

## OTTAWA, ONTARIO

There were 2-3 Lithuanian families in Ottawa before World War I, according to the II Lithuanian Days publication. Several hundred Lithuanians moved to the city from the Displaced Persons' (DP) camps after World War II. The first Lithuanian events took place in 1948 and Ottawa's Lithuanians sent Mr Vaičius as their representative to the so-called parliament of Canada's Lithuanians in Montreal the following year. Fr. Dr. J. Razutis and Mr. and Mrs. Prancevičius were especially active during this period. In 1951-52, there were about 250 Lithuanians in Ottawa. By 1954, this number was reduced to about 80, due to Lithuanians moving to Toronto and Hamilton.

**LCC.** The nucleus of the Ottawa Lithuanian Community was formed in 1948. On 12 June 1949, Fr. Razutis called a meeting of Lithuanians in the Ottawa area. An executive committee was elected, with Albinas Paškevičius as chairman.

Ottawa's Lithuanians reacted diplomatically to the various arguments that arose during the establishment of the LCC from 1949 to 1952. Rival factions established several executive committees, but the Ottawa chapter of the LCC considered these arguments an unnecessary waste of energy and allowed Lithuanians to support whichever executive committee they chose.

Lithuanian activities in Ottawa were centred on the Ottawa chapter of the LCC and the Lithuanian Masses held each month. In 1955, the Ottawa chapter reported that Lithuanians gathered for the commemorations of the significant dates in Lithuanian history: Independence Day on 16 February, Deportation commemoration services on 14 June, the Coronation of Vytautas the Great on 8 September, Armed Forces Day on 23 November, etc.

Events are organized for Independence Day, Mother's Day and Christmas. Guest speakers are often invited. Lithuanians participate in gatherings organized by other ethnic groups and are represented on the Ottawa Citizenship Council, a multicultural organization. When Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union, a large commemoration service used to be organized on 14 June. It was attended by representatives of other occupied nations. Ottawa's Lithuanians maintain contact with Canadian government institutions and Members of Parliament.

An LCC Relief Fund chaired by Paulė Ancevičienė operated from 1973 to 1985. Donations and clothing were sent to Suvalkai, an area inhabited by Lithuanians in present-day Poland. Many packages were sent, and over 400 letters of thanks were received in return. In June of 1997, a committee to help the hungry of Lithuania was established. Donations were sent to a soup kitchen maintained by the Kaunas archdiocese's chapter of *Caritas*. By 2 May 1998, over \$1,000 had been sent. The committee was composed of Viktoras Prišcepionka, Irena Prišcepionkienė and Gintas Mitalas.

From 13 to 19 May 1974, the Ottawa chapter of the LCC celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary by organizing numerous events: the opening of Lithuanian Week at the National Arts Centre; an exhibition of Lithuania postage stamps, currency, books and folk art at the central library; a display of the tapestries of Anastazija Tamošaitienė; an anniversary ball at the Civic Centre; an exhibition of the art of Telesforas Valius, etc. At the time, the executive committee of the Ottawa chapter of the LCC was chaired V.

Priščeponka, with members B. Čeponkus, R. Čeponkienė, S. Mitalienė, A. Elvikis and L. Giriūnas.

These days, national holidays are celebrated in a family atmosphere. Attempts are being made to attract those who no longer speak Lithuanian by organizing Lithuanian cooking classes and events where there are fewer speeches and more music, children's performances and sing-alongs.

Rūta Kličienė, chairwoman of the Ottawa chapter of the LCC, organized a Christmas program and dinner for the area's Lithuanians in 1999. The children of the Dr. Vincas Kudirka Saturday School performed a Christmas pageant prepared by Giedrė Matusevičienė.

**LCC Ottawa chapter chairs:** Fr. Dr. J. Razutis, Albinas Paškevičius, J. Saulėnas, V. Trečiokas, B. Ragauskaitė, M. Šimanskis, J. Danys, P. Daunius, Fr. Dr. V. Skilandžiūnas, S. Balsevičienė, Dr. A. Šidlauskaitė, Rūta Danaitytė, V. Priščeponka, Benediktas Čeponkus and currently Rūta Kličienė. The other members of the executive committee of the LCC are Vytas Radžius, Raimundas Kličius, Rūta Rudaitytė-Renaud, Elė Jurgutienė, Antanas Skučas and Nijolė Gray. The audit committee is composed of J. Verbyla, S. Danaitienė and B. Čeponkus.

**School.** Dr. Vincas Kudirka Saturday School.

**Organizations.** A folk-dancing group directed by A. Paškevičienė performed from 1949 to 1953. *Vingis*, another folk-dancing group, existed from 1991 to 1994. A 14-member students' association was established in 1965 but did not last long.

**Parish.** Ottawa's Lithuanian Catholic Mission.

**Statistics.** According to the 1951 Canadian census, 127 Lithuanians lived in Ottawa that year. The 1956 Canadian Lithuanian Days yearbook indicated about 90 LCC members. The 1960 VII Lithuanian Days publication notes, "Of the Lithuanians living in the area, 70 are active LCC members." In 1961, it was announced that there were approximately 140 Lithuanians around Ottawa, and that about 70 of them were regular supporters of LCC activities. At the 1966 National Council meeting of the LCC, it was reported that there were about 120 members in the Ottawa chapter. Most of these were professionals, and community life was quite active. At the 1970 National Council meeting, 170 Lithuanians were counted in the chapter. And by the 1981 meeting of the National Council, the complaint was made that "We have about 90 people on our lists...but normally only about 60 come to community events."

According to a 1984 survey conducted by Rasa Kurienė, chairwoman of the LCC's Culture Committee, there were 150 Lithuanians in the chapter, with 35% of these active in community events. Yet the same year, chapter chairman J. Danys reported to the National Council that "according to 1981 government of Canada statistics, 235 Ottawa citizens consider themselves Lithuanians and 60 speak Lithuanian at home. The chapter's rosters list 80 family names, which works out to about 120 individuals who make an appearance at least once every two years. 40 to 60 come to Lithuanian events, including Masses. We rarely see 70 to 80." In 1999, there were 95 families, or about 200 individuals, on the chapter's lists. 120 came to the 16 February Independence Day ceremonies.