

# Conference inspired and energized attendees

## Editorial

Congratulations to Bonnyville and District FCSS for hosting the Vibrant Aging conference on Saturday.

About 150 smart, active, engaged people gathered to learn, but maybe most of all to share. All of the sessions were relevant and informative, and all of them provoked questions and discussion. A lot of the information was new, and much of it was self-affirming: people may not have realized how many others share their experiences.

It takes a lot of thought and effort to make an event like this come together. From brainstorming what information to offer, to getting it all on the program, getting the word out, and finally hoping people will show up, there's always an element of risk.

The subject matter went far beyond what might have been predictable. Participants came away informed, inspired, sometimes angry, and above all energized.

And logistically, the event was excellent. The Bonnyville Seniors Drop-In Centre provided a superb facility, with lots of food and coffee. The speakers were terrific, the schedule was well-balanced, and the participants, of course, made the conference worthwhile.

The Bonnyville and District FCSS's plan is to hold the next seniors' conference in 2021. If that seems too long to wait, seek out the many other opportunities throughout the Lakeland to get involved and make a difference.

In the meantime, hats off to everyone involved in the Vibrant Aging conference.



# Looking through the wire

Opinion JEFF GAYE

With a barbed wire enclosure, it's easy to know if you're on the inside or the outside. But when you look through a single section of fence, you start to wonder.

I am not Ukrainian. "My people," British-Canadian homesteaders, were as responsible as anyone for the internment of Eastern European settlers from 1914 to 1920. Ironically, many of those who were rounded up had deeper roots in Canada than the people who feared them as enemy aliens.

When I look through the 21 strands of wire in Lagasse Park in St. Paul I can imagine myself as an internee. I can imagine as I watch other people enjoying the park, perhaps unaware that I am standing there, how I might feel to be on the inside: deprived of my freedom and my family robbed of its dignity.

I can also see myself on the

"free" side, as a Canadian, asking how this travesty could have been carried out in my name.

Not many Canadians asked during the Second World War, gathering up Canadians we feared and dehumanized because of their ethnicity. We locked them up, stole their possessions, and cruelly disrupted their lives.

The camps are gone, but those 21 strands of barbed wire are still doing their job. In our distrustful minds, we divide our fellow citizens into camps and categories. We see Canadians who, like those Ukrainians, don't talk "like us," don't dress "like us," don't look or worship or live "like us."

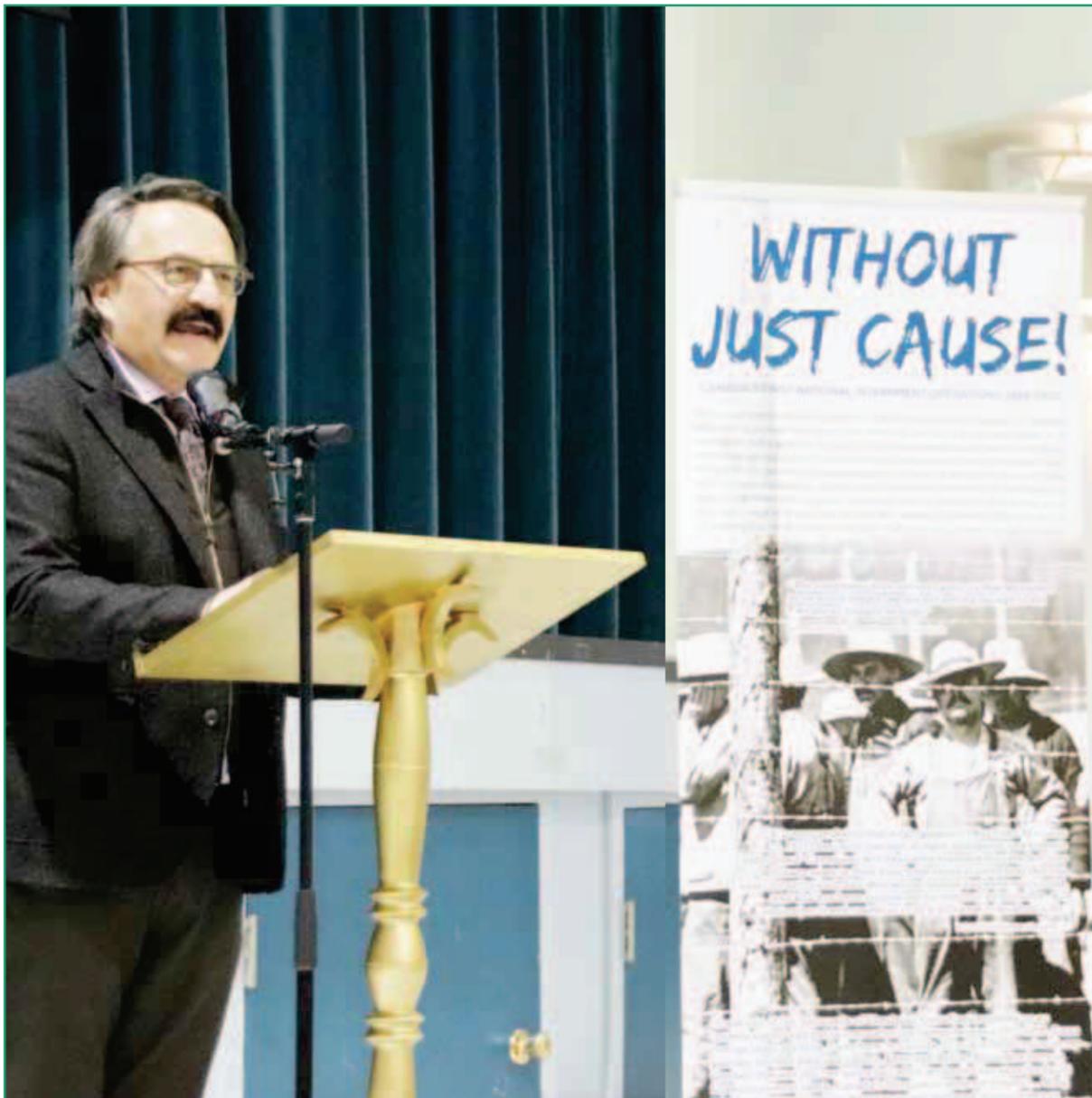
But they are us.

The more narrowly we define ourselves, and the quicker we are to distrust anyone who doesn't conform to an arbitrary racial,

ethnic, religious, cultural, or linguistic standard of inclusion, the more likely we are to start stringing the barbed wire again. But ultimately we will erect the fences around ourselves. We will imagine ourselves free, but we will be on the inside—enclosed by our own fear.

We are all familiar with George Santayana's statement, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The interpretive panel next to the 21 Strands installation bears a more chilling quote from Hegel: "We learn from history that we do not learn from history."

Congratulations to all the community partners in St. Paul, and to the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, for telling the story of Canada's first national internment operations. Maybe this time we'll learn.



Professor Lubomyr Luciuk told the story of Canada's first internment operations and the campaign for recognition of the injustices. JEFF GAYE

# Respect

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