

Responses to the Survey sent by Ms. Laurel Tombazzi on behalf of the Congress of Ohio

Prepared by Helena A. Rempala on behalf of the Polish American Club of Columbus (PAC)

November 27th, 2019

Reasons why you feel there should be an Eastern European Commission for Ohio?

From the Polish American perspective, the Commission could:

- 1. Help with exploring, documenting and preserving the Ohioan-Polish heritage. The heritage is rich and dates from early XIX century. Its history is understudied and its current state under-documented.*
- 2. Promote the new elements of Polish-American culture (due to the new arrivals from Poland) in the context of building on to the already established Polish roots in Ohio.*
- 3. Facilitate cooperation and exchange of information among all of the Polish-American Clubs in Ohio fostering cultural development of the State, strengthening the ties among communities and building cooperation and tolerance among Ohioan Eastern-Europeans of various backgrounds and perspectives.*
- 4. Offer a formal platform to increase the exchanges of information and cultural traditions among the Eastern-European Americans. This could create a truly unique social, educational, economic, and cultural experience for Ohioans.*
- 5. Validate the needs and give a formal voice in the state-wide matters to a large percentage of Ohioans that identify with Easter-European cultures.*
- 6. Act swiftly and efficiently in the event of an emergency in the Eastern-European countries that would increase the immigration to America. The actions would be culturally informed thanks to the participation of the Americans with similar to prospective immigrants' cultural heritage.*

Such approach would view the integration of Polish-Americans into the Ohio culture as an asset. Successful cultural integration promotes good mental health, creativity, productivity, strong families, and cohesive neighborhoods. Studies repeatedly show that the best mental health outcomes for immigrants are associated with integration of their heritage into the American traditions, instead of "dissolving" their cultural distinctiveness into the "melting pot". I believe that the Commission and the Office could promote a new, modern, more conscious and more deliberate form of integration of the Polish heritage with the American one.

Let me also share with you the reaction of the Polish-American community in Columbus to the news of this initiative. Our first impression was that such Commission and Office would have been a [godsend](#) 120 years ago! It is because

the integration of Poles has been particularly difficult in the past. Historically, the emigration from Poland occurred later in the XIXth century than the first wave of [other](#) European Immigrants. We were the “later arrivals” seen as a threat to the jobs, hard won stability, prosperity, and emerging American culture. The Polish [immigration](#) was forced by wars and political or economic hardships. Thus such [immigration](#) was done in haste, with no time to learn English, preventing people with education to continue the professions established in Poland, and with no funds to invest or start a business. At the same time, the historians suggest that “in the case of America, a positive motivation always existed. People were not only pushed out of the old world by the need to survive but also drawn by the wish for a social betterment”, Walszek, 2002). In Ohio, the first bigger wave of Polish emigrants faced an overt hostility. They were originally settled specifically by steel factory owners to break the strikes of American workers (specifically the strike of 1882 by AAISTW at the Rolling Mill’s company). This type of [immigration](#) often resulted in homesickness and isolation from the Americans, creation of own neighborhoods (Cleveland’s Warszawa, Krakow or Jackowo neighborhoods), Polish Catholic churches, stores, newspapers, etc. While the origins of initial mistrust has long been forgotten, some sentiments may linger.

At this point we observe two trends. The first trend, a positive one, suggest a decline in negative perceptions of Polish Immigrants. It seems that the term “Polack”, a derogatory name used in the XX century to denote an immigrant from Poland (nota bene immortalized in the West Side Story with its central conflicts between Puerto-Ricans and the “Polacks”) is no longer in use (or is used very rarely). Also the “Polish jokes”, enormously popular in the 70s are less and less common. Further, Poles are no longer depicted in the movies as crude brutes (e.g., Marlon Brando playing Stanley Kowalski in “A Streetcar Called Desire”) but started showing up as the likes of the NYPD Blue’s Sipowicz, often called a “moral character” of the series or quite likable and funny Grobowski portrayed by Vince Vaughn co-starring with Jennifer Aniston in The Break Up.

The second trend is definitely less positive from the perspective of cultural diversity: By the second generation Polish-Americans assimilate quickly, efficiently, often losing the connections to their Polish heritage, language, keeping just a few of the food items on their Holiday menus. By the third generation the Polish heritage in Polish-Americans is largely lost. While it has been an adaptive trend in the 50s, 60s, 70s and even 80s to avoid discrimination, it may not be needed anymore in the XXI century Ohio. After all, vast majority of new arrivals from Poland come well educated, often bi-lingual, and with resources to invest. It is possible that the Commission’s influence could help slow down and transform this trend into integration instead of assimilation that robs Ohio of its cultural diversity.

