

Diaspora video project shares personal stories of Holodomor survivors ahead of 80th anniversary

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Ukrainians light candles and say prayers in memory of victims of the Holodomor famine of 1932-33 at a memorial in Kyiv.

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Ukrainian Mychajlo Zahorulko, originally from Manzhelina village, Poltava Oblast, now a resident of Montreal, recalls bodies being loaded onto carts and taken to the cemetery in 1933.

"They buried hundreds of people there... dug big holes and threw them in," he says. "Sometimes you could hear that some of the people they brought were still alive. They begged, asking not to be thrown in (the grave), saying 'we're still alive.'"

Toronto resident Vera Lechky, formerly of Tyzhivka village, Kirovohrad Oblast, remembers her train pulling into the Kyiv central station one day in the early 1930s.

"When we got to Kyiv, we saw hell," she explains, fighting back tears. "At the station there were masses of people. The trains ran very rarely, and when they did come, they were so full that people were not only inside, but on the roof as well. At the station, dying people were lying by the walls. Their eyes were so sunken and full of lice."



Zahorulko and Lechky, both survivors of the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 known as the Holodomor (extermination by hunger), a deliberate act of genocide

by starvation on the part of Josef Stalin and the Soviet Union that cost millions of Ukrainian lives, shared their first-hand accounts of survival recently as part of a project by three Ukrainian diaspora groups to highlight the tragedy ahead of its 80th anniversary.

The [Ukrainian Canadian Congress](#), [Ukrainian World Congress](#) and [Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre](#) will add a new personal story each day leading up to the International Holodomor Memorial Day on Nov. 23 to the collaborative video and web project "[Share the Story](#)."

In the videos Holodomor survivors, many of them in their late 80s and 90s, tell their haunting accounts of life during forced collectivization under Stalin's criminal regime.

Olga Katalak, 87, originally from Trustyanets village, Kamyanetsk-Podilsk (now Khmelnytsky) Oblast, tells of children trying to collect grain in the fields surrounding her home and the dispossession of her family. Niney-five-year-old Melania Momot describes the burial of people in her village of Katerynivka, Zaporizhzhia Oblast who died of starvation. Gregory Kowalik, an 87-year-old former resident of Osokorivka village, Kherson Oblast, describes life in an orphanage during the Holodomor, where the Soviet government molded them into "loyal Communists."

Each video account is told in the Ukrainian language, but transcripts are provided in English and Russian, as well as Ukrainian.

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