

CREATING MODERN IDENTITY— SERBIAN CULTURE AND LANGUAGE IN AUSTRALIA

ANA CAGIC



Ana Cagic is an anthropologist and freelance researcher from Serbia. She graduated from Belgrade's University, Faculty of Philosophy, in 2013. Since then she has conducted research on culture and history of her country. Currently, she

works as a freelance content writer and occasionally does voluntary articles related to various cultural subjects. Ana has published scientific work on massive panic phenomenon in Europe and in Serbia. One of her works on Chinese culture and its influences around the world won the Third Prize at international writing contest, Shanghai Get Together, in 2015. Her drawings and paintings have also been rewarded several times. She is an active member of the oldest singing society in the country, The First Belgrade's Singing Society. Ana also expresses her creativity in form of art, drawings and paintings. Her artwork is greatly inspired by traditional costumes, history and cultural riches of the world, which is mainly influenced by her anthropology studies.

Population migration has been happening since first days of human civilization on Earth; depending on current socio-political situation, these waves varied in all aspects. Speaking about the Serbian population in Australia, data shows that one of the biggest migration waves to Australia took place after 1990s civil war in the former Yugoslavia. Many Serbian refugees have chosen friendly Australia to be their new home. The last major migration wave, however, occurred between 2001 and 2006.

Data on Serbian migration to Australia seize back to 19th century, but it was not until the second half of 20th century that stronger bonds have been made.

Initial needs of Serbs who came to Australia in early 1990s have changed. Today, Serbian-born people in Australia think of this country as their home and are eager to become full participants in the society. Needless to say though, they still have sentiment about their motherland. Activities of the Serbian community (SCAA) are primarily focused on developing innovative services for improvement of these peoples' quality of life and their position in Australian society. An important part of this mission is the maintenance of one's cultures traditional values and heritage, but incorporated into modern society scheme and seen through a multicultural, contemporary world prism.

A modern approach to establishing strong connection between Australian and Serbian society is based on projects that promote links between these two cultures, including shared cultural values and bilingualism.

There is an important note on the idea of traditional values; while most of us commonly use the term 'tradition' to describe or understand archaic practices and cultural heritage coming from far past; it is more complex than that. Tradition is being created continually and it includes all the elements that particular society's culture consists of, in both past and present.

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Serbian culture is abundant, dynamic and colourful—in all aspects. From traditional food, arts and crafts, folklore dances and religious practices, to Serbian language and Cyrillic letter, contemporary art, science, and business. Above all, the educational aspect is what is greatly appreciated and encouraged. Modern Serbs are not farmers in 'opanci' and 'sajkaca', but they would never stop dancing kolo or eating 'burek' and 'slatko'. However, these amazing elements of Serbian folklore are today wisely incorporated in an up-to-date way of perseverance. Australians are intrigued and fascinated by the richness and versatility of Serbian tradition, which appears a bit exotic to them. Additionally, they respect Serbia's literary and artistic heritage. They also think of Serbia as a country that has given the world many notable people, who left their mark in global annals.

Creating a new perspective on Serbian culture by promoting not only its traditional values, but also its contemporary tendencies and modern development, is the foundation stone for building an image of Serbia and its people as true citizens of the world.

For Serbs in Australia, celebrating their language and culture is of a vital importance. It not only reminds people of their mother country, history and

cultural heritage, but also helps them connect with people in the country they live in. Cultural diversity is often seen as an obstacle for mutual understanding; the thing is, it could actually strengthen bonds between nations of different origin and create new ones. Celebrating your own culture in a benevolent and positive manner is what contributes to mutual understanding, appreciation and love. In addition, it's exciting and inspiring!

The focus of Ivo Andric Society is that exactly. This enthusiastic organization has an exciting approach to the idea of promoting a nation's culture, language and tradition. It is a young organization, formed only a year ago, around the idea of promoting and celebrating Serbian language and culture in the multicultural Australian environment. The Serbian community in the city of Canberra, where the Society operates, is relatively small, but spirited and motivated. According to the Society's representatives, the support of the SCAA plays an important role in making their vision alive.

Through educational activities combined and spiced up with more traditional elements, the Ivo Andric Society introduces Serbian language and culture not only to Serbs living in Australia, but also to Australians, Australian-born Serbs, and Australians connected with Serbian tradition through marriage



St Sava Festival in Canberra



Serbian Festival in Sydney

or family line and vice versa. Through promotional activities, the wonderful world of Serbian culture is open to tourists and visitors from other parts of the world, as well. The Society had its debut at Multicultural Festival in Canberra, earlier this year and it was a huge success. As they have said, it gave them hope and motivation to continue their mission and make it even greater.

The Society operates mainly through promotional and educational activities. They are proud to say that children play an important, if not the most valuable role in presenting Serbian culture at such events. For example, Serbian children from Dositej School had a serious task at the festival, but they did it like professionals. They were teaching visitors about Serbian letters and instructed them to write their own name in Cyrillic! At Ivo Andric Society's stand at the festival, visitors could take brochures about the school, buy books from Serbian Bookstore, play educational games, win a lottery, learn a bit of Serbian language and many more.

The mission of Ivo Andric Society is to show that Serbian culture is far more than 'sarma' and 'rakija', products that, we have to admit, other nationalities find quite tasty. Serbia is proud to be a homeland of talented and recognized artists, authors, scientists, excellent sportsmen and individuals successful in other fields. The presence of the Society at the festival in Canberra demonstrated how people of various cultural backgrounds enjoy Serbian music and dances, food and drinks, souvenirs and art and that they were eager to learn more about educational programs and Serbian language.

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Dositej Serbian Language School, the institution where the idea of I.A. Society was born, has established collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia, public schools in Canberra and with Australian societies that promote and support bilingualism. The school has been working hard ever since and there are more and more people interested in attending the classes. Not only parents from Serbia who want their children to learn two languages and preserve their Serbian heritage, but also adults who are related with Serbian culture through family are eager to get closer to Serbian (modern) tradition.

The response of multinational audience in Canberra is very positive and encouraging for the Serbian community. It brings people together and creates new relationships, mutual love and support. Australians consider Serbian culture dynamic and inspiring, but also a culture that has much to offer in an educational and professional way.

Representatives of Ivo Andric Society are pleased with such results. They plan new programs for the celebration of Serbian language and culture in Australia to strengthening bonds between the Serbian community and Australian society. They plan collaboration with similar organizations and institutions in other Australian states and look forward to new opportunities.



Australian Government
Australian Digital Health Agency

Your health record in your hands

What is 'My Health Record'?

My Health Record is an online summary of your key health information. More than 1 in 5 Australians already have one. Over time, My Health Record will bring together health information such as medical conditions, medicines, allergies and test results in one place. This means safer and more efficient care for you and your family.



Personally controlled

It's your choice who sees your My Health Record and what's in it. You can choose to share your information with the healthcare providers involved in your care. By allowing them to upload, view and share documents in your My Health Record, they will have a more detailed picture with which to make decisions, diagnose and provide treatment.

A secure system

My Health Record has various safeguards in place to protect your information, including secure login, firewalls and encryption.

What do I have to do?

You don't have to do anything. A secure My Health Record will be created for you by the end of 2018 if you have a Medicare or Department of Veterans' Affairs card. However, if you don't want a My Health Record, let us know by **15 October 2018** by visiting our website or calling our Help line.



This year, you will get a My Health Record unless you tell us you don't want one

For more information go to:

MyHealthRecord.gov.au
Help line 1800 723 471

Authorised by the Australian Government, Canberra.