Friday, October 14, 2022

MacEwan honours the memory of former Alberta Speaker with the Gene Zwozdesky Artist in Residence program

Edmonton – The newly established Gene Zwozdesky Artist in Residence program at MacEwan University honours the life and longtime public service of the former Alberta Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and enthusiastic supporter of Edmonton's Ukrainian community.

Zwozdesky was a longtime Edmonton MLA who served as Speaker from 2012 to 2015. During his time in government, he also held a number of cabinet positions including Minister of Education, Minister of Health and Wellness and Minister of Community Services.

"On behalf of the Zwozdesky family, we want to thank MacEwan University and the members of the Edmonton Ukrainian community for honouring my father's legacy in this way," said Myron Zwozdesky. "He was a big supporter of post-secondary education and I know he would be very proud of this recognition."

For many years, Zwozdesky was involved with and greatly supported MacEwan University in general, and the university's Ukrainian Resource and Development Centre in particular. The URDC is currently marking its 35th anniversary.

In earlier days, Zwozdesky arranged for the establishment of the province's Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations and included the centre's director as a member. He also hosted MacEwan's visitors from Ukraine at the Alberta Legislature and supported program development and exchanges between faculty and students in MacEwan's business, nursing, sociology and music programs and Ukrainian universities.

"I am thrilled that we are able to honour Gene, who was a good friend to MacEwan and a strong advocate of Ukrainian Canadians and their contributions to Alberta," said Dr. Annette Trimbee, president and vice-chancellor. "This program will enrich our already stellar fine arts program and is a wonderful reflection of Gene himself, who was a gifted musician and artist."

There were many other ways in which Zwozdesky advanced MacEwan's role as an advisor to the Government of Alberta, including involving URDC's director in the preparation of the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act, an act that was unanimously passed by the Alberta Legislature. He also encouraged MacEwan's dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Communications to highlight country music in musical studies. That effort led to the Distinguished Visiting Artist in Country Music initiative which was announced earlier this year. Zwozdesky also arranged to have Ruslana, winner of the Eurovision music award, perform in Edmonton and visit MacEwan University.

The first recipient of the Gene Zwozdesky Artist in Residence program will be announced in spring 2023.

For more information, please contact archerj24@macewan.ca

Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.