

History of Polish Canadians in Nova Scotia

Little is known about early Polish immigration to Nova Scotia. First groups settled on Cape Breton Island where they found employment as steelworkers and coal miners.

1909 St. Michael's Polish Benefit Society was formed in Sydney, Cape Breton.

1913 St. Mary's Parish was established in Sydney, Cape Breton. The parish remains the only Polish Parish in Atlantic Canada. The church was destroyed in the devastating fire on November 29, 2014. It was rebuilt in 2016. At the official re-opening of St. Mary's Polish Church in Sydney in 2016, the Province of Nova Scotia affirmed that the reconstructed site will remain a **Provincial Historic Landmark** honoring Polish Nova Scotians.

1949 The Polish Village Hall (Dom Polski) was constructed in Whitney Pier by the St. Michael's Polish Benefit Society on Victoria Road, replacing an earlier hall on Wesley St. In 2011-2012, the hall underwent a major renovation. In 2013, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality designated the hall as a **Municipal Heritage Landmark**.

Stanisław Świaniewicz (November 7, 1899 – May 22, 1997) was a Polish economist and historian. A veteran of the **Polish-Bolshevik War**, during World War II he was one of the few survivors of the **Katyń Massacre** and an eyewitness of the transport of Polish prisoners of war to the forests outside Smoleńsk by the **NKVD**. He was a professor at **Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia**. He is buried in Sackville near Halifax.

1963 Stanisław Bóbr – Tylingo arrived to Canada. He was born in Warsaw on 30 March 1919. He was a veteran of World War II. He came to Nova Scotia in 1963 and was appointed **Assistant Professor** in the **History Department of Saint Mary's University in Halifax, N.S.** He was promoted to full Professor in 1971. He remained at SMU for the rest of his life. During his retirement he wrote a history of the Restored Polish Republic 1919-1947. He is buried in Sackville near Halifax.

Halina Jadwiga Bóbr – Tylingo (Reszke) studied biology in Paris. She became a Professor of Biology at SMU. Stanisław and Halina remained Polish patriots throughout their lives. Prof. Halina was best known from her work in the **Polish Library**, located in St. Anthony Parish/ St. Faustyna Kowalski Polish Mission, Dartmouth. At present it is supervised by **Wiesława and Leszek Witkowski**.

A group of Polish intellectuals has established several Polish organizations; **Polish School, Polish Scouts, Polish Publishing House, Polish Apostolate** with a Polish priest. Apostolate supports St. Faustyna Kowalska Polish Mission and the Polish Bulletin, issued weekly by **Urszula Rudź**.

1973 Premier of Nova Scotia, Gerald Reagan born in Windsor NS, introduced legislation in favor of multicultural movements in N.S.

1974 Witold Zahorski and Wiesław Robaczewski, played crucial role in organization of Polish Emigrants. They are founders of the Polish Association of Halifax-Dartmouth.

Witold Zahorski was born in Warsaw in 1926, he is a survivor of the Warsaw uprising of 1944. At 18 year old, he fought in platoon "Żaglowiec", under alias "Rotunda"

1976 The Polish Association of Halifax-Dartmouth was officially registered. The first president **Wiesław Robaczewski** 1975-1976, followed by Stanisław Lewandowski 1976 – 1980; Janusz Rosiński 1980 – 1982; Stanisław Bóbr Tylingo 1982 – 1984; Bożena Liszka 1984 – 1985; Jan Woźniczek 1985 – 1986; Leszek Witkowski 1986 – 1988; Mieczysław Welke 1988 – 1990; Barbara Sobaszekiewicz 1990 – 1991; Rajmund Gudelewicz 1991 – 1995; Leszek Witkowski 1995 – 1997; **Alina Klimek** 1997 till present. This organization is known to support social activity in the Polish community. It plays an important role in the organization of the annual spring **Polish Heritage Festival** at St. Anthony Parish/St. Faustyna Kowalska Polish Mission, Dartmouth.

Other Polish organizations in Nova Scotia

1982-1994 Our Lady of Lourdes Polish Refugee Society – New Glasgow & Stellarton, Nova Scotia.

