BALTIC HERITAGE NETWORK

Newsletter no. 3 (56) 2026 issn: 228-3390

## A New Beginning

Do you also get the feeling of a new beginning in the autumn? I certainly do. Perhaps it comes from the days when we were still in school. Or perhaps the summer holidays create a sense of interruption and a fresh start? Whatever the reason, for many people working in or connected with the fields of research, education, and culture, September marks the beginning of a new season.

The same is true for BaltHerNet. What lies ahead? After holding our 13th Summer School in Tallinn and Narva this summer, we are now beginning preparations for the 2027 conference, which will bring together those working with Baltic diaspora heritage in Riga, where the Latvian War Museum will host us from June 10 to 12. This time, the conference will be held jointly with another NGO bringing together Baltic memory institutions, the Baltic Audiovisual Archival Council.

Mark the dates in your calendars already! The call for papers will be announced in early 2027.

Wishing you a wonderful new academic year, dear friends!

*Piret Noorhani*



*BaltHerNet Summer School participants in Narva*

## The XIII BaltHerNet Summer School Took Participants to Tallinn and Narva

The Baltic Heritage Network (BaltHerNet) summer school, Estonian Cultural Heritage Abroad. XIII. Borderland, took place in Tallinn and Narva from June 30 to July 3, 2026. The summer school brought together 33 participants from Estonia, Canada, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, focusing on the history and cultural heritage of Estonian communities abroad and on the preservation of memory.

On the opening day, participants visited the new home of the National Archives on Endla Street in Tallinn, followed by a meeting with writer Tõnu Õnnepalu, whose novel Border State (Piiririik) inspired the summer school's theme: being on the border and between two worlds, both historically and as a contemporary question of identity for Estonians abroad.

In Narva, Piret Noorhani opened with a talk on liminality and belonging, followed by presentations on the exhibition The Great Escape of 1944, research into Estonian communities in Canada and Kazakhstan, oral history projects in Ida-Viru County and Narva, exile literature, refugee databases, and diaspora archives held across Europe and North America. Speakers included Sirle Sööt, Piret Voolaid, Maryia Oinas, Terje Anepaio, Marin Laak, Ülle Kraft, Kristi Metste, Merike Kiipus, Katariina Sofia Päts, Evelin Varris, Anne Raud, Riina Reinvelt, Tarmo Johannes, and Lili Kängsepp-Puun. The intensive programme also included visits to Narva Estonian High School, Narva Town Hall, the Kreenholm Manufacturing Complex, and Narva Art Gallery.

The event was supported by the Ministry of Education and Research. BaltHerNet, together with the Estonian National Museum, the Estonian Literary Museum, and the National Archives, hopes to continue organizing similar gatherings, especially as 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the Estonian diaspora archives network.

*Birgit Kibal, Piret Noorhani*

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The Baltic Heritage Newsletter is distributed quarterly, on-line.

**The next deadline for submissions is December 5th, 2026.**

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www.balther.net
ISSN 2228-3390

YOUTH SEMINAR · TALLINN

# BaltHerNet Youth Seminar at Vabamu: Turn Your Research into a Zine




BALTHERNET YOUTH SEMINAR AT VABAMU

On 26 August 2026, Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom in Tallinn hosted a BaltHerNet youth seminar, with a focus on participants turning their diaspora-related research interests into zines.

The day started with an introduction and small tour from Vabamu's new CEO, Maarja Merivoo-Parro, about her own experience with diaspora research, and what non-academic forms it has taken – including tv programmes, books, CDs, and exhibitions (such as Vabamu's own permanent exhibition Freedom Without Borders).

After this, participants were given the opportunity to create their own zines. For those unfamiliar, zines are small, DIY, independent publications, often in the form of a small booklet. The name comes from the word magazine. Zines can essentially take whatever form the author wants and are a great way to express oneself in a creative manner. The aim of the workshop was to give the participants an opportunity to think about and discuss their research in a non-academic format.

The zines created during the workshop covered a variety of topics, from perestroika making its mark at the Melbourne ESTO festival in 1988, the digitalisation of Estonian diaspora publications in Sweden and how to research them, as well as the feeling of being Estonian in Kazakhstan. All zines can be seen on Noorte Vabamu's (NoVa) website.






HOMBURGER GESPRÄCH 2026 · RIGA

# Visual Culture of Baltic Exile Communities in the Aftermath of World War II



A collaborative colloquy (Homburger Gespräch 2026) under the auspices of the Böckler-Mare-Balticum-Foundation (Bad Homburg) in collaboration with the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe – Institute of the Leibniz-Association (Marburg) and the Latvian National Museum of Art (Riga) took place in Riga at the Art Museum RIGA BOURSE on September 11. The concept of the event came from Agnese Bergholde-Wolf, Jānis Krēsliņš, Ulrike Nürnberger, Dietmar Popp.

