

# The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award



## Sonja Bezyk

Winnipeg, Manitoba

Sonja Bezyk has devoted her life to celebrating her Ukrainian heritage and community.

Born and raised in Winnipeg, Ms. Bezyk is the daughter of the late federal member of Parliament Mykola Mandziuk, and Maria Mandziuk-Senitska, who instilled in her a deep love and appreciation for her Ukrainian culture, heritage and faith from an early age.



Before devoting herself to an extraordinary list of volunteer achievements, Ms. Bezyk distinguished herself as a teacher. After earning her B.A. and B.Ed. from the University of Manitoba, she taught high school mathematics for 30 years, and was head of the mathematics department at Miles Macdonell Collegiate, in Winnipeg.

After retiring, Ms. Bezyk took on an ever-more active role in the community, deepening her commitment to several Ukrainian cultural and heritage institutions. A lifelong member of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada (UWAC), she worked diligently to develop and nurture Ukrainian cultural traditions as a distinctive contribution to the national culture of Canada.

UWAC itself is an integral component of the Ukrainian Self-Reliance League of Canada, which Ms. Bezyk served as its president. She was also president of the board of directors of the *Ukrainian Voice* newspaper, which celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2010. The *Voice* has a strong personal connection with Ukrainian Canadians. "We share news from Ukraine, from all of Canada, and local news. We chronicle what happens in the Ukrainian community," said Ms. Bezyk. "My father used to get it all the time. Both of my parents were staunch Ukrainians and they put that seed in me." She was also involved in working with the Ukrainian Museum of Canada and Kyiv Pavilion at Folklorama.

Ms. Bezyk's executive positions are almost too numerous to mention. Among the many senior posts she has held are president of Trident Press; president of the board of Holy Trinity Cathedral; chair, director and board member of St Andrew's College; executive vice-president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress; and past-president of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Canada.

***"Sonja is a person of integrity, enthusiasm and dedication in every role she has undertaken and a tireless worker for her community."***

**Jane Luchak, nominator**

In recognition of her efforts, Ms. Bezyk has received many awards for her work, including the UCC Centennial committee award, the Shevchenko Medal, and the Award of Excellence. "Sonja is a person of integrity, enthusiasm and dedication in every role she has undertaken and a tireless worker for her community," says Jane Luchak, who nominated her for the Caring Canadian Award. "If you ask anyone in the Ukrainian community, they will tell you there is no one who merits the Caring Canadian Award more. She is an example of what volunteerism can achieve."



The Caring Canadian Award was presented to Sonja Bezyk on April 17, 2012, at Rideau Hall.  
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