1982-2003 **Solidarity** Association-Antigonish/Polish Relief Fund of Nova Scotia - Antigonish County established by Thomas Roach and Dr. Leonard Pluta.

1983 **Pomorze**, Nova Scotia's Polish Folkdance Ensemble was established by **Dominik Gniewek** and his family in Sydney Cape Breton. **Pomorze** came to Halifax in 1984 and attracted dancers from the Polish and other communities. The group had amazing original Polish folk costumes and a rich repertoire.

Pomorze gave over one hundred fifty performances at occasions such as the Polish Dance Festival of the Americas in both Boston and Montreal, the Canadian Polish Dance Festival in Toronto, the Seventh and Eighth International Festival of Polish Folkdance Ensembles in Rzeszow, Poland, the Canada Games Festivities in Cape Breton, the visit of His Holiness Pope John-Paul II in Halifax, The Nova Scotia International Tattoo, the first annual 'A Day in Poland' celebrations, and many multicultural events and celebrations.

1990's **The Polish Association of Halifax-Dartmouth** promoted health live. Sports were popular among the Poles. **Tennis Club** organized tournaments twice a year (total 8 tournaments), Women, Men, juniors, Men's Double, Double Mix. **Soccer Team** practiced at the fields of Commons in Halifax with coach, Zbigniew Górski. **Volleyball Team** attracted women and men.

1993-1996 **Polish Bulletin** Kris Gorzelnik, Rajmund Gudelewicz, Leszek Witkowski, Maryla Dłutek.

2000 **Krzysztof Dłutek** set up Polish Bridge Society, current leaders **Maryla Dłutek** and **Jolanta Piórko**.

2004 **Pogoria Polish Folk Ensemble** was formed in Sydney, Cape Breton.

2007 **Wanda Szubielski** established Nova Scotia Society of Polish Artists (NSSPA). |

2012 The Nova Scotia House of Assembly passed an *Act to Amend the St. Michael's Polish Benefit Society Act*. It was the first law in Canada to be officially written in Polish and English. It came into force on May 3, 2012.

2013 **St. Mary's Polish Church** marks its 100th anniversary. Events included a joint concert "**The Men of the Deeps**" and the Choir of St. Mary's Polish Church at **Cape Breton University, Sydney N.S.**



"The Men of the Deeps" is North America's only Coal Miners Choir. The concert was attended by over 300 representatives of the local Polish community and invited guests. Among other things, the famous song Working Man was sung in Polish for the first time and the theatrical interpretation of Al Balawyder's *The Odyssey of the Polish Treasures* was performed. A major historical exhibit and the opening reception were broadcast live on CBC Radio in Cape Breton. A number of other events also took place including: a conference of the Canadian Polish Research Institute, a number of community service projects, an official banquet, a celebratory Mass with the presence of the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, and a Polish Festival. During the concert, two ceremonial Polish Miner's uniforms, specially sewn in Poland for this event, were presented to "The Men of the Deeps" by the Consul General in Montreal, Andrzej Szydło.

2014 **Polish Canadian Society of Nova Scotia** (PCSNS) is a not-for-profit society that maintains, celebrates and shares the richness of Polish-Canadian presence, language and culture in Nova Scotia. The work of the Society is primarily focused on teaching the Polish language to children and adults. The organization promotes cultural exchange and works collaboratively with existing groups and organizations. PCSNS creates initiatives and partnerships with everyone interested in the connection with the Polish-Canadian culture. The society is engaged in other activity such as "Polish Film Festival" and other.

Numerous Polish-Nova Scotian's have been recognized with awards and appointments by the Queen, the Canadian Government, Universities and Various Organization in: **Law, Science and Engineering, Medicine, Education, Politics, Music, Culture and Media, Actors, Military, Sports.**



2012 Honorary Consul: **Jan Skóra, M.Arch., MCIP, LPP**, Consulate Inauguration: Nov.17, 2012.

The following is a list of Consulate activities:

Polish - Canadian programs - Find out more about scholarships, Quo Vadis conference, International Parliamentary Internship Program or Youth Mobility Program.

