

## UCAMA receives large donation of shares

The origin of Michael Szpital's surname translates into "hospital," the modern-day institution we use to care for people. It is an appropriate meaning for Mr. Szpital, who has spent his life caring, not only about his family and friends, but for his entire community. His generosity is appreciated by many, and now UCAMA can also extend its heartfelt appreciation to our generous benefactor. Mr. Szpital recently donated shares valued at \$131,000 to our new museum project, and has pledged to donate another \$50,000.



Michael Szpital

Michael Szpital, like so many of his generation, learned the value of community early in life. He was born in 1931, on a farm five miles northwest of Newbrook AB. As a child and youth, he attended a few different schools, starting at a small country school near Darling. After completing Grade 10 in Darling, young Michael went on to attend Newbrook school and then Thorhild, where he graduated Grade 12.

During his last years of high school, as Michael matured into an upstanding young man, he stayed in the Thorhild area helping to look after a confectionary store, while living with his sister Annie. He was growing into an ambitious lad and took the time during his last two years of high school to complete a radio electronics course by correspondence. It wasn't easy to balance all of his challenges, but Michael always found a way.

In the spring of 1950, at the age of 19, he travelled to the industrial centre of Canada, Toronto, to gain practical experience with electronic equipment in a lab setting. He knew, even then, that nothing came on a silver plate, and he worked three hard months in the bush with Swanson Lumber of Chisholm, Ontario, to earn enough money to be able to afford the travel, accommodation and other costs of the Toronto-based training.

It was all worth it. Mr. Szpital's first job, as a trained radio technician, was at Kingsway Film Equipment in Toronto. From there, he went on to work with Caplan Radio, where another emerging world of electronics opened up for him. At Caplan, he learned a great deal about servicing televisions, mainly from his co-workers. He never passed up an opportunity to gain an advantage in his goals. It was 1952 and he was in the right place at the

right time—televisions were just starting to appear in people's homes, and the CBC had just been officially established in Toronto and Montreal.

Once he had the right experience under his belt, Mr. Szpital was able to broaden his horizons – he decided to abide by the old mantra of "Go West young man." In 1954 he found himself in Winnipeg, where he took a job servicing radios and televisions at Video Television. It wasn't long before he was offered a better position with Freeman Radio Television. In those days, thanks to his smart career-planning, Mr. Szpital was one of only a few technicians who could service televisions at all in Winnipeg.

Mr. Szpital was out West, but not quite west enough for this Alberta-born son. During a visit to Alberta in 1957, he noticed an advertisement for a television repairman at Richie Electronic in Edmonton. He decided it was the right place for him. He moved to Edmonton and took a position at Richie for six years as the main technician, working in the shop and making service calls. He had a knack with people, and most days it was the service calls that brought him the greatest satisfaction.

Mr. Szpital then answered an advertisement from the University of Alberta requesting trades people to teach at the Grade 10 level. After the end of World War II, most trades

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positions were being filled by people immigrating from a war-torn Europe. But once conditions improved overseas, Canada found itself still short of skilled trades people. Mr. Szpital was once again in the right place at the right time. He attended the University of Alberta to complete the Vocational Teacher's course which had been compressed into one year due to the shortage of teachers. It was tough-going to work and study, but his efforts paid off.

Once he completed his course of studies, Mr. Szpital was qualified to teach. With his experience in electronics, he was a natural for teaching Grade 10 shop, and he started with about 12 eager students at Camrose Composite High School. During that first year, he was in his comfort zone teaching the technical classes, although he also taught Grade 9 social studies. He remained at Camrose Composite for five years.

Another option came his way in his final year at Camrose, and by now he had learned never to shy away from opportunity knocking at his door. Mr. Szpital began attending evening classes at the newly established Camrose College (now Augustana University) to upgrade his academic qualifications. During the summer, he attended classes toward a Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Alberta. When, in 1969, electronics were temporarily discontinued at his teaching post, he turned a potential negative into a positive, and from 1969-70 completed a one-year Vocational Counselling diploma at the University of Alberta.

The 1970-71 school year was Mr. Szpital's last year to teach at Camrose Composite where he taught industrial arts classes, including electronics, wood and metal work. Initially the students, who were bussed in for a half-day of school, were not motivated to learn, but eventually Mr. Szpital won them over through a combination of his enthusiasm as a teacher, and his own interest in the subject matter.

# Message from the President

I am delighted to announce the new UCAMA Museum project is moving forward. This past summer the UCAMA Board reviewed the budget and construction plans of the new museum project and felt it was time to move forward and show progress and development on our Jasper Ave project. On November 16 the City of Edmonton reaffirmed their 3 million dollar commitment to phase one of the Jasper Ave UCAMA Museum project. We have retained Group2 Architecture Engineering Ltd. and Delnor Construction to complete phase one of the project. All of the construction planning team is so excited to finally get things under way.

This is a welcome step towards our goal of creating a museum that not only preserves our past into the future, but strengthens the cultural and economic vibrancy of Edmonton's downtown. When built, the new facility will ensure the survival of an important collection that documents the history of Ukrainians in Alberta and the contribution they have made to the province and Canada.

Two years from now we will be able to move into our new museum, fully confident the artifacts and documents in the facility will be stored in a safe and secure environment. I anticipate the excitement will build each week until the award-winning design is finally open to the public. 🇺🇸



**Paul Teterenko**  
President

In 1971, Mr. Szpital left Camrose to accept a position at QCTV in Edmonton. Ed Polansky, a former classmate at radio college, was in the process of setting up this new cable company, which was destined to join one day with Shaw Cable, Canada's largest cable company. Mr. Szpital's first job was to utilize his exceptional people skills, and his teaching abilities, to visit all the television shops and educate their owners about cable television. He was successful in conveying to them that cable television did not want to put their shops out of business—it was a new partnering and the way of the future.

