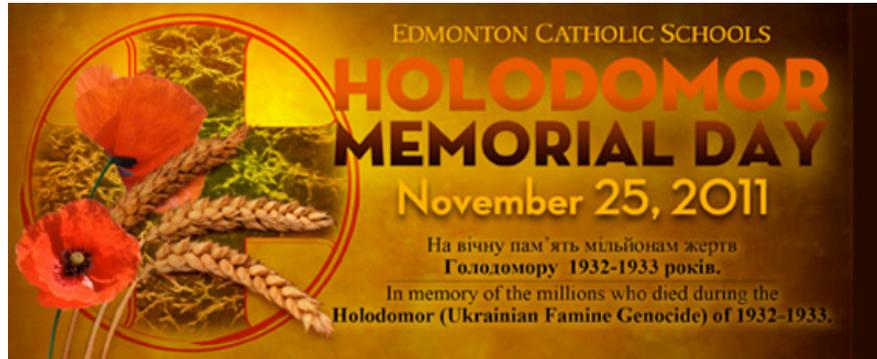




Home > About Us > Holodomor



## Holodomor (Ukrainian Famine Genocide) Memorial Day



On May 31, 2011, the Board of Trustees of Edmonton Catholic Schools declared the last Friday in November as Holodomor (Ukrainian Famine-Genocide) Memorial Day. The recommendation made to trustees by Bishop David Motiuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton, and unanimously endorsed by trustees, reads:

"In recognition of the millions of Ukrainians who died as a result of this genocide, the following plan will be taken by administration:

- Declare the last Friday in November as Holodomor (Ukrainian Famine Genocide) Memorial Day in the Edmonton Catholic School District
- Insert Holodomor Memorial Day, the last Friday in November, into the school district calendar, in perpetuity
- Encourage schools to undertake a moment of silence or other activity during Holodomor Memorial Day in recognition of the millions of Ukrainians who died as a result of this genocide. "

On November 25th, 2011, 38,000 staff and students in the Edmonton Catholic School District will recognize Holodomor (Ukrainian Famine-Genocide) Memorial Day.

Holodomor remains as the greatest mass murder of civilians undertaken during peace time. Despite this infamy, Holodomor is still a little known and little understood event.

Holodomor is a Ukrainian word with two parts: Holod, which means hunger, and moryty, which means a slow, cruel death. Adding to this tragedy is that outside of Ukraine, little was known about Holodomor, and even inside Ukraine, to speak of this event was forbidden.

The plan behind Holodomor was calculated and deliberate: for collectivization to be successful in Ukraine, the breadbasket of Europe, independent farmers had to be eliminated. Beginning in 1932, all food was removed by Soviet police and soldiers from targeted areas of Ukraine, and Ukraine's borders were sealed, denying people the opportunity to search for food. At the height of the genocide, 25,000 people per day were dying from starvation. Once the campaign of engineered famine was completed, Ukraine's religious, artistic, intellectual and political leaders were arrested, deported or executed. The russification of Ukraine followed.

For decades the Soviet government tried to conceal the atrocities it committed from the rest of the world. In Ukraine under the Soviets, any mention of the Holodomor was considered a crime against the state and subject to imprisonment, exile or execution. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the once highly classified documents of the Soviet government and communist party were opened up to researchers. Holodomor has been documented in detail by many historians and eyewitness accounts have been gathered, revealing the magnitude and the deliberate intentions of the genocide. Some of the eyewitness accounts have been gathered from survivors currently living in Edmonton.

That Holodomor was genocide is supported by incontrovertible facts established through examination of archival documents, eyewitness accounts and demographic analysis:

- farmers' seed grain was taken from them and then all food was removed from Ukraine's villages



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- School Directory
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- farmers' seed grain was taken from them and then all food was removed from Ukraine's villages
- villages that did not cooperate were blacklisted, that is, these villages were surrounded by secret police, all food was removed, and anyone who tried to flee was executed
- Ukraine was the only Soviet republic where borders were sealed, denying starving people the opportunity to search for food
- The Famine Genocide targeted Ukraine as well as the Kuban region in Russia, which was predominantly settled by ethnic Ukrainians.
- Ukraine experienced a sizeable loss in population while the rest of the Soviet Union showed population growth in the 1930's. Demographic studies have shown a disproportionate loss of life in Ukraine during the 1930s compared to other parts of the Soviet Union.

Following the mass-famine was a very deliberate campaign of "russification". The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, predominant in eastern Ukraine where Holodomor was most widespread, was destroyed, priests were exiled or executed and overnight, Ukrainian Orthodox churches were reduced to rubble. Ukrainian intellectuals and artists were exiled or executed and the Ukrainian language and culture were suppressed.

Edmonton Catholic Schools joins the governments of Canada, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec in establishing a Holodomor Memorial Day as a way of paying tribute to the millions who died. Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba also include Holodomor as a mandatory topic to be taught in their curriculum.

### **[Bishop David Motiuk's Pastoral Letter on The Ukrainian Famine \(1932-1933\) - Holodomor](#)**

