

KOBZAR Book Award Presentation

March 26, 2026

Canadian Museum
for Human Rights



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...culture is one of the first things that is targeted in this kind of aggression, which is what makes it so important. There's a certain fragility to culture, but it's never going to be wiped out fully. So long as the people are around, they will continue making culture.

– **Maria Reva**, Winner of the KOBZAR Literary Award (2022), Long-listed for the Booker Prize (2025), Winner of the Atwood Gibson Writers' Trust Fiction Prize (2025)



11th KOBZAR Book Award Presentation
March 26, 2026
Canadian Museum for Human Rights
Winnipeg, Canada

*KOBZAR is a trademark of the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko

Message from the President



The Shevchenko Foundation proudly presents the 11th KOBZAR Book Award in recognition of stories that spotlight the Ukrainian Canadian identity.

Ukrainians have a long and fascinating history in Canada. As such, the Ukrainian Canadian identity has been shaped by diverse experiences and often complex relationships with the past.

The 2026 KOBZAR Book Award shortlist illuminates three of these relationships. Taking readers on a journey through historical events, including both world wars and the Holodomor, the shortlisted titles pull back the curtain on the Ukrainian Canadian psyche.

The first KOBZAR Book Award was presented in 2003 to encourage Canadian writers to boldly and creatively interpret our Ukrainian Canadian stories for the world to enjoy. Twenty years after the presentation of the first award in 2006, we've only scratched the surface of our storytelling as the stories not only continue to evolve but also inspire compelling engagement.

Thank you to the team that produced the presentation ceremony led by The Shevchenko Foundation Executive Director Bohdana Bashuk.

The Shevchenko Foundation will continue to provide a platform for our stories to be documented, amplified, and celebrated in the confidence that they will always find readers to inspire.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Balan', written in a cursive style.

Boris Balan

President

The Shevchenko Foundation

About the KOBZAR Book Award



The **KOBZAR Book Award** is presented every second year by The Shevchenko Foundation (TSF) to a writer who has brilliantly captured a story that offers readers a glimpse into the Ukrainian Canadian identity – a people, its challenges, achievements, and aspirations.

The KOBZAR Book Award fills a very important niche in the Canadian and North American book and literary awards scene. In addition to creating a place for the experiences and stories of Ukrainian Canadians, it impacts the lives of authors by giving them recognition and providing resources to enable them to continue their work.



2024 Shortlisted Authors from left: Andrew Sniderman, Douglas Sanderson, Ivanka Galadza, Barbara Joan Scott, Adrian Lysenko, Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, Natalie Kononenko, and laureate Myrna Kostash

In a world where we are bombarded with information, sound bites, and uncurated content, the KOBZAR Book Award carves out an avenue for documenting the Ukrainian Canadian legacy.

Formerly the KOBZAR Literary Award, the \$25,000 prize has been awarded to eleven winners since 2006 whose literary works belong to one of several genres, including literary non-fiction, fiction, poetry, young readers' literature, play, screenplay, and musical.

Hosted in Toronto for eight awardings, online, and now in Winnipeg for a second year at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, TSF looks to introducing the KOBZAR Book Award to audiences across Canada.

Thank you, Winnipeg, for the hospitality!



*2024 KOBZAR Book Award Presentation at the CMHR
Event Committee: Patricia Tymkiw, Lesia Szwaluk, Marusia Labay*

Emerging Writers Short Prose Competition

The KOBZAR Book Award is at the core of TSF's literary arts program that includes the **Emerging Writers Short Prose Competition**.

Young writers are encouraged to pursue their passion and to one day aspire to submit an entry to the KOBZAR Book Award. The \$2,500 prize is awarded annually for the best piece of unpublished prose on a topic with a tangible connection to the Ukrainian Canadian experience.



Anastasia Skrypnyk

The 2026 TSF Emerging Writers Short Prose Competition was awarded to **Anastasia Skrypnyk**, a Toronto-based writer. Her story, **JCS: Impressions, Pt. 1.**, shares the experience of a young newcomer to Canada forced to navigate a new reality while struggling with conflicting cultural expectations.

