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OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE PARKS CANADA NATIONAL INTERNMENT EXHIBIT, *ENEMY ALIENS, PRISONERS OF WAR: CANADA'S FIRST WORLD WAR INTERNMENT OPERATIONS 1914 TO 1920*

Banff, Alberta – September 13, 2013 marked the official of the opening of the Parks Canada National Internment Exhibit, **Enemy Aliens, Prisoners of War: Canada's First World War Internment Operations 1914 to 1920** at Cave and Basin National Historic Site, Banff National Park. Cave and Basin was one of the 24 internment camps that were established in Canada during the First World War. The Cave and Basin and Castle Mountain internment camps held up to 600 men who were unjustly interned as enemy aliens between July 14, 1915 to July 15, 1917.

A stakeholders committee comprised of members of the Endowment Council of the CFWWIRF (representing the affected communities) and local community representatives reviewed the text and content of this national exhibit and provided recommendations relating to the exhibit to Parks Canada and their historians. The Canadian Government National Historical Recognition Program provided the funding of \$3.3 million to build this exhibit along with interpretive panels at Fort Henry National Historic Site in Kingston, Ontario and Halifax Citadel National Historic Site, Nova Scotia.

Mr. Dave McDonough, Superintendent Banff Field Unit of Parks was the Master of Ceremonies for this event. Maria Dunn along with members of the Ukrainian Male Chorus and Axios Men's Choral Society of Edmonton, Alberta opened the program with O'Canada. Maria Dunn continued with the singing of her song, *In The Shadow of the Rockies*, which speaks about those who were unjustly interned at Castle Mountain and those who now enjoy the beautiful mountain air asking them to remember who toiled in the Rockies.

The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Multiculturalism was among a crowd of hundreds in attendance at the opening of the Interpretive Centre, which generated significant local, national and international media coverage. Hon. Kenney was accompanied by fellow Member of Parliament James Bezan and Senator Scott Tannas.

Minister Kenney addressed those in attendance, stating: “As we look around, we see a place of unspoken beauty. Yet, we know this site is also one of unspeakable sadness... Let us say to the internees, that there was no reason for them to be ashamed and that they, yes, were proud sons and daughters of Europe, of Ukraine, of those other cultural backgrounds but they too, were proud daughters and sons of Canada. Today we honor their memory, their sacrifice, their devotion to this country. We look back with deep regret on a policy that never should have been implemented... In times of conflict and warfare it is understandable that there were elevated concerns about national security but do not allow historians today to whitewash what happened between 1915 and 1920 at Cave and Basin and at the other sites. The historical record is clear that the Imperial Government in London specifically told the Canadian authorities during the First World War that there was no reason to treat the so-called subjects of Austro-Hungary as enemy aliens, that they did not pose a security risk. And so this was a policy designed, conceived and executed – I believe the historical records shows—in bad faith. But today, we seek symbolically to correct that bad faith through an act of faith, through an act of collective memory.”

Mr. Ivan Grbešić, Chair of the CFWWIRF also addressed those in attendance, stating: “It is truly a historic day – the opening of a permanent exhibit by Parks Canada exploring Canada’s first national internment operations, a tragic yet little known chapter in Canadian history... Based on information that was available, many historians appear to have over-contextualized internment, offered to us things that we do not need or want, and decided not to place more emphasis on the personal experiences, perspectives and affirmations of those interned, which were documented not only by the internees and their families but by their ‘jailors’... We are led to believe by all sides that there is one correct version of Canadian history. However, people approach history with their own perspective and interpret it from that perspective. We need to ensure that we are not misled by those using history in order to further present day agendas – whatever their agendas may be. History presented only from a particular viewpoint ceases to be history. It is only through debate, discussions and consultations that we come closer to the truth. And this internment exhibit is exactly that – an attempt to get closer to the truth.”

In closing, Mr. Grbešić told those present about one of the last known survivors of the Spirit Lake Internment Camp, Mary Manko, who passed away at age 98, in July 2007. Mary’s sister, Nellie (Carolka) Manko, not quite three years old at the time, perished at Spirit Lake. Mary Manko was quoted in 1994 stating, “What was done to us was wrong. Because no one bothered to remember or learn about the wrong that was done to us it was done to others again, and yet again. Maybe there’s an even greater wrong in that.”

In his closing remarks, Mr. Dave McDonough thanked all those who worked on the exhibit text and stated: “... while we cannot change the past, we can learn from it.”

A blessing of the building and a memorial service was delivered by Most Rev. Bishop David Motiuk and Eparchial Clergy of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton and His Grace The Rt. Rev. Bishop Ilarion, Western Eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, The Very Rev. Archpriest Taras Krochak, and Rev. Fr. Timothy Chrapko, both of St. Volodymyr Parish, Calgary, Alberta. Also, joining them in this service was members of the Ukrainian Male Chorus and Axios Men's Choral Society of Edmonton, Alberta. The service included the singing of the moving "Vichnaya Pamyat" (Memory Eternal) in memory of all internees.

The laying of the wreaths were presented by members of the Ukrainian, Polish and Croatian communities along with the Descendants of Ukrainian Canadian Internee Victims Association.

The program concluded with the singing of "Amazing Grace" by Maria Dunn.

For the complete address by Ivan Grbešić, Chair of the CFWWIRF, visit www.internmentcanada.ca.

For full news articles, videos and photographs of this event, Like us on Facebook.

About CFWWIRF

The Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund (CFWWIRF) was established to support projects that commemorate and recognize the experiences of all of the ethno-cultural communities affected by Canada's first national internment operations of 1914 to 1920.

For more information on this exhibit or the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund contact the Program Manager, Andrea Malysh, toll free at 1-866-288-7931.

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Photo courtesy of Frank Jankač

L-R:

Front row: Mr. Dave McDonough, Master of Ceremonies, Superintendent Banff Field Unit, Parks Canada; The Honourable Jason Kenney, Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister of Multiculturalism; and Ivan Grbešić, Chair of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund.

Second row: Mr. James Bezan, M.P. Selkirk- Interlake and Senator Scott Tannas.