

The Kingston Symposium - An Opportunity to Remember

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Her children did not believe her story. His nephew was frightened by how adamantly he refused to talk about it. Her grandchildren would only learn what happened when they read her diaries long after she passed.

Their children never learned about it in school. Most did not talk about it because they feared it would happen again or they were ashamed that it happened to them. Their stories were almost lost forever. The Government of Canada destroyed most of the paperwork. Perhaps a reasonable rationale could have been found. It is unlikely. These things do not happen when decision-makers use reasonable judgment.

None of them committed a criminal act to warrant such treatment. None of them asked for any of their belongings or property to be returned after they were freed. Over time, some feared no one would remember. Others only wanted acknowledgement from the government that betrayed them. None of them lived to witness that acknowledgement because it took almost 90 years to achieve. After almost a quarter of a century of effort, the acknowledgement was made by the Government of Canada along with a \$10 million endowment fund, Canada's First World War Internment Recognition Fund (the Fund), the means for the affected communities to commemorate and educate the general public about the injustice that was perpetrated.

The Kingston Symposium is the first significant endeavour by the Advisory Council of the Fund. On June 17-20, 2010, the Council gathered approximately 50 descendants, scholars, educators, artists and community activists from across Canada who have been committed to recalling Canada's first national internment operations. The fact that there was so much enthusiastic discussion is evidence that the internee stories have not been lost. Moreover, the future of the stories looks bright as the attendees provided the Council with an overwhelming number of ideas to consider as they determine how to select projects to fund in the future and how to determine their own strategic initiatives.

The Kingston Symposium's local organizer and Chairman of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Professor Lubomyr Luciuk, said: "This meeting represents the culmination of many years of effort on the part of many of those attending it. We hope the Kingston Symposium will lay the groundwork for helping the Endowment Council ensure that what happened to Ukrainians and other Europeans during this country's first national internment operations becomes part of the educational curricula of every province and is recalled through film, artwork and historical markers across Canada. Our fellow citizens need to become better aware of what the internees suffered - not because of anything they had done, but only because of who they were, where they came from."

Sessions were facilitated by Gail Lord and Katherine Molineux of Lord Cultural Resources, a global business that collaborates with people and organizations in the visioning, planning and

implementation of cultural places, programs and resources. Ms. Lord skillfully facilitated the four sessions of the Symposium whose themes and introductory speakers were as follows:

A Crippling Legacy - The Affected Communities. Paul Grod, National President, Ukrainian Canadian Congress, explained that the objectives of the Kingston Symposium were to elicit input into the development of a clear strategic plan of action for the Fund that would help explain the importance of the internment experience and how to transmit this importance to Canadians. He stressed that the Fund should focus on achieving clear, measurable objectives and not simply being a granting agency.

Repositories of Memory – The Curators, Custodians and Collectors. Mark O’Neill, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian War Museum, spoke to the significance and programming in today’s museums and how the internment story will emotionally appeal to a larger number of Canadians especially if it is incorporated into the larger context of civil liberties and human rights abuses nationally and globally.

Recovering Memory - Educating the Educators. Dr. Ruth Sandwell, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, explained the complexities and value of including the internment operations in the school systems in each province by navigating through the curriculum process compared to directly educating the teachers.

Reshaping Canada’s Cultural Landscapes – The Creators. Marsha Skrypuch, author and internee descendant, facilitated a discussion about the challenges of communicating the story through various cultural media and criteria that existing arts granting organizations use to select projects that should receive funding.

The keynote address was delivered by Professor Roger Daniels, Professor Emeritus, University of Cincinnati entitled *Bringing Governments to Justice*. Professor Daniels shared his valuable perspective, knowledge, and experiences of researching and writing about the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Of great significance and relevance to the Kingston Symposium, was his time as a consultant to the presidential Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians which resulted in the signed apology by then-President Ronald Reagan and a symbolic payment of \$20,000 to Japanese Americans in 1988.

The Kingston Symposium concluded with a somber memorial service held at historic Fort Henry, Canada's first permanent internment camp, hosted by Fort Henry Curator, Ron Ridley. Wreaths were laid by Orest Kruhlak, Chair, Endowment Council; Andrew Hladyshevsky, President, Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko; and by the following diplomats representing the countries of the affected communities: Dr. Ihor Ostash, Ambassador of Ukraine to Canada; Ms Vesela Mrden Korac, Ambassador of Croatia to Canada; and Mr. Tamas Kiraly, Deputy Head of Mission for the Embassy of the Republic of Hungary. Ms. Diane Dragasevich, Endowment Council member represented the Serbian Canadian community. An ecumenical prayer was given by the Reverend Dr. Stanford Lucyk following comments by Honourable Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons.

A summation of the discussions was that there is a need for the Fund to support the development and dissemination of research and cultural products through the education system in Canada and

other cultural institutions including museums, art galleries, and libraries. The challenge will be to interest researchers, whether they are graduate students, professors, or students of high school age, to conduct the research and share their analysis. Moreover, the artistic community needs to be inspired to deliver their unique expressions of the internment story using media that are accessible and appealing to cultural consumers of all ages - especially given the popularity of social media like Twitter and YouTube.

The risk facing the Council is funding projects that only the creators and their immediate network or community will experience or consume. The Council must ensure it manages expectations within the affected communities in terms of not being able to financially or feasibly provide funding to all sorts of projects that are significant in intent but not in exposure or longevity.

The next steps for the Council include sorting through all of the input offered at the Kingston Symposium and strategically identifying priorities and criteria for future projects. The Endowment Fund is an exciting, long-awaited, and well-deserved opportunity to cement the traumatic saga of Canada's first national internment operations in the Canadian, and in time, the global lexicon. It would be unfortunate if the opportunity was wasted.

More information about the Endowment Fund and activities of the Advisory Council can be found on the following website: www.internmentcanada.ca

Information about the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association can be found at www.uccla.ca.