

Poles mark 100 years of history in Windsor

Book signing kicks off Polish Week celebration

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Author Agata Rajski had barely lived in Windsor before she made the city's Polish community the focus of a master's thesis, which she completed in 2005.

The thesis was turned into a book and became the genesis for a Polish exhibit at the Windsor Community Museum on Pitt Street. Rajski, who moved back to Poland in 1995, signed books in Windsor Saturday at the kick-off event for Polish Week and the celebration of 100 years of Polish history.

Rajski, 44, said she didn't appreciate the Polish community in Windsor when she was a resident. She was sponsored to come to Canada by Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church in 1988 and stayed until her family moved to Edmonton in 1991.

"My older daughter was born here," Rajski said Saturday. "I tried to assimilate, but I wasn't involved in social activities."

After starting her master's



FOND MEMORIES: Polish author Agata Rajski's book is 100th Anniversary of the Polish Community in Windsor.

Star photo: Scott Webster

degree in politics and international studies, she remembered her time in Windsor.

"This community is close to my heart," she said. "It was my first step in Canada beyond Poland's borders. In Poland, I was living a student's life. When we came to Canada adulthood started. It was a hard time, but I'm glad I went through it."

The first person of Polish descent came to Windsor in 1908 and was followed by a large influx of people in 1914 as they

flocked here for jobs in the automotive industry. Windsor was so popular that the exiled Polish Armed Forces set up its headquarters and recruitment office here during the Second World War. Currently there are 11,545 people of Polish descent in the Windsor area.

The Polish exhibit is in the west gallery of the community museum. Hugh Barrett, curator of the exhibit, says it took a year to gather photographs, artifacts and heritage clothing for the display.

The exhibit closes Dec. 31 after a seven-month run.

One of the highlights of Polish Week will be the unveiling of a bronze fountain in Odette Sculpture Park. It's a gift from Lublin, Poland, Windsor's twin city. The mayor of Lublin and other Polish dignitaries, including Marek Cisieleszuk, the Consular General of Poland, will formally present the drinking fountain to Mayor Eddie Francis on Friday at 2:30 p.m. in the park near the sculpture of the family of elephants.