The study of Baltic exile communities following the Second World War has often concentrated on the seemingly inextinguishable energy that these communities displayed in combining their carefully defined political, social and cultural ambitions with their commitment to self-preservation. This dual mission required resounding resilience. The importance of their visual cultures in this process, however, has not received the interest it deserves. The aim of the 2026 Homburger-Gespräch was to delve deeper into how visuality in the Baltic exile communities after the Second World War helped them shape their understanding of reality.

This was done by assembling conversational partners from various backgrounds and fields in Riga for a day-long colloquy. The focus was not primarily on formal aesthetics, text, and speech, but rather on how cultural meaning, codes and identity were formed through visual cues.

The notion of seeing was ever-present in these discussions. What did its members choose to see and what not to see and how did new ways of seeing evolve in the new environments? How did geography and history leave its mark on this seeing? How were space, color, materiality negotiated?



*Gemälde von Arnolds Treibergs, Porträt Jānis Krēsliņš sr., Foto Dietmar Popp*

Attention was focused on the period between 1944 and 1991. This does not, however, mean that the communities did not draw on visual perceptions prior to this period and did not reconfigure this visuality retrospectively once the exile experience in the formal sense of the word came to an end in 1991. By incorporating the most varying impulses from periods “prior and post”; and by, at times, engaging their new environments, at others, secluding themselves from them, an enhanced multifariousness and manifoldness evolved.

For the complete conference program, see:

https://www.herder-institut.de/de/aktuelles/veranstaltungen/visual-culture-baltic-exile-communities-aftermath-world-war-ii



TORONTO · 20–23 AUGUST

## KESKfEST

From August 20–23, Toronto came alive with KESKfEST, a spectacular four-day celebration marking the soon-to-be-completed KESKUS, the new international Estonian centre. KESKUS’s KESKfEST has laid the foundation for a new tradition of bringing Estonians together! A vibrant showcase of the best of Estonian culture, the festival culminated in the Valguspidu concert. More than 300 singers joined forces in the combined choirs, while another 300 performers filled the arena floor in a breathtaking choreographed spectacle created by Agne Kurrikoff-Herman, Heli Jürgenson, Janika Mölder and Ellen Valter.

Read more about the celebrations on the KESKUS blog, here.

VEMU · TORONTO

# Visiting VEMU



During the grand celebrations of KESKfEST, a few guests from near and far also found their way to VEMU. Among them was Estonia's first State Architect, Tõnis Arjus, who was introduced to the story of Tartu College, VEMU's development plans, and the ways in which Estonians continue to contribute to the development of Toronto's urban landscape.

We also welcomed colleagues from the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture for the customary tour of Tartu College and VEMU. From left: Kadri Linnas, Head of the Global Estonians, Honorary Consuls and Cultural Diplomacy Desk at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Madli-Liis Parts, Cultural Counsellor of the Republic of Estonia in the United States; Eda Silberg, Deputy Secretary General for Cultural Diversity at the Ministry of Culture; and Anne-Ly Reimaa, Adviser at the Ministry of Culture. For Eda, this was her first visit; all the others had visited VEMU's collections before, when they were still housed at their original location.






It was also a great pleasure to meet Marti Mätas, Director General of the Global Estonians, Honorary Consuls and Cultural Diplomacy Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Estonia's Special Envoy for Global Estonians. Among other things, we introduced him and our other guests from Estonia to the legendary Madison Pub, which also has a history with Toronto's Estonian community. From left: Marcus Kolga, Piret Noorhani, Kadri Linnas, Marti Mätas, Eda Silberg and Anne-Ly Reimaa.



A delegation from the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, together with Estonia's newly appointed Ambassador to Canada, Gert Auväärt, also visited VEMU to learn more about the activities and plans of VEMU and Tartu College. From left: Ylli Enn, Head of the European Union and International Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Education and Research; Piret Noorhani; Kristina Kallas, Minister of Education and Research; and Ambassador Gert Auväärt.

After the whirlwind of KESKfEST celebrations, our colleague Eve Otstavel from the Haapsalu Museum came to learn more about VEMU. There was also an unexpected and joyful reunion at Tartu College with Monika, a member of the VEMU team and Eve's roommate at the BaltHerNet summer school. From left: Ingmar Kiviloo, Monika Kiviloo and Eve Otstavel.






In August, VEMU welcomed Kaia Ivask from the National Archives of Estonia, who was helping St. Peter's congregation organize its archives. During her previous visit to Canada in 2023, Kaia worked with VEMU's documentary archives. VEMU assistant Olga Loitsenko is also pictured.



