

Support system strong for Ukrainians in city

Day in the park brings together many with Ukrainian roots

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The StarPhoenix

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Thousands of people gathered Saturday in Kiwanis Park to take in the sights, sounds and tastes of the eighth annual Ukraine Day in the Park.

A celebration of Ukrainian culture and independence, the event was a gathering place for those with deep roots in Saskatchewan as well as more recent Ukrainian immigrants such as Artem Baranov, who arrived in Saskatoon last year from the Sumy region in northern Ukraine.

Like many recent immigrants to Saskatchewan, Baranov, 29, was brought in to help fill labour shortages.

"I'm working for Double Diamond Industrial Structures in Saskatoon," says Baranov, who had six years of carpentry experience in Ukraine. "I had to take an exam, and when my boss saw my work (in Ukraine), he asked me to sign a contract."

Baranov got the job through a partnership with the Kiev Youth Labour Centre in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) here in Saskatoon. The UCC offers preparation, arrival and retention services to recent and potential Ukrainian immigrants.

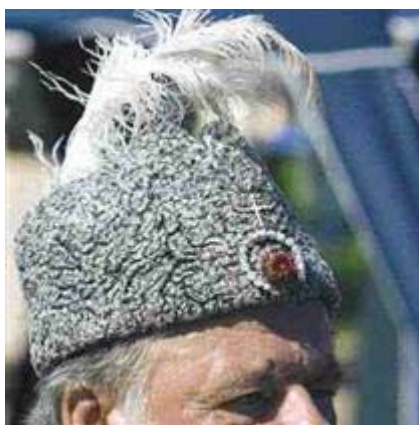
According to UCC president Slawko Kindrachuk, the organization has helped bring 350 Ukrainian workers and their families to Saskatchewan this year through partnerships with 16 different employers.

In addition to employment services, the UCC also offers ESL classes.

"The ESL programs are good," says Baranov. "If you don't have experience



CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Young dancers wait their turn to perform during Ukraine Day in the Park Saturday in Kiwanis Park south of the Delta Bessborough Hotel



CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Paul Bunka, dressed like a Cossack, takes in some of the Ukrainian culture at the eighth annual Ukraine Day in the Park

talking in English, they can help you."

Admittedly, Baranov doesn't seem to need ESL classes, as his English is very good.

"I had a few good teachers in Ukraine," he says.

Although he's been here for only 14 months, Baranov seems fairly well ensconced in the Ukrainian social community. He's the captain of an informal Ukrainian soccer club that plays every Sunday in Saskatoon -- an event he dreams of turning into a recreational league where immigrants from other countries can compete together -- and he happily volunteers his time to assist other Ukrainian newcomers with the "little things," like dealing with SGI, that come with moving to the province.

"You won't be alone here if you're a newcomer," Baranov says.

As if to add credence to his statement, Baranov is among friends immediately after arriving at Ukraine Day in the Park. He is quick to shake hands and chat with Vyacheslav Sirotenko, a former ESL classmate who works as a cook at a restaurant in Blaine Lake, and Vitali Sorokotiaguine, the artistic director of a local Ukrainian dance troupe.

Sorokotiaguine smiled when he heard that Baranov was being interviewed by The StarPhoenix. "A little bit of drink and we'll start talking," he joked, gesturing toward the beer garden.

Contrary to his friend's chiding, Baranov ordered only a 7-Up before sitting down at one of the festival's food tables. Once there, he talked of bringing his wife, Larisa, to Canada and settling here permanently.

"I want to live here. I like this country," he says.

He also noted the contrast between the traditional Ukrainian cuisine he's used to and the Canadian-Ukrainian food he's encountered here in Saskatoon.

"It was a big difference. For Ukrainian perogies here, they use cheese and potatoes, but our perogies, we made them



CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Dave Foreman enjoys some perogies during Ukraine Day in the Park Saturday



CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Loran Chrusch dresses like a Cossack for Ukraine Day in the Park



CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Theresa Sokyryka, a Canadian Idol runner-up originally from Sask-atoon but now living in Toronto, performs during Ukraine Day in the Park Saturday

with just meat and onions."

And don't even get Baranov started about the frozen variety of perogies that you can find at the larger grocery stores.

"No. I don't like them," he said, laughing.

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CREDIT: Greg Pender, The StarPhoenix
Artem Baranov

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