

POLAM

Sept.-Oct. 2014

Vol. 36, Number 5

www.pacim.org

Gypsy Poet

Sacred Traditions

Caravan of Grief

Scholarship
Update

see page 3

Behind the Scenes

Superstitions may seem funny to outsiders, but cultures steeped in superstitions take them seriously. For instance, from childhood on I learned to worry when a person didn't sneeze



Babcia

a third time. I knew a man was coming to the house when at mealtime a fork fell to the floor. Taking family pictures ensured the death of a member within a year. To this day I don't let two people compare hands in order to ward off the potential death of one of them. My kids laugh at me, and I can see how silly my superstitious nature must seem to them, but it would be terrible if some misfortune befell someone because I'd let down my guard.

My *Babcia*, I should say here, was part Gypsy. Superstitions came through the generations like treasured recipes. Mixed with our Catholic traditions, the Polish Gypsy way of viewing life held as much power over me as the catechism.

It all began sometime in late 19th century Poland my great-grandmother connected with a man from a Gypsy caravan that wandered by. I'm not sure if it was her choice or his force, or if she left with the caravan when it moved to the next town; but I do know that *Babcia* was the product of that union.

Black hair, dark eyes, and with a spitfire disposition, *Babcia* was a force to be reckoned with. Bootlegger, fortune teller, folk doctor and purveyor of superstitions, *Babcia* struck fear in my mother's suitors and evoked admiration from fellow immigrants.

While researching the article on the Polish Gypsy poet Papusza, I saw a photo of her that looked a lot like *Babcia*. If I had doubts that Gypsy blood ran through my veins, they were assuaged when I compared the photos.

Oh, I better stop talking about my family, lest bad luck come to us all. Enjoy this issue!

Do zobaczenia,
Jane Mrazek Flanders, *Editor*



The Gypsy Poet Papusza

POLAM

PolAm (Permit #31789) is the publication of the Polish American Cultural Institute of Minnesota (PACIM) and is published six times a year. Non-profit bulk permit paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. Please direct all inquiries to: PACIM, 43 Main St. SE, Suite 228, Minneapolis, MN 55414; office@pacim.org; or 612-378-9291.

Founder:
Chester Róg

Managing Editor:
Jane Mrazek Flanders

Associate Editor:
Patricia Beben

Editorial Advisor:
Anthony Bukoski, Ph.D.

Design:
Bruce Rubin and Jim Cordaro
Rubin Cordaro Design

Contributing Writers:
Joseph Hughes, Ph.D. and
Richard Lewis, Ph.D.

Staff Writers:
Marie Przynski and Dan Schyma

PACIM is a 501c(3) non-profit. All donations are tax deductible to the extent limited by law.

PACIM Board of Directors
Charlene Kaletka Delaney, Phyllis Husted, Terry Kita, Peter Pawtowski, Paul Róg, Dan Schyma and Renata Stachowicz.

Table of Contents

- 4 Gypsy Poet
- 5 Sacred Traditions
- 6 Caravan of Grief
- 8 Library
- 9 Happenings
- 10 Buzz in Poland

Scholarship News

PACIM's commitment to individuals who actively engage in furthering Polish culture through study or work is evidenced through its scholarship program. This year three scholarships were awarded, and the recipients' plans for using the funds underscore their merit in being selected among the fine candidates.

Chester Róg Endowment Fund

Honoring one of PACIM's founding members, the Róg Fund grants stipends up to \$1,000 per year to individuals and/or groups who are committed to use what they have achieved to benefit the cause of Polish heritage in Minnesota or Wisconsin.

2014 Recipient: POLESOM

"Polish Educational Solutions of Minnesota exists to provide and inspire creative and outstanding education activities that resonate with the Polish American population. We focus on teaching Polish to children by weaving Polish culture and tradition into monthly kids clubs, classes, summer camps and musical performances. We promote Polish language, art, culture and heritage by creating engaging events around all things Polish."

– Agnieszka Kemerley, Co-Founder



POLESOM Co-founders Monika Kusmirak and Agnieszka Kemerly

Angeline Guminga Scholarship

Thanks to a generous bequest from the estate of Angeline Guminga, PACIM is able to offer scholarships up to \$1,000.