*During her visit to Toronto for KESKFEST, Minister of Education and Research Kristina Kallas also visited VEMU, where she presented Chief Archivist Piret Noorhani with a letter of appreciation for her work in preserving, collecting, and making Estonian diaspora cultural heritage accessible in Canada.*

ESTONIAN MUSIC WEEK · KESKfEST

# Nordic Connect Conference, the industry platform of Estonian Music Week, returned August 20–21 for a special edition, strengthening connections between the music industries of Toronto and Tallinn

Presented by VEMU Estonian Museum Canada, the conference brought together nine Estonian delegates and more than 30 Canadian participants to build connections, exchange knowledge, and explore opportunities for artists and cultural organizations in both countries. Taking place as part of KESKfEST, this special edition celebrated a new chapter in cultural exchange between Canada and Estonia.



Visiting delegates were introduced to grassroots organizations across Toronto. A highlight was the keynote panel on music and cultural exchange, introduced by Estonia's Assistant Deputy Minister of Culture, Eda Silberg, and moderated by CBC broadcaster Tom Allen. The panel featured Jutta Brendemühl, Program Curator at the Goethe-Institut Toronto, a writer and consultant specializing in international cultural exchange; Marichka, a Ukrainian-Canadian singer, ethnomusicologist, war journalist and producer whose work lies at the intersection of music, human rights and cultural diplomacy; and Marcus Kolga, a Canadian journalist, human rights advocate and internationally recognized expert on foreign disinformation, influence operations and transnational repression. The relationships established provide a strong foundation for future collaboration ahead of NCC's full return in May 2027, when participants from across the Nordic-Baltic region will join Canadian colleagues in Toronto.

OLAF KOPVILLEM 100




*On September 19, an exhibition celebrating Estonian-Canadian musician, conductor and community leader Olaf Kopvillem opened at VEMU Estonian Museum Canada. The exhibition was curated by Olaf's granddaughter, Keila Kopvillem, who also delivered the Dr. Vello Soots Memorial Lecture on the occasion. The event marked the 100th anniversary of Olaf Kopvillem's birth as well as the 56th anniversary of Tartu College, VEMU's current home. The Olaf Kopvillem 100 celebrations will continue in November.*

VEMU ARCHIVES · 2026/27

# VEMU's archives are being renovated into a state-of-the-art preservation facility in 2026/27

Collections are the heart of a museum. The VEMU Archival Repository, Library, and Museum Collections are the foundation of everything we do. They are the wellspring from which exhibitions, education, and public engagement flow.

They contain:

- rare books and publications from Estonia and the diaspora
- personal records such as letters, diaries, and organizational archives
- photographs, films, and sound recordings
- art and ethnographic objects reflecting Estonian life across continents

Together, they tell a story that exists nowhere else in the world. And yet, these irreplaceable materials are at risk.

It has been sixteen years since the last renovation of the VEMU storage facility. There is no longer enough space for incoming materials. Heavy rainfall has led to leaks.

Temperature and humidity conditions are unstable. These are not minor inconveniences, they are direct threats to the preservation of our cultural heritage.



This renovation is both very specific and urgent: an essential step to secure VEMU's collections and the history of the Estonian diaspora. Designed by Alar

Kongats, it is not a simple fix. It is a complete reimagining of how we protect and steward our heritage: lowering the floor to increase ceiling height, installing proper drainage and environmental controls, introducing compact mobile shelving to nearly triple storage capacity, and adding dedicated spaces for art, objects, photo, audio, and film preservation, including a cold room for films.

These improvements will make the collections not only better preserved, but more accessible to researchers, to community members, and to future generations. VEMU regularly welcomes visitors who, in addition to exhibitions, wish to explore the collections, and the renovation will allow us to better serve them.

This work will transform the archival repository from a vulnerable storage space into a state-of-the-art preservation facility. It is the first crucial step in solidifying VEMU's mark on the cultural heritage of the Estonian diaspora, Canada, and Estonia, and essential groundwork for the future VEMU Museum.



**The future VEMU Museum will be the permanent home of an institution already alive with purpose — seventeen years of exhibitions, research, and more than seventy public programs in 2025 alone, connecting generations and keeping Estonian culture vital in Canada and beyond. The archives are its foundation. The museum will be its future.**

**Our goal is clear: to rebuild and secure the VEMU archival repository for generations to come. The cost is $4 million.**

**This is a community effort, and every contribution matters. Whether you are making your first gift, contributing at a meaningful personal level, or considering a transformational investment, you are helping to safeguard the story of our people. We are also seeking leadership support, including million-dollar cornerstone gifts, to accelerate this work, establish long-term care through endowment and enable the future VEMU Museum.**

Every donor becomes part of this legacy.

VEMU · ESTONIAN LITERARY MUSEUM

# VEMU and Estonian Literary Museum Exhibition Continues Its Journey

The joint exhibition of the Estonian Museum Canada (VEMU) and the Estonian Literary Museum (ELM), Growing Up in Canada: Childhood and Youth in the Memories of Estonian Canadians, began its journey in March at the Annelinn branch of Tartu City Library. Most of the exhibition team attended the opening: curators Piret Noorhani (VEMU), Piret Voolaid and Astrid Tuisk (ELM), Liisa Nurme (University of Tartu), editor Asta Niinemets (ELM), exhibition designer Martin Mileiko, and printer Priit Pajusalu (Seri Disain). We also gratefully acknowledged VEMU team members Kati Kiilaspea, Keila Kopvillem and Maiki Müürsepp, who contributed to the creation of the exhibition in many ways.