What Ohio contributions has *your nationality* provided to Ohio?

Polish emigrants to Ohio were instrumental in growing Ohio into the modern, industrial and educated State it is today. The emigrants, albeit often uneducated and poor on arrival, actively worked on integrating into the existing social structures bettering themselves and their environment. We see it as the biggest contributions of our Polish forefathers in Ohio – they did not “sit and wait”. They worked, studied, built, and ran for offices.

Let me list just a few most notable efforts of Polish-American immigrants’ contributions to the State’s development:

In 1921 Polish Veterans’ Association in America started in Ohio and provided assistance to the Polish-American unemployed war invalids. In 1923 the Association joined forces with the American Legion strengthening its Ohioan ranks.

The Polish Sport League also established in Cleveland, promoted the American sports like baseball and basketball among the city’s Polish-American youth.

1916 saw the first Polish Medical and Dental Association (from its first meeting the Association accepted Russian and Slovak speaking physicians and dentist).

In 1916 Women’s Alliance headquartered in Cleveland funded the Association of Polish Women as a “fraternal benefit society”. They did it to keep their dues right here, in Ohio,” as close to home as possible”. They “wanted to devote all their attention to local matters..., established an insurance fund, ...undertook charitable, educational, and cultural projects.” Also the Unity of Polish Women, funded in 1922 made its mission “study and community service”. The women focused their efforts primarily on “promoting Americanization and naturalization activities, including the improvement of English language skills and citizenship education”.

The first Polish councilmember in Cleveland, Joseph Śledź, a saloon owner, Democrat from Ward 17, held the office from 1902-1907 and 1914-1917. Others followed. The 1905 brought the first Polish Representative to the Ohio legislature, Józef Sawicki.

My own grand-great father Stanisław Dangel, co-founded and served as the first editor of the Cleveland’s Polish Daily news (1916-1966). This daily newspaper kept the community informed, helping local business to flourish, and promoting cultural integration.

The 1920 Polish Educational Society organized English classes and lessons on history on politics.

In 1923 The Cleveland Society of Poles was established, “bringing together Polish businessmen and professionals and sponsored cultural events.”

The Ohio past smoothly run into its present. We have a high population of Polish-Americans who contribute locally and at the State level. There are many individuals who work in their fields of expertise, contributing to research and furthering our society. Listing them individually runs a risk of omitting someone important. In Columbus we have the good fortune of benefitting from the art of Grzegorz Kuchrski, artist, painter and designer, from research of the Astronomy Professor and University Distinguish Scholar Krzysztof Stanek, the Professor of Mathematics and Biostatistics and former Interim Director of the Biomathematical Institute, Grzegorz Rempała, Professor of Pediatrics and the Principal Investigator in the Battelle Center for Mathematical Medicine of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital Andrzej Kłoczkowski. Finally, Professor of Aerospace Engineering and Associate Dean for Research at OSU, Dorota

Greiner-Brzezińska who on November 14th, 2019 was offered by President Donald Trump an appointment to the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). <https://www.cleveland.com/open/2019/11/president-trump-says-hell-appoint-ohio-state-professor-to-science-council.html>

The current President of the Polish American Club, Robert Warzycha has its own unique contribution to Columbus, Ohio. "Polish former professional association football player, Warzycha had a long and successful career in Europe, playing for teams in Poland, Hungary and England with Everton in the Premier League. He moved to the United States in 1996 and subsequently spent seven seasons in Major League Soccer with Columbus Crew. He later served as a coach for the team, serving as head coach for five seasons." (Wikipedia)

Over the last few years Polish-American community mourned the death of two of the distinguished contributors to both Ohio and the Nation:

In 2017 the Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures at the Ohio State University announced the death of the emeritus professor Jerzy R. Krzyżanowski. "In addition to his service to Ohio State, Jerzy Krzyżanowski served numerous associations including the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (P.I.A.S.A.), where he was a board member from 1980-86. Author of many materials for studying Polish, Jerzy [Krzyżanowski] also wrote the biography of Władysław Reymont (Twayne, 1972) and a companion to Sienkiewicz's famous trilogy, as well as novels, books, and memoirs in Polish, many of which have been published over the past two decades." (<https://u.osu.edu/slavicdept/2017/10/24/in-memoriam-jerzy-r-krzyzanowski/>)

In 2018 Columbus lost another Polish son, a brilliant artist and sculptor, Roman Czech. Here is how the Columbus' Short North Gazette wrote about his presence in our city in 2006 "It is easy to see why Roman Czech, an artist as well as a businessman, might be drawn to art as both creator and entrepreneur. His warm, open demeanor seems at once an ideal channel for artistic expression and a powerful means of reaching prospective clients. His fluid yet heavily accented English tells others that, despite his European upbringing and art training, Czech is no prissy art snob. Instead, he's a guy who loves bringing art and people together, and who has ideas about the Short North's potential to lift Columbus fully out of its status as cultural backwater and transform it into a force to be reckoned with on the international art scene."

