

## INTERNEES' STORIES CAN FINALLY BE TOLD

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by Elizabeth Church

Lubomyr Luciuk was a master's student at Queen's University when he first stumbled upon a little-known episode in Canada's past. An elderly man from Kingston's Ukrainian community told him about the time he spent at a prison camp at Fort Henry during the First World War.

Although the young researcher grew up in the same community, he did not know of the camp's existence or that civilians had been interned as part of the war effort.

"I was totally blown away," said Prof. Luciuk, who, 30 years later, teaches at nearby Royal Military College. "I realized there was this blank page in Canadian history that needed to be filled."

Beginning today, Prof. Luciuk and the descendants of some of the people who were prisoners there are hoping to fill in that missing chapter with a new fund that will support research and commemorative projects on the period. The fund was started with a \$10-million endowment from the federal government and is designed to support a wide range of work, from scholarly papers to works of art or literature.

"It's all about remembering," Prof. Luciuk said. "When I first started doing this research, I had people telling me this never happened. "

It's been nearly a century since Canadian authorities rounded up thousands of immigrant families they considered enemy aliens and sent them to labour camps during the First World War. More than 8,500 people, mostly from what is now Ukraine, were sent to 24 internment camps across Canada between 1914 and 1920, because of their homeland's links to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Many men were used for forced labour, and 81 women and 156 children lived in the camps. Despite the scale of the internment, little evidence remains. No known survivors are still alive and many of the official records were destroyed.

This lack of historical records puzzled Fran Haskett for years. From her earliest childhood, she remembers her mother, Mary, making references to the time she spent as a young girl interned with her family in Northern Quebec.

"She would say things like, 'When I was in a prison camp and there were guards all around us,' " Ms. Haskett said. "How could we make sense of that? She was born in Canada."

When Ms. Haskett searched the atlas, there was no sign of Spirit Lake, where her mother said her family was taken from Montreal. The site, in the Abitibi region of Quebec, had been renamed.

In 1988, her mother read a piece in The Globe and Mail written by Prof. Luciuk and his colleague Bohdan Kordan, and the story began to fall into place.

In that piece, the two men, who met in graduate school, asked for recognition from the government of the events. They suggested markers be placed at the camps, which included well-known sites such as Kingston's Fort Henry, the Cave and Basin area of Banff and the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto.

Prof. Luciuk, whose parents came to Canada from Ukraine after the Second World War, continued to press successive governments in Ottawa on behalf of the community.

That recognition finally came in the form of a private member's bill in 2005 sponsored by Conservative MP Inky Mark and an agreement on the \$10-million endowment last year.

"I live in the centre of Ukrainian culture in Canada, and I didn't know a thing about this period," Mr. Mark said. "Every new generation of immigrants always faces hardships. These stories need to be told."

There are now markers at most of the former camps, and plans for larger displays at Spirit Lake - today called Lac Beauchamp - and at the Cave and Basin site. The endowment is set up to make annual grants for the next 15 years and will be administered by a council comprised of representatives of the affected communities, which included immigrants from other Eastern European countries and the former Ottoman Empire.

"If this is managed well, it could become a vibrant source of communication, a model for remembering," said Ted Sosiak, a Toronto doctor whose Polish grandfather arrived in Canada with an Austrian passport and was held at Fort Henry. It is fitting, Dr. Sosiak said, that the money be used to fund educational material, rather than be paid to individuals.

Ms. Haskett believes that her mother, who died two years ago at age 98, would be happy her story is finally being told. "I am very grateful to everyone," she said. "If she were here, I think she would just say, 'At last. I told you.' "