On June 3, a second copy of the exhibition, specially printed for Canada, was officially opened at VEMU in Toronto. In addition to Piret Noorhani, the opening featured curators Piret Voolaid and Liisa Nurme, who had travelled from Estonia, as well as some of the people whose stories are featured in the exhibition, including Mihkel Jürima and Reet Marten Sehr.

On May 18, the exhibition in Estonia moved to the University of Tartu's teaching building on Lossi Street. Thanks to Eva Rein, who leads Canadian Studies at the University of Tartu, two curator-led tours were held there over the summer: on June 29, as part of Tartu City Day, and on July 29 for participants in the University of Tartu's Summer School of Estonian Language and Culture. Piret Noorhani, Piret Voolaid and Astrid Tuisk spoke about the making of the exhibition and explored its various themes.




On August 11, the Estonian version of the exhibition continued its journey to the Academic Library of Tallinn University. The opening attracted a large crowd, including many friends of VEMU. Speakers included Canadian Ambassador Mr. Laird Garfield Hindle, Grete Lepvalts from the Academic Library, and curators Piret Noorhani, Piret Voolaid and Liisa Nurme. The opening reception was supported by the Embassy of Canada and VEMU.

The exhibition has received a warm welcome everywhere it has been displayed. Whether the audience is Estonian-speaking or international, growing up and living in a multicultural environment seems to resonate with everyone—we are, after all, living in an increasingly globalized world. The stories of Estonian Canadians are therefore of interest far beyond our own community. The experiences of Estonian children on their journey as refugees, their resettlement in Canada and the challenges of starting a new life in an unfamiliar country have touched people from many different backgrounds. So have the stories of what life and home were like for an Estonian family abroad, what it meant to live with an Estonian name in a multicultural society, and what everyday childhood was like—with its games, jokes, fears, beliefs and celebrations. The exhibition helps you discover how the Estonian Canadian community supported the lives and activities of children and young people, and what has helped keep Estonian identity and culture alive in Canada for more than 80 years since the Great Escape of 1944.

The exhibition was made possible with additional support from the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia, through its Global Estonian Program. Many thanks!

The exhibition was at Tartu College in Toronto until September 14 and can be seen at the Academic Library of Tallinn University until October 30. If your community would also like to host the exhibition, please get in touch: info@vemu.ca.

VEMU EXHIBITIONS · PÄRNU

## Pärnu Residents Discover Canada's Tartu

VEMU's exhibitions are on the move. In addition to the exhibition Growing Up in Canada. Childhood and Youth in the Memories of Estonian Canadians, another exhibition has once again hit the road: Our Tartu: 50 Years of Tartu College. From September 14 to October 3, it can be viewed at Pärnu Central Library (Akadeemia St. 3).



The exhibition offers a comprehensive overview of the origins and history of Tartu College, one of the main centres of Estonian life in Canada, as well as the organizations and people who have worked, lived, or stayed as guests in the building. It also looks at the future of the Estonian diaspora. Oral history—people's personal memories—features prominently in the exhibition, adding a human dimension to the story of the building. In preparation for the exhibition, VEMU Estonian Museum Canada conducted 36 video interviews in Estonian and English with people connected to Tartu College. The exhibition also draws on photographs, ephemera, and other fascinating materials. It was completed and opened at Tartu College in September 2022.

VEMU would like to thank its kind and energetic helpers Piret Voolaid, Heidy-Maarja Melts and Janno Simm from the Estonian Literary Museum, as well as the staff of Pärnu Library, led by Director Krista Visas, for bringing the exhibition to Pärnu at such an appropriate time—just before Tartu College's 56th birthday.

VEMU Estonian Museum Canada and Estonian Literary Museum Collection Campaign

## "The Autumn of Life: Reflections on Old Age and Aging among Estonians Abroad"

Aging is a natural and inevitable part of life that, if we are fortunate, awaits each and every one of us, regardless of our national identity or where we live. Through this collection campaign, we are seeking to answer the question: How does a Canadian Estonian grow old?



*Liisa Nurme and Piret Voolaid after interviewing Anne Remmel in Toronto in June 2026*

At the beginning of the summer, Piret Voolaid, Director of the Estonian Literary Museum and a folklorist, and Liisa Nurme, a master's student at the University of Tartu, visited Toronto. In a short time, they conducted 25 interviews with local Estonians—and now we are looking for more stories to add to the collection.