Polish-Americans are hard-working, very resourceful, and smart employees. They readily engage in local affairs and support causes that are important to them. While they are not a homogeneous group politically or socially, they are fiercely loyal to America and to their Polish heritage.

What US Contributions has *your nationality* provided to America?

Polish-Americans have been actively present in American's history and culture from its very beginnings. It is impossible to name them all but a survey of the members of the Polish American Club of Columbus consistently named several Poles that Ohioans of Polish origins are particularly proud of.

Let's start with Polish general during the Revolutionary War Tadeusz Kościuszko: "Kosciuszko played a pivotal role in the American Revolution and stood up for the rights of African slaves, European peasants, Jews, Native Americans & women. After coming up with the winning strategy for the Battle of Saratoga, Kosciuszko drafted the plans for West Point. Kosciuszko left his salary from the Continental Army with Thomas Jefferson and asked that it be used to purchase and free slaves. When General Kosciuszko visited the United States in 1797, Congress appropriated over \$15,000 to him and a land grant of 500 acres. This land was a part of his reward and compensation for the services to the United States in the American Revolution. Lying on the east side of the Scioto River and extending from the Delaware County line below the Village of Dublin is the tract of land known as "The Kosciuszko Lands."

(https://www.thekf.org/kf/chapters/northeast_ohio/about/kosciuszko_lands_in_ohio/)

Our Club participated in the installation of the commemorative sculpture, Feather Point, by Cleveland-based Polish-American artist Olga Ziemka in Kosciuszko's Park in 2017.

Kazimierz Michał Władysław Wiktor Pułaski of *Ślepowron* (English: Casimir Pulaski; March 4 or March 6, 1745^[1] – October 11, 1779) was a *Polish nobleman*,^[b] soldier and military commander who has been called, together with his counterpart *Michael Kovats de Fabriczy*, "the father of the *American cavalry*". Pulaski is remembered as a hero who fought for independence and freedom in both Poland and the United States. Numerous places and events are named in his honor, and he is commemorated by many works of art. Pulaski is one of only eight people to be awarded *honorary United States citizenship*." (Wikipedia)

From there the list counts in hundreds and includes: Ignacy Jan Paderewski, Polish pianist and composer, freemason, politician, statesman and spokesman for Polish independence; Zbigniew Brzezinski, Polish-American diplomat and political scientist; Maksymilian Faktorowicz, also known as Max Factor Sr., Polish businessman, beautician, entrepreneur and inventor, founder of the cosmetics giant Max Factor & Company; Helena Rubinstein, Polish-American businesswoman, art collector, and philanthropist, cosmetics entrepreneur, founder and eponym of Helena Rubinstein Incorporated cosmetics company, which made her one of the world's richest women; Barbara "Basia" Piasecka Johnson Polish American *humanitarian*, *philanthropist*, art *connoisseur* and *collector*; Barbara Ann Mikulski, American social worker who served as a United States Senator from Maryland from 1987 to 2017 and in the United States House of Representatives from 1977 to 1987; Urszula Bogumiła Dudziak-Urbaniak, a Polish jazz vocalist. Also John Paul II, Pope, has made a huge impact on Catholic Americans and the world.

America has been continuously contributed to by Polish individuals and by Polish-Americans. The best compendium can be found under the link https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Polish_Americans.

Currently, again risking omitting valuable contributors, our Columbus Polish-Americans list the following contemporaries: Darius Adamczyk, Polish-born CEO of Honeywell; Nathan Blecharczyk, co-founder and CSO of Airbnb; Luke Nosek co-founder of PayPal; Mike Johanns,

United States Senator; Marcy Kaptur, U.S. Representative for the Ninth Congressional District of Ohio; Jan Czekajewski, Engineer and owner/president of Columbus Instruments.

Further, popular Polish musicians (i.e. Bednarek) come to Chicago and New York to perform due to the large Polish populations in these cities. Polish artists come with their expositions, for example Jerzy Jotka-Kedziora has brought and displayed his amazing balancing sculptures to numerous parks in Columbus Ohio. In his words "Art must get out of museums and reach the people". This had added pleasant character to these parks that was not there before!

What are you doing to promote your culture? Why would it be easier to have an Eastern European Commission to promote your culture to others? What would you need to make it easier?

