



BELWEDER NORTH SHORE POLISH ASSOCIATION HISTORY, MISSION, and ACHIEVEMENTS

Belweder North Shore Polish Association was established in 2002 as a representative cultural and social community organisation, serving the Polish diaspora and Canadian society. The organisation promotes Polish culture, arts, language, and understanding of history within the context of multiculturalism in Canadian society and Canada's history.

As an organisation that honours youth and elders alike by fostering powerful sense of identity and purpose, it has preserved much of the Polish community's cultural heritage and maintained traditions through various forms of activism and community endeavours.

Belweder North Shore Polish Association has been able to accomplish a great deal despite a small budget thanks to the help of many volunteers. Over the last 20 years, Belweder North Shore Polish Association has been involved in organising cultural and community events throughout the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, of which the annual Polish Festival Vancouver is its signature event, an inclusive and open, festive event that is organised with great consideration for everyone who shares in human values of freedom, love, and compassion for one's fellow citizen.

The organisation's founding member and long-time president, Urszula Sulińska, who was encouraged by many in the Polish community to create the organisation, has been devoted to bringing people together, and unifying them for the betterment of the Polish community and Canadian society. Mrs. Sulinska began her Polish Canadian activist career by helping the existing Polish organizations. In British Columbia, she was also the founder of Polonia Vision, the Polish-language TV channel on Multicultural Channel, which still broadcasts under the name of TV Polonia. She has been an active and enthusiastic member of the Polish community, engaging as a member in other organisations. Mrs. Sulinska served on the Board of Directors of the M. Kopernik (Nicolaus Copernicus) Foundation helping to manage Kopernik Lodge – facility caring for Complex Care residents, she was also a long-time member at Polish Friendship Zgoda Society. At present she continues her work as the President of the Belweder North Shore Polish Association, she is Elected Director at the Polish Canadian Congress BC - Heritage Committee and she is one of the Directors at the Polish Heritage Foundation in Ottawa.

For her commitment, dedication and accomplishments in building and strengthening the Polish community despite all social and economic adversity in 2013, Urszula Sulińska was awarded the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland. In 2015 she received a Community Award of West Vancouver in the Arts & Culture category for promoting Polish culture and art in West Vancouver.

Many members of the Belweder organization work tirelessly alongside Urszula to bring her vision to reality. The most active member working closely with Urszula is Izabella Sobieski, Vice President, an IT entrepreneur has contributed to the Belweder's many successes and is well known for her dedication and hard work in serving Polish community.

Belweder North Shore Polish Association represents the Polish community, inclusively, openly, and without bias. In promoting the Polish language, organization supports development of Polish language courses for the Polish community and public in general. Belweder celebrates Polish identity by honouring all of humanity in common human values in whichever diverse ways they are expressed.

By promoting arts, culture, and a tradition that is uniquely Polish, we wish to celebrate the diversity of many ethnic backgrounds within the community we live in and to encourage the integration and appreciation of its next-door neighbours.

Belweder North Shore Polish Association has been able to accomplish a great deal despite a small budget thanks to the help of many volunteers. The organization is an active member of the the Canadian Polish Congress, British Columbia Chapter.

Achievements During the last 20 years, our organization has been involved in organizing a variety of events such as:

1. Beauty and Talent Contest at the Greek Community Centre, Vancouver (2002) - education through a fun event in cooperation with other Polish societies
2. Theatrical Play entitled Widmo by Slawomir Mrozek: at Norman Rothstein Theatre, Vancouver (2004)
3. West Vancouver Community Day/West Vancouver Bridge Festival: from 2005 to 2019, we have shared our heritage through arts, food, and folk-dance performances. We have also participated in the parade.
4. Canada Day in West and North Vancouver: participation in the parades
5. Essay competition about the life of Frederic Chopin for students from West and North Vancouver high schools (2010)
6. Kay Meek Theatre, West Vancouver - piano concert and poster exhibition at the occasion on the 200th anniversary of the birth of Polish composer Frederic Chopin (2010) and Polish Folk-Dance group Jedliniok performance (2018)
7. Chopin – Impressions and more, a concert by Leszek Mozdzer, an outstanding pianist, composer, and producer at the Centennial Theatre with the cooperation with Radio IKS.
8. Silk Purse Gallery: an art exhibition of the Polish - Canadian artist Ryszard Wojciechowski, a

well-known artist on the North Shore. His sculpture “North Shore Rhapsody” is installed inside the Centennial Theatre, North Vancouver (2012) and his sculpture Trumpet is exposed next to Pier 7 Restaurant.