You can participate in the campaign by registering for an interview or by writing down your thoughts. We also welcome photographs, archival materials, and objects related to the theme.

**Topics to reflect on:**

- Tell us about your background: where and when were you born, where did you grow up, and where have you lived?
- What do you enjoy doing? If you read books, watch television, etc., do you mainly consume content in Estonian or English?
- Do you have children or grandchildren? What nationalities are their partners? How do you feel about this? Have they attended or do they attend an Estonian school?
- What language do you prefer to communicate in? What language do you use with your children, grandchildren, and friends?
- Was contact with Estonia maintained during your childhood? How? Do you or members of your family have connections with Estonia today? How do you maintain those connections? Have you visited Estonia?
- How do you perceive the younger generation's interest in Estonian culture? Has it changed during your lifetime or over the years you have lived in Canada? How do you feel about these changes? How important is it to you to preserve the Estonian language and culture in Canada, and in what ways?
- Tell us about your youth, your parents, your home, and working life. Was Estonian culture kept alive in your childhood home? If so, how? How have you carried this on in your adult life?
- Do you sometimes use idioms or proverbs? In Estonian or English? Which ones? Did your parents or other older relatives use them? What special sayings or expressions do you remember from the way your parents and grandparents spoke?
- Were books read to you or fairy tales told to you as a child? In what language? What stories were they? Have you read or told these stories to your children or grandchildren?
- How do you feel about anecdotes and jokes? Were they part of your family life? If you remember one, please share a story.
- Do you like to sing? What songs do you prefer to sing? What language do you prefer to sing in and listen to music in? Was singing and making music part of your childhood home? What kind? Have you ever encountered a *regilaul* (traditional Estonian runic song)?
- What holidays and special occasions were celebrated in your childhood home, and how?
- What is the best age to be in life? What are the advantages and disadvantages of different stages of life?
- Has your attitude toward aging and older people changed during your lifetime? How? Do you think attitudes differ from country to country?
- Is age just a number? Or is it something more?
- What is the right way to grow old? What can we do to remain in good physical, mental, and emotional shape for many years?
- What are the main challenges faced by older people living in Canada? And what are the joys?
- How does the Canadian state support older people living here? And what about the Estonian community?
- What would you say to a young person who asks how to live a long and happy life? What is your recipe for a good life?

If you are ready to share your story and thoughts with us, please write to piretnoorhani@vemu.ca. We will arrange a suitable time and place for an interview. The deadline for submitting contributions is March 31, 2027.

The materials collected will be preserved at VEMU and the Estonian Literary Museum.

Hopefully, an exhibition will grow out of this project in the future as well—just as it did with the material collected during the two museums' previous joint collecting campaign, which focused on Estonian children and young people in Canada.

LITHUANIAN HERITAGE · CANADA

# An Online Map of Lithuanian Heritage in Canada

This year, the Lithuanian State Cultural Heritage Commission is collecting and refining data on cultural heritage of significance to Lithuania in Canada. The collected material will be presented on the U-Paveldas database, on a map, and publication.

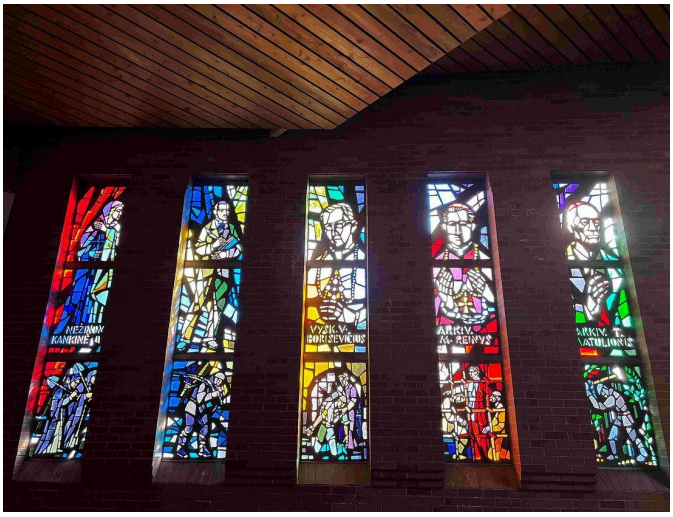
Information on Lithuanian cultural heritage in Canada will appear in stages—from one province and city to another, while revealing the stories of communities, connecting the objects and the stories of heritage that are still little known. In parallel, a separate thematic map is being prepared, which will be published in paper and electronic formats. It will contain 41 objects in five Canadian provinces.

The project is being implemented in cooperation with the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in Canada, the Lithuanian Community in Canada and other partners.