The Award



The KOBZAR Book Award is named for the travelling 19th-century minstrel wanderers, “Kobzars,” who narrated and sang a repertoire of historic epics, religious and folk songs, and stories of the day to the instrumental accompaniment of a bandura or kobza. The award, as shown also on the front cover, was designed by award-winning sculptor **Oleh Lesiuk**.

KOBZAR Book Award Recipients

2024

Myrna Kostash

*Ghosts in a Photograph:
A Chronicle*

2022

Maria Reva

Good Citizens Need Not Fear

2020

Laisha Rosnau

Our Familiar Hunger

2018

Lisa Grekul and

Lindy Ledohowski (Editors)

*Unbound: Ukrainian Canadians
Writing Home*

2016

Maurice Mierau

Detachment: An Adoption Memoir

2014

Diane Flacks, Andrey Tarasiuk,

Luba Goy

Luba, Simply Luba

2012

Shandi Mitchell

Under This Unbroken Sky

2010

Randall Maggs

Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems

2008

Janice Kulyk Keefer

The Ladies' Lending Library

2006 (Co-Winner)

Danny Schur

Strike: The Musical

2006 (Co-Winner)

Laura Langston

Lesia's Dream

Emerging Writers Short Prose Competition Winners

Camille Pavlenko (2025, 2024)

Melissa Morelli Lacroix (2023)

Matthew Kruchak (2022)

Adrian Lysenko (2021)

Tanya Berezuk (2020)

Program

Emcee Bohdana Bashuk

Opening Remarks

Bohdana Bashuk, Executive Director, The Shevchenko Foundation

Welcoming Remarks

Boris Balan, President, The Shevchenko Foundation

Greetings from the Province of Manitoba

The Honourable Nellie Kennedy

Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism

Presentation of 2026 KOBZAR Book Award Finalists

Red Harvest *Michael Cherkas*

The Matryoshka Memoirs *Sasha Colby*

**No Place Like Home: Enemy Alien Internment in Canada
During the Great War** *Bohdan Kordan*

Introduction of Kultura Rising: On the Cultural Front of this War

Presentation of 2026 KOBZAR Book Award



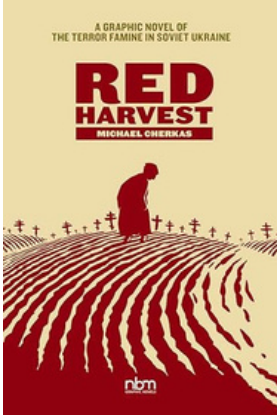
Bohdana Bashuk is the Executive Director of The Shevchenko Foundation with over 20 years of experience in the not-for-profit sector in culture and heritage administration. A veteran television and radio broadcaster, Bohdana was the host-moderator of Open for Discussion, a national weekly show on the Women's Television Network (WTN), and for over twenty years she produced and hosted a daily Ukrainian radio program at CKJS Radio, Winnipeg. She has narrated films, and produced and directed live-event shows and festivals in Canada.

KOBZAR Book Award Finalist

Red Harvest

by Michael Cherkas

NBM Publishing



Red Harvest is based on the tragic events that took place in Soviet Ukraine and other parts of the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1933. Stalin and the ruling Communist Party began their program of forced large-scale collectivization of individual farms and farmers, including the seizure of livestock, farm implements, crops, seed stock, and other property. Red Harvest is the fictional story, based on true stories as related to the Ukrainian-Canadian author, of Mykola Kovalenko, a Ukrainian immigrant to Canada,

Mykola Kovalenko was the only member of his family to have survived the Holodomor. Through his memories, we witness the horrors of what happened to his family and fellow villagers in the "breadbasket of Europe" as they struggled—not only to make sense of the war that was being waged against them—but, ultimately, to survive.

Michael Cherkas graduated from the Ontario College of Art in 1979, and since then has worked in Toronto as an illustrator, graphic designer, art director, cartoonist and graphic novelist. He began drawing comic books in 1986 when he and writer Larry Hancock co-created *The Silent Invasion*, a four-volume graphic novel series.

