



# Press Release

---

29 June 2009

## Scholars Impressed with Ukrainian Life in Brazil

In 1891 several families departed the village of Servyriiv, Zolochiv county, Galicia, crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and landed in Brazil. In the same year, two Ukrainian pioneers from the same Austrian crownland, Vasyl Eleniak and Ivan Pylypiv, embarked on another trans-Atlantic journey, but one that took them north to Canada. The mass migrations of Ukrainians to Canada and Brazil are linked in many ways, although few people have explored these connections.

Two folklorists, a geographer, and a historian recently completed a joint research trip from Canada to the Ukrainian community of Brazil, whose numbers are estimated at 500,000. Drs. Andriy Nahachewsky (Huculak Chair and director of the Kule Folklore Centre at the University of Alberta), Maryna Hrymych (Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, visiting professor with the Kule Folklore Centre), Serge Cipko (coordinator, Ukrainian Diaspora Studies Initiative, Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta), and John Lehr (professor of geography, University of Winnipeg) researched a wide variety of subjects, including Ukrainian customs and language, dances and crafts, farming, identity, and history.

The four visitors started their trip in Curitiba, the capital of the state of Paraná, where they were hosted by Vitorio Sorotiuk, president of the Representação Central Ucrainiano-Brasileira (Ukrainian-Brazilian Central Representation), and Larysa Myronenko, general consul of Ukraine in Curitiba. The group met with the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox churches there, as well as with members of local Ukrainian organizations, the Poltava dance ensemble, and the Barvinok dance group and choir. They also visited two Ukrainian museums and were taken to the home of the *pysanka* artist Jorge Sorotiuk, who showed the group his impressive collection.

One thinks of Halifax or Montreal as points of entry for turn-of-the-twentieth-century Ukrainian immigrants to Canada. In Brazil, the main point of entry for arriving Ukrainians was the port city of Paranaguá. The group was given the opportunity to visit that city and meet with its mayor, José Baka, who is of Ukrainian origin, and members of the local council.

The foursome then travelled to the town of Prudentópolis (pop. ca. 18,000). An estimated 75 percent of the population of the entire municipality of Prudentópolis (about 55,000 inhabitants) is of Ukrainian origin. The town itself is home to several Ukrainian Catholic religious orders, including a junior seminary and several schools run by the clergy. A printing house has been publishing the Ukrainian newspaper *Pratsia* (Labour) since 1912. Prudentópolis boasts a Taras Shevchenko monument, a large museum, a *bandura* school, and Vesselka (another of the estimated 23 Ukrainian dance groups in Brazil). From their base in Prudentópolis, the group visited nearby *colonias*, including three (Capanema, Tijuco Preto, and Linha Paraná) where the Bishop Budka Charitable Society of Edmonton, Canada, has been sponsoring projects.

The Canadian visitors attended a rural wedding with traditions that would be familiar in Canada and Ukraine, but with some fascinating Brazilian features as well. They were very impressed by the breadth and vitality of the Ukrainian community, from rural schoolchildren in the countryside who spoke Ukrainian to their

Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies  
Канадський Інститут Українських Студій  
Institut Canadien d'Etudes Ukrainiennes

parents to elderly people who welcomed them into their homes for interviews, as well as specialists dedicated to Ukrainian history or traditional crafts. The *Zemelnyi Komitet* (Land Committee), the *katekhytky* (Catholic nuns) at the St. Olha Institute, the *Museu do Milênio* (Millennium Museum), and others were wonderfully hospitable and supportive.

The four scholars also travelled to other Ukrainian communities around Brazil. They attended an ordination and a large *feira* in Craveiro in the state of Santa Catarina, photographed a cemetery monument and traditional house in Costa Carvalho, visited the town of Irati, and observed a Ukrainian language class at a university in the modern capital city, Brasilia.

Meetings with historians, linguists, and other academics interested in the Ukrainian community took place in Curitiba, Paranaguá, Irati, and Brasilia. Several lines of potential cooperation were discussed.

The group was warmly received and their research facilitated everywhere they went. More than once the team heard expressions of desire for stronger academic and cultural ties. During visits to Brasilia (Embassy of Ukraine) and São Paulo (Consulate General of Canada), prospects for trilateral (Brazil-Ukraine-Canada) cooperation were discussed. The upcoming anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Brazil could provide an opportunity for such cooperation: the Ukrainian-Brazilian Central Representation plans to commemorate the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ukrainian immigration to Brazil in 2011.

*Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies  
Kule Centre for Ukrainian and Canadian Folklore*

**Pictures:**

Research group in the office of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in South America, Curitiba (L–R): Serge Cipko, John C. Lehr, Andriy Nahachewsky, and Maryna Hrymych, with His Grace Jeremias Ferens, Archbishop of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in South America (courtesy of John C. Lehr).

Memorial Ucrainiano in [Parque Tingüi](#), Curitiba (courtesy of Andriy Nahachewsky).

Children at a Ridna Shkola in Curitiba (courtesy of John C. Lehr).