

Kmiecik Family

Kazimierz Kmiecik

- Kazimierz Kmiecik was born on December 11th, 1918 in the farming village of Falkow, district of Konskie, province of Lodz, Poland.
- He was the eldest son of Maria (nee Goralska) and Kazimierz Kmiecik, Sr.
- Unexpectedly, during a night in April 1940, the German S.S. searched the homes in Kazimierz's village, seized the young men and women over age 18 years and sent them by train to work as forced "farm labourers" in the Schleswig-Holstein province of northern Germany.
- Twenty-two year old Kazimierz was taken to the Emil Brandt farm in Hemmingsted on May 2nd, 1940.
- His duties for 12-15 hours each day were to feed the hundreds of farm animals, milk the cows, and work out in the fields. Only occasionally was he granted a few hours off on Sunday.
- The rules were strict: he was not allowed to go to church or visit friends within one kilometer of his workplace—breaking the rules would mean paying a fine as penalty.
- At various times, the German police would search their meager sleeping quarters looking for bulletins or flyers which had been thrown out of American planes during the night. If any such material was found in their possession, they were threatened with deportation to a concentration camp in another part of Germany.
- Kazimierz, who had always been motivated to improve himself, attended a course offered by the railway and became certified as a locomotive operator.
- Of his family of eight siblings, Kazimierz was the only one who left Europe and never returned to his battered native Poland.
- Once in Red Lake, Kazimierz quickly obtained a job at Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines Limited. He worked there from 1951 until its first closure in 1976.
- He worked as an underground miner for a short time and then became the mine's hoist operator for almost 25 years.
- Kazimierz taught himself to speak, read and write fluently in English.
- It didn't daunt him to take a compressor operator course, just in case, and he always focused on trying to be one step ahead.
- Soon after the Madsen Mine closure, he worked for Campbell Gold Mines Limited as a hoist operator before retiring in 1984.
- Kazimierz spent many hours in this back yard tending to his large vegetable garden.
- He also had a hobby farm which consisted of mostly chickens and, at other times, rabbits, pigeons, geese and ducks.
- An avid bird watcher, he erected about 100 of his hand-made birdhouses throughout the yard and forest for his beloved swallows and sparrows.
- Kazimierz died at age 85 on December 19th, 2003 at the Red Lake Margaret Cochenour Memorial Hospital.

Irena Kmiecik (nee Kaluzny)

- Irena was born on January 4th, 1931 in the farming village of Jozefow, district of Turek, province of Lodz, Poland. (The names of these provinces and districts have changed over time.)
- She was the daughter of Feliksa (nee Kubiak) and Walenty Kaluzny.
- In September 1939 when the German Army invaded their homeland, Irena's family felt tremendous apprehension about what would become of them.
- Unfortunately, their worst fears were realized when the German Army ravaged Irena's small community and burned farms.
- The German Schutzstaffel (S.S.) seized the local men and boys—including Irena's father, her 14-year old brother Leszek, and many of her cousins—and executed them in a firing-squad line on Irena's family's farm field.
- Irena's mother, Feliksa, was suddenly widowed, homeless and without food to feed her five remaining children.
- They sought refuge at the neighbour's undamaged house until their partially-burned farmhouse was repaired enough for habitation.
- In the spring of 1942 horror again visited the Kaluzny family. Their farm and possessions were

- seized by the Germans.
- Irena, her mother, brothers and sisters were taken by train to Germany to work on a farm called Dadow, in the district of Hagenow, province of Mecklenburg.
 - Until the end of the war, Irena and her family were forced to work long and hard hours in the fields.
 - Irena and her family were sent to the Polish Camp at Meierwik in the district of Glucksberg, Germany in 1946. This is where she met her future husband, Kazimierz.
 - Irena studied to become a dressmaker, a skill which served her well for decades to follow.
 - After her marriage to Kazimierz, they travelled to Fallingbostel, Germany, a resettlement centre for displaced persons about to emigrate.
 - Irena, her mother Feliksa, and 16-year-old brother travelled to Canada together (all of Irena's other siblings had already immigrated to Canada).
 - They left on April 19th, 1950 on the *U.S.S. General W. C. Langfitt* (a former American war ship) and arrived on May 20th, at Pier 21 in Halifax.
 - After an exhausting immigration process and physical examinations, the family was directed onto the "immigrant" trains to begin their journey to Canada's west.
 - On the train, Irena became separated from her mother. Irena didn't find her until her mother was dropped off at the Red Lake Road railway station, where Irena's brother, Stanislaw, and sister, Mary Stolarek, were waiting to pick her up and bring her to their home in Madsen. Irena's mother Feliksa spent the rest of her life in the Red Lake area.
 - Irena's brother, Stanislaw (born August 1st, 1922) moved to Madsen in 1949 and was married in Red Lake to Krystyna Plichta on July 14th, 1951. They spent many years in Red Lake, where their children received their elementary and high school education. Stanislaw died in Calgary, Alberta, on January 20th, 2009.
 - Mary Stolarek, Irena's older sister, lived first in Madsen and later moved to Red Lake with her husband, Mike, and family. After demolishing their house on Hammell Road, they built The Red Lake Bakery on the same location.
 - Eventually, Irena's younger brother also joined the family in Madsen.
 - In 1951, after living and working in Alberta for about a year, Irena's brother Stanislaw drove out there and brought Irene, Kazimierz and their first child, Teresa, to live in Madsen.
 - For the first few years in Madsen, Irena was a homemaker while raising their young daughters. The dressmaking trade she learned in Europe was put to good use in Canada.
 - She and her best friend, Mary Janicki, often sewed stylish dresses only by using a picture of a fashionably-dressed movie star as a guide. They then wore their creations to the weekend Madsen community hall dances.
 - One of Irena's joys was tending to her beautiful flower gardens.
 - Later, Irena began working at the Madsen Red Lake Gold Mines cookery as an assistant cook. It did not take her long to be promoted to head cook, a position she held until the mine closed. Her day started every morning at 4:00 a.m. to get ready for work and walk some distance to the cookery for 5:00 a.m. to prepare the miners' breakfast and lunches. Most days ended at 6:30 p.m. (with a break in the mid-day).
 - Born on March 16th, 1902 in Poland, Irena's mother Feliksa had suffered greatly when her husband and son were murdered during the Second World War. Years later she married Henryk Kunt (born August 16th, 1911) and the couple spent the rest of their lives in the Red Lake area.
 - Henryk's mother, Marianna Kunt, died in Red Lake in 1954 and is buried in Red Lake Cemetery.
 - Six days before his 56th birthday, Henryk died on August 10th, 1967.
 - Feliksa died on July 9th, 1982 at age 80. They are buried together in Red Lake Cemetery.
 - Irena accepted the job of custodian at St. John's Roman Catholic Separate School and worked there until her retirement in 1995.
 - Irena died at age 74 on April 21st, 2005.