Talking to a Hill, a short story written by Larry Hancock and illustrated by Cherkas, was nominated for a 2024 Eisner Award – the comic book industry's Oscars. In 2023, it appeared in the Eisner Award-winning anthology *Comics for Ukraine*.

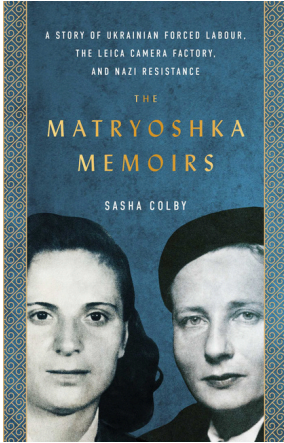


KOBZAR Book Award Finalist

The Matryoshka Memoirs

by Sasha Colby

ECW Press



Irina Nikifortchuk was 19 years old and a Ukrainian schoolteacher when she was abducted to be a forced laborer in the Leica camera factory in Nazi Germany. Eventually pulled from the camp hospital to work as a domestic in the Leica owners' household, Irina survived the war and eventually found her way to Canada.

Decades later, Sasha Colby, Irina's granddaughter, seeks out her grandmother's story over a series of summer visits and gradually begins to interweave the as-told-to

story with historical research. As she delves deeper into the history of the Leica factory and World War II forced labor, she discovers the parallel story of Elsie Kühn-Leitz, Irina's rescuer and the factory heiress, later imprisoned and interrogated by the Gestapo on charges of "excessive humanity."

Sasha Colby is the Director of Simon Fraser University's Graduate Liberal Studies Program, a live-Zoom MA for working aged adults across Canada that includes travel study in Italy and at the University of Oxford.

She is currently building an Oxford-partnered international research centre devoted to uniting research with better storytelling so that it travels further and with more impact.

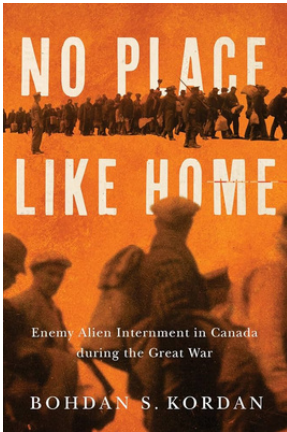


KOBZAR Book Award Finalist

No Place Like Home: Enemy Alien Internment in Canada during the Great War

by **Bohdan S. Kordan**

McGill-Queen's University Press



No Place Like Home chronicles a little-known episode in Canada's national history: when internment was first employed during the Great War under the War Measures Act.

Highlighting the problem of immigrant fit and belonging, Bohdan Kordan shows how legal, political, and cultural frameworks modelled an understanding of the role and place of immigrants originating from enemy lands and how, amid the economic, social, and political uncertainties of war, internment as an

instrument of security policy and a political choice altered the lives of thousands of innocent people. *No Place Like Home* brings to the fore new perspectives on both Canadian internment and the role and responsibility of government in war.

Bohdan Kordan is Professor Emeritus of International Relations in the Department of Political Studies, St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan where he served as Chair of the Department of Political Studies and Acting Chair of the Department of Economics. He was also the Founding Director of the Prairie Centre for the Study of Ukrainian Heritage. In 2005, Dr. Kordan helped create the Ramon Hnatyshyn Centre for Canadian Studies at Ukraine's Chernivtsi National University. As an academic, Professor Kordan has written extensively on Canada-Ukraine relations and the politics of state/minority relations within the Canadian context.



KOBZAR Book Award Jury



Myrna Kostash is author of numerous books including the classic *All of Baba's Children*. Most recently in 2022, she published *Ghosts in a Photograph: A Chronicle* that won the 2024 Kobzar Book Award. Her essays, articles, and creative nonfiction have been widely anthologized. She has been a frequent lecturer at home and abroad, and an instructor of creative writing as well as writer-in-residence in Canada and the US.



Kay Rollans is an acquisitions editor at University of Alberta Press. She has worked in and around independent Canadian publishing for ten years, including at the Book Publishers Association of Alberta, at Brush Education, and as a freelance editor. She serves on the board of the Association of Canadian Publishers and is a past vice-president of the Coalition for Diversity of Cultural Expressions. She currently lives in Mohkinstis — Calgary, Alberta.



