

**Creating a Sense of Place One Stitch at a Time:  
The role of embroidered pillows in the Ukrainian Canadian Community**

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Since the first arrival of Ukrainians to Canada in 1891, the folk art of pillow embroidery has endured six generations and five waves of immigration. Over that period of time, Ukrainian Canadian embroidered pillows (*podushky*) have been a form of decoration, and their creation a leisure activity. To some people they are a means of artistic expression and outstanding craftsmanship; others regard them as keepsakes out of respect for their ancestral connections. My recent research has also identified Ukrainian Canadian embroidered *podushky* as expressions of group affiliation and cultural identity; helping [re]define social, spatial, cultural, and temporal connections in Ukrainian Canadian homes.

To gain a deeper insight into both the nature of these Ukrainian Canadian artifacts and the artisans who created them, my study approach involved a negotiation between past and present; gathering information from 57 interviews, and analysis of 496 Canadian-made, hand-embroidered *podushky* created between 1920 and 2015. I found that, like many personal possessions, embroidered *podushky* have a life trajectory of their own. Some were created spontaneously, others evolved through detailed planning. *Podushky* have moved in status from the top shelf to the bottom, from the living room to the closet. Their meaning and significance is often held within many generational layers. This paper presents a brief history of the Ukrainian Canadian embroidered pillow (*podushka*) and further reflects on the narrative associated with the production and consumption of these unique artifacts, describing how they became an index of such a large diaspora community.