

Mandzija Family

Weronika Mandzija (nee Engel)

- Weronika was born a twin in Mirzice, Poland, on April 24th, 1906.
- As a young woman, prior to her marriage to Piotr in 1929, Weronika worked as a domestic for wealthy Jewish families.
- She came to Canada in 1954 with Piotr and three of their children.
- They settled in Madsen and Weronika lived the rest of her life in the Red Lake District.
- Weronika was diagnosed with cancer and was ill for some time.
- She died at age 68 at the Red Lake Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital on November 4th, 1974.

Piotr Mandzija

- Piotr, son of Jakob Mandzija, was born in Lwow, Poland on July 10th, 1903.
- A carpenter by trade, Piotr suffered the amputation of his right arm in a horrific saw machinery accident.
- Due to Piotr being an amputee, his family's application to immigrate to Australia was denied. They ended up immigrating to Canada instead in 1954.
- When he arrived in Canada, Piotr got a job in the mill of the Madsen Mine. He had a false arm and hand but did fine.
- Piotr worked there until he retired.
- Piotr lived to advanced age and spent long periods of time living with his daughters.
- While residing with Aniela in Cochenour, Piotr died from cancer on May 9th, 1991, in his 88th year.
- He was buried beside Weronika in Woodland Cemetery in Balmertown.

The Couple

- Piotr and Weronika were married in Lwow, Poland in 1929.
- The Mandzijas were living in Lwow when it was overtaken by Russia and then by Germany during the Second World War. Their family was forced to leave their homeland and later sent to a number of displaced persons camps.
- In January 1954, Weronika and Piotr and their children Aniela, Zozsa (Sofia), and Adolf Boleslaw left Europe by ship from Bremerhaven, Germany enroute to Canada.
- They had initially hoped to immigrate to Australia, where another daughter, Kazimiera (Kasia) Gacek, had moved. However, their application was rejected on account of Piotr being an amputee.
- The voyage took approximately 14 days over rough, windy seas. The storms were so severe that the ship docked in England until danger had passed.
- Once they landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the family went by train to Winnipeg. Then they moved to Madsen where they remained.
- Both Weronika and Piotr are buried in Woodland Cemetery in Balmertown.

Children

- Weronika and Piotr were the parents of nine children:
- **Irka (Irene)** died when she was about nine months old.
- **Michal** died in Austria in 1947, at the age of 18, from mumps.
- **Willusz Wilhelm** was seized at a displaced persons camp in Sudetenland by the German army and his family never saw him again. When the Mandzijas came to Canada, they searched for him through the Red Cross Society, but never found any answer.
- **Jozefa (Josie)** was the first of the family to immigrate to Canada. She was born in 1929 and married Wladyslaw (Walter) Sukiennik.
- **Aniela (Angela)** was born in 1935. She immigrated to Canada with her parents in 1954 and married Herwig Feigl. **(SEE BELOW FOR MORE INFO)**

- **Zozsa (Sofia)** was born in 1940 and came to Canada in 1954. She married Boleslaw (Bolek/Bill) Dranski, who was also born in Poland and came to Canada in 1953 with his parents, Janina and Stanislaw Dranski. The family settled in Starratt-Olsen, near Madsen, where his parents lived for 41 years. Bill and Sofia eventually retired in Whitby, Ontario where Sofia's older sister, Janina, also lived.
- **Adolf Boleslaw** was born in 1944. He also came to Canada with his parents and two sisters in 1954.
- **Kazimiera (Kasia) Gacek** was born in 1932. She immigrated to Australia.
- **Janina Witazek** was born in 1927. She lived in Whitby, Ontario.

Aniela Steffani Feigl (nee Mandzj)

- Aniela was born on October 12th, 1935 in the city of Lwow, Poland (now Ukraine).
- Her parents were Piotr and Weronika Mandzj.
- Aniela has lasting memories of the Second World War. "The Germans forced my family to leave Poland after the war. They told us the Russians would kill us if we didn't leave. My mother cried and didn't want to go and when they heard this, soldiers pushed her to the wall and threatened to kill her. She saved herself because she spoke German to them."
- "So, we were shipped from camp to camp. They were called displaced persons camps. We first went to Salzburg, then Linz, and Wien (Vienna). The American soldiers used to give us care packages."
- "The Red Cross moved us out of Wien about 150 kilometres away to Enns in upper Austria because the Russians were circling Wien and there was danger. I still remember how loud and terrible the sirens screamed 20 minutes before a bombing. I felt like it would make me crazy."
- After having survived the Nazi onslaught by fleeing her home, Aniela found life in the displaced persons' camp to be an oasis of calm and learning: "We had to leave our home with nothing, then we had everything to eat and play with in the camp, and it was all free. There were teachers in the camp and we could learn anything."
- "I learned ballet and when I had studied enough, I gave lessons to others." Later, in Red Lake, she again took dance lessons.
- Aniela's older sister, Jozefa (Josie, born 1929) and her husband, Wladyslaw (Walter) Sukiennik were the first of the family to immigrate to Canada.
- Aniela came to Canada in January 1954 with her parents, sister Zozsa (Sofia, born 1940), and brother Adolf Boleslaw (born 1944).
- Her fiancé, Herwig, whom she had met in a displaced persons camp in Enns, Austria, came later that year in October.
- "We landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and went by train to Winnipeg. My sister, Josie, worked there when she first came to Canada and before she went to live in Madsen. My family went to Madsen and my Dad got a job in the mill of the Madsen Mine. He had a false arm and hand and did fine. He worked there until he retired."
- "I was only in Madsen three months when I went back to Winnipeg with Josie and went to work in a clothing factory. The more you sewed, the more money you made. So, I sewed leather jackets like crazy! When Josie went back to Red Lake, I did too," Aniela remembered.
- Aniela returned to the work force when their youngest child, Richard, was in grade one.
- She was a chambermaid at the Balmer Motor Hotel in Balmertown.
- As well, Aniela worked part-time ironing men's shirts for three years for Victoria and John Gazankas in their Red Lake Laundry.
- In 1980, the year the area was evacuated due to danger from a massive forest fire, Aniela began her long employment at the Owen J. Matthews Manor in Cochenour. Initially she worked as a cleaner and then was promoted to the position of nurses' aide. Aniela devoted herself to the care of the Manor's elderly residents until, after 18 years of employment, she retired in 2000 at age 65.
- Aniela was a long-time member of the Red Lake branch of the Polish Alliance Friendly Society of Canada, and served for two years as president of its Red Lake ladies auxiliary.
- She contributed her delicious cooking for countless occasions over the years, as well as donated hundreds of hand-knitted items to charities and fundraisers.
- In the late 2000s, Aniela joined the Red Hat women's group.