In most Ohio major cities one can find a Polish-American Club. I am the Vice-President of the Polish American Club of Columbus. Our club's purpose is "...to promote social and cultural interest with the Poles and Americans residing in Columbus and Surrounding areas". Our membership is open to everyone. Our members are involved in organized activities such as:

- Weekly Yoga/Aerobic classes in Polish for Ladies*
- Monthly catholic Masses in Polish (with the help of the Polish priests from Cleveland)*
- Christmas Party or Wigilja*
- Mardi Gras party or Ostatki Dance*
- End of the Winter celebration (an outdoor event commemorating old Polish folk traditions of "Drowning Lady Winter".)*
- End of Summer 3 day Picnic.*
- Yearly pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Sorrowful Mother in Bellevue, Ohio.*
- Yearly participation in the International Festivals in Columbus (btw, the International Festival of Columbus was cancelled in 2017 and the B.R.E.A.D. festival of Dublin was cancelled in 2019). That left Columbus with no celebration of its various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.*
- The Club also sponsored Saturday Polish School for children. The program was suspended in 2018. The closest Saturday Polish School operates out of the Cincinnati area.*

Our Club also sponsors cultural activities proposed by members; for example artistic programs of the ensemble Cicho-Sza or the Commemoration of the Warsaw uprising in 2014. It sponsors Polish Choir (Diakonia) that sings monthly in Columbus and often travels to Cincinnati and to Cleveland with traditional Polish church songs to support the cultural initiatives across Ohio. The choir also participates in the Marian concerts organized by the Columbus's Saint Leo's Preservation Society concerts.

Club's members organize countless get-togethers. The Club communicates with its members via Facebook, website, twitter and email. The club also keeps in contact with the Polish-American Society of Greater Cincinnati and with the Polish-American Cultural Center of Cleveland. We

inform each other of special events promoting Polish culture and language in Ohio (concerts, movies, festivals, memorials, visits from the Ambassador of Poland, religious events).

Our members report numerous ways they show and celebrate their Polish heritage in America: by sharing various Polish traditional foods with people at work, in their churches, during neighborhood parties. They also use various Polish symbols to emphasize Polish heritage and customs i.e. car stickers, customized license plates, Polish flags outside of the homes, wearing various clothing with Polish symbols etc.

It would make easier to promote our culture if:

- *The International Festivals or other multicultural events were still sponsored by the City/State;*
- *There was a space in Columbus accessible to various Eastern European ethnic clubs. The majority of the yearly expenses incurred by PAC goes toward renting spaces for various events. Lack of space interferes with scheduling cultural activities, hosting members of other ethnic groups, and (in the past) running the Saturday Polish School.*
- *There was a commitment on the part of the State to sponsor events featuring Polish food, Polish artists, or Polish contemporary and classical music either by invitations or during the Columbus Art Festival or Ohio Fair.*
- *There was a central data base of who to contact to organize intercultural events celebrating Eastern-European heritage.*
- *There was a scholarship established for Ohioan of Polish-origins to study in Poland for a semester to promote cultural integration, Ohio development, or understanding of the dynamic place of Poland in Europe.*
- *There was a scholarship established for an Ohioan of Polish-origins to explore, uncover and document Polish-American history in Ohio.*
- *There were matching funds to help Polish-American community bring visiting scholars, artists, businessmen from Poland that would bear witness to the cultural and social changes in Poland and to educate Polish-American Ohioans about those changes.*
- *There was a license plate celebrating Polish-American heritage.*
- *There was a Polish speaking priest in Columbus who could celebrate traditional Polish ways of practicing the Catholic faith (e.g., Corpus Christi Procession in June, or Blessing of the Foods before Easter Sunday).*
- *There were guidelines for the employers to respect Polish Catholic Holidays, such as Good Friday, Monday after Easter (a.k.a Lany Poniedzialek), the Marian celebration on August 15th or the most solemn of Polish Catholic holidays, All Souls' Day, on November 2nd.*
- *Finally, although the majority of newly arriving emigrants from Poland are educated and resourceful, it would be important to have a formalized way to help the new arrivals with quick access to Polish-English translators, lessons on Ohio social and civic structures and link to the classes of English as a second language.*

Ohio is the national center for many Eastern European Churches

Do you have a cathedral of your specific nationality in Ohioans? If so, what is the nationality of these churches? Find out what OH House/Senate district they are in. Do you have an idea of the number of members that belong?