2014 Recipients: Jerome (Jeremy) Biedny, III and Patricia Stachowicz

"The formation of my identity as a Polish American and my affinity for Polish language and culture has been fostered since early childhood. By my involvement with



local Polish organizations, my transformative journey backwards in time to visit my ancestral villages, and my decision to seriously pursue degrees in both Linguistics and History under the auspices of my Polish heritage have all contributed to my character as a scholar of culture and language."

– Jeremy Biedny, First year student at the University of Arizona, Tucson

"Giving back to my community is a virtue that was instilled in me from an early age. The Polish community in Minneapolis has been an excellent outlet for me... in a community that fosters and cherishes not only their cultural heritage, but also



learning and trying out new things. Working with local dancers and choreographers throughout high school has taught me that there is no one path in the 'real world,' and there are multiple avenues to include art along the way."

– Patricia Stachowicz, First year student at Marymount Manhattan College

Major Gift Donated to PACIM

In support of PACIM's scholarship program, The Polanie Club of Minneapolis/St. Paul made a very generous donation of \$50,000 in August. The club, which disbanded in 2014 after more than 85 years of outstanding service, had a well-reputed scholarship program of its own and knows that, through its donation to PACIM, young scholars of Polish heritage and interest will continue to find support for their studies.



PACIM was delighted to host a reception for acclaimed Polish film producer and director Krzysztof Zanussi in mid-August. Plans for the event took shape at the last minute as Mr. Zanussi's schedule allowed him to attend and speak at the Twin Cities Polish Film Festival. Friends and members of PACIM and the Film Society of Minneapolis/St. Paul gathered with Mr. Zanussi for several hours at the Film Society's suite overlooking the Mississippi River. It was an evening to be remembered.

Annual Meeting and Director Elections

PACIM will hold its Annual Meeting at 1 pm on Sunday, October 12, 2014, at the Institute, Suite 228, 43 Main St, Minneapolis. Agenda items include voting for new directors and an update on the organization's growth, events and plans for the coming year. Light refreshments will be served.

Three nights

after Papusza's birth, her mother and an old Gypsy woman waited in a tent for a spirit's visit. Fear and superstition kept them from repeating the spirit's warnings. They only whispered to the tribe, "She'll either bring great honor or great shame." That auspicious beginning to the late poet's life foreshadowed the impact her work would have on Gypsy traditions and secrets. To this day, Papusza is viewed as a gifted poet by the literary world and as a traitor by many *Polska Roma*.

Born Bronisława Wajs in Lublin early in the last century, Papusza's tribal family gave her the nickname "doll" to reflect her beauty. They also could have given her the nickname "inquisitive" or "curious" to reflect her desire to read and write — skills unwanted in a girl from her family's caravan of musicians. Papusza never attended school. Instead, she stole chickens in exchange for lessons in reading and writing from a Jewish woman who kept a shop near their camp. She also read fortunes to earn money, but preferred reading books, even after her father beat her and destroyed her books. Late in life she reflected on her self-perceived inability to write well and attributed it to being a self-taught reader.

Papusza composed ballads based on *Polska Roma* traditions and stories, capturing their spirit for later generations. Her work reflects the simple life of Polish Gypsies. Descriptions of nature's beauty and of daily life among the caravans punctuate her songs. Seen as an unusual talent among her tribe, her efforts remained safe within the confines of that group until 1949, when Jerzy Ficowski, a poet and member of the Polish Resistance, joined her caravan. Having escaped the persecutions of the secret police and taken refuge among the *Polska Roma*, Ficowski was fascinated by Gypsy customs and language. He saw the literary value of Papusza's songs and convinced her to write them down. That is where the trouble began.

The publication of her poems and a published interview with her by Julian Tuwim, another Polish poet and Ficowski's friend, brought feelings of exposure and shame to her people. A printed mini-lexicon of *Polska Roma* language, which accompanied the interview, added to the tribe's pain. They declared her "unclean" for revealing details of their language, culture and customs. Her interaction with *gadjos* (non-Romani) made her a scapegoat for Gypsy oppression, amid anti-nomadic efforts by the government.