### Landscape of Lithuanian Memory in Canada

The concentration of cultural heritage of significance to Lithuania in Canada was determined by several waves of emigration. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, Lithuanians settled in

Montreal and Winnipeg, and before WWII—in the Delhi region. The greatest influence on the formation of Lithuanian heritage was the post-war emigration. After leaving Lithuania in 1944, Lithuanians in Canada built churches, community centers, Lithuanian Saturday schools, credit unions, archives and other institutions, which became pillars of Lithuanian identity. The largest concentration of objects currently recorded is in the province of Ontario: Toronto, Hamilton, Mississauga and their surroundings. Lithuanian heritage objects are also found in Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta, and Nova Scotia.



*Stained glass window at the Lithuanian Martyrs' Catholic Church in Mississauga.*

*Photo credit: Lithuanian Canadian Community*

### From Anapilis Halls to Lithuanian Name Streets

One of the most prominent objects of Canadian Lithuanian heritage is the Anapilis Halls in Mississauga. It is one of the most important Lithuanian building complexes in Canada, on the territory of which stands the Lithuanian Martyrs' Shrine, built in 1974—the first church in the world to bear this name.

Among the objects that will appear on the map are other lesser known but no less significant places of Lithuanian history. For example, the Baltic Tree Circle in Winnipeg, planted in 1967 by Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian communities, symbolizes the common fate and solidarity of the three Baltic nations. In Montreal and Ottawa, the Lithuanian footprint is reminded by place names: Rue Lithuania and Vilnius Avenue. The history of Lithuanians in Canada is also evidenced by credit unions, camps, Lithuanian Saturday schools, museums, and archives established by Lithuanians.

*Lrt.lt info*

AABS 2026 · CLEVELAND

# Preserving Cultural Heritage of the Lithuanians of Cleveland

*Dalia Cidzikaitė*

At the 30th conference of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS), held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Elizabeth Anne Piwkowski gave a presentation on the preservation of Lithuanian Heritage in Cleveland. In her presentation, entitled "Preserving Lithuanian-American History in Cleveland: A Case Study in University-Community Partnerships for the Preservation of Diaspora Collections," Piwkowski talked about the successful collaboration of Cleveland Lithuanians with Cleveland State University in collecting, digitizing, and preserving local Lithuanian cultural heritage.

In 2002, the Michael Schwartz Library at Cleveland State University, in collaboration with local communities, launched a new website Clevelandmemory.org, dedicated to digitizing and publishing digital materials. Its goal is to feature historical photographs, a growing collection of e-books, and documentary material about the history of Greater Cleveland and Northeast Ohio, its industries, and its people.

The exhibition dedicated to the Lithuanians of Cleveland (https://www.clevelandmemory.org/lithuanian/index.html) includes photographs, documents, and press publications from the special collections of Cleveland State University and other local memory institutions (e.g., Kent State University), the Cleveland Lithuanian community, and individual donor and supporter collections.



*Moses, 1927. Cowan Pottery Studio (America, Ohio, Lakewood, 1913–1919), Alexander Blazys (American, born Russian Empire [now Lithuania], 1894–1963). Faience (?); overall: 48.3 x 21.6 cm (19 x 8 1/2 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, Educational Purchase Fund, 1928.667.*

The exhibition is divided into the following sections: "Oral Histories," "Image Collections," "Off-site Resources," as well as digitized books (essential reading) about the history of Lithuanians in Cleveland, and information about artists of Lithuanian descent with Cleveland ties.

The "Oral Histories" section presents four Lithuanians: Grace Kudukis (b. 1941), Milda Lenkauskas (b. 1933), Frank J. Lucas (1948–2024), and Roman Zorska.

In the "Image Collections" section, visitors will find photos and other material about the Čiurlionis Lithuanian National Art Ensemble, the Lithuanian Cultural Garden at Cleveland Cultural Gardens, and the Lithuanian Churches in the city (for example, Our Lady of Perpetual Help). In the future, information will be available on the topics of Lithuanian Independence Day, St. George's Church, Lithuanian Scouts, sports, funerals, and weddings.

This section also contains dozens of Dan Hanson's videos, which captured the daily life of the Lithuanian community in Cleveland. They feature performances by Cleveland Lithuanian folk dancers and choirs, a folk costume fashion show, Easter egg coloring, interviews with the most prominent Lithuanians, and short films on various topics ranging from the history of the Cleveland community, international politics to traditional Lithuanian dishes.

In the section dedicated to artists of Lithuanian origin, one finds the names of three artists: Alexander Blazys (1894–1963), Max Kalish (1891–1945), and Paul "Toppy" Toppelstein (1925–2022). However, only Blazys can be attributed to artists of Lithuanian origin: Kalish was born in Valozhyn (now Belarus), and the internet does not provide information about Toppelstein's origin.

In her presentation, Piwkowski noted that one of the most important aspects of the Cleveland Memory project is cooperation with local communities and individuals. With limited funding, much of the work is carried out by volunteers: university students, seniors, and schoolchildren. However, the most valuable collaborators of the project are the sponsors and patrons. In the case of the online exhibition about the Lithuanians of Cleveland, it is the Adomaitis family.