Niigaan Sinclair is Anishinaabe from Peguis First Nation. He is an award-winning writer, editor and professor of Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba who was named by *Maclean's* magazine in 2022 as one of the most influential people in Canada. His first book *Wînipêk: Visions of Canada from an Indigenous Centre* (McClelland & Stewart, 2024), a national bestseller, won the 2024 Governor General Award for Non-fiction.

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The Centrepiece

The colourful and distinctive centrepieces symbolizing the vibrant Ukrainian culture and the diversity of our stories were designed by Winnipeg artist **Patricia Tymkiw**.



Patricia's work has been displayed at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, Mendel Gallery in Regina, Ukrainian Museum of Canada, Saskatoon, and the Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts.

Presenting Sponsor

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For over 50 years, Zorianna and Eugene Hyworon have been shaping common dreams into reality by supporting artists, youth, church, and community projects locally, nationally, and internationally. In their home province, the philanthropists support emerging and established artists with the Zorianna and Eugene Hyworon Manitoba Arts Program Fund, a designated fund within The Shevchenko Foundation.



Zorianna & Eugene
Hyworon Family Foundation

Please guard and document your precious family stories, pass them on to your children and grandchildren, encourage them to show their creativity by interpreting and sharing them. So we can learn, honour, remember our past - who we are, and where our roots are - and build our future.

До перемоги і до перебудови!

- Zorianna and Eugene Hyworon



SOME STORIES MUST NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

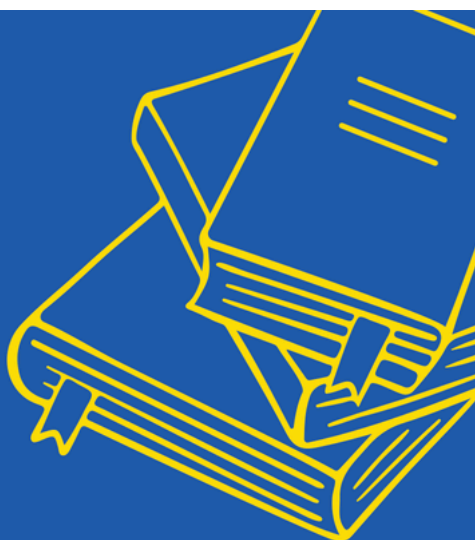
The KOBZAR™ Book Award recognizes authors whose work captures the experiences and voices of Ukrainian Canadians.

Ukrainian Credit Union Limited is proud to support the Shevchenko Foundation and this celebration of Ukrainian Canadian literature.



Congratulations to the 11th KOBZAR™ Book Award Nominees.

We proudly celebrate Canadian storytellers whose voices, stories, and perspectives continue to shape and strengthen the Ukrainian identity in Canada.



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AN ORIGINAL SHEVCHENKO FOUNDATION PODCAST



Discover how the arts and artists have been reshaped in wartime. And how Ukrainian Canadian culture is meeting the moment.

HOST: Andrew Kushnir



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Lesia Szwaluk ~ Marusia Labay ~ Patricia Tymkiw ~ Donna Korade ~
Olesia Fedchenko ~ Barb Bencharski

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Award Designer

Oleh Lesiuk

Centrepiece Designer

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Encore Canada – Winnipeg

Reception Pianist

Connor Derraugh



*The Shevchenko Foundation expresses gratitude
to all sponsors, donors, and guests for supporting the KOBZAR
Book Award and the Canadian stories that represent the Ukrainian
community and culture in Canada.*

About The Shevchenko Foundation

The Shevchenko Foundation is a leading nationwide charitable organization entrusted to preserve, develop, and promote Ukrainian Canadian arts, heritage, community, and education.

Guided by the principles of Leadership, Stewardship, and Partnership, The Shevchenko Foundation works to strengthen the Ukrainian community in Canada and enrich the Canadian experience with the beauty, passion, and diversity of Ukrainian Canadian culture.

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