9. Poland the Series, Famous People, Interesting Places - lectures at the West Vancouver Library:

- celebration of Polish Independence Day and Canadian Remembrance Day, a lecture about the history and importance of both days.
- Audio-visual presentation and introduction to:
poetry of Polish Nobel Prize winner Wislawa Szymborska (2012, 2013)
Polish Noble Prize Laureates,
Warsaw’s history and its modern architectural changes
Polish cinema and its famous directors
Krakow and Wieliczka big tourists’ attractions
100th Anniversary of Poland regaining its independence, Poles who influenced the world.

10. Participation in the Dundarave Festival of Lights: raising money in support of the North Shore Shelter & Housing Centre - Lookout Society in North Vancouver (2004-2021)

11. Concert of Katarzyna Musial in tribute to Polish composers (2014) and Polish Pride concert in cooperation with Andrzej Rozbicki – conductor and Vancouver West Coast Symphony Orchestra on the occasions of the Poland’s 100th Anniversary of regaining independence (2018) – both organized in the Centennial Theatre, North Vancouver

12. Blueshore Financial Centre/Capilano University – Concert Beautiful and Free celebrating Canada’ 150th Anniversary

13. Silk Purse Gallery – concert of the Ryszard Wrzaskala (2017) and celebrating Stanislaw Moniuszko’s - father of the Polish Opera 200th Birthday Anniversary (2019)

14. Pipe Shop, West Vancouver – arts and crafts fair and arts and crafts Christmas fair (2016)

15. Polish Cultural Festival: Lynn Valley Village, North Vancouver, organized from 2013 to 2017 and Shipbuilders Square, North Vancouver from 2018 to 2019. This year we will be organizing it for the eight time. It is a successful event, with over four thousand participating every year for one day event full of art and entertainment for people of all ages.

16. Participation in the North Vancouver Cultural Days

17. Poland the Series - Famous People, Interesting Places. The main purpose of this event is to broaden knowledge about Poland. It is a free event. We try to organize it twice a year in two locations – the West Vancouver Library and the North Vancouver Library. This event has an educational character. During the events from the series, we had a lectures and video presentations on the following topics:

- Polish Noble Prize Laureates,
- Warsaw’s history and its modern architectural changes

- Polish cinema and its famous directors
- Krakow and Wieliczka big tourists' attractions
- 100th Anniversary of Poland regaining its independence, Poles who influenced the world.

In 2022 MONOVA – Museum and Archives of North Vancouver recognizing the value and importance of the Polish community and its cultural and business impact to the development of the North Shore and its community signed the Letter of Cooperation with Belweder North Shore Polish Association with the purpose of preserving and commemorating the achievements of the Polish community in the North Shore for future generations.



Polish school in 2002. From left: Urszula Sulinska, Mirek Mituta, Teresa Rakowska, Consul General of the Republic of Poland Krzysztof Czapla, Bozena Lukomska-Khan and Danuta Dmowska.



Polish Festival Vancouver at the Shipbuilders' Square – North Vancouver, BC- 2019



Urszula Sulińska and Izabella Sobieski accompanied by Hon Bruce Ralston Minister of Jobs, Trade and

Technology and Bowinn Ma MLA North Vancouver



Belweder North Shore Polish Association's members celebrating 15th Anniversary of the organization in the Silk Purse Gallery, West Vancouver



Members of the Belweder North Shore Polish Association celebrating 20th Anniversary

