



## Irena L. Bell

*Community Development*

Irena was born as her parents, Jaroslaw and Olha Zajszyj, fled the Communist take-over of Western Ukraine. Growing up in Montreal, Irena was involved in Plast, Ukrainian dance, and teaching Ukrainian school.

In Ottawa, she worked from 1974 to 1995 in the government multicultural program, lastly heading the Multilingual Biblioservice of the National Library. From 1996 to 2005 Irena Bell was Coordinator for the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa.

Since 2003 Irena produces and hosts the Ottawa Ukrainian radio program (also streamed and podcast). She previously hosted the Ottawa Ukrainian TV program.

For 20 years Irena produced a monthly Ottawa Ukrainian-interest Events Calendar, with wide distribution via e-mail, media, etc. She organized and mc'd events, was twice president of the Ottawa UCPBA, editor of the UCPBA newsletter for several years, and vice-president of the Ottawa UCC.

Irena was on the Board of Directors of CFUS, Advisor to the UofO Chair of Ukrainian Studies, and on the Shevchenko Foundation's Synick Award committee. She was advisor at the State Historical Library in Kyiv as part of the Canada-Ukraine Partners Program, and evaluated Canada-Ukraine project proposals for CBIE. She has written many letters to media assailing misinformation about Ukraine.

In 2016 Irena started a scholarship fund for students in Ukraine via the Canada-Ukraine Foundation.

Irena Bell was the first recipient of Ottawa UCPBA's Filip Konowal Lifetime Achievement Award in 1995 for long-term volunteer service to the Ukrainian-Canadian community. She also received the Ontario 20-year Volunteer Service Award, the UCC volunteer service award, and in 2017 the UCPBA's Ottawa Ukrainian-Canadian Community Builder Award. She is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond-Jubilee Medal. In 2019, the Lviv National Agrarian University awarded Irena Bell 'Doctor Honoris Causa LNAU'.

In 2016, the UCRDC recorded an interview with Irena for their Oral History archives.