

## Masaryk Memorial Institute's Scholarship and our new winner

Masaryk Memorial Institute (MMI) provides Scholarships to residents of Ontario that are admitted as first-year students to study at post-secondary school institutions (University or College). The intent is to provide scholarships to those students who have Czech or Slovak ancestry and who can demonstrate a commitment or involvement in their culture.

### Eligibility

The applicant must achieve an 80% grade average or higher in their final year of secondary school to be eligible and should be able to demonstrate Czech or Slovak "ancestry". Criteria to be attained in order to be considered to receive the Scholarship should include one or more of the following:

- has completed two or more years of Czech or Slovak language school during the past ten years;
- is able to converse in either Czech or Slovak languages;
- is a member or has parents that have been members of Masaryk Memorial Institute during the past ten years;
- is a member or has parents that have been members of Sokol organization during the past ten years; or
- alternative criteria such as participation in dance, theatre, and church events that demonstrate involvement in the Czech or Slovak community will be considered.



### Our winner

My name is Helen Novak Szentirmay, and I graduated from high school as an Ursula Franklin Academy Scholar, and an Ontario Scholar. I was a shortlisted valedictorian. As a member of the school council and the prom and graduation committee, I looked forward to celebrating the end of my final high school year. Unfortunately, there was no prom in June 2021 and only a backyard graduation party. I was fortunate to be accepted to every university program I applied to, including Engineering and Computer Science. Learning online for the last year and



a half was stressful and since the university programs would be online as well, I decided to take a gap year to have a much-needed break from online learning. I found myself a part-time job in a bakery and took a university computer course. This fall I started in the Business Technology Management program at TMU (formerly Ryerson University), and I am enjoying it. I am interested in pursuing a career in Information Technology. I would like to be at the creation of new and exciting technologies, as well as assisting organizations to adapt to ever-changing modern technologies. I have been immersed in the Czech language and culture since I was born. My mom has been speaking solely in Czech to me all my life. When I was little, she read Czech books to me and sang songs and nursery rhymes. When I could read, I started to read Czech books by myself and watched Czech movies and fairy tales. Also, I have been fortunate to be able to enjoy the company of my Czech grandparents and their involvement in my life from an early age. I have been talking to them not only during regular Skype calls, but especially in person every summer, either in Brno or in Toronto. My grandparents do not speak English, but I have no problem speaking Czech with them. Besides Czech and English, I am also fluent in French. I have been visiting the Czech Republic regularly since I was four months old. When I was three years old, I spent a year in Brno with my parents and joined a Czech kindergarten during that time. I have seen many children's plays performed in theatres. Going to see Czech plays, and visiting cities, castles, museums, cultural events, festivals, and other places of interest in the Czech Republic has continued every year since. At an early age, I joined Sokol Gymnastics and participated in Czech celebrations at Masaryktown and Mikulasska in the Czechoslovak Church. When I became older, I regularly went to see Czech plays with my mom at Nove Divadlo in Mississauga, until this tradition has temporarily been interrupted by Covid19. When the Czech cooking classes with Chef Stephanie Pacheco started, I welcomed the opportunity to participate along with my mom. We cooked several tasty meals together.