The Couple

- When the Second World War ended in September 1945, the forced labourers were relocated to displaced camps throughout Germany. In 1946, both Kazimierz and Irena (with her family) were sent to the Polish Camp at Meierwik in the district of Glucksberg, Germany.
- Kazimierz and Irene first met when they were both active in the dancing and singing groups which had been formed in their camp.

- On March 29th, 1948, Kazimierz and Irena were married in the small camp church.
- The couple resided at the camp until March 10th, 1950 when they travelled to Fallingbostal, Germany, a resettlement centre for displaced persons about to emigrate.
- In preparation to immigrate to Canada, they had to sign a contract to work for a year on a sugar beet farm in Raymond, Alberta.
- After arriving in Canada in spring of 1950, Kazimierz, Irena, and her younger brother went to Lethbridge, Alberta, where they were met by the farmer/owner of the sugar beet farm for which they had signed a contract to work as "farm labourers". Along the field, they were given the use of a small cabin. They worked hard for the farmer.
- Their first child, Teresa, was born on the farm on January 30th, 1951. Kazimierz had to help the doctor with the delivery as there were no hospitals close by.
- Around the time Teresa was born, Kazimierz began to feel that life for his young family in Alberta would be a continuous struggle with no advancement. At that same time, Irena's family was trying to persuade them to move to Madsen and work at the gold mine where they could have a good future and keep the family together.
- In June 1951 Irena's brother Stanislaw drove to Alberta to bring them to Madsen. The Kmieciks packed up their few belongings and some chickens (which would be valuable to Kazimierz's hobby farm) and headed out for their new life.
- Soon they had a house with a large back yard with a forest in the background. Life was very good for the Kmiecik family.
- Their second daughter, Christine Wiesia, was born on August 14th, 1953 at the Red Lake Red Cross Memorial Hospital.
- Kazimierz and Irena were very sociable and were soon involved in community events.
- They were long-time parishioners of St. John's Roman Catholic Church, where they volunteered their time and talents on countless occasions.
- In 1976 Kazimierz and Irena had their first new house built in Red Lake.
- In 1998, the Kmieciks—surrounded by their family—celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.
- To both Kazimierz and Irena, family was the most important part of their lives—their family always came first.
- They were loving parents and devoted to their six grandchildren who gave them much happiness and to whom they were known as "Babcia" and "Ga Ga".
- Throughout their lives, Irena and Kazimierz felt it was important to be involved in the community where you live and always make the best of the life regardless of its sorrows and challenges.
- They are buried side-by-side in Red Lake Cemetery.

The Polish Alliance Friendly Society

- Supported by a large population of Polish immigrants in the Red Lake district, in 1955-56 the Polish Alliance Friendly Society of Canada, Branch 35, Red Lake Ontario, was formed through the head office in Toronto.
- Both Kazimierz and Irena became members, participated in meetings held in various places in Red Lake, and became involved in dramatic plays (with Kazimierz usually playing a major character).
- With a growing membership, the Red Lake Polish Alliance members built the Polish Hall building on Howey Street in 1959. This dedicated group finally had a place to have their meetings and gather for holiday and family events.
- The stage at the Polish Hall provided space to continue with their cultural programs which consisted of Polish dancing and singing in Polish traditional costumes, music, and dramatic plays and skits.
- For many years Kazimierz and Irena were instrumental in the Polish Alliance's participation in the annual Multicultural Days during the district's summer festival. They organized and took part in the Polish float for the parade and assisted in the Polish ethnic food booth.
- In 1963 Kazimierz became the president of the Polish Alliance and held this position for over 30 years until the building was sold in 1998. "Kaz" could usually be found at the Polish Hall, spending many hours at the hall either doing repairs, cleaning, organizing bingos, and tending to the hall when it was rented to the community for weddings, dances and other celebrations.
- Irena was the president of the Polish Alliance Women's Group for many years. She was a driving force behind the many years of catering done by the women of the Polish Alliance. Her delicious cabbage rolls, perogies, and other food were always popular and greatly enjoyed. They became so popular that she eventually made and sold her cabbage rolls and perogies from her own home to

her favorite customers.

- Kazimierz and Irena devoted many years to the Polish Hall and had a lot of good memories. Even at the end, when it was no longer feasible to continue operating the hall due to membership decline, they tried to keep life going into the hall.