Polish-Americans belong overwhelmingly to the Catholic Church, which is universal across the nations. Thus Polish-American Catholics find themselves at home in the American Catholic Churches. We do however greatly value an opportunity to celebrate Holy Mass in Polish, with Polish customs and traditions. The main Polish Church is in Cleveland, Saint Stanislaus in the 11th Congressional District. This Polish parish was established in 1873. In addition, Cleveland is home to the Polish Churches of Saint Casimir, Saint John Cantius, Saint Mary's Polish National Church (in Parma), Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Holy Trinity Polish National Catholic Church. Currently there are no Polish churches or permanent Polish priests designated to work with the Polish-American community in Columbus – something that Polish American Club of Columbus has been advocating with the Diocese for decades. The Polish priests from the Polish Churches in Cleveland visit Columbus once a month for a Holy Mass celebration and again on Holy Saturday for the blessings of the Foods. The attendance during these gatherings ranges from 30 to 80 attendees.

What economic impact of business is there within your Eastern European nationality? How many East European businesses have been started to provide specifically to your nationality?

Columbus has isolated examples of businesses catering specifically to the Polish-American Community. Those are usually food industries. However, there are a number of businesses that are Polish-American friendly or Polish-American owned including car mechanics (e.g. SigmaTec Automotive), IT security company (e.g., Bizwit), quick food service and catering businesses (e.g., Hubert's Polish Kitchen), or the excellent French Restaurant La Chatelaine whose owners have Polish roots and can bake terrific pączki for Mardi Gras celebration. There are several restaurants in Columbus that offer selected menu items like pierogis patronized by the Polish-Americans. There are also a few medical professionals who provide care in both English and Polish (e.g., the internal medicine specialist Dr. Piotr Kloda). Note that both Cleveland and Cincinnati host many more Polish-American businesses and business that cater specifically to their large Polish-American population.

Different holidays you celebrate.....examples of "negativity" because your Eastern European holiday was at a different time

Christmas

New Year

Easter

Polish-American Holidays are tied to the Catholic calendar so we are not negatively affected by their timing. However, Catholics in Poland celebrate a few more days as Holy and it is difficult to prepare the traditional celebrations and attend Church for the Holy Days of Obligations without an opportunity to request time off from work. Examples:

*2nd Day of Easter or Easter Monday (Lany Poniedziale)
Second Day of Christmas (December 26th)
August 15th Marian Celebration*

Your specific Eastern European Independence Day....how would this enhance knowing about us through Ohio's educational system?

Polish Independence Day is celebrated on November 11 that marks the anniversary of the end of [World War I](#) (Armistice Day) It coincide with the Veterans Day in America. The two are closely connected. The Veterans Day was instituted by President Woodrow Wilson who was instrumental in helping Poland re-gain its independence in the aftermath of WWI in 1918. Before WWI Poland was divided among its neighbors: Russia, Austria and Germany and thus did not exist as an independent country. Many Poles fled their occupied country of 1800's and settled in America, specifically in Ohio. With US entrance into the WWI in 1917, thousands of Polish-Americans were allowed to join Polish national army formed in France to bear arms as Polish soldiers instead of fighting as part of the US expeditionary force. The effort of Polish armed forces in 1917 and 1918 against the Germans in France earned the emerging Polish nation a place at the winners' table during the Versailles conference and consequently led to re-creation of the Polish state. The presence of Polish- American soldiers therefore largely contributed to reemergence of Poland as an independent state in November 1918.

Poland also celebrates May 3rd, its Constitution Day. "The Constitution sought to implement a more effective [constitutional monarchy](#), introduced political equality between townspeople and nobility, and placed the peasants under the protection of the government, mitigating the worst abuses of [serfdom](#). It is generally considered Europe's first, and the world's second, modern written national constitution, after the [United States Constitution](#) that had come into force in 1789. (Wikipedia). Including this information in the Ohio curriculum would showcase the often unrecognized similarities between the two nations across centuries.

Sister Cities in Ohio...does your city have a Sister City with an Eastern European country? If so, how has this benefited your city? If not, how do you feel this would benefit?

I was surprised to find that Ohio has 2 sister cities in Poland. The pairs are as follows:

Gdańsk – Cleveland

Poznań – Toledo

Columbus does not have its Polish sister-city.

One thing that Ohioans often do not realize is that Ohio looks on the maps quite similarly to Poland. Both have a heart-like shapes. They are also similar geographically with a large body of water in the North (Lake Erie in Ohio and Bałtyk Sea in Poland) and mountains or hills in the South (Hocking Hills in Ohio and Tatra Mountains in Poland). Columbus- the capital of Ohio, just

like Warsaw- the capital of Poland, is located roughly in the center of the State. Wouldn't it be fitting to ask Warsaw if it would like to become Columbus's sister city?

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