

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Moved by: Councillor James Pasternak

Seconded by: Councillor Mike Colle

The Mayor and Members of Toronto City Council are deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Naena Gnatyuk on Wednesday, January 13, 2021.

Naena leaves behind a tremendous legacy, one that is defined by perseverance and of helping others. Born in the Soviet Union in 1937, Naena survived the Holocaust with her mother and sister, despite struggling immensely from hunger and cold both during and after the war. Naena was spared from starvation when her father, desperate to feed his children, stole some food so his family could survive. Naena's father was searched and arrested by KGB officers, and despite being only five years old at the time, Naena held the memory of her father getting separated from the family for the rest of her life. In 1945, when the Soviets took back the island of Sakhalin from Japan, Naena's mother joined others resettling there. The hardship and pain of hunger and loss during the war left a lasting impact, as Naena's mother chose the remote island of Sakhalin, as this location was far away from the Nazis, and close to the ocean where fish was plentiful and they would never have to worry about starvation again. It took Naena, her mother and sister traveling two months in a cattle car to get to the pacific coast of Russia.

On Sakhalin, Naena worked as an elementary school teacher for a number of years and always an eager and avid learner, Naena later returned to school to become an economist in the marine industry on the island. It was also on Sakhalin where she met her husband, a sea captain who was there on the island serving in the Navy. In 2010, Naena immigrated to Canada with her husband, joining her daughter and two of her four grandchildren in Canada. Naena adored dogs and in her free time loved reading poetry, having had an incredible ability to recite long chapters of Russian poetry from memory. Skilled at knitting and needlepoint crocheting, Naena's tapestries were so vivid and detailed that many of these works looked like real paintings. Naena is remembered as having a brilliant mind, incredibly caring and compassionate, and for always wanting to help anyone and everyone as much as she could, in any way she could. She spoke regularly with her sister and friends back in Russia and Ukraine, and was very close with her family who will miss her greatly. Her life of persevering in the face of adversity is a testament to her character and legacy, and she will continue to serve as a source of inspiration to friends and family and all those who knew her.

The City Clerk is requested to convey, on behalf of the Members of Toronto City Council, our sincere sympathy to Naena Gnatyuk's family and friends.

February 3, 2021