Mr. Szpital remained with QCTV for 24 years, until his retirement in 1996 at age 65. Along the way, the company continued to grow, changing its name

to VideoTron in 1985, and then joining the Shaw family. Always interested in lifelong learning, while working at QCTV, Mr. Szpital also studied industrial carpentry, ceramics and plastics, at the graduate level at the University of Alberta. He was awarded a Master of Education in Industrial and Vocational Education in May 1978—a proud day for him and his family.

When the company went public on the Toronto Stock Exchange, Mr. Szpital wisely invested in Shaw shares, increasing his holdings once again upon retirement.

Congratulations Mr. Szpital on an interesting and successful career! And many thanks for supporting your community and your heritage through this generous donation to UCAMA! 🇺🇸

## UCAMA launches unique fundraising campaign

# Step up to the Plate!

BY NADIJA SZRAM

A committee of Mark Palka, Paul Teterenko, and Nadija Szram has launched “Step up to the Plate,” a unique UCAMA fundraising campaign featuring the work of Iryna Karpenko, one of Alberta’s noted fine artists.

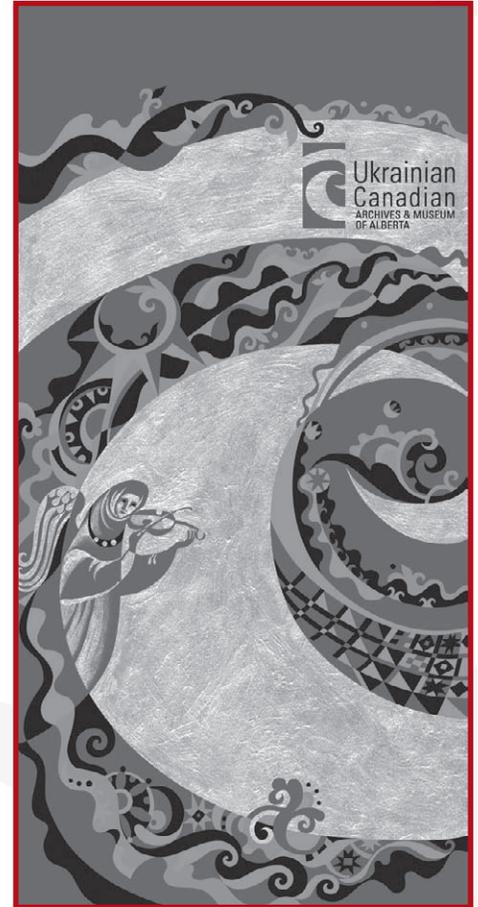
Iryna has a captivating whimsical style that she has translated to a work of art on glass for this project. These glass “plates” – which are rectangular rather than round – are offered as original pieces of fine art for the following three categories of donors to UCAMA: Bronze - \$500 to \$999; Copper - \$1,000 to \$1,499; and Gold - \$1,500+.

For the Bronze category, Iryna uses textured tempered glass panels with the design partially printed at the back of the panels. She then applies 23 karat gold leaf and gilds each section by hand before applying the final hard glaze on the back to preserve the gold layer. Each one-of-a-kind piece of fine art is signed by the artist.

For the Copper category, bevel-edged, flat glass panels are used and the design is partially printed on the panels allowing Iryna to apply copper leafing. The copper gilding is applied by hand and as a result each piece is a unique creation. The final step involves the application of a hard glaze on the back to preserve the fine art. Each piece is signed by the artist.

For the Gold category, each textured and tempered glass panel has Iryna’s original design and signature printed in full color on the back, before the application of a final coating to preserve the piece. Each piece is numbered by Iryna Karpenko on the back.

No matter the category, donors will receive a lasting piece of fine art by an established artist, whose work is either a worthy addition to an existing art collection or an ideal way to begin a collection. 



The design for the “Step up to the Plate” campaign

## Iryna Karpenko



Iryna Karpenko

Iryna Karpenko graduated from the Kyiv College of Industrial Arts and the National Academy of Fine Art and Architecture in Ukraine. She worked as an illustrator for a number of publishing houses and children’s

magazines. Her active exhibition life included a solo-exhibit at the Kyivo-Pecherska Lavra and permanent exhibitions at Tvorchist, Art-East and Neff Art Galleries in Kyiv. Iryna’s artwork earned her a Laureate title at the United Nations Fiftieth Anniversary Painting Competition and a Second Prize at the Ukrainian Poster Biennial Competition in Kyiv.

Iryna’s art is based on impressions from a mixture of different stories, songs and legends which surround our real and imagined, natural and cultural, historic and prehistoric lives. Some of her subjects are derived from Ukrainian mythology and ancient fairytales. Others can be interpreted as an intricate combination of elements from different epochs and cultures. Fascinated with various art mediums, Iryna splits her preferences between

several art techniques including watercolor, acrylic, gouache and printmaking.

Iryna Karpenko resides in Edmonton. Impressed by new opportunities here in Canada, Iryna came up with a new technique – art on glass. Attracted by playing with small elements, she likes to design elaborate works incorporating a lot of details.

Together with her husband Oleksiy, Iryna Karpenko completed art and design projects for numerous Ukrainian groups. Iryna’s art works were selected for a permanent exhibit at The Sir Winston Churchill Square. In 2007 Iryna began her teaching career as an art instructor for the Barvy Art Studio where she teaches drawing, painting and composition. 

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Many thanks to our recent donors who include:

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**There are four easy ways to send us your pledge:**

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**Thank you for your generous support.**

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