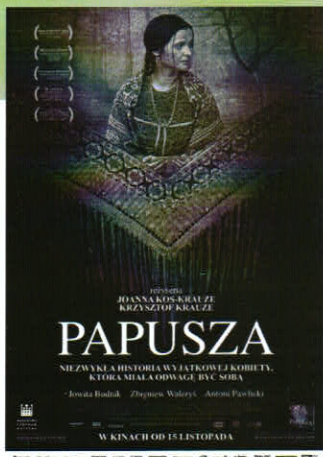
Papusza's own people threatened to pull her limbs apart with horses. Her claims of misuse by Ficowski fell on deaf ears, and she endured verbal and physical abuse by her people. The creative and tender poet collapsed and spent eight months in a mental hospital grieving the lost love of her people and her way of life.

Banned from her Gypsy community, Papusza lived the next 30 years deep in pain. She never wrote again. She burned much of her old work along with letters from friends like Tuwim who remained faithful to the end. At the end of her life, she confessed, "If I only had not learned to read and write, stupid me, maybe I'd have been happier."

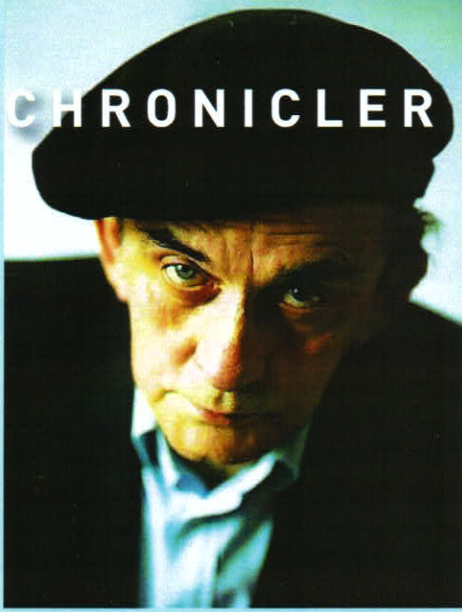
The memory of Papusza and the exquisite beauty of her poetry were later immortalized in Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz's symphonic poem *Papusza's Harp*. Composed in the Romani language, it premiered in 1994 at Kraków's Blonie Park Theatre and featured international opera star Gwendolyn Bradley. Today that music provides the soundtrack for *Papusza*, a 2013 feature film directed and scripted by Joanna Kos-Krauze and Krzysztof Krauze.



Gypsy Poet



CHRONICLER OF SACRED TRADITIONS



Jerzy Ficowski intrigues, inspires and challenges perceptions with his artistic endeavors. As an author, poet, songwriter, translator, resistance fighter, and prisoner, he claimed he was only “a survivor,” one who wrote about cultures that were almost eradicated, underscoring his belief in a rich, tolerant society that he felt Poland should aspire to.

Well known for his extensive study of the life and works of Jewish author Bruno Schultz, as well as for his own poetry, he also wrote on various “lost” cultures — poems and short stories about Jewish life in Poland, and also about the *Polska Roma*, giving us a peek into these hidden cultures.

During the German occupation of Poland in World War II, Ficowski was a member of the Polish resistance, the *Armia Krajowa*. After the war, the Stalinist government treated resistance fighters with deep suspicion and Ficowski went into hiding, taking refuge with Poland’s beleaguered Roma community. He immersed himself in Roma culture and lifestyle and earned their trust. Later, he wrote they were a “people without history,” attributing this ethos to the Gypsy’s “instinct to suppress the past”... a way of enduring. His publications explore various facets of Roma life — fortune telling, customs, folklore and tales. Even today his comprehensive study, *The Gypsies in Poland*, provides a clear understanding of cultural practices. He is considered Poland’s most distinguished scholar of Gypsy life and folklore.