BALTIC WAY · PARIS

# Memorial Plaque Dedicated to the Baltic Way Unveiled in Paris

On July 13, a memorial plaque dedicated to the Baltic Way was unveiled on the Île aux Cygnes in Paris. The plaque commemorates one of the most important symbols of peaceful resistance in European history and recalls the solidarity march with the Baltic peoples that took place in Paris on the same day.




*A memorial plaque dedicated to the Baltic Way was unveiled in Paris.*
*Photo credit: G. Bontemps / Paris Municipality*

On August 23, 1989, when almost two million Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians formed a human chain from Vilnius to Tallinn to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Baltic communities in Paris, together with the young people of the Baltic countries participating in the World Youth Congress, organized a solidarity march from Trocadero Square to the Statue of Liberty on Île aux Cygnes. The participants of the march called on the international community to support the Baltic peoples' quest for freedom and not to recognize the Soviet occupation. A memorial plaque for the Baltic Way was unveiled at the place where the march ended.

The unveiling of the plaque crowned a joint project of the embassies of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia in France and Paris, launched in 2020. Its goal is to immortalize one of the most prominent symbols of peaceful resistance in European history and to preserve the living memory of the Baltic people's struggle for freedom for future generations.

*Lrt.lt info*

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF LITHUANIA

# Teachers and Students Deepened Their Knowledge at the National Library

On July 22, the participants of Lithuanian studies organized by the Academy of Education at the Vytautas Magnus University, teachers and students from the Lithuanian schools operating abroad, visited the National Library of Lithuania. For several years now, the library has been inviting participants of these studies to get acquainted with cultural heritage, current research, and to participate in lectures on various topics.



*The visit was an opportunity to deepen knowledge and share experiences.*

*Photo credit: National Library of Lithuania / Vygaudas Juozaitis*

Dainius Vaitiekūnas, a researcher at the Lithuanian Studies Unit of the Documentary Heritage Research Department, presented the possibilities of contemporary Lithuanian literature in teaching and learning the Lithuanian language. He discussed how contemporary literary works that address topics relevant to young people can enrich the educational process.

Researcher Silvija Stankevičiūtė talked about images of Vilnius in contemporary children's and youth literature, such as novels, comics and graphic novels, that reveal the city's history, culture, and everyday life from different historical periods.

The participants also got acquainted with the 15th-20th-century documentary heritage, preserved at the National Library of Lithuania, presented by Povilas Andrius Stepavičius, a researcher from the Rare Books and Manuscripts Unit.

The visit became an opportunity for teachers and students who foster the Lithuanian language and culture abroad to deepen their knowledge, share experiences, and discover new sources and methods for Lithuanian education.

VYTAUTAS THE GREAT WAR MUSEUM

# The Blaževičius Family Archive at the Vytautas the Great War Museum

The collection of Aleksandras Blaževičius (1912-1998) and Birutė Avižonytė-Blaževičienė (1914-2012) housed at the Vytautas the Great War Museum has been supplemented with new artifacts. They arrived from across the Atlantic, just like the Blaževičius family archive that reached the museum earlier. Among the treasures donated to the museum, a prestigious US military award, the Bronze Star for services in World War II, given to Aleksandras Blaževičius.




*The Avižonytė collection consists of about 1,200 items.*

*Photo credit: Vytautas the Great War Museum*

The Avižonytė collection reached the museum at the end of April 2025. Her collection consists of about 1,200 items: photographs, letters, clippings, postcards, documents, awards, insignia, etc.

Aleksandras Blaževičius was born in the USA. His life was torn between the USA and Europe, and he finally settled in his native state of Connecticut. During World War II, he fought against Nazi Germany and participated in the Normandy landings. He retired with the rank of captain in the US Army.

Birutė was not only the daughter of the famous professor Petras Avižonis. Having studied law and economics at universities in Paris and Switzerland, she worked in the Lithuanian diplomatic service, and in 1938–1939. she was the secretary of the Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Poland, Kazys Škirpa, in Warsaw.

*Lrt.lt info*

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF LITHUANIA

# Vilnius Will Have Its Migration Museum

The first migration museum in the Baltic States is planned to be established in the capital of Lithuania. The Janukonis Foundation and the National Museum of Lithuania have signed a cooperation agreement on the creation of a new museum.




*The museum will be created in collaboration with the National Museum of Lithuania.*

*Photo credit: E. Ufartas / BNS photo*

The new museum will become a permanent site where the visitors will learn about the history of Lithuanian migration and the contribution of Lithuanians scattered around the world to the development of the state, society, science, business, and culture. The museum will feature a modern digital exhibition that will allow visitors to learn over a century-long Lithuanian migration history—from the 19th century to today.

