

**Vera Yuzyk Notes**  
***Inaugural ceremony of The Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism***  
**Roy Thompson Hall, Toronto**  
**June 12, 2009**

**Good evening, bonsoir, dobrey vechir, Honourable Jason Kenney, Honourable John Yaremko, Your Eminence Archbishop Yuriy, Your Grace Bishop Stephen, family, friends and guests.**

**Introduction of Family**

**I am joined this evening by my sisters: Evangeline Duravetz and Vicki Karpiak, my brother Ted Yuzyk and his wife Lucya, and our children, Tanya Malley from California, Thea Yuzyk and my daughter Paula Stelmach.**

**We are delighted to be here this evening for this Inaugural Ceremony of The Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism.**

**Link to Multiculturalism**

**Some of you here today knew my father, others will be hearing about him for the first time. Let me tell you briefly about how he became a champion for multiculturalism.**

**He was born in Estevan, Saskatchewan in 1913, the son of Ukrainian immigrant labourers. His parents eventually settled in Saskatoon. He grew up in ethnically diverse neighborhoods - a reality on the Prairies.**

**He witnessed discriminatory practices against these newcomers - heard them called names such as "foreigners and bohunks." He saw how his own group, the Ukrainians, were encouraged to Anglicize their names and forget their heritage so they would better fit into the existing Anglo-Canadian society.**

**He personally experienced this discrimination. After graduating from Normal (Teachers) School in Saskatoon in 1933, he sent out seventy-seven letters of application, all of them unsuccessful. The problem**

**was his last name. During interviews, he was told he was a “foreigner” and that “foreigners couldn’t be trusted teaching our children.”**

**He did not forget this experience. He vowed that if someone who was born in Canada could be labeled a “foreigner,” then there was a need to build a better, more inclusive Canada, which is [later became] the title of one of his books. He also believed that newcomers should be made to feel welcome and at home in Canada and not be made to feel ashamed of their ethnic backgrounds or heritage.**

**He took up the cause of reform in two ways. Firstly he became a historian and Professor at the University of Manitoba and authored many books and articles on Ukrainian-Canadians and their contributions to Canadian life. It was an English-Canadian, Dr. George Simpson, a History Professor at the University of Saskatchewan and mentor, who steered him into the field of History and encouraged him to write about Ukrainians who were one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada, yet were little known to Canadians.**

**As Chair of the Ethnic Group Studies of the Manitoba Historical Society, my father was instrumental in sponsoring several historical publications on other ethno-cultural groups in Manitoba, later becoming a spokesperson for this “Third Element,” or Canadians of non-British and non-French origin.**

**Secondly, he took up the cause to get multiculturalism officially recognized as Canada’s cultural identity. This cause was boosted by his appointment to the Senate, in 1963, by Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, who was of German descent, and was the first Prime Minister of non-British and non-French ancestry.**

**He launched the concept of Canada as a multicultural nation in his Maiden Speech in the Senate in 1964. In it, he directly challenged the premise of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism [recently] established by Prime Minister Lester Pearson [in 1963] that Canada was a bicultural nation. Instead, he documented how the demographic makeup or “face of Canada” had changed since Confederation as a result of large-scale immigration from Europe and other countries. He called for an all-inclusive Canadian identity that**

**recognized this new reality and the contributions of Canadians of all ethnic origins in the nation building process.**

**What I particularly liked about his speech was that he presented a vision of Canada as a multicultural nation and a prediction that multiculturalism would become a model for other countries and would be Canada's contribution to the world.**

**A few years later, he also convened a Thinkers' Conference on Cultural Rights in Toronto, in 1968, the first conference in Canada with representatives from major ethnic groups. There, resolutions were adopted for the implementation of a policy on multiculturalism that was sent to the Federal and provincial governments.**

**Events and multicultural conferences were held in several provinces in support of the direction of multiculturalism in 1970 and 71. Finally, in response to Book IV of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, Prime Minister Trudeau announced the adoption of a federal policy of multiculturalism in 1971 in the House of Commons.**

**Special thanks to Minister Kenney**

**Our family would like to especially thank Minister Kenney for initiating *The Paul Yuzyk Award for Multiculturalism* and recognizing our father's legacy in this field and through it, other Canadians who have contributed to promoting multiculturalism.**

**This recognition would have been a great source of pride to our father. Thank you.**