

## **TWENTY-YEAR PROJECT COMES TO FRUITION**

The Whig Standard, 11 September 2009

by Ian Elliot

A project to remember Canadians of European descent who were interned during the First World War has officially launched.

Royal Military College professor Lubomyr Luciuk has been working on the project for more than 20 years. Yesterday he dropped the latest of hundreds of envelopes into a mailbox, bound for universities, schools and community groups across Canada to announce details of the program.

"It is so rewarding to see this project finally get off the ground," said Luciuk yesterday.

"What I am proudest of is that it represents the success of the Ukrainian community in Canada over the past 20 years in persuading the federal government to do this, but we're turning it back to society as a whole."

The endowment is funded with \$10 million from the federal government and is overseen by an independent board of trustees.

The Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund will sponsor any Canadian who wants to write about or otherwise commemorate the more than 8,500 Canadians imprisoned as "enemy aliens" between 1914 and 1920.

People and groups have already expressed interest in the program, which will publicly launch Saturday with ads in major newspapers and through its website, which is already up at [www.internmentcanada.ca](http://www.internmentcanada.ca), through which people can download applications and information.

One of the individuals who has already contacted the fund is from Brantford, where a small population of 108 Ottoman Turks abruptly disappeared without much notice being taken. Only recently did people there realize they had been rounded up and jailed for the duration of the war and some died in the camps.

The internment of Japanese and Chinese Canadians during the Second World War is much better known. Few people, including Luciuk, knew much about the internment of Germans, Gypsies, Ukrainians and eastern Europeans during the war in places such as Fort Henry.

He bumped into a survivor of the camps and that launched his two-decade quest for the government to make amends.

He didn't want individual restitution, as was paid to descendants of the Asian families, but a collective remembrance such as the fund represents.

"The important thing to remember is that this is a symbolic restitution," he said.

"The value of the labour provided by the internees and the money that was seized from them and the property they forfeited far outweighs the value of this fund."

Luciuk's one regret is that so much time has passed that none of those who were imprisoned had the opportunity to see the fund created and the injustice perpetrated against them addressed in some way.

"That is my only sorrow in all this, that the last survivors died before they could see this" he said.

The first recipients of grants from the fund will be announced later this year.