The museum will be created in collaboration with the National Museum of Lithuania, based on the research accumulated by scholars and curators and the experience of the exhibition "Worldwide Lithuania: Our Migration History" showcased at the House of Histories in Vilnius. The exhibition will be constantly updated, integrating new research and stories from Lithuanian communities around the world.

Currently, work is underway to develop the museum concept, gather partners, and find a suitable location. The museum is planned to welcome visitors in 2028.

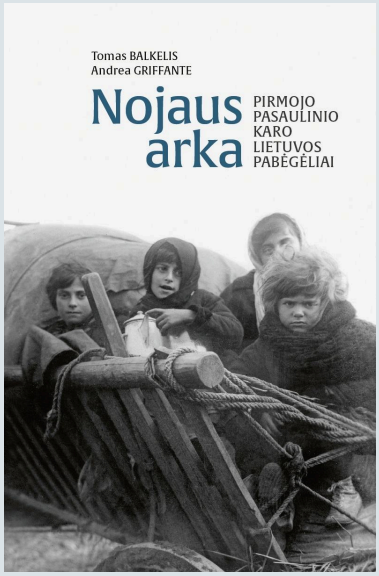
*ELTA info*

LITHUANIAN INSTITUTE OF HISTORY

# A Book about WWI Lithuanian Refugees

During World War I, more than half a million inhabitants of various nationalities and social strata from the governorates of Vilnius, Kaunas, and Suwałki were forced to retreat to the depths of Russia. Their exodus lasted almost a decade—from 1914 to 1922, when the official repatriation of refugees from Soviet Russia ended.

The monograph *Nojaus arka. Pirmojo pasaulinio karo Lietuvos pabėgėliai* [Noah's Ark. WWI Lithuanian Refugees] published by the Lithuanian Institute of History presents the history of the Lithuanian refugees of the First World War, from their forced departure to their return home.




Noah's Ark *is the most detailed study of WWI Lithuanian refugees to date.*

This forced migration of Lithuanian residents, although it involved almost every fourth resident of the country, has been forgotten today, because it was overshadowed by subsequent, no less painful historical events. Reminding about it, the authors of the book discuss the experiences of refugees not only of Lithuanians, but also of other nations, paying special attention to ordinary people—how they fled, how they lived in the German-occupied land and in the depths of Russia, how they returned to already independent Lithuania.

The book explores in detail how war and Russian revolution affected refugee identities; explains how the war changed their understanding of what empire and homeland are, and how the returnees were received by independent Lithuania.

*Noah's Ark* is the most detailed study of WWI Lithuanian refugees to date. It summarizes the knowledge accumulated in various historians' works, corrects historiographical positions, and includes new and little-studied sources.

*The Lithuanian Institute of History info*

DIASPORA CHORAL MUSIC · VEMU ARCHIVES

# Bringing Estonian Diaspora Choral Music into Estonia's Musical Landscape

*How much Estonian choral music is actually hidden outside Estonia? And how much of this music is still waiting to be discovered?*

The work of Estonian diaspora composers is an important part of our musical history, yet much of it has remained largely in the shadows. The works of composers who were forced to leave Estonia for various reasons have survived in archives and private collections in Canada, the United States, Sweden, Germany, Australia, and elsewhere. Many of these works, however, have not been performed in Estonia for decades—or ever. It is precisely this hidden musical heritage that the present project seeks to uncover, with a particular focus on Estonian diaspora choral music.

The first major destination is Toronto and the archives of the Estonian Museum Canada (VEMU). In July of this year, research was conducted in the VEMU archives, with the aim of finding both well-known and previously undiscovered choral works, manuscripts, and printed materials. The main task was to establish what has survived, examine the scores and manuscripts, and consolidate the information gathered about them in a digital archive. The more material we worked through, the clearer it became that the treasury of Estonian diaspora choral music is far richer than we had initially imagined.

Estonian diaspora choral music speaks of much more than music alone. It contains homesickness, memories, the Estonian language, and the desire to preserve something of one's own. Choral singing has helped Estonian communities abroad maintain their connections with Estonia and with one another, and many of these songs carried a powerful sense that Estonia had not disappeared.

The main goal of the project is to give these works a new life and to build bridges through our shared musical heritage. The plan is to bring a selection of works together in a choral music collection. This will also involve transcribing archival materials so that they can be easily read and performed by contemporary choirs. To ensure that the collection does not simply gather dust on a shelf, presentation concerts in Tallinn and Tartu are an important part of the project, giving these works an opportunity to be heard once again, performed by Estonian choirs.

The research is far from over, however. In addition to the works found in the VEMU archives, we are also very interested in materials held in private collections. We may discover something that has not been sung for decades. An old manuscript may turn out to be an extraordinary find. And a song once performed by a choir in Toronto, New York, or Stockholm may find a new life on an Estonian concert stage. That is precisely what we are looking for—not simply lost scores, but music that can once again be heard and carry our story.

*Roland Viilukas*
*Mirell Jakobson*