Enfield’s Poles will tell their stories with Heritage Lottery help

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The Adam Mickiewicz Saturday School will be tracing the histories of three generations of Polish Immigrants who settled locally immediately after World War Two, in the 1970s and 1980s to escape the Soviet regime, and those who arrived after Poland joined the European Union in 2004.

Ten people from each of these periods will have their reminiscences recorded by volunteers who will be trained in interviewing and oral history methods by Middlesex University. The project will look at such issues as housing, employment and citizenship and will span the generations bringing older and younger Poles together so that experiences can be compared and contrasted.

The project will involve pupils, teachers, volunteers and trustees from the Polish Saturday School as well as members of the Polish Parish in Waltham Cross. The end result will be a community exhibition held first of all at Edmonton Green Library and then in the local schools and Forty Hall. A Polish library and resource centre will also be created.

Learning resources and a DVD covering Polish history, culture and traditions will be produced in co-operation with Turin Grove School, Edmonton, the Sikorski Museum in London, and the Polish Educational Society and will be distributed to local schools. A community website will be set up with the help of students allowing access to the collected reminiscences and material resulting from the project.

Commenting on behalf of the Adam Mickiewicz Saturday School, Grazyna Maczkowska, Head of the School, said: “We are delighted to receive this grant which will help to rescue memories of Polish emigrants, particularly the older generation and will bring together different generations of Poles to share their experiences and improve understanding. We hope that the project could help to change the stereotypical image of Poles and that the collected material and output from the project will help other communities in a better understanding of the Polish history and culture.”

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “This project aims to enhance understanding within their own community and with a wider audience about the Poles’ distinctive heritage, culture and traditions.”

Notes to editors

The Adam Mickiewicz Saturday School, based at Albany Secondary School, Bell Lane, opened in November 2006 and continues traditions established by a similar Polish school that existed from 1960 to 1975. The main purpose of the Saturday School is to advance Polish children’s education in the Polish language, literature, history and geography and to teach them about Polish traditions, culture and religion.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, with over £850 million granted in London alone.

Further information

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