Education - Find out more about studying in Poland, Polish Studies in Canada or instructions to apply for Youth Mobility Program.

Free Internet Polish School

Invest in Poland - Learn about Polish economy and achievements of Polish industries.

Investors Guide - Learn about Polish business opportunities, legal system, consumer protection, tax system, tariff regulations, European Union regulations, registration procedures, economic forecasts and more.

2014 Consulate played crucial role in organization of the "**Jan Karski exhibit**" at Saint Mary's University, May 2 - 10, 2014. In Poland, the Year 2014, was announced the Year of Jan Karski. The exhibit "**The world knew. Jan Karski's mission for humanity**" was produced by the Polish History Museum in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland and the Jan Karski Educational Foundation. The exhibit was opened in Ottawa in November 2013, as a Canadian recognition to Jan Karski by Minister Jason Kenney.



2015 **Barbara Dzierżanowska** Partner McInnes Cooper, Basia is ranked in the Canadian Legal Lexpert Directory and has been recognized as a Lexpert ranked lawyer in the Lexpert Leading Canadian Lawyers in Global Mining and Corporate Finance and Securities. She has also appeared on the cover of Lexpert Special Edition – Canada's Leading Energy Lawyers in the November 2015 issue of Globe and Mail's Report on Business Magazine.



2015 **Olivia Rybicka-Oliver** an 11-year-old girl performed the fastest spin on ice skates (342 revolutions per-min.) and is waiting for Guinness World Records verification. She did her spin at the National Stadium in Warsaw as part of a fundraising effort for "Fundacja Dziecięca Fantazja" in Poland and for a Canadian Charity called "Leave out Violence". She was born in Poland and now lives in Hammonds Plains, N.S.

The majority of Poles are Roman Catholic, but there are also Lutherans, Anglicans and United Church members, Polish National Catholic Church (not affiliated with Rome), Buddhists and Jewish. All of them play an important role in the development of Canadian Culture.

All Polish Canadians including their descendants are encouraged by organizations such as the Congress, Polish Embassy and Consulate, to preserve their heritage and retain some ties with Poland and its people.

First 2 phases of Polish immigration included numerous illiterate peasants, but later immigrants were generally well educated. The children were sent to public or private schools. A network of part-time Polish-language schools was also established. Most of the later are affiliated with the Polish Teachers Federation.

The feeling of unity among Polish Canadians has been expressed primarily in support of the Polish Nation. Political and financial support for Poland was strong during WWII, when Poland was under German occupation, and later under the Communist ruling. An extensive "Help for Poland" program established in Canada after October 1956 has

recently been revived. Contact with the motherland remains vivid through organized travel tours to Poland, family visits and language courses for the young.

National pride is reinforced by Polish contribution to world culture.

Mikołaj Kopernik, born in Toruń, was a Renaissance mathematician and astronomer who **formulated a model of the universe that placed the Sun rather than the Earth at the center of the universe.**

Maria Skłodowska-Curie shared the 1903 Nobel Prize in Physics with her husband Pierre Curie and with physicist Henri Becquerel. She won the 1911 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. She was the **first woman to win a Nobel Prize**, the first person and **only woman to win twice**, the **only person to win a Nobel Prize in two different sciences**. She was also the **first woman to become a professor at the University of Paris**, in 1995 she became **the first woman to be entombed on her own merits in the Panthéon in Paris.**

Tadeusz Kościuszko was a Polish–Lithuanian military engineer and a military leader who became a national hero in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and the United States.

Frederic Chopin Polish composer and virtuoso pianist.

Pope John Paul II 1978 – 2005.

Czesław Miłosz, in 1980 the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Lech Wałęsa ,in 1983 the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Wiesława Szymborska, in 1996 for the Nobel Prize for Literature , and many others.

References: <http://www.polishconsulhalifax.ca> ; <http://www.poloniahalifax.ca> ; <http://pcsns.ca> ; www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca ; https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_Canadians ; <http://www.cphsalberta.ca/wacekmaje.html> ; <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/Pages/polish.aspx> ; <https://rjsc.gov.ns.ca> ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanis%C5%82aw_B%C3%B3br-Tylingo