



PROBUS Club of Central Edmonton Newsletter

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January 17 Presentation:

David Marples, research Fellow in the Contemporary Ukraine Studies Program of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, helped us understand what is happening in Ukraine.

Current issues starting with an uprising in the Ukraine in 2013 which resulted in installation of government which was friendly to the west. Then Russia annexed Crimea and installed pro-Russian governments in two eastern regions. One underlying challenge in eastern regions, are the large number of Russian speaking people in the major population centers. There were some military success for Russia in 2014 and 2015, also the Minsk Accords were established in 2014, these included steps for the areas dominated by Russian speaking people to leave Ukraine.

In 2019, the Zelensky was elected as president. Zelensky stated that he believed that Ukraine should remain whole. Zelensky government's ability to retain a whole Ukraine were negatively impacted by the Minsk Accords. Other steps taken by Zelensky included:

- Nationization of Russian Orthodox Church which resulted in the first Ukrainian language services in its last Christmas services held in the major Russian Orthodox cathedral
- The arrest of pro-Russian leaders such as Viktor Medvedchuk

In early 2022, Russia (read Putin) made several claims against the West. E.G. no expansion of NATO (1990), military build in Baltic States and Poland, military trainers in Ukraine, and alleging that the West was behind the 2014 protest that removed Yanukovich.

Along with these claims Russia demanded that:

- Ban on Ukraine entering NATO
- No NATO military exercises in Ukraine without Russia's permission
- Removal of NATO membership for states bordering Russia
- Removal of heavy weapons from these states
- Legal guarantees of Russia's security

David speculated that the reason for these demands were Russia's desire to get the West to the table for negotiations, resolve problems with collapse of USSR and Russian retreat, and Putin's legacy and his questionable psychological state as well as his imperialism.

This round of Russia's aggression started in Nov 2021 with the massing of troops on eastern border of Ukraine. This included a buildup of weapons such as tanks and missiles. Also, Russia started a social media campaign against Ukraine. After further steps, Russia began its invasion on February 24, 2022.

As the war unfolded, Russia focused on expansion of Donetsk and Luhansk (Eastern regions). It began its campaign of terror by reducing cities to rubble, capturing steelworks, invasion of Kherson and capture of a major city. In the start, Ukraine struggled because the supplies from the west took time to get to it and to get staff trained to use it. Russia's advance faltered, its failures included:

- Underestimation of Ukrainian resistance
- Use of raw recruits
- Poorly supplied tanks, no fuel, expended along road to Kyiv
- Did not capture Ukrainian government (Zelensky)
- Using prisoners and mercenaries leading to atrocities which bolstered resistance.

Ukrainian Counterattacks taking back land from Russia, freeing Cities. However, this led to missile attack and widespread destruction. Russia employed the Wagner Group, which had some success, but committed great atrocities. Some realities:

- Russian economy is doing well, it is a petro state
- By GDP and economy is a medium power
- United democratic world against invasion.
- Countries are now seeking to join NATO (Finland and Sweden)
- United Ukrainians against invasion
- While sanctions against Russia are severe, they are not crippling the economy
- Putin seem to be ruled by emotions.

Will war result in nuclear war, this is unclear? Russia has alluded to it as an option. A number of important countries have come out against it, including China.

What will be the results? Amongst many alternative shared with us, here are a few:

- Ukraine becomes part of Russia; guerrilla war will be likely.
- Putin loses power, but maybe someone worse takes over.
- Further breakup of Russia.

What we do know, is that if and when this ends, an enormous amount of effort and money will be needed to rebuild Ukraine. Depending on the result, the many Ukrainians who fled will or will not return. What was not touched on was the impact of this action by Russia on the greater world stage. We thank David for his fascinating and unnerving presentation.

January 25 Tour:

About 12 members gathered at the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) for a self guided tour including a guest from Beaumont. People went together to the Reimaging the Drive exhibit but then pursued their own interests to explore other parts of the museum -- e.g., Human History, Natural History and Bug Gallery. I was unable to join, fortunately Mel kindly supplied picture. I share few with you below.

But first, some information about RAM drawn from its website:

- The RAM is the largest museum in western Canada and one of the top museums in Canada. Located in the Arts District in downtown Edmonton, they collect, preserve, research, interpret, and exhibit objects and specimens related to the heritage of Alberta's people and natural environment. The museum's expansive permanent galleries feature engaging exhibits complemented by internationally touring features.
- It first opened to the public on December 7, 1967, and soon became an important destination for Albertans. In 2005, we were renamed the Royal Alberta Museum in honour of Queen Elizabeth II, who visited Alberta that spring. In 2018, it moved into new 419,000 square foot facility in downtown Edmonton.
- Each of the more than five million objects in its collections not only has a history, but a story. It is passionate about collecting and conducting research that helps you discover why Alberta is remarkable. The work of its researchers and scientists supports the exhibitions, outreach, and learning programs at RAM.



RAM exterior

The following pictures are taken from the collection Mel sent me. They provide an impression of the range of displays in RAM.



Sacred Stones

Over generations, people returned again and again to the carved stones of their ancestors. These are sacred stones, and where they rest are sacred places. They play important roles in ceremonial life.

There are several dozen carved boulders in Alberta. It may have taken months to carve each boulder. Using stone tools, artists chipped out lines, grooves, and depressions. Some carved boulders look like ribcages and are called ribstones. Taking the time to make these impressive objects tells us that ancient societies valued artistic expression, and made time for it.





As noted, I could not make it, but it remains on my bucket list. It is a true treasure.

Interesting aside:

1. Where there's a will, there's a relative.
2. It's hard to explain puns to kleptomaniacs — they're always taking things literally.
3. I like to hold hands at the movies, which always seems to startle strangers.
4. Women should not have children after 35, but 35 kids are enough!
5. There are three kinds of people. Those who can count and those who can't.
6. Whenever I lose my TV controller, I always find it in a remote location.
7. My first job was working in an orange juice factory, but I got canned. I just couldn't concentrate.
8. My [math teacher](#) called me average. She's so mean!
9. "The easiest time to add insult to injury is when you're signing somebody's cast." — Demetri Martin
10. I don't have an attitude problem. You have a perception problem.
11. I'm skeptical of anyone who tells me they do yoga every day. That's a bit of a stretch.
12. Light travels faster than sound, which is why some people appear bright before they open their mouth.
13. I don't have a boyfriend, but I do know a guy who would be really mad to hear that.
14. "The worst time to have a heart attack is during a game of charades." — Demetri Martin
15. When dogs go to sleep, they read bite-time stories before bed.
16. "I don't want to be part of a club that would have me as a member." — Groucho Marx
17. "Does my wife think I'm a control freak? I haven't decided yet." — Stewart Francis
18. Dogs hate driving because they can never find a barking space.

Have a Great month – stay well