

UA FEST 2026 — Press Release

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For the first time, a 160-metre embroidered European record leaves Europe — for Carleton Place

CARLETON PLACE, ON — An embroidered cloth 160.5 metres long, stitched by communities across more than a dozen European countries, will be shown outside Europe for the first time on September 13, at UA FEST in Riverside Park.

It is made of 103 separate panels contributed by 89 organizations — families, churches, schools and community groups supporting Ukraine and Ukrainians abroad — some naming two places: a hometown in Ukraine, and wherever that family ended up. On May 24 this year, in Tallinn, the Book of World Records certified the cloth as a European Record.

Canada is its 15th country, and Carleton Place is the first stop on this continent.

Two rushnyky, one idea

In 2013–2014, Andrii Yatsenko — then Director of the Department of Education and Science, Youth and Sports of the Kherson Regional State Administration — led an embroidery initiative across the Kherson region. Children, alongside their parents and teachers, stitched a rushnyk in schools, kindergartens and universities. University and college students, together with cadets from the Kherson State Maritime Academy and the Kherson Maritime School, carried the finished cloth — more than 700 metres long — across the Antonivskyi Bridge, joining both banks of the Dnipro to symbolize the unity of the Ukrainian nation. The Ukrainian Book of Records certified it as a national record.

In 2022, Russian forces looted the Kherson museum where the cloth was being kept. Museum staff got it out. It survived the occupation, and remains in Kherson today, in a local museum.

A second, separate rushnyk carries the idea forward, uniting Ukrainians and people of good will outside of Ukraine. Launched once again by Andrii Yatsenko in October 2024 in Tallinn, *Rushnyk of Unity – Rushnyk of Victory* has grown panel by panel through Ukrainian communities in Estonia, Portugal, Germany, France, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Italy, Austria, Ireland, Scotland and the

rest of the United Kingdom. This is the rushnyk now travelling the world, and the one arriving in Carleton Place.

Lanark County is being asked to add a panel

Every community that hosts the cloth is invited to embroider its own section — 50 cm wide, 1.5 to 2 metres long, white linen or cotton, any technique. UA FEST is running open stitching circles through August so that local residents, Ukrainian or not, can work on it.

On September 13 the Lanark County panel gets sewn onto the rushnyk on the main stage. It will name Carleton Place, alongside the towns in Ukraine that people here came from.

The festival

UA FEST (Ukrainian Fest Lanark County) runs **Sunday, September 13, 2026, 12:00–18:00, at Riverside Park, Lake Ave W, Carleton Place. Admission is free.**

It began in the spring of 2023, when Carleton Place resident Gloria Bradley held a garage sale to help Ukrainian families who had arrived in the county. The money paid for the first festival on November 5, 2023; about 1,000 people came. Last year it was more than 4,000. The organizers are aiming for 5,000 this year. There has never been a paid member of staff.

The day includes Ukrainian food, live music and dance, a craft market, a children's zone, workshops and a heritage exhibition. Part of each year's proceeds goes to a charity working with children affected by the war — Rotary for Kids of Heroes in 2023, Save Ukraine in 2024, Kids of Ukraine in 2025–2026.

Background, timeline and photography: uafest.ca/rushnyk

Quotes

"This rushnyk was never meant to be finished — and that's the whole point. Every new stop adds a new, unique rushnyk, and Carleton Place is the first to add one beyond the Ocean. It's proof that the distance between Ukrainians is only a distance on a map, not in the heart." —

Andrii Yatsenko, founder, Rushnyk of Unity – Rushnyk of Victory

"A rushnyk was once sewn only by mothers and grandmothers, by blood, for one family. Now it's stitched by anyone who believes unity matters

more than bloodline. Come see it begin here, in a small town — and add your own thread to a story that will outlast us all.” — **Olga Ialovenko**, Festival Director, UA FEST

Media contact

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Available for interview: the festival director; a representative of the rushnyk project; local embroiderers.

Things to film or photograph: stitching circles through August (quiet, good for interviews); the cloth on site September 13; the panel being sewn on at the main stage; food preparation; workshops.

Images: high-resolution photography, including the record certificate, at uafest.ca/press — free for editorial use with the credit given on each file.