

THE REDRESS ENDOWMENT

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The Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund was officially launched on September 14, with the publication of a notice in *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's national newspaper. (The notice was reproduced in last week's issue of *The Weekly* on page 4.). The announcement was the culmination of an agreement reached by representatives of the Ukrainian Canadian community with the government of Canada.

The endowment received \$10 million from the Canadian federal government for activities related to the 1914-1920 national internment operations, i.e. commemorative, educational, scholarly and cultural projects whose aim is to teach and remind all Canadians of this little-known chapter in the nation's history. The funds are to be available to Ukrainian and other Eastern European communities who were subjected to the internment operations.

More than 8,500 men, women and children were unjustly disenfranchised and interned in 24 camps during World War I when they were branded as enemy aliens simply because of where they'd come from. Some 5,000 Ukrainians were targeted because they had the bad luck to be immigrants from Ukrainian lands then under control of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The endowment fund is the result of 20 years of hard work by a small group of dedicated and determined activists – chief among them Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk. There were many stops and starts along the way, but these undaunted activists continued to fight for recognition, restitution and reconciliation – for righting a grievous wrong committed by the Canadian government.

In the beginning, there were those who didn't believe there could have been internment camps in Canada. Even the families of some internees were incredulous – after all, they had never learned about this in school, read about it in history books, or heard the Canadian government acknowledge this grave injustice. Inky Mark, a member of Parliament who represents a riding in Manitoba that is home to many Ukrainian Canadians, told *The Globe and Mail*: "I live in the center of Ukrainian culture in Canada, and I didn't know a thing about this period. ... These stories need to be told." It was Mr. Mark's private member's bill – The Internment of Persons of Ukrainian Origin Recognition Act – that finally obliged the Canadian government to reach an agreement with Ukrainian Canadian community representatives on redress settlement.

Today, thanks to the efforts of the UCCLA and its supporters, there are trilingual (English-French-Ukrainian) markers at most of the internment camp sites, and Canadians are becoming aware of the country's first national internment operation.

Much more, however, needs to be done. And it will be done, thanks to the document establishing the redress endowment fund that was signed in May 2008 on behalf of the Ukrainian Canadian community by Dr. Luciuk of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Andrew Hladyshevsky of the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Taras Shevchenko (the entity that manages the endowment fund) and Paul Grod of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress with representatives of the government of Canada.

Dr. Luciuk has said he has only one regret: that so much time has passed that none of the internees had the opportunity to see the fund created and the injustice perpetrated against them addressed. Thought for years to be the last known survivor, Mary Manko Haskett, who was 6 when she and her family were sent to the Spirit Lake camp, died in July 2007. Another survivor of the internment operation, Mary Hancharuk, who was born at Spirit Lake in 1915, passed away in January 2008.

Dr. Luciuk told the Whig Standard: “That is my only sorrow in all this – that the last survivors died before they could see this.” However, Mrs. Haskett’s daughter Fran put it all into perspective, telling *The Globe and Mail*: “If she [my mother] were here, I think she would just say, ‘At last. I told you.’ ”

In the end, the truth will be told and justice will prevail.