

Mary Dyma

Founder and First President of the UCWLC

Jayne Paluck

The National Executive of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada fondly remembers the outstanding and lifelong contributions of their first National President, pioneer organizer and loyal member, Mary Dyma.

Recently, our Organization created a Mary Dyma Scholarship Award to honour this extraordinary woman.

Mary Dyma was born in Borschiw, Ukraine. She immigrated to Winnipeg in 1920. In a short period of time her intelligence and tenacity helped her master the English language. At the University of Manitoba she completed a four year Bachelor of Arts program in only three years, and in 1923 became the first woman of Ukrainian descent to earn a degree from a Canadian university.

She was a teacher, a principal and a school trustee. She was a talented organizer and leader of pioneer women. In 1928 she organized the Ukrainian Handicraft Guild that later affiliated with the Canadian Handicraft Guild. She was a founding member of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada and became the first National President in 1944. In 1945, she became the first National President of an umbrella organization that united all the Ukrainian women's organizations in Canada. This organization is now named the Ukrainian Canadian Committee, Women's Council. In 1950 she assumed the presidency of the

Canadian League of Women Voters.

She represented Ukrainian women at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in London in 1953, and went on to represent the UCWLC at a World Congress of Mothers held in Brussels, Belgium where she addressed the assembly in French. She was a member of the Ukrainian Canadian Relief Fund and following World War II, she and her husband Dr. Bronislaw Dyma helped many Ukrainian families enter and settle in Canada.

In recognition of her outstanding contributions to her Ukrainian community, her Church and to her country Mary Dyma received many honours and awards. She was conferred the Centennial Medal on July 1, 1967 on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada. She was granted a private audience with His Holiness Pope Pius XII, and in 1983, Pope John Paul II awarded her the Papal Medal "Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice". On a poster issued by the Manitoba Women's Directorate entitled "Engendering Change" she was recognized for her outstanding contribution to life in Manitoba. For her contributions to the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League she was granted Honourary Life Membership. She was awarded the Taras Shevchenko Medal for meritorious service and was named to the prestigious Order of Canada.

In 1989, Jean Sherman, National President of the



UCWLC, officially announced the creation of the Mary Dyma Fund in which the principal would be invested and the accrued interest would be used to assist Ukrainian Catholic lay women pursue religious studies through an accredited program. Originally funded by the members of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada, the Fund has continued to grow through generous in memoriam donations made by her sons Donald and Bernard Dyma of Winnipeg, UCWLC Branches and private donors.