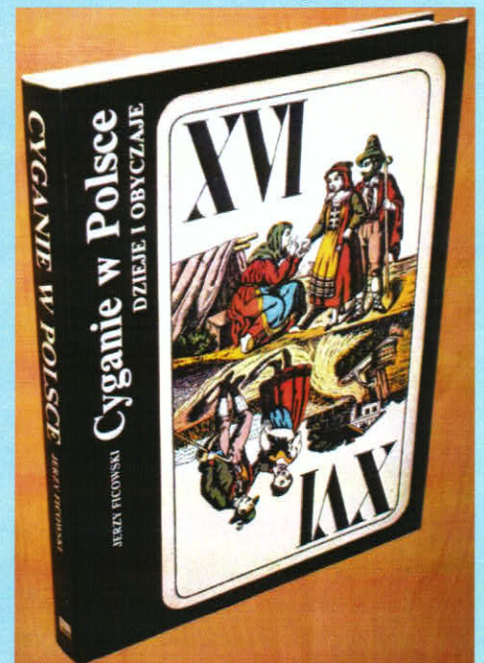
Ficowski befriended Gypsy poet Papusza (Bronisława Wajs), encouraging her poetry, and translating it. These works incurred scorn from the Gypsies. They regarded them as treason, alleging that these works increased suspicions and distrust and divulged their innermost private traditions. This ultimately cost Ficowski’s friendship with them as well as with Papusza, who was ejected from the community and never allowed to return.

Ficowski became a government adviser on “the Gypsy Question,” and the forced settlements (“Great Halt”), ultimately accepting the persistence of the ancient Gypsy nomadic life style. Over time, Ficowski diametrically altered his views on Gypsies, providing evidence in later publications, “that although it did increase literacy, most... who became educated left... and traditional crafts and customs were dying out.”

In spite of government sanctions (his work was banned), it did not deter his efforts to free Poland, participating in Poland’s political reawakening, signing letters protesting censorship and the repression of workers, admitting he did not believe in the “effectiveness of silence.”

After Poland gained its independence, he continued to work for freedom, and is respected for his lifelong efforts on its behalf. He has received numerous literary awards and in 2004 he was awarded the Commander’s Cross with Star of the *Order of Polonia Restituta*.

by Marie Przyński



Ficowski’s compendium, *Gypsies in Poland: History and Customs*



caravan of grief

by Jane Mrazek Flanders



Five-year-old

Krystyna Gil witnessed the murder of most of her family at Szczurowa, where Nazis executed 93 Polish Gypsies. Held by her grandmother while her mother was killed, Krystyna was among the five survivors of the 1943 Szczurowa massacre. The massacre was part of the Roma Holocaust during World War II, but it was not the first time Roma experienced persecution, exile or murder. From their earliest origins in India to Poland today, Gypsies have been an easy target. Their nomadic way of life and creative ways to scratch out a living subject them to stereotyping and ridicule, but rich traditions and customs reside inside their culture, not unlike other ancient peoples.

Around the 11th century, Muslim victors of wars in India brought the first Romani people to Europe as slaves. Their dark features and path to Europe led to the idea that they were Egyptian, originating the moniker “Gypsy.” By the 14th century they faced ethnic cleansing and forced labor from the Holy Roman Empire, and moved east toward more tolerant Poland where King Kazimierz III’s rule provided freedom for Jews and other ethnic groups. Two centuries later *Polska Roma* formed as a distinct ethnolinguistic group in western Poland after escaping persecution, waves of pogroms, and anti-Romani laws in German-speaking territories. To this day, of the four Gypsy groups in Poland, *Polska Roma* remains less assimilated than other Romani groups and most suspicious of outsiders (*gadjos*).

Polish Gypsies never identified themselves with a territory or homeland. Their caravans and tents resulted in part from fleeing persecution. To put bread on the table while “on the move,” Gypsies took jobs that required little overhead. Wheel repair, metal work, fortune telling, and folk medicine were aboveboard jobs; but often out of necessity, or spite, Gypsies turned to thievery to turn a buck. Their struggle to avoid poverty, hunger and persecution too often led to Gypsies being distrusted and feared.

Within the subculture of Polish Gypsies, there are four different groups, each with its own dialect, traditions and history: the *Polska Roma* of western and central Poland; the *Bergitka Roma* in south and southeast Poland; the *Kalderash*; and the *Lovari*. The population of these groups shifted as laws and wars impacted their lives. During Poland’s Partition, the groups competed against each other economically and politically, and after World War I the *Kalderash* were recognized by Polish authorities as the representatives of all Romani in Poland. The Gypsy Kings came from that group in the interwar period, but not all Gypsies bowed a knee to those rulers.

Persecution of Poland’s Gypsies hit a peak when Germany invaded. Nuremberg laws defined Romani, along with Jews, as “enemies of the race-based state” and nearly annihilated both populations within Nazi-occupied countries. Because Romani traditions did not include written history or a census, the estimated death toll of their group at the hands of the Nazis ranges from 220,000 to 1.5 million. The Roma language describes the Holocaust as *Porrajmos*, which literally means “the devouring.” The Roma were the first race to be subjected to experimentation by the Nazis as part of Joseph Goebbels’ “Final Solution.”

At the Library

The PACIM Library announces **new additions** to its DVD collections. Twenty recently released films offer bits of history, romance, humor and drama.



Bring the Kids!

Children's Corner returns to the PACIM Library on October 19. Geared toward children ages 2–5, there will be storytelling and small projects relating to the story, song or tale. Admission is free. This special program for kids takes place every third Sunday of the month through May.

PACIM Library

43 Main St SE, Ste 228
 Minneapolis, MN 55414
 Hours: Sundays 1 to 4 pm
 or by appointment

The Library's open hours on Sundays coincide with free parking along Lourdes Place (the street behind RiverPlace). Take advantage of the free parking to browse books, DVDs, CDs, and to visit with other PACIM members over a cup of fresh coffee. For directions or alternative parking suggestions, visit pacim.org or call 612-378-9291.

HAPPENINGS

October 23–November 2

Twin Cities Jewish Film Festival

A partnership of the Sabes JCC and the St. Paul JCC, the event is a showcase for feature films, documentaries and shorts from around the world on themes of Jewish culture and identity. The festival also includes community events paired with each film to enhance experience, inspire dialogue and provide community engagement. Details at sabesjcc.org.



October 26

Sister Cities International Fundraiser

Columbia Heights, MN and Łomianki, Poland Sister Cities Program sponsors a Lasagna and Polish Sausage Dinner from 4–7 pm at Murzyn Hall in Columbia Heights. Proceeds support humanitarian projects. Evening includes an international bazaar, vintage boutique, and holiday treasures. Tickets and info at 763-571-1709 or 763-574-1489.

November 8

Immigration History and Research Center Annual Meeting/Fundraiser

Friends of the IHRC will host Ellen Engseth, Curator of IHRC's archives and the University of Minnesota's Head of Migration and Social Services from 5:30–9 at the Little Venetian Restaurant in Little Canada. Presentation follows a social hour, silent auction and dinner. Required advanced tickets and details at 612-625-4800 and ihrc@umn.edu.

State/Regional

October 5

Smaczne Jabłka

Sponsored by the Polish Museum of Winona, this annual Apple Festival features live music, dancing, a silent auction, crafts, and apple related activities. Event begins at noon. No advance tickets are needed. For information call 507-454-3431.

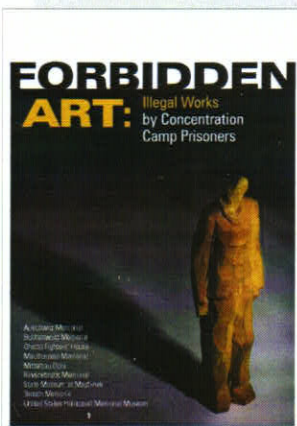
October 9–23

Chicago International Film Festival

Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the festival prides itself in championing young filmmakers and daring visions, and also in presenting the latest from masters of world cinema. One of this year's premier films is *Papusza*, about the life of the Polish Gypsy poet.

October 19–January 11

Forbidden Art Exhibit



Hosted by the Polish Museum of America in Chicago and prepared by the Auschwitz Memorial, the exhibit consists of 20 pieces of artwork made illegally by prisoners of Nazi concentration camps who risked their lives to complete the works. The exhibit is an historical document which records humanity and emotional sensitivity that survived among the horrors of war. Details at polishmuseumofamerica.org.



October 10

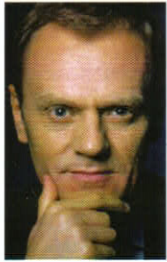
Polish Film Night

PACIM's monthly evening of cinema resumes this fall with the classic *Pan Tadeusz*. Directed by Andrzej Wajda, the 1999 film weaves the tangled passions of men and women into a handsome, expansive tapestry of exile, yearning, Polish pride, war and history. Film begins at 7 pm in the PACIM Library and is free and open to the public. Stay after the film for light refreshments and discussion.

Join PACIM for a traditional *Wigilia* dinner on Sunday, December 14, at the Gasthof zur Gemutlichkeit restaurant. This community Christmas Eve celebration features sharing of *opłatki* and singing *kolędy*. Proceeds from the dinner support PACIM's *Dom Dziecka* fund. This year's targeted Polish orphanage in Tuchola, Poland, houses 30 children from 11–20 years. Advance reservations are necessary and can be arranged by calling 612-379-9485, or by visiting pacim.org. Seating is limited.



Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and his cabinet resigned after his nomination to head the European Union in Brussels. The decision creates a void of



leadership in Poland's ruling party one year before national elections and will likely lead to a political change in the EU's largest emerging economy.

More than **100 paintings** from the collection of Stanisław August Poniatowski are now on display at Łazienki Park's Baroque Palace in Warsaw. Poniatowski, the last king of Poland, reigned from 1764-95. This palace was once his favorite summer residence.

Poland's **National Broadcasting Council** granted a license for a new documentary television channel intended for men. The "Adventure Channel" will broadcast foreign and Polish shows focusing on adventure sports and other adrenaline-inducing pursuits such as off-road car rallies, mountain climbing, hunting, fishing and sailing.

According to a recent New York Times survey, Warsaw is ranked the best value among cultural capitals in Europe.

An Apple A Day May Keep Putin At Bay by Marie Przyński



As tensions continue to escalate between Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists, Russia responded with bans on imported food and food products, claiming health and sanitary violations. Poland is the bull's-eye of that target with bans on fruit and vegetables. In particular, the ban on Polish apples may cause more than a bruise

on the skin for the globe's largest exporter of apples. With half of its apple production going to Russia, Poland exports over \$573 million worth of apples each year.

The Polish business community together with the agricultural industry started an "Eat Apples" campaign. Within hours, numerous social media sites were posting information and pictures of celebrities, government officials and ordinary citizens biting into fresh Polish apples as a tongue-in-cheek political statement. These "selfies" quickly became viral on the internet, including one of Poland's National Security Bureau Head, Stanisław Koziej. Poland believes the apple ban is retaliatory, but that it will be overturned.

Polish Minister of Agriculture Marek Sawicki is seeking new markets for Poland's fruit growers, mainly in Asia, but is approaching the US and western European countries as well. He also secured financial compensation from the European Commission for Polish losses that will be incurred by the ban.

It is unknown what bans or military efforts Russia may put forth next. While the US and EU countries struggle to censure Russia and President Putin for his incursion into Ukraine, Russian forces continue to move further into Ukraine, arming the separatists, despite the increased global pressure. The world awaits the "peace talks" and hopes Russia will withdraw their influence from this conflict.





Krystyna Gil painfully recounts her family's murder at Szczurowa.

The most noted attack on the Roma race occurred in Szczurowa deep into the war. For many generations, families of Romani lived in the village among their Polish neighbors and integrated into the local milieu, even through mixed marriages. On August 3, 1934, German police hauled nearly all the Romani in the village to the local cemetery and executed them. Thirteen years later, local villagers and veterans erected a memorial stone at the site of the mass grave, marking the world's first recognition of *Porrajmos*. Other incidents of *Porrajmos* occurred in Bielcza, where 28 Romani were murdered; Borzęcin Dolny, another 28 were murdered; and Żabno, where 49 Romani lost their lives.

After the scourge of WWII, remaining Polish Gypsies lost the freedom to live their nomadic lifestyle. Communists wanted to "settle" the Romani and began offering free housing and financial incentives; but traditions run deep among the Gypsies and by the late 1950s many refused to comply and forced settlement became the Communists' new strategy. Outright prohibitions against the nomadic lifestyle grew strict. Vagrancy was outlawed and Romani parents were jailed if their children failed to attend the same school through an academic year. Approximately 80% of previously nomadic Polish Gypsies finally settled and some emigrated abroad. A small portion of committed Gypsy nomads went underground, keeping their culture and way of life alive.

Today, less than 20 miles from Auschwitz where Romani were gassed during World War II, Gypsies see a new face of racism. In the town of Andrychów, radical nationalists have begun a campaign

of harassment against the small Roma community of 100 who live among the 20,000 residents. The campaign began with a rally and supporters of a local soccer club chanting *Cyganie raus!* (Gypsies out!). Fueled by social media intimidation, the harassment has the modest group of Gypsies frightened.

During the summer, a pregnant Romani woman was attacked as she walked along the street in Andrychów. Now Romani men take turns to keep watch at night to protect their families. But anger eats at everyone, and a few Romani young men retaliated for the woman's attack with one of their own. Members of the local soccer club posted pictures of the incident on Facebook along with calls to "expel the whole Gypsy group." That post captured more than 14,000 "likes" and members of the soccer club have set up vigilante patrols.

History proves that Gypsies in Poland were and are not currently without fault. They have stolen from and cheated others. Most recently a wedding party traveling by car in southern Poland said they were attacked by Gypsies near the village of Maszkowice. The altercation ended in a brawl with damage to the car,



Gypsy flag flies as a memorial.



Polish gypsy children outside their makeshift housing.

but so far neither side has agreed to file an official complaint with the police.

Life among Polish Gypsies today looks much like the impoverished Native American reservations in the US. Poor housing, lack of education and low income make for a bleak existence. Forced settlements and diminished freedoms created a big socioeconomic issue for Poland's local and national governments, and so far there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

OVER 80 YEARS OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE.

Since 1933

SIWEK
LUMBER & MILLWORK, INC.

MINNEAPOLIS **JORDAN**
612-781-3333 952-492-6666

SiwekLumber.com

Dreaming of Selling?

Contact us today for a no-obligation market analysis of your home and take advantage of this great market!

Alan & Sherry Rybak
CRS, GRI, ABR
Hall of Fame

RES Realty

612.232.9151
Rybakas@aol.com

Polish Film Night

October 10



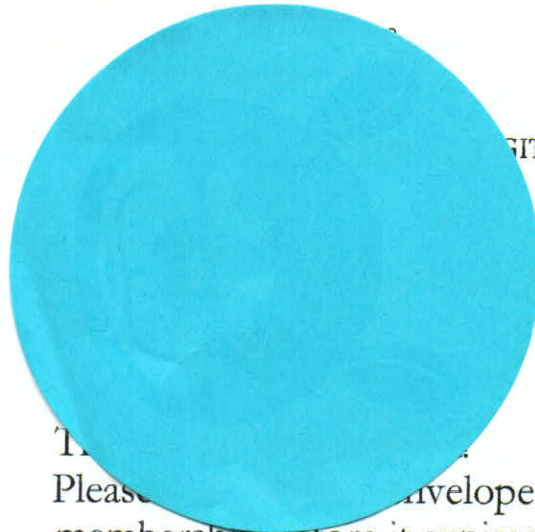
7 pm

PACIM

POLISH AMERICAN
CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 30308
TWIN CITIES MN

5 333



Please send this envelope to renew your membership before it expires on April 1, 2015.



German Restaurant

Daily Live German Entertainment
Tues-Wed-Thurs 5-10
Fri-Sat 4-11; Closed Mon

Twin Cities largest Oktoberfest

Banquet Facilities
For Special Occasions

2300 NE University Ave
Minneapolis

www.gasthofzg.com
612-781-3860



POLISH SOUPFEST

- Taste classic Polish soups
- Dance to live Polish folk music
- Shop for artisanal gifts and Baltic amber jewelry
- Practice ancient Polish crafts like *pisanki* and *wycinanki*
- Learn Polish history and legends
- Full Bar with Viking's Game on TV!
- New Recipes Approved by Chef Peter Pawlowski, Esquire TV's featured chef!

Sunday, November 16

1-5 pm

Murzyn Hall

530 Mill St. Columbia Heights, MN

Purchase tickets at www.pacim.org and at event.

PACIM

POLISH AMERICAN
CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF MINNESOTA

