

Discovering Unity! 2017 National Youth Convention - Release

National CYMK - Ukrainian Orthodox Youth announces a successful gathering of over 60 youth participants at the 2017 USRL convention held in Winnipeg, Manitoba from August 9 – 13, 2017. Participants aged 7 to 23+ travelled from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario for this bi-annual meeting which was themed "Discovering Unity". Twenty-nine senior CYMK-UOY (ages 14+) members and 10 junior CYMK-UOY members (ages 7 – 13) were joined by 10 guests including 4 seminarians from St. Andrew's College and also 10 advisors including 4 priests.

Youth participants were one sub-group of the people attending the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League convention which also included representatives from the Ukrainian Women's Association (UWAC) and the Ukrainian Self-Reliance Association (TYC).

All members of the Ukrainian Orthodox community were invited to participate in the convention, including parents, parish priests, parish council chairs and all members interested in creating a youth group in their parish.

Special and new this year was a chapel at the hotel, where all youth registrants received a complimentary prayer book to be used for daily morning and evening prayers and Vespers Saturday evening. Father Bohdan Hladio led the weekday prayers and other participants of the convention also joined the youth to attend services.

The youth program began on Wednesday evening with a keynote address by CYMK alumnus - Fr. Peter Haugen, who spoke about faith & hospitality. He encouraged everyone to seek out those people in their lives who are suffering and to serve them. This was followed by group games and a pool party!

Thursday was a special day away at the Holy Trinity Metropolitan's Cathedral, with a morning of sessions exploring the concept of "community:"

- **Community 101: What is deep community?** - facilitated by Christina Kowalenko, National Youth Organizer: a discussion of how to commit when you're an avid individualist
- **DIY: Starting a Community** – facilitated by Connor Moen, SUSK national coordinator: a discussion including reminders to always record what you say, do, and decide at a meeting
- **Growing a Tribe** – facilitated by Yuri Hladio, National Youth Organizer: practical tips and suggestion on how to talk to new youth in Church parishes.

During our Greek-themed lunch, Fr. Taras Udod, chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada spoke to the group about John F Kennedy's famous quote - "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for it."

In the afternoon, after an insightful session by Orysia Kostiuk (professional mediator) about learning how to ask clarifying questions before assuming a conflictive/defensive reaction, the group split into two - some traveled to the Museum of Human Rights for the world-class displays and the others to Winnipeg Harvest, a food bank, where they quickly set up their own sorting process to sort bread products.

Friday morning, the entire youth group explored the natural environment at historical Fort Whyte, and reconvened at the Delta Hotel in the afternoon. For each local which was represented, Senior CYMK-UOY members met individually and began charting their plans for the upcoming year, applying the previous day's information. The Junior CYMK-UOY members met with the seminarians nearby for discussions, and wrote icons afterwards with Vera Senchuk. The day finished with engaging round-table discussions with other members of Ukrainian Self Reliance League, and a first-ever Faith-on-Tap informal meet-up with priests at the local pub, where the priests shifted tables like speed-daters, ready to answer any questions their table guests presented - including "does the length of your beard indicate your level of holiness?!"

On Saturday, after an early morning Annual General Meeting, with reports from locals and the national executive, the group drafted some insightful and practical resolutions before breaking for lunch. The afternoon concluded with a lengthy choir rehearsal in preparation for the next day's Liturgy. In the evening, to conclude the banquet, CYMKivtsi charmed everyone with their laid-back rendition of popular Ukrainian folk songs, featuring ukeleles! A zabava followed, and featured local band "Budmo" and a wonderfully quirky photo-booth!

Sunday morning came too soon, but everyone was bright-eyed to sing the 9 AM Hierarchical Divine Liturgy conducted by Christina Kowalenko. Quick, teary goodbyes were said after the yummy brunch, with an air of an excitement knowing that everyone would be seeing each other every summer for the next four years!

Special thanks to those who provided financial support to allow the youth to participate in this convention: first-time sponsor, Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada Foundation and the longstanding support of the SUS Foundation of Canada for their significant donations. We also thank the Taras Shevchenko Foundation (Temerty Fund), USRL Project 20,000, and National USRA/TYC for their support.

