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OFFICIAL UNVEILING OF THE VERNON INTERNMENT MURAL RECALLING CANADA'S FIRST WORLD WAR INTERNMENT OPERATIONS 1914 TO 1920

Vernon, British Columbia – March 21, 2014 brought the Ukrainian, Japanese and First Nations communities together in a ceremony entitled, *Internment to Inclusion*.

Chief Byron Louis of the Okanagan Indian Band provided a ceremonial welcome to the Ukrainian community to the Okanagan, the first of its kind in Canada. Chief Louis stated, "We all share the effects of internment." Andrea Malysh, program manager of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund (CFWWIRF) presented Chief Louis with the staples of Ukraine: Bread and Salt. The program was opened with the singing of O'Canada by Internee Descendant, Subdeacon Paul Malysh.

Speaking on behalf of the Endowment Council of the CFWWIRF, Andrea Malysh provided an overview of the Internment Operations along with the local history of the Vernon Internment Camp and the use of forced labour to build local highways to open of the Okanagan Valley to the Kootenays' to the east, and the Transcanada Hwy to the north. Ms. Malysh told those present about her great grandfather, Wasyl Luchak being interned in Spirit Lake Internment Camp along 1200 others, one being 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."

Reverend Andrzej Wasylanko of St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Parish assisted by Cantor Subdeacon Paul Malysh of the Assumption of St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church provided a Blessing of the mural and a Prayer service for those who died during Canada's first national internment operations of 1914 to 1920. The prayer service concluded with the singing of the moving "Vichnaya Pamyat" (Memory Eternal) in memory of all internees.

International muralist, Michelle Loughery spoke about the internment of many ethnic communities, including the Japanese internment in WW2 and Residential Schools. "Racism is in all of us. Internment is a human flaw," said Loughery, a descendant of a First World War internee. "We need to come together and be nicer to people." But despite her optimism, Loughery pointed out that conflict continues around the globe, including recent aggression by Russia in Crimea. "Put your hearts out to Ukraine and what this (mural) really means," she said. Ms. Loughery presented Andrea Malysch with a Sunflower art piece created by her mother, internee descendant Pat Sanyshyn. The plaque reads on the art piece which is entitled, *Searching for the Light, Remembering the Ukrainians determination and comradeship during the internment camps*. In front of the mural were eight wax art pieces created for today's commemoration event which were comprised of images of First Nations; Japanese and Ukrainians' sufferings. In the sun, the wax was melting and Ms. Loughery commented that these were tears of those who have suffered past historical injustices. The aroma of beeswax was in the air. Ms. Loughery introduced Dyan Louis, Okanagan Indian Band Councilor and a 3rd generation Residential School Survivor. She shared statistics of the fall out of the Residential School system which has been a struggle for many generations.

City of Vernon Mayor Rob Sawatzky was among a crowd of over sixty in attendance. Mayor Sawatzky said he sometimes feels as though nothing ever gets better, "but when I see what policies had been in place, I know that we are better." He encouraged the survivors and descendants to be proud of their backgrounds and their cultures.

Ruth Hoyte, past president of the Downtown Vernon Association embraced Vernon's history of WW1 internment by reading a story of the Sunflower. "The right thing to do was acknowledge the past and move forward so it can never happen again," said Ruth Hoyte.

Wayfinder programmer, Katie Mitchell provided thanks to Sponsors of the Vernon Internment Mural Sunflower project which included; City of Vernon, Downtown Vernon Association; Silver Star Rotary Club; Big Box; Acklands; Cloverdale Paint; Levitt Rental; Vernon Community Police/Restorative Justice; Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Foundation; Assumption of St. Mary Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Vernon; St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Parish, Vernon; Ukrainian Women's Association, St. Olha Branch, Vernon; Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Vernon Branch, Pacific Northwest Seed Company; Lois Campbell and the Vernon Teacher's Association to mention a few.

The ceremony was concluded with the singing of the Ukrainian National Anthem by Subdeacon Paul Malysch.

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 mural 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 Emily Fraser

L-R:

First row: Students and Teachers' from Mission Hill Elementary School; Brenda Elis, Wayfinder Project.
Second row: Second from left, Okanagan Indian Band Chief Byron Louis; City of Vernon, Mayor Rob Sawatsky; Dyan Lous; Sheldon; Ruth Hoyte, past president Downtown Vernon Association; Muralist, Michelle Loughery; Wayfinder Programmer, Katie Michelle; Roman Chez, President of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Vernon Branch; Lois Campbell, Internment Educator; Subdeacon Paul Malysh; Andrea Malysh, Program Manager of the Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund; Chad Soon, Teacher, Mission Hill Elementary School; Reverend Andrzej Wasylanko, St. Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic Parish.

