Rental Inquiries: [rental@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:rental@ivanfranko.ca)  
Book Club and Lending Library: [books@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:books@ivanfranko.ca)

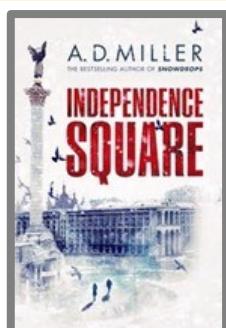
Our library is a warm and inviting place to spend some time perusing excellent historical, cultural and literature books and archival material. Members are invited to sign out books for a one month period.

Наша бібліотека – це тепле та затишне місце, де можна провести час переглядаючи чудові історичні, культурологічні та літературні книги та архівні матеріали. Члени нашого товариства пропонується виписати книги на один місяць.

Check out these and other absorbing books in our library.



## Book Club



The Ivan Franko Book Club meets four times a year to discuss excellent books and view films on Ukrainian themes and topics. New members are welcome.

The book club selection for our March 2026 meeting is an exceptional political thriller *Independence Square* by A.D. Miller.

Independence Square takes place during both the Orange Revolution, Ukraine 04-05, and several years later in 2017 when thoroughly disgraced diplomat Simon obsesses over how his personal and professional life went so devastatingly wrong. He is determined to pinpoint who is to blame.

## Current Cultural Programs At Our Society

### “Ukrainian Nest”

#### Saturday Ukrainian Children’s Class

This class runs every Saturday between 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. Children are taught Ukrainian language, history and traditions in a fun interactive way. For more information, please contact Svitlana Maksymenko via email at [lana19031501@gmail.com](mailto:lana19031501@gmail.com) or via phone 778-288-2247.

### “The Brainchild Studio”

#### Musical Theatre Group for Children

The musical theatre group has classes on Mondays and Wednesdays between 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm. Children are taught songs and dances and will prepare for performances. For more information, please contact Anna Shylova via email at [brainchildstudiomt@gmail.com](mailto:brainchildstudiomt@gmail.com).

### “Ukraina”

#### Ukrainian Dance Ensemble for children

“Ukraina” practices at our centre every Saturday morning between 10:30 am to 11:30 am. Choreographer Yuliia Rychkova teaches the children Ukrainian traditional dance. For more information, please email [bbravecenter@gmail.com](mailto:bbravecenter@gmail.com)

### “Ukrainian Language Classes for Adults”

We continue to offer Ukrainian language classes for adults. Currently we have a Beginners level that is made up of students that have some experience and have attended at least one or two of our lesson sets. We also offer an advanced beginner level. Students in this class are able to have basic conversations and have attended several lessons sets with our instructor Alla Dudka. All classes are offered via zoom. For more information, please email us at [info@ivanfranko.ca](mailto:info